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**PAN-TURKISH-ISM: THE NATION-CENTRED IDEOLOGY
AND THE GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGY OF THE ‘TURKISH WORLD’**

**PAN-TURC-ISM: IDEOLOGIA CENTRATĂ PE NAȚIUNE ȘI STRATEGIA
GEOPOLITICĂ A LUMII TURCEȘTI**

**ПАНТУРЦИЗМ: НАЦИОНАЛ-ОРИЕНТИРОВАННАЯ ИДЕОЛОГИЯ И
ГЕОПОЛИТИЧЕСКАЯ СТРАТЕГИЯ “ТУРЕЦКОГО МИРА”**

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ABSTRACT:

**PAN-TURKISH-ISM: THE NATION-CENTRED IDEOLOGY
AND THE GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGY OF THE ‘TURKISH WORLD’**

This article analyses the geopolitical strategy of the ‘Turkish world’. The author introduces the terms ‘Pan-Turkish-ism’ and ‘global Turkey’, a nation-centric doctrine that differs from the commonly accepted concepts of ‘Pan-Turkism’ and ‘Turkic world’, a multinational concept representing all Turkic peoples. The article examines the following aspects of ‘Pan-Turkish-ism’: the Neo-Ottomanism of the ‘Turkish World’, ‘the Turkish world’ versus ‘the Turkic world’ in the post-Soviet arena; the Gülen [Hizmet] Network: the globalist instrument of the ‘Pan-Turkish-ism’.

On the basis of unpublished archival documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, the author examines the Bulgarian diplomatic analysis of Russian-Turkish relations in the Balkans. Special attention is focused on History as the main ‘ideological’ tool of ‘Pan-Turkish-ism’ in Bulgaria and the Balkans. The idealization of the West is another characteristic feature of ‘Pan-Turkish-ism’, which, according to the author, can be defined as Turkish-Islamic-Western synthesis.

Keywords: Pan-Turkish-ism, Turkish world, Pan-Turkism, Turkic world, global Turkey, Turan, Pax Ottomana, Neo-Ottomanism, Strategic depth, Nazism, Kemalism, Russkiy Mir, Slavic World, Eastern War, Gülen [Hizmet] Network, Ecumenism, Vatican, Turkish-Islamic-Western synthesis

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REZUMAT:

PAN-TURC-ISM: IDEOLOGIA CENTRATĂ PE NAȚIUNE ȘI STRATEGIA GEOPOLITICĂ A LUMII TURCEȘTI

Acest articol analizează strategia geopolitică a lumii turcești. Autorul introduce termenii 'Pan-turc-ism' și 'Turcia globală', o doctrină centrată pe națiune care diferă de concepțele acceptate în mod obișnuit de 'Pan-turcism' și 'lumea Turcă', un concept multinațional care reprezintă toate popoarele turcice. Articolul examinează următoarele aspecte ale 'Pan-turc-ism': Neo-Otomanismul 'lumii turcești', 'lumea turcă' versus 'lumea turcă' în arena post-sovietică; rețeaua Gantorlen [Hizmet]: instrumentul globalist al 'pan-turc-ism'.

Pe baza documentelor de arhivă nepublicate de la Ministerul Afacerilor Externe al Republicii Bulgaria, autorul examinează analiza diplomatică bulgară a relațiilor ruso-turce din Balcani. O atenție deosebită este acordată istoriei ca principal instrument ideologic al pan-turcismului în Bulgaria și Balcani. Idealizarea Occidentului este o altă trăsătură caracteristică a 'Pan-turc-ism', care, potrivit autorului, poate fi definită ca sinteză turco-islamică-Occidentală.

Cuvinte cheie: Pan-turc-ism, lumea turcă, Pan-turcism, lumea turcă, Turcia globală, Turan, Pax Ottomana, Neo-Otomanism, adâncime strategică, Nazism, Kemalism, Russkiy Mir, lumea slavă, Războiul Eestic, rețeaua G. hizmet, Ecumenism, Vatican, sinteza turco-islamică-Occidentală

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РЕЗЮМЕ:

ПАНТУРЦИЗМ: НАЦИОНАЛ-ОРИЕНТИРОВАННАЯ ИДЕОЛОГИЯ И ГЕОПОЛИТИЧЕСКАЯ СТРАТЕГИЯ "ТУРЕЦКОГО МИРА"

В данной статье анализируется geopolитическая стратегия "турецкого мира". Автор вводит термины "пантурцизм" и "глобальная Турция", национал-ориентированную доктрину, которая отличается от общепринятых концепций "пантюркизма" и "турецкого мира", многонациональной концепции, представляющей все тюркские народы. В статье рассматриваются следующие аспекты "пантурцизма": неоосманизм "Турецкого мира", "Турецкий мир" против "Тюркского мира" на постсоветском пространстве; сеть Гюлена ["Хизмет"]: глобалистский инструмент "пантурцизма".

На основе неопубликованных архивных документов Министерства иностранных дел Республики Болгария автор рассматривает болгарский дипломатический анализ российско-турецких отношений на Балканах. Особое внимание уделяется истории как главному 'идеологическому' инструменту 'пантурцизма' в Болгарии и на Балканах. Идеализация Запада - еще одна характерная черта 'пантурцизма', который, по мнению автора, можно определить как турецко-исламско-западный синтез.

Ключевые слова: Пантурцизм, Турецкий мир, глобальная Турция, Turan, Pax Ottomana, Неоосманизм, Стратегическая глубина, нацизм, Кемализм, Русский мир, Славянский мир, Восточная война, Сеть Гюлена [Хизмет], экуменизм, Ватикан, Турецко-исламский мир, Тюркский мир -Западный синтез

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Introducción

Why 'Turkish' and not 'Turkic' world? Because the Turkish concept of 'Pan-Turkism' (in the language of the Kemalist opponents) or 'Turkism' (in the language of the Pan-Turkists) is essentially 'Pan-Turkish-ism', i.e. a Pan-Turkish doctrine and nation-centred ideology and geopolitical strategy with Turkey at its centre. The concept of 'Pan-Turkish-ism' (the Turkish world) is hidden in the term 'Pan-Turkism' (the Turkic world), like a suitcase with a double bottom. 'Pan-Turkish-ism' is the concept of 'global Turkey' as 'global Britain'.

The ‘linguistic peculiarity’¹ of the Turkish language, in which there is no difference between ‘Turkish’ and ‘Turkic’, is not insurmountable, but it reflects the Turkish understanding of the ‘Turkish world’. The president of the Turkish Foreign Policy Institute, Prof. Tahsan, states that the difference between the terms ‘Turkish’ and ‘Turkic’ is ‘artificial’ and ‘imposed by Western scholars’².

When Turkish authors write about ‘Pan-Turkism’ in English, they use the term ‘Turkish world’³ rather than ‘Turkic world’.

‘Pan-Turkic’ is a supranational category and remains in Turkey’s English political vocabulary only in relation to the 2009 Organisation of Turkic States, which is united by the vision of a ‘Turkic’ rather than a ‘Turkish’ world.

The Turkic states of the post-Soviet era do not identify themselves as ‘Turkish’ and insist on their own national identity, which they define as part of the supranational Turkic civilization. Another specific feature of the Turkic states of Central Asia and South Caucasus is the lack of a lasting phobia about Russia and, consequently, towards the doctrine of the ‘Russian world’ (‘Русский мир’).

‘Russkiy Mir’ is a kind of ‘pan-Russianism’, much more limited than the pan-Slavism of the ‘Slavic World’ from the time of the empire. It is no coincidence that the term is ‘Russian’ (‘русский’) and not ‘Russiyan’ (‘руссийский’) world, because it was originally intended to appeal to for Russians outside the Russian Federation, primarily in the post-Soviet arena, and, ultimately, for all Russian speakers around the world.

There is no antagonism from the ‘Russian’ world to the ‘Turkic’ world because the Russian nation has always been state-forming and never dominant. The Turks and Muslims in the Russian Empire were not in the disenfranchised status equivalent to ‘giaours’ [the archaic Ottoman Muslim word for ‘infidel’], but were integrated into Russian culture, which is European.

However, there is cultural, ideological and geopolitical antagonism from the ‘Turkic’ world to the ‘Russian’ world, which is more pronounced on the Turkish side and directed towards the post-Soviet environment. Hence the choice of the topic - the ideological characteristics of the ‘Turkish world’ versus ‘Russkiy Mir’.

Unlike the ‘Turkic world’, the ‘Turkish world’ is analogous to the ‘Pax Ottomana’, and contemporary ‘Pan-Turkish-ism’ can be seen as synonymous with ‘Neo-Ottomanism’ from the point of view of Turkey’s foreign policy ambitions.

From a domestic political point of view, ‘Pan-Turkish-ism’ (Pan-Turkish doctrine) can be seen as close to the secular ‘Kemalism’, but it can also be synonymous with Turgut Özal’s ‘Turkish-Islamic synthesis’ [approach to national identity].

A characteristic feature of ‘Pan-Turkish-ism’ is ideological mimicry reflecting the historical period and political regime, but with the foreign policy goals remaining unchanged.

A classic example of the absolute overlap in the geopolitical and cultural-ideological ambitions of the Kemalists and Neo-Ottomans is Atatürk’s strategic speech on 29th October 1933, the tenth anniversary of his declaring the country a republic:

“Today, the Soviet Union is our friend, our neighbour and ally. We need this friendship. But nobody can foresee what will happen tomorrow. The Soviet Union may dissolve just like the Ottoman or the Austro-Hungarian Empires did... Then, Turkey should know how to act... We have our brothers under their rule with the same language and faith. We must be ready to embrace them... We cannot expect them to get closer to us. We should take the first step”⁴.

Kemal Atatürk’s strategy is a model of foreign policy continuity with that of the Ottoman Empire, regardless of the ideological contradictions. Atatürk thinks within the framework of the eternal ‘Eastern War’ between Turkey and Russia.

¹ Демешко, Н.Э., Г.Л. Мурадов, А.А. Ирхин, О.А. Москаленко. Русский и Тюркский миры на пространстве Евразии. – Вестник МГИМО-Университет. 2023. 16(6), с. 162.

² Киреев, Н. Исламо-турецкий синтез в государственной идеологии Турции. – Россия и мусульманский мир, 2016, N 12 (294), с. 77–78.

³ Taşkin, Y. Upsurge of the Extreme Right in Turkey: The Intra-Right Struggle to Redefine 'True' Nationalism and Islam. – Middle Eastern Studies, Jan., 2008, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Jan., 2008), p. 152.

⁴ Ibid, p. 141.

The 'Eastern War' is a Russian geopolitical concept that emerged after the Crimean War. It was known by contemporaries as the 'Eastern War', just as the subsequent Russo-Turkish War of Liberation (1877-1878) was known in 19th-century Russian society as the 'Second Eastern War'.

Just as Russia has a painful attitude towards most of the post-Soviet sphere, Turkey is hypersensitive to the post-Ottoman territories, just as Iran is probably hypersensitive to those of the former Persia. Imperial memory is deep and patient, and always manifests itself when an enemy is weakened.

Contemporary 'Pan-Turkish-ism', or 'Turkish World', awakened on the eve of the collapse of the USSR and became active after 1991 in the post-Soviet and then post-Yugoslav, arena.

The ideological and geopolitical interests of 'Pan-Turkish-ism' in the 20th century were directed towards post-Soviet, post-Yugoslav geography and the Balkans.

The main subdivisions of the 'Turkish world' are: *the post-Soviet*, including Central Asia and the South Caucasus; *the Russian*, directed towards Crimea, Tatarstan, and Bashkortostan; *the Bulgarian*, comprising the Bulgarian diplomatic analysis of Russian-Turkish relations in the 'Eastern Balkans'; *the post-Yugoslav*, directed mainly towards the Western Balkans and covering the former Yugoslav countries that remain outside the EU, excluding Serbia; the *globalist*, including the Gülen (Hizmet – Islamic fraternalist) network; and the *regional division*, covering economic and ideological integration in the regional project of the Organisation of Turkic States.

The Neo-Ottomanism of the 'Turkish World'

'Neo-Ottomanism' is an unacceptable term for its ideologue, Ahmet Davutoğlu, who nevertheless admitted in 2009, "Yes, we are the new Ottomans" and summarised the new Ottoman goal: "Ottoman history is a successful history. Now we must restore it"¹. Some Russian authors believe that Davutoğlu is right not to use the term 'neo-Ottomanism' because of the "different meanings of different peoples," seeing in foreign policy "not aggression, but activity and pragmatism"².

Elnur Mehdiyev pays special attention to Turkey's aspiration to move from the periphery to become the "centre of Eurasia" with "neo-Ottomanism" as a "strategic course for returning to the 'Ottoman past' based on four principles: blood, Ottoman thinking, soil and language"³.

Vladimir Avatkov emphasises the "supranational spirit" of 'neo-Ottomanism' as "Turkey's unofficial foreign policy doctrine" with a "network" of neo-Pan-Turkic, Pan-Islamism and Turkish Eurasianism⁴. Vladimir Mityukhin draws attention to the domestic political aspect of 'post-secular Turkey,' balanced between the secular and religious⁵.

Ilgar Mammadov notes that "the geo-historical-cultural belt with a predominantly Muslim population, which is important for Turkey and divides the Balkans into three parts, may be in line with Russian interests." Close to Russia, according to Mammadov, are Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia in the north, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Macedonia in the middle and within the Turkish sphere, and Greece in the south, where "Russia and Turkey can act independently or in partnership"⁶.

Most Russian researchers of 'Pan-Turkic' and 'competition between the Russian and Turkic worlds'⁷ focus primarily on Russia (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Altai, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Crimea), the post-Soviet arena and Middle East, and very little on the Balkans. Viktor Nadein-Raevsky sees Davutoğlu's 'neo-Ottomanism' even outside the post-Soviet region as

¹ Петров, Л. Неоосманизмът. Новата геополитическа доктрина на република Турция. София, 2015, с. 26–27.

² Кудряшова, И. В., В. В. Матюхин. Турция: национальные интересы и имперскость. – Политическая наука. 2013. № 3, с. 135.

³ Мехдиев, Э.Т. «Неоосманизм» в региональной политики Турции – Вестник МГИМО-Университет, № 2 (47) 2016, с. 32.

⁴ Аватков, В. Неоосманизм. Базовая идеологема и геостратегия Турции. – Свободная мысль, 2014, № 3, с. 74–77.

⁵ Матюхин, В.В. «Постсекулярная» Турция. – Политическая наука, 2013, N 2, с. 128, 139.

⁶ Мамедов, И.М. Доктрина «стратегической глубины» А. Давутоглу и Балканы. – Славянский альманах. 2021. № 3–4, с. 145.

⁷ Демешко, Н.Э., Г.Л. Мурадов, А.А. Ирхин, О.А. Москаленко. Русский и Тюркский миры на пространстве Евразии..., с. 175.

"the creation of a kind of Ottoman Empire as a Turkish-controlled union of Middle Eastern countries"¹.

The Rand Corporation similarly pays no attention to the Balkans as a field of Russian-Turkish strategic conflict, unlike the Caucasus and Central Asia².

The Balkan view of 'neo-Ottomanism' is more critical than the Russian for understandable reasons. For Davutoğlu, "the Balkans are of particular importance in connection with the erasure of the Ottoman Empire from the map of Europe... After the Balkan War, the Ottoman Empire, with the exception of Eastern Thrace, was wiped off the European map, and after the First World War, its eradication was finally completed in the international arena"³.

It is curious that Davutoğlu avoids the term 'empire' when talking about the 'Ottoman Empire' – is it realism about the difficult-to-achieve goals of 'neo-Ottomanism' or a nod to the Kemalist republicans?

Darko Tanaskovic compares 'Kemalism' and 'neo-Ottomanism' to "hybrid ideological and value complexes" with the main specificity of "un-surmounted imperial ideology"⁴. 'Ottomanism' is also an ambiguous and "vague concept," according to Balkanist Alexander Vezenkov, "the word 'Ottomanism' is used to refer to different types of identity"⁵.

Stanislav Stanilov makes no distinction between 'Ottomanism' and 'neo-Ottomanism', which he sees as being based on "the long-term application of the Nazi philosophy of dividing human society into *menschen* (superior humans) and *untermenschen* (subhuman beings)... the 'non-humans' are the infidels/giaours"⁶.

Vladimir Avatkov does not use the term 'Nazism', but shares his observation that "Turkey, in the person of its president and other representatives of the ruling elite, sincerely believes in its own exceptionalism, to which other countries and peoples must aspire"⁷.

That feeling of exclusivity is also characteristic of representatives of Turkish nationalism from the Kemalist period. Orlin Zagorov defines A. Türkeş's doctrine of 'the nine rays' "Turks are the highest tribe" as "neo-fascism". In 1981, the Turkish authorities used the term 'fascist regime based on chauvinism and racism under the guise of nationalism' in the military government's indictment against the Nationalist Movement Party⁸. Orlin Zagorov analyses the doctrine of 'external Turks' as a "neo-fascist creation" for a "great Turkic race"⁹.

Ibrahim Yalamov examines the ideological trend 'from Pan-Turkism to neo-fascism' in the doctrine of the 'nine rays,' whose ideologue, Türkeş, "insistently emphasises Turanism," claiming that" there are no ethnic groups in Turkey. There is a single Muslim Turkish nation"¹⁰.

The attitude towards the Kurds is indicative of both 'Pan-Turkish-ism' and 'Kemalism' – they officially do not exist, except as 'mountain Turks'¹¹ under Atatürk, or as 'eastern Turks' after 1985¹².

¹ Надеин-Раевский, В.А. Идейная борьба и «Новая Турция». – *Вестник МТИМО-Университет*, No 2 (47) 2016, с. 29.

² Angel Rabasa F. Stephen Larrabee. The rise of political Islam in Turkey. RAND Corporation, 2008, p. 85.

³ Давутоглу, А. Статегическа дълбочина. Мястото на Турция в международните отношения. София, 2015, с. 151.

⁴ Танаскович, Д. Неосманизъмът. Турция се завръща на Балканите. София, 2010, с. 20.

⁵ Везенков, А. Османизъмът като политика на идентичността през епохата на Танзимата. – *Либерален преглед*. 07 май 2013 <https://librev.com/index.php/prospects/bulgaria/2048-osmanizam-tanzimat> [Accessed 17 July 2025]

⁶ Станилов, С. Новият османизъм и българите. Три години по-късно. София, 2018, с. 10.

⁷ Аватков, В. А., Сбитнева, А. И. Новый национализм Турецкой Республики. – *Вестник Российской университета дружбы народов. Серия: Политология*. 2022. Т. 24. № 2, с. 294

⁸ Загоров, О. Критика на пантюркизма. София, 1988, с. 71, 65–66.

⁹ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁰ 'According to Ziya Gökalp, "Turanism" is "the distant goal of Turkism," while the immediate goal is "the Turkmen union" (Azerbaijan, Iraq, Iran, Persia, and Turkey)': Яламов, И. От пантюркизъм към неофашизъм. София, 1984 г. За служебно ползване, с. 117–118, 125.

¹¹ Иванов, П. България в Истанбул Ислам и национализъм в Турция. Сблъсъкът исламизъм-секуларизъм и последствията за идентичностите в страната. Дисертация за присъждане на образователната и научна степен "доктор по история". София, 2022, с. 113.

¹² Пеева, К. Турският национализъм през XX век. – В: *Маски долу! Национализъмът на Балканите през XX век*. София: Парадигма, 2018, с. 192.

The nationalist policy of the military Kemalists is even more extreme than that of Franco's military dictatorship, which attempted to create an 'ultra-Spanish and unitary state' from a culturally heterogeneous society¹. In both Kemalism and Francoism, basic laws "make no mention of the existence of other nationalities"². The result is that in Turkey, 'Kurd' is synonymous with 'terrorism', just as in Spain, 'Basques' are identified with terror³.

Without calling it 'Nazism', contemporary researcher Plamen Ivanov discovers a Turkish sense of exceptionalism in the Young Ottoman Ali Suavi, "who became an inspiration for the Young Turks," in whose understanding: "The Turks are superior to other races from a political, military and cultural point of view; the Turkish language is superior to European languages in its richness and achievements; the Turks created Islamic civilisation"⁴.

Bulgarian diplomat and philosopher, Ambassador Lyuben Petrov, sees in 'neo-Ottomanism' 'a radical transformation of the Turkish state's foreign policy views and internal political system.'⁵.

Georgi Markov considers the neo-Ottoman process to be "irreversible" for Turkey, which "cannot be returned to its previous European modernisation"⁶.

Emilia-Boryana Slavkova, a Turkologist and specialist in contemporary Turkey, defines 'neo-Ottomanism' as "an Islamist ideology embedded in globalism, built on the Turkish mentality, way of thinking and worldview, which derives the legitimacy of its hyperactive expansionist actions from Turkey's inherent Ottoman heritage"...a pragmatic contemporary project with organic ideological and emotional roots in the mentality of imperial Ottoman nostalgia, which is deeply and strongly expressed among the average Turk ... with the prospect of a global Turkish caliphate⁷.

The Turkish world' versus 'The Turkic world' in the post-Soviet arena

In the post-Soviet Turkic space, Kazakhstan (Central Asia) is the furthest from the Turkish orbit in terms of mentality, while Azerbaijan (South Caucasus) is the closest to Turkey. However, both Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan accept 'Pan-Turkic' doctrine but reject 'Pan-Turkish' ideology of 'Pan-Turkish-ism'.

From a cultural and ideological point of view, Kazakhstan's understanding of the 'Turkic world' is particularly interesting. Unlike nation-centric Turkey, Kazakhstan "follows the path of a pluralistic model of state identity"⁸, combining 'Kazakhstani' citizenship with 'Kazakh' ethnicity. When it comes to supranational identities, Kazakhstan does not limit itself to 'Turkic' identity, but also chooses 'Central Asian' as its geopolitical identity, 'Eurasian' as its civilizational identity, and 'Caspian' as its macro-regional identity⁹ This is the kind of ideological diversification that guarantees sovereignty.

A Kazakh specificity, embodied by the Kazakh Pan-Turkic poet Magzhan Zhumabayev, is the combination of pantheism, Tengriism, Pan-Turkic doctrine, Nietzscheanism sees the Turk as a

¹ Алексиева, Г. Регионалният въпрос в началото на прехода към демокрация в Испания. – Минало, бр. 4, 2006, с. 55

² Алексиева, Г.. Две гледни точки за спасението на Испания. – В: Кюстендилски четения 2003-2004. Фабер, 2004, с. 67. Вж. Алексиева, Г. Концепцията за „интегралната държава“ по време на създаването на Втората Испанска република (1931 г.). – В: Интеграционни и дезинтеграционни процеси в Европа. исторически проекции, 2023, с. 259–268.

³ Алексиева, Г. Баският национализъм между мира и конфликтите. – В: Годишник на Софийски университет, ИФ. Докторантски четения - март 2006. София, 2011, с. 174. Вж. подробно: Алексиева, Г. "Забравената" каталунска автономия (1979-2006). – В: Кюстендилски четения 24(2018). Памет и забрава в историята, 2019, с. 265–273; Алексиева, Г. Каталунският сепаратизъм: минало и настояще (2003- 1 октомври 2017 г.), С поглед към България и света. Сборник в памет на проф. д-р Костадин Грозев. София, 2019, с. 190–204.

⁴ Иванов, П. България в Истанбул Ислам и национализъм в Турция..., с. 101.

⁵ Петров, Л. Неоосманизъмът..., с. 15.

⁶ Марков, Г. Необходима и полезна книга за българската външна политика. Предговор. – В: Любен Петров. Неоосманизъмът. Новата geopolитическа доктрина на република Турция. София, 2015, с. 11.

⁷ Славкова, Е. „Една от най-сложните страни на земята“ – Авиохол, с. 96.

⁸ Жанбосинова А.С. Национальная стратегия Казахстана: гражданская идентичность или этническая идентичность – время выбора. – Российские регионы: взгляд в будущее, 2016, N 3 (8), с. 195.

⁹ Романова, А.П., Е.В. Морозова. Конструирование новых идентичностей в современном Казахстане: тенденции и ориентиры. – Мировая экономика и международные отношения, 2023, том 67, № 7, с. 86.

superhuman, worshipper of fire and the sun. Magzhan Zhumabayev, who describes himself as "son of the sun, ... prophet"¹, sings the praises of Turkestan and Turan.

In the Kazakhs' view, the 'heir to Great Turan' is the Kazakh Khanate of the 15th century, not the Seljuks. And the centre of Eurasia is the 'Great Steppe' of Kazakhstan², not Turkey. According to Nursultan Nazarbayev, the 'Turkic world' originated in the lands of Kazakhstan, the 'ancestral homeland of the Turks'³. In 2018, Nazarbayev declared Turkestan the regional capital of South Kazakhstan, replacing Shymkent, as a spiritual symbol of the Turkic world⁴. At Kazakhstan's suggestion, the Declaration of the Organization of Turkic States of 21st November 2021 in Istanbul chose Turkestan as the "spiritual capital of the Turkic world"⁵.

There is also a serious discrepancy between Kazakhstan and neo-Ottoman Turkey in terms of geopolitical interests. Kazakhstan's priority is the 'pan-Asian geopolitical balance' which, even if it merges with the 'pan-Turkic' one, will remain dominant. On 14th -15th September 2023, at the Fifth Meeting of the Leaders of Central Asian Countries, the two projects partially merged into the format 'Central Asia & Azerbaijan'⁶. The Eurasian/Russian region with EurAsEC remains a priority for Kazakhstan. The Eurasian project is 'multinational', while the Turkic one is 'mono-ethnic'⁷.

However, the 'dualism of state identity' in Kazakhstan, defined by Kazakh researchers as "the divergence in the socio-cultural aspirations of the two leading ethnic groups in the country – the Kazakh and the Russian"⁸, is not in Russia's favour.

The Kazakh nation is not homogeneous because of the 'oralmans' ('returnees'), as the Kazakhs call those who re-immigrated after 1991 from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, China and Mongolia having flown Soviet collectivization. There are even differences in the pronunciation of the ethnonym 'Kazakh' among them: 'gazak' among the Iranian Kazakhs, 'khasyg' among the Mongolian Kazakhs⁹. To reduce the division, President Tokayev proposes to formalise the term 'kandas' ('compatriot') instead of 'oralman'.

The linguistic divide also remains among Russian-speaking Kazakhs, whose command of literary Kazakh is poor. For this they are called 'shala-kazakh' [half-Kazakh]. Nazarbayev shares his concern that he is "ashamed of those who divide society"¹⁰.

Perceptions of the 'Russian world' differ between ethnocentric Kazakhs and their Russian-speaking compatriots. For some ethnocentric Kazakhs, the 'Russian world' is 'Euro-Russocentrism,' from which they try to escape, but they shift to nomadocentrism [a centrism based on the nomadic] and idealization of ancient Kazakhstan as a 'nomadic democracy.' Ethnocentric Kazakhs also deny the 'Soviet' nation as 'mythical', while at the same time defining the inhabitants of Soviet cities in Kazakhstan as 'belonging to the USSR and Russia', effectively 'Soviet'¹¹.

¹ Жұмабаев М. Исповедь. /Перевод и примечания Ауэзхана Кодара. Петропавловск, 2011, с. 43. 53.

² Туран на старинных картах: Образ пространства – Пространство образов. Алматы – Москва, 2008 г., с. 39–40.

³ Статья Главы государства «Семь граней Великой степи». 21 ноября 2018. <https://www.nur.kz/politics/kazakhstan/1764659-sem-granej-velikoj-stepi-opublikovana-novaa-stata-nazarbaeva/>

⁴ Farkhad Sharip. Revival of Pan-Turkism in Kazakhstan Threatens Pillars of Eurasian Union. – *Eurasia Daily Monitor*. Volume: 15. Issue: 104. July 12, 2018 07:50 PM <https://jamestown.org/program/revival-of-pan-turkism-in-kazakhstan-threatens-pillars-of-eurasian-union/>

⁵ Declaration of the Eighth Summit of the Organization of Turkic States. 12 November 2021, Istanbul, Turkey. <https://turkicstates.org/u/d/basic-documents/eighth-summit-declaration-15-en.pdf>

⁶ Tukumov, Y. Kazakhstan's Strategic Priorities in the Turkic World. – *Insight Turkey*, Fall 2023, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Fall 2023), pp. 32–33.

⁷ Кляйторный, С. Россия и Казахстан: геополитическая альтернатива и цивилизационный выбор.. – *Central Asia & Caucasus. Journal of Social and Political Studies*. 2003. No 6 (30). https://ca-c.org.ru/journal/2003/journal_rus/cac-06/19.kliru.shtml

⁸ Шайкемелев М.С. Казахская идентичность в контексте модернизации общества. Монография [Изд. 2-е. Перераб и доп.]. – Алматы: Институт философии, политологии и религиоведения КН МОН РК, 2020, с. 154

⁹ Жанбосинова А.С. Национальная стратегия Казахстана..., 191–192.

¹⁰ Шайкемелев М.С. Казахская идентичность в контексте модернизации общества..., с. 174.

¹¹ Буркумбай А. "Русский вопрос" в Казахстане: исторические параллели. – *Central Asia & Caucasus. Journal of Social and Political Studies*. Выпуск 15, 1998. https://ca-c.org.ru/journal/1998/15-1998/st_05_ajagan.shtml

The complex attitude towards the ‘Russian world’ is also manifested in the ethnocentric perception of the influence of the Russian Empire: “a constant process of erosion of Kazakh identity”, of the Soviet Union: “an undermining of ethnocultural identity”, and the Russian Federation: “a spiritual and informational dependence¹”.

Russian-speaking Kazakhs perceive themselves as successors to the Soviet nation, of which the “multinational people of Kazakhstan” were a part. For them, ‘Soviet’ is synonymous with ‘elite’ in all areas, while at the same time they criticise the ‘peripheral statehood’ of the ‘steppe mentality’. For Russian-speaking Kazakhs, ‘anti-Russian’ is synonymous with ‘anti-Kazakh²’.

The attitude towards the ‘Russian world’ directly influences Kazakh identity, in contrast to the cultural proximity of the ‘Turkic world’, which is summarised in the Kazakh question: “Kazakhs must answer not only the question, ‘Who are we?’, but also the question ‘Who are we with?’³. If Turkic and Russian worlds are equal in response to ‘Who are we?’, then the answer to the second question ‘Who are we with?’ is Russia-Eurasia.

It is difficult to say how long this will remain the case, given the two trends in Kazakhstan, but the poet Magzhan Zhumabayev put it most accurately: “I am a Son of the Universe, I am yours for a time”⁴ Kazakhstan can say ‘I am yours for a time’ to both Turkey and Russia.

Azerbaijan suggests a stronger ethnocultural affinity with Turkey, but even Azerbaijanis reject the idea of being ‘Turkish’. The Azerbaijani party nomenclature was Pan-Turkic during the collapse of the USSR, but Azerbaijani society was not. Under Azerbaijan’s first president, Abdulfaz Elchibey (1992–1993), leader of the nationalist Popular Front, the doctrine of ‘One Nation, One State’ was introduced, and the Azerbaijani language was renamed Turkish. Azerbaijani society rebelled against Turkification because it “saw in Turkish businessmen... the beginning of a new colonialism”⁵. With Aliyev’s rise to power (1993), the formula ‘One Nation – Two States’ was imposed. In 2019, Erdogan attempted to expand the formula to ‘one nation – five states’⁶, but this remained only a Turkish vision.

Even in Turkey itself, ‘Pan-Turkish-ism’ cannot build a common Turkish identity owing to the existence of ‘two Turkish nations’, ‘Kemalists/secularists’ and ‘conservatives’, as described by Mustafa Akyol:

“The two ‘nations’ do not even speak the same language. This results from Atatürk’s ‘linguistic revolution’ – a state campaign to purge the Turkish language of Arabic and Persian loanwords ... Atatürk began to ‘discover’ (in other words, invent) ‘pure Turkish’ replacements for tens of thousands of words from the rich Ottoman vocabulary. Today’s Turks strictly adhere to the ‘old’ or ‘new’ language to emphasise their affiliation with [either] the camp of the children of the language revolution or the language dissidents... even the names people choose for their children are politically charged. Conservative families prefer traditional Islamic names such as Ayşe, Abdullah and Ahmet, while secularists prefer neologisms such as Çağdaş, Evrim and Devrim (‘modern,’ ‘evolution’ and ‘revolution’)”⁷.

The Gülen [Hizmet] Network: the globalist instrument of the ‘Turkish world’

There are many definitions of Gülen’s network, but the most accurate is that of sociologist Joshua Hendrick, who studies ‘power as influence and organisational mobilisation.’ Hendrik characterises the Gülen movement with the term ‘strategic ambiguity’, a flexible organisational model without a clear hierarchy, in which ‘plausible deniability’ makes it difficult to link one to Gülen. Hendrik outlines three circles: 1) the innermost ‘jamaat’ with most inspired by Hoca Efendi (the Ottoman scholar & teacher); 2) the middle, core circle of friends ‘arkadaşlar’, donors and adherents; and

¹ Шайкемелев М.С. Казахская идентичность в контексте модернизации общества..., с. 22–24, 128.

² Своик, П. Национальный вопрос в Казахстане: взгляд “русскоязычного”. – *Central Asia and the Caucasus*. Выпуск 15, 1998. https://ca-c.org.ru/journal/1998/15-1998/st_04_svoik.shtml

³ Шайкемелев М.С. Казахская идентичность в контексте модернизации общества..., с. 209.

⁴ Жұмабаев М. Исповедь..., с. 34.

⁵ Салимов, Г. Этнонационализм и этнополитическая. – *Central Asia and the Caucasus*. Выпуск 15, 1998. https://ca-c.org.ru/journal/1998/15-1998/st_09_salimov.shtml [Accessed 20 July 2025]

⁶ Шангареев, Р.Н. «Армия Турана» – проект Турции по военной интеграции тюркского мира. Угрозы и перспективы. – *Обозреватель–Observer*, 7/2021, с. 75.

⁷ Акйол, М. Кои са турците? – В: *Какво мисли Турция?*. Европейски съвет за външна политика, 2012, с. 23–24.

finally, 3) there are the sympathisers and "most powerful organisational stratum – the unconscious consumer", who may be a student at a Gülen school or a reader of his writings¹.

Emilia-Boriana Slavkova defines Gülen's structures as "mimicking local communities and societies, liberal and conservative Islamists" in the 'Hizmet' ('service') movement². Plamen Ivanov defines Hizmet as 'Euro-Islam' or 'tolerant Islam' in the words of its members as opposed to Salafism, 'moderate Islam'³.

Criticising Gülen turns out to be a threat to one's life. Turkish writer and history professor Necip Hablemitoglu, author of the Gülen expose, 'Spy' [Kostebek]⁴ was assassinated in 2002.

Gülen does not differ from Erdogan in terms of 'Pan-Turkic'⁵, the Kurdish question and the army, which is the main opponent of both⁶. Gülen's first missionary group was in Georgia in January 1990, and in 1996 he shared the goal of his " jamaat in Eurasia": "to return to the homeland of our ancestors," which, beyond the rhetoric, is postcolonial-pragmatics: "... in the days when the saturation of our domestic market has reached its peak, we need foreign markets ... We are presented with a rare opportunity – Central Asia"⁷. The market-oriented Gülen is "is building a financial empire... one of the richest religious communities in Turkey"⁸. The scale of Gülen's activities characterises him as a 'globalist conservative'⁹.

Gülen's main ideological tool is the network of private schools – Turkish lyceums, which he opened in the 1990s in the post-Soviet arena and in Russia (until 2007, the last schools remained in Tatarstan). The methodology is geared towards ideological influence on the 30% of best students, who become part of Hizmet, while the remaining 70% are not initiated¹⁰.

In respect of Hizmet's intentions, Gülen's words are quoted: 'You must move through the arteries of the system so that no one notices you until you reach all the centres of power'¹¹.

In Russia, Gülen's globalist 'Pan-Turkish-ism' created the 'Dialogue Eurasia' platform with its magazine 'DA' (Diyalog Avrasya), bringing together scholars, writers and journalists from the Russian and post-Soviet areas of Eurasia, including [author] Chingiz Aitmatov, academician Rostislav Rybakov, Indologist and student of Svetoslav Roerich, Prof. Vitaly Sheremet, orientalist and apologist for Gülen, calling him a "righteous man"¹². Chingiz Aitmatov defines 'Eurasia' as Russia, not Turkey: 'It is only thanks to Russian colonialism that we, the inhabitants of Central Asia, have been able to merge into a single civilisation. Russia remains the core around which the Eurasian axis revolves'¹³.

¹ Dr Joshua Hendrick, Loyola University. Gulen the Ambiguous Politics of Market Islam in Turkey. – *Rumi Forum*. Nov 27, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8dJCz-Gfz8> [Accessed 20 July 2025]

² Славкова, Е. „Една от най-сложните страни на земята”..., с. 94.

³ Иванов, П. България в Истанбул Ислам и национализъм в Турция..., с. 194.

⁴ Киреев, Н. Исламо-турецкий синтез в государственной идеологии Турции..., с. 74.

⁵ Раис Сулейменов: "Пантюркизм станет угрозой в Поволжье только в период ослабления России". – В: "Мягкая сила" и внешняя политика Турции между экспансиеи и реалиями. Москва, 2023, с. 373

⁶ Надеин-Раевский, В.А. Идейная борьба и «Новая Турция»..., с. 26–29.

⁷ Киреев, Н. Исламо-турецкий синтез в государственной идеологии Турции..., с. 71–73. Gülen's interview is in Yeni Omit. Ekim-Kasim-Araiik. 1996. No 34.

⁸ 'The community owns the Samanyolu TV channel, a radio station (Burg FM), the daily newspaper Zaman, and four scientific and political magazines. - Aksiyon, Zafer, Sizinti u Yeni Umut Dergisi': Başkan, F. The Fethullah Gülen Community: Contribution or Barrier to the Consolidation of Democracy in Turkey? - *Middle Eastern Studies*, Nov., 2005, Vol. 41, No. 6 (Nov., 2005), pp. 850–851.

⁹ Taşkin, Y. Upsurge of the Extreme Right in Turkey: The Intra-Right Struggle to Redefine 'True' Nationalism and Islam. – *Middle Eastern Studies*, Jan., 2008, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Jan., 2008), p. 144.

¹⁰ Раис Сулейменов: "Пантюркизм станет угрозой в Поволжье только в период ослабления России"..., с. 373–374.

¹¹ Султанмуратов, Ф. Күкеева, Е. Чүкүбаев, К. Байзакова. Казахскотурецкие лица как фактор распространения идеи гюленизма в Казахстане. – *Central Asia and the Caucasus*. Том 23 Выпуск 2, 2020, с. 25.

¹² Шеремет, В.И. Фетхуллах Гюлен в диалоге культур Востока и Запада. – В: *Толерантность религий и цивилизаций. Взгляды Фетхуллаха Гюлена*. Москва, 2012, с. 180.

¹³ "Империализм может тоже иметь свои положительные стороны". Интервью с Чингизом Айтматовым. 12 июля 2005 г. - <https://www.inopressa.ru/article/12Jul2005/faz/aitmatov.html?ysclid=mgwqluiw6h760992204> [Accessed 20 July 2025]

Prof. Svetlana Vinokurova, one of the chairpersons of ‘Dialogue Eurasia,’ defines Istanbul as a ‘symbol of Eurasianism,’ shares the ‘revolutionary’ decisions of the Second Vatican Council, and compares the Eurasian platform to a ‘spiritual Davos’¹. Another aspect of Gülen’s globalist reach is ecumenism under the guise of ‘dialogue between civilisations’.

Gülen met Istanbul Patriarch Bartholomew (April 1996) and then Pope John Paul II (February 1998)². Gülen kissed the Pope’s hand and attended the wedding of a Catholic and a Muslim, scandalising traditional Muslims³.

Gülen advocates ecumenical positions: ‘All religions are based on the same principles, so we must start a dialogue ... Let no one doubt that Muslims, Christians and Jews will grow even closer’⁴. Gülen writes that he ‘cannot ignore’ the decisions of the Second Vatican Council⁵. Turkish nationalists accuse Gülen of being ‘guided by the trio of the United States, Israel and the Vatican’⁶.

Catholic authors compare Gülen to Ignatius of Loyola and the schools of ‘Hizmet’ to those of the Jesuits. The expectations of the ‘Jesuit’ methods of Gülen’s network are: ‘Hizmet members can not only revitalise the religion of Islam... but also help Christians find new resources to refresh their own faith’⁷.

Contacts between Hizmet and the Vatican are undertaken through the Tevere Institute, established in 2007 for interfaith dialogue, whose website prominently features a photo of Gülen with the quote: ‘Any form of violence against innocent civilians or persecution of minorities is contrary to the principles of the Koran and the tradition of our prophet (peace and blessings be upon him)’⁸. Care for minorities does not include the Armenian genocide, on which Gülen has no official position.

The Vatican’s influence in Turkey grew during the diplomatic mission of Angelo Roncalli, the future John XXIII, known as the ‘Turkish Pope’ [papa Turca] or ‘Turkophile Pope’. The diplomacy of the papal nuncio (1935–1944) is described by Turkish professor Cenap Aydin as the ‘Roncalli effect’⁹.

In subsequent papal visits to Turkey, there was a series of ‘Roncalli effects’ in the ecumenical sphere.

Paul VI was the first pope to visit Turkey (1967) and meet Patriarch Athenagoras in Fener, embracing him and greeting him with the ‘kiss of peace’ – the ‘Roncalli effect’. John Paul II went to Turkey (1979) on the feast of St. Andrew and crossed himself from right to left like an Orthodox practitioner – the ‘Roncalli effect’. Benedict XVI visited Turkey (2006) after a scandal over his speech in Regensburg, when he quoted the Byzantine Emperor Manuel Palaiologos: ‘Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword and the faith he preached.’ Benedict XVI is the first pope to pray in a mosque (the Blue Mosque) together with the mufti of Istanbul – the ‘Roncalli effect’. Francis also visited Turkey (2014) and continued the tradition of joint prayer with the mufti and statements about ‘rapprochement between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches’¹⁰.

¹ Шаблыко, Т. Платформа «ДА»: евразийский позитив. Интервью с Светланой Винокуровой. – Беларусская думка, 2013, № 4, с. 49–50.

² Başkan, F. The Fethullah Gülen Community..., p. 850.

³ Надеин-Раевский, В.А. Идейная борьба и «Новая Турция». – Вестник МГИМО-Университет, № 2 (47) 2016, с. 25.

⁴ Брусиловский, Д.А. Реализация межкультурных возможностей диалога Запада и Востока в межрелигиозной сфере. – Вестник АГТУ, 2016. № 1 (61), с. 54.

⁵ Гюлен, Ф. Необходимость межрелигиозного диалога. – В: Толерантность религий и цивилизаций. Взгляды Фетхиллаха Гюлена. Москва, 2012, с. 48.

⁶ Taşkin, Y. Upsurge of the Extreme Right in Turkey: The Intra-Right Struggle to Redefine “True ‘Nationalism and Islam...”, p. 144.

⁷ Valkenberg, P. Religious life and service in Christianity and Islam. - In: *Renewing Islam by Service*, Catholic University of America Press. (2015), pp. 251, 253, 256.

⁸ Tevere Institute. http://www.istevere.org/?page_id=356 [Accessed 17 July 2025]

⁹ Presentazione del libro Giovanni XXIII Amico Dei Turchi di Rinaldo Marmara (Jaca Book, 2013)

<http://www.istevere.org/?p=256> [Accessed 17 July 2025]

¹⁰ Türkan, A. Turkey-Vatican Relations from the Ottomans to the Republic, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IJHSS)*, Vol. 5, No. 5; May 2015, 148-163.

The ecumenical dialogue between Fener and Rome does not affect the main feature of ‘Pan-Turkish-ism’ – anti-Christianity. In an interview with Euronews, Erdogan states that ‘the EU should not become a Christian club’¹. In 2020, Erdogan was considered to have desecrated St. Sophia, turning it into a mosque, which has been the dream of Turkish nationalists and Islamists since the late 1940s. St. Sophia is perceived by nationalists as a symbol of the ‘Turkish-Islamic character of Istanbul’². Ali Erbaş, president of Diyanet (Directorate of Religious Affairs), personally led the ceremony in St. Sophia, delivering a sermon with a sword. The Minister of the Environment and Urban Planning, Erdogan Bayraktar, stated that ‘Christianity is no longer a religion’ but a culture³.

Aggression against people of other faiths is no different among the Ottomans, Kemalists (Armenian genocide; the massacre of Orthodox Greeks in Turkey, neutrally referred to as ‘the events of 6th – 7th September 1955’⁴), and the neo-Ottomans (the massacres of Christians, Yazidis, etc. in Syria after 2024).

The idealization of the West is another characteristic feature of ‘Pan-Turkish-ism’, which represents a *Turkish-Islamic-Western* synthesis.

The leading ideologist of the Young Turks, Mehmet Ziya Gökalp, emphasises in his programmatic text ‘The Foundations of Pan-Turkism’ (1923): ‘We belong to the Turkish nation, the Islamic umma, and Western civilisation’⁵.

The West is present not only in Turkish minds, but also as a global factor influencing Turkey. It is no coincidence that Erdogan went to Pennsylvania to visit Gulen before coming to power. Gulen was also visited in the United States by future President Abdullah Gul before the elections⁶.

In the apologetic collection of Belarusian scholars on Gülen alongside ‘Dialogue Eurasia,’ one can also find the sober observation that two civilisations will benefit from the ‘Fethullah Gülen project’: the Islamic and the North American⁷.

A Bulgarian situational analysis from 1993 defines the role of the Balkans, for the United States, as part of ‘the chain of strategic strongholds that they are building around the European ‘heartland’. The support they provide to Muslim forces in Bosnia ... highlights American geostrategic aspirations’⁸.

Bulgarian diplomatic analysis of Russian-Turkish relations in the Balkans

Bulgarian diplomatic analytical studies from the 1990s explore, with particular interest, Russia’s ‘strategic sensitivity’ in the Balkans as indicated by Russian-Turkish relations. Russia and Turkey⁹ remain ‘tactical partners’ and ‘strategic rivals’ in geopolitical and ideological terms.

Even before the USSR folded, Turkey formalised the concept of ‘external Turks’ at the International Kurultai [assembly of Mongol & Turkic leaders] of Turkestan convened in Istanbul in December 1990¹⁰.

Following the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the USSR and, subsequently Yugoslavia, Turkey dramatically increased its regional influence and activity in the post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav sphere. In 1992, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) was established in Ankara and,

¹ Реджеп Тайип: ЕС не должен стать христианским клубом и не должен принимать участия в кампании исламофобии. – *Ислам в современном мире* № 1-2 (25-26) 2012.

<https://idmedina.ru/books/islamic/?4763> [Accessed 17 July 2025]

² Taşkin, Y. Upsurge of the Extreme Right in Turkey..., p. 143

³ Гаэтан, В. Католическая geopolитика. Папа, Эрдоган, Сирия и Украина. <https://inosmi.ru/20141202/224618250.html>

⁴ Güven, D. Riots against the Non-Muslims of Turkey: 6/7 September 1955 in the context of demographic engineering. – *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 2011, N 12, p. 3.

⁵ Иванов, П. България в Истанбул Ислам и национализъм в Турция..., с. 96, 112.

⁶ Надеин-Раевский, В.А. Идейная борьба и «Новая Турция»..., с. 24.

⁷ Социально-философские аспекты учения Ф. Гюлена: взгляд белорусских ученых. Минск, 2012, с. 24.

⁸ Балканска сигурност. Политически и военни проблеми. София, 1995, с. 13.

⁹ Details and personal observations on the Turkish direction in Bulgarian diplomacy can be found in the memoirs of Ambassador Petar Vodenski, Consul General in Istanbul (1990–1991) and Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador in Ankara (1991–1992). – Воденски, П. А иначе дипломацията е сериозен занаят. София, 2024.

¹⁰ Аватков, В. Перекресток геополитических интересов России и Турции – Кавказ и Центральная Азия. Институт Ближнего Востока. <http://www.iimes.ru/rus/stat/2009/24-04-09a.htm> [19.02.2020]

in the same year, Süleyman Demirel announced that Turkey would become a ‘cultural centre and historical magnet for the newly sovereign states’ with the geography of the ‘Turkic world,’ stretching from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China¹. Demirel also formed a group of linguists to accompany him on a tour of Central Asia to prepare post-Soviet Turks for the transition from Cyrillic to the ‘common Turkic Latin alphabet’².

However, Turkish Prime Minister Demirel realised that, although Russia's ideological and geopolitical positions had weakened after the collapse of the USSR, this did not affect its military potential. In 1993, Demirel stated in an interview that ‘the Soviet Union collapsed, but its military capabilities and mechanisms remained intact’³. Bulgarian diplomats noted that Turkish military officials used the term ‘potential threat to Turkey's security’ when referring to Russia⁴.

The strengthening of Turkey's presence in the post-Soviet and Yugoslav spheres of influence is a subject of interest to Bulgarian diplomacy. Russian-Turkish rivalry in the Balkans is ‘a matter of particular importance’ for Bulgaria and is being monitored by Bulgarian diplomats with ‘increased attention’⁵. According to a diplomatic analysis from 1995, after the collapse of the USSR, Turkish policy in the Balkans became more active, and Turkey was trying to play a ‘leading role’, as a result of which ‘Russia's footholds in the Balkans have been reduced to a minimum’, with Moscow seeking rapprochement with the ‘disobedient child’ of the socialist camp – Serbia⁶.

In its quest to become a regional superpower in the Balkans, and while Russia is restoring its ‘historic friendship with Serbia’, Turkey, according to Bulgarian diplomats, ‘has gained solid positions in Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina’⁷.

Diplomatic analysis pays special attention to the ‘Islamic factor,’ or ‘politicised Islam,’ as a leading factor in strengthening Turkey's position in the Balkans. The Turkish thesis on Ankara's vocation as a ‘defender’ of Muslims suggests: ‘for Turkey, Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina are the same as Palestinians for the Arabs’ which is why Turkey ‘violates the arms embargo against Bosnian Muslims’ and in December 1994, Turkish Defence Minister M. Gölhan admitted that Turkey was ‘secretly supplying weapons to the Bosnian government’⁸.

An important part of the ‘Islamic arc’ in the Balkans is Macedonia⁹ and Turkish policy towards Macedonian Muslims. Diplomatic analysis explains Turkey's rapid recognition of Macedonia's independence, whereby it “did not consult its NATO allies” in order to present itself as a ‘protector’, with Ankara ‘offering military training and Turkish weapons for the newly formed Macedonian army’ together with cultural cooperation¹⁰.

¹ Дружиловский, С.Б., Аваков, В.А. Россия и Турция в новом тысячелетии. – В: Российско-турецкие отношения: 2002–2012 годы (материалы Круглого стола, г. Москва, 4 апреля 2013 года). Москва, МГИМО-Университет, 2013, с. 16.

² Демоян, Г.А. Культурно-образовательный пантюркизм: история и современность. – В: Востоковедный сборник, вып. 4, Институт изучения Израиля и Ближнего Востока. М., 2002, с. 41.

³ АМВнР. Дело 3. Оп. 52-25. А.е. 31. Л. 10.

⁴ АМВнР. Дело 3. Оп. 52-25. А.е. 31. Л. 26.

⁵ АМВнР. Дело 3. Оп. 52-25. А.е. 31. Л. 43.

⁶ АМВнР. Дело 3. Оп. 52-25. А.е. 31. Л. 4.

⁷ АМВнР. Дело 3. Оп. 52-25. А.е. 31. Л. 33.

⁸ АМВнР. Дело 3. Оп. 52-25. А.е. 31. Л. 34–35.

⁹ For details on relations between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia, see. Божинов, В. Република Македония в съвременната геополитика. София, 2017, с. 205–244.; For the geopolitical aspects of the Yugoslav crisis based on archival documents from Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until 1992, see. Божинов, В. Социалистическа Югославия в разпад (1989–1992). София, 2021; Bojinov, V. Why did Yugoslavia Break Up? A View From Outside. – *Tokovići historije*, 2012, N 2, с. 265–271; Bojinov, V. Economic, Social and Political Situation in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia after Tito's death (according to the notices of the Bulgarian diplomats in Belgrade). – В: *Tematski zbornik radova međunarodnog značaja. Socijalna politika u Srbiji na raskršću vekova*. Beograd, 2019, pp. 273–283; Божинов, В. Почему распалась Югославия? Краткий обзор событий и причин от Тито до Милошевича. – В: *Imagines Mundi. Альманах исследований всеобщей истории XVI–XX вв.* Балканка. Выпуск 2. Екатеринбург, 2010, с. 248–257.

On the “Green Diamond Strategy”... on the construction of a corridor through Bulgaria, Macedonia, Kosovo, Bosnia, and the establishment of Turkey as a suzerain in the region. See. Чакъров, К. От втория етаж към нашещвието на демократите. София, 2001, с. 286–290.

¹⁰ АМВнР. Дело 3. Оп. 52-25. А.е. 31. Л. 39.

Russia is the seventh country to recognize Macedonian independence after Bulgaria, Turkey, Slovenia, Croatia, the Philippines and Lithuania. Bulgarian diplomats observe continuity between Russia and the USSR in terms of their policy towards Macedonia, noting that ‘Belgrade has the greatest chance of influencing Macedonia’. Bulgarian diplomatic analyses assess the overall policy of Russia and Turkey towards Macedonia as ‘not in our [best] interest’, since both Russian and Turkish goals are ‘inconsistent with Bulgarian national interests’¹.

The main conclusion for Bulgaria, according to the diplomatic analysis, is that ‘the deterioration of Russian-Turkish relations would be unfavourable for Bulgaria’ in a regional context. However, there is a global factor influencing Russian-Turkish relations, according to Bulgarian diplomats, namely: ‘the confrontation between the two world powers – Russia and the United States’². The Bulgarian diplomatic forecast from the 1990s was that, due to the decisive activation of Russian Balkan policy, ‘in the future, nothing important will happen in the Balkans without Russia’s knowledge and participation’³.

According to Bulgarian diplomatic analyses, there is a ‘discrepancy and opposition’ between Russian and Turkish interests in the Balkans, and Turkey is ‘forced’⁴ to comply with Russia, despite [the latter’s] weakened position.

The rewriting of history: an ideological tool of the ‘Turkish world’. The Bulgarian perspective

History is the main ‘ideological’ tool of ‘Pan-Turkish-ism’ in Bulgaria and the Balkans and has been assigned a special strategic role in Davutoğlu’s doctrine (Strategic Depth): ‘Strategic consciousness must be based on history, but strategic planning on today’s realities’⁵. The distortion of history leads to a distortion of consciousness.

The term most commonly used by Turkey is ‘common history’, as set out in the ‘Turkic Vision 2040’. An eloquent example of how they understand ‘common’ is the Declaration of the 18th meeting of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) (Istanbul, 2021), which highlights the 60th anniversary of the first manned space flight from Baikonur, Kazakhstan⁶. Neither the name of the ‘man’ Gagarin nor the state, ‘USSR’ are mentioned – they are not part of the ‘common’.

Another example of a selective approach to ‘shared history’ comes from historian Ibrahim Karahasan-Chynar, who does not sympathise with the neo-Ottomans, but calls on five EU member states (Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy, the United Kingdom), which ‘had troops in the territory of present-day Turkey’ to ‘begin a process of self-reflection because they do not pay attention to the lasting consequences of these wars, in which even the capital of Turkey was occupied for several years’⁷.

‘Common history’ is also understood as common geography. The Bulgarian brand of ‘Pan-Turkish-ism’ (global Turkey doctrine) has a focal point that is present in Davutoğlu’s ‘Islamic Arc’⁸ – the city of Kardzhali.

Kardzhali is given a special place in the ‘Cultural Atlas of the Turkic World’⁹. In 2023, a ‘documentary’¹⁰ film about the creation of Kardzhali was broadcast, financed by the Turkish state

¹ АМВнР. Дело 3. Оп. 52-25. А.е. 31. Л. 40.

² АМВнР. Дело 3. Оп. 52-25. А.е. 31. Л. 44.

³ АМВнР. Дело 3. Оп. 51-25. А.е. 24. Л. 24.

⁴ АМВнР. Дело 3. Оп. 52-25. А.е. 31. Л. 37.

⁵ Давутоглу, А. Стратегическа дълбочина..., с. 84.

⁶ Declaration of the Eighth Summit of the Organization of Turkic States. 12 November 2021, Istanbul, Turkey. <https://turkicstates.org/u/d/basic-documents/eighth-summit-declaration-15-en.pdf>

⁷ Алтънай, Х. Движещи се части. – В: Какво мисли Турция?. Европейски съвет за външна политика, 2012, с. 47–48.

⁸ ‘The arc that starts in the northwest from Bihać and follows the line of Central Bosnia – Eastern Bosnia – Sandzak – Kosovo – Albania – Macedonia – Kardzhali – Western Thrace... the lifeline of Turkey’s Balkan geopolitics’: Давутоглу, А. Стратегическа дълбочина..., с. 377.

⁹ Yeşiltepe, A. Türk Dünyası Kültür Atlası, Ötüken Neşriyat A.Ş., İstanbul, 2023. https://www.otuken.com.tr/u/otuken/docs/t/u/turk-dunyasi-kultur-atlasi-pdf-1701280316.pdf?srsltid=AfmBOoo6nGfyCI_7kjnxIkryB1Y6ws4WfmtaWQArwU93cuWQKUi1WYBb

¹⁰ Документален филм за легендата за създаването на Кърджали породи спорове. Екранизацията, с финансиране от турската държава, провокира дебат доколко историята е истинска или провокация. - BTV. 25.09.2023 г.

(for 900,000 lira). The film refers to the conquest of the Rhodopes by the Ottomans as 'their creation' and presents, as historical fact, the legend of Kardzha Ali, for whom a concrete 'turbe' (mausoleum) was built in Kardzhali, which also appears as 'Ottoman heritage' in the Cultural Atlas.

In 2012, municipal councillors from the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) were alarmed by the announcement that General Vasil Delov would be made an honorary citizen of Kardzhali on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the city's liberation from Turkish rule. For the MRF, the First Balkan War is an 'evil for the Rhodopes'¹.

Turkey has a special interest in the Rhodopes because of their strategic advantage, as analysed by Voin Bojinov: 'Whoever controls the water resources of the Rhodopes and Bulgarian part of Thrace has the opportunity to turn the whole of Northern Greece and the western part of Eastern Thrace into either a paradise or a desert'².

Kardzhali is also linked, in some irrational way, to Turkey's painful memories of the Balkans. 'Pan-Turkish-ism' and 'neo-Ottomanism' are also the result of Turkish fears. It is no coincidence that Davutoğlu asks the rhetorical question: 'Is the erasure of the Ottoman Empire still going on?'³.

Yordanka Bibina describes the loss of the Balkans, in Turkish memory, as 'the greatest trauma' and 'Balkan nostalgia' as part of the Turkish national identity⁴.

Stanislav Stanilov explains the 'Balkan trauma' as 'the deep complexes of modern Turks, who cannot identify their's as a European society' and that, without the Balkans, the neo-Ottomans cannot perceive Turkey as a European country⁵.

Davutoğlu fears a new 'Balkan Union', but claims the "right to intervene in matters concerning Muslim minorities in the Balkans" following the example of the 'Cyprus military operation'⁶, thereby provoking Bulgarian concerns.

The term 'minority' is not used when referring to the Turkish state, but for the Balkans and Bulgaria it is fundamental to 'Pan-Turkish-ism' (global Turkey).

Emilia-Boriana Slavkova notes that Bulgaria signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995) in the Council of Europe with a 'special opinion' and a statement that there are no 'national minorities' within its borders, but there are 'communities'⁷.

Ambassador Lyuben Petrov recalls that 'in no bilateral Bulgarian document since the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878 does the term 'Turkish minority' appear. The 1925 Treaty uses the term 'Muslim communities' in Bulgaria but refers to a 'Bulgarian minority' in Turkey'⁸. Valeri Stoyanov agrees with the term 'Turkish minority'⁹.

Unfortunately, sometimes the distortion of historical memory is initiated by the Bulgarian side, as in the case of the exhibition 'The Decoration of the Yatagan' at the Regional Military History Museum in Pleven (10th April 2025) with a specially published luxury catalogue. The Yatagan was presented as 'cultural heritage', 'bearer of the collective intellect of the time', the theme of 'the Decoration of the Yatagan' being a 'correct definition'¹⁰ of elements of history, etc. The public

¹ <https://btvnovinite.bg/bulgaria/skandal-za-dokumentalna-lenta-sporove-okolo-film-za-kardzhali-finansiran-ot-turcija.html>

² Освободителят на Кърджали се оказа недостоен да бъде почетен гражданин. – 24 часа, 21 октомври 2012 г. <https://www.24chasa.bg/bulgaria/article/1597668>

³ Божинов, В. Република Македония..., с. 227.

⁴ Давутоглу, А. Стратегическа дълбочина..., с. 151.

⁵ Бибина, Й. Балканските идентичности през призмата на тюрклюка. <https://balkansbg.eu/bg/content/b-identichnosti/487-tyurklyuka.html>

⁶ Станилов, С. Новият османизъм и българите..., с. 12–13, 20.

⁷ Давутоглу, А. Стратегическа дълбочина..., с. 155, 154.

⁸ Славкова, Е. Съвременни турски тълкувания на Ангорския договор и турският хегемонистичен национализъм в българо-турските отношения. София, май 2016, с. 1–29. <https://nafiz.academia.edu/EmiliaSlavkova>

⁹ Петров, Л. Неоосманизъм..., с. 118.

¹⁰ Стоянов, В. Турското население в България между полюсите на етническата политика. София, 1998, с. 5.

¹¹ Регионален военноисторически музей - Плевен., фейсбук, 10 април 2025 г.

reaction was stormy. Velizar Enchev described the exhibition of the Yataga as ‘a mockery of national memory’ and ‘a perversion to honour the weapon of the bloody massacre in Batak’¹.

The Yatagan can only be displayed as a trophy. The death of Bulgarian martyrs cannot be ‘glossed over’.

If the ‘decoration of the Yatagan’ is a psycho-historical factor for the replacement of national memory, then the Declaration condemning the attempt at forced assimilation of Bulgarian Muslims, adopted on 11th January 2012 by the National Assembly, is a political retreat at the highest level, using false concepts about the forced expulsion of some Bulgarian Turks in 1989 as ‘ethnic cleansing’².

The declaration is an ‘anti-Bulgarian document’ of which Turkey took advantage as early as 13th January, when the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs ‘expressed satisfaction with the decision of the National Assembly and gave further guidance: a) the perpetrators should be convicted and punished b) all 360,000 victims should be compensated’³.

The political reaction to ‘Pan-Turkish-ism’ on the Bulgarian side at National Assembly level is reflected in the proposals of the Ataka party for a ‘draft resolution recognising the genocide of Bulgarians in the Ottoman Empire between 1393 and 1913’ on 17th May, the date on which the Holy Martyrs of Batak are commemorated.

On 2nd March 2016, a ‘brief chronicle of the atrocities committed in 1913 alone’ was described from the parliamentary rostrum: ‘2nd July - 1,100 women and children and 350 men were killed in the village of Bulgarköy; 8th July - the entire population of the village of Enidje was massacred; 9th July - 521 Bulgarians were killed in Edirne, after being beaten with iron bars and cut with knives; 10th July – all captured inhabitants (unknown number) of the village of Mustafa Pasha (near Svilengrad) were killed in the slaughterhouse. Teacher dyado Vuglyarov was beheaded along with the priest’s mother...’⁴. The proposal by Ataka was not accepted, but it was supported by historian and VMRO (Bulgarian National Movement) leader Krasimir Karakachanov.

In the proposal the time frame for the ‘genocide of Bulgarians in the Ottoman Empire’ is very broad (1393-1913), and would make it difficult to confirm the policy of ‘genocide’ being extant for the entire period from the 14th to the 20th century. It would be more realistic to request recognition of the ‘Bulgarian genocide in Thrace, 1913,’ just as the Armenian genocide is recognised for 1915, even though the Turkish massacres began in the 1890s. Unfortunately, very few researchers use the term ‘genocide’⁵, to describe the massacre of Thracian Bulgarians, with most referring only to the ‘refugee problem’.

The psycho-historical impact of Davutoğlu’s doctrine in the Balkans and in our country can have two effects:

1) fear of revenge (Lyuben Petrov: ‘The problem is that Bulgaria has no doctrine towards Turkey’, and ‘Serious concern, tomorrow we could be another Cyprus or something worse. Like Bosnia, for example’⁶. Stanislav Stanilov: ‘I am beginning to think that I am living at the end of the 14th century – such political and moral apathy reigns’⁷);

2) the mobilisation of historical consciousness.

¹ „Жестока гавра с националната памет: вицепрезидентът открива в Плевен изложба с името “Украсата на ятагана”. Перверзия е да почиташ оръжието на кървавата сеч в Бatak”: https://novini247.com/novini/8222-jestoka-gavra-s-natsionalnata-pamet-vitseprezident-otkriva-v-pleven-izlojba_9036351.html [Accessed 20 July 2025]

² Декларация осъждаща опита за насилиствена асимилация на българските мюсюлмани. 11 януари 2012 г. – Държавен вестник, брой 5, 2012 г.

<https://www.parliament.bg/bg/declaration/ID/13813>

³ ‘...there was no ethnic cleansing. The majority of the approximately 600,000 Turks remained in Bulgaria... 110,000 of those who had left returned after a few days... The Turkish government accepted the remaining 200,000 and closed the border behind them’: Петров, Л. Неоосманизмът..., с. 152.

⁴ Станилов, С. Новият османализъм и българите..., с. 100–109.

⁵ Славкова, Е. Силното изригване на възходящия турски национализъм, извършил на българския геноцид в Тракия 1913 г. София, 17 януари 2024 г. <https://natfiz.academia.edu/EmiliaSlavkova>

⁶ Петров, Л. Неоосманизмът..., с. 14, 117.

⁷ Станилов, С. Новият османализъм и българите..., с. 8.

Are there risks from the ‘Turkish world’?

The geopolitical possibility of a ‘Turkish world’ is limited, and its activation driven by external factors: The First World War and the revolutions (1917); World War II; the end of the Cold War (1989); the collapse of the USSR (1991); and the break-up of Yugoslavia (1991–2008).

Turkey cannot become a global ‘factor’, and even when it acts as a regional one, ‘Pan-Turkish-*ism*’ is *situational* and adapts to external forces.

An example of situational ‘Pan-Turkish-*ism*’ is Turkey’s behaviour during World War II. If, in the autumn of 1942, ‘Pan-Turkish-*ism*’ was on the rise, Turkey concentrated about half its soldiers on the Caucasian border with the USSR, and Turkish Prime Minister Saracoglu declared to the German ambassador: ‘The destruction of Russia is a reality for the Führer... and a centuries-old dream of the Turkish people’¹, but in 1944, a ‘secret Turanian organisation’ was uncovered in Turkey, followed by arrests².

‘Pan-Turkish-*ism*’ (global Turkey doctrine) can only be dangerous in the event of tectonic geopolitical upheaval, not on its own initiative.

The post-Soviet arena rejects ‘Pan-Turkish-*ism*’, a nation-centred doctrine, and chooses ‘Pan-Turkic’ world (multinational Turkic diversity).

Post-Soviet Turks have acquired the consciousness of sovereign nations thanks to Soviet national policy, as a result of which they perceive Turkey as an equal partner rather than a leading centre of neo-Ottoman reintegration.

The inter-relationship of post-Soviet Turks with Istanbul is ‘Turkic’ rather than ‘Turkish’ and is being successfully implemented on an equal basis: economically with Central Asia; militarily and economically with Azerbaijan; and culturally and ideologically with part of the Western Balkans.

What are the risks of the ‘Turkish world’?

In the post-Soviet area, the risk for Armenia is perhaps the greatest owing to the Turkish-Azerbaijani military-political alliance and the peculiar Armenian regime, which is unlikely to stop at Nagorno-Karabakh if the international security system continues to erode.

Moreover, a situation similar to that of the First World War is emerging, when the ‘Armenian wedge’ separating the Ottoman Empire from the Turkic world stood in the way of the ‘realization of the idea of ‘Greater Turan’, which was followed by the Armenian genocide³.

The modern ‘Armenian wedge’ separating Turkey and Azerbaijan from the Turks in post-Soviet Central Asia is the Zangezur corridor, which has a special place in the ‘Turkic Vision 2040’⁴.

For Russia, the risk of ‘Pan-Turkish-*ism*’ is the weakest and is perceived as a ‘sleeping threat’ that can only be activated in the event of “major political upheavals”⁵.

For the post-Yugoslav sphere, ‘Pan-Turkish-*ism*’ (global Turkiye) remains an instrument of the United States. Davutoğlu fails to create a “regional balance of power” and creates only a ‘Turkish balance of power – between subordination to the United States and autonomous self-assertion’⁶.

‘Pan-Turkish-*ism*’ is a reactive doctrine; it lacks the power of geopolitical initiative because it is weak from within, hostage to the instability of Turkish identity, and irreversibly divided into ‘two Turkish nations’. ‘Pan-Turkish-*ism*’ (Turkish world) represents a Turkish-Islamic-Western synthesis.

For Bulgaria, the risk is not from ‘Pan-Turkish-*ism*’ but from internal erosion of the sovereignty of historical consciousness.

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² Пеева, К. Турският национализъм през ХХ век..., с. 182.

³ Надеин-Раевский, В. История пантюркизма и его современные сторонники. Часть 1..., с. 69.

⁴ Turkic World Vision - 2040. <https://turkicstates.org/en/news/turkic-world-vision-2040>

⁵ Раис Сулейменов: “Пантюркизм станет угрозой в Поволжье только в период ослабления России”..., с. 377.

⁶ Петров, Л. Неоосманизъм..., с. 47.

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A cruel mockery of national memory: the vice president opens an exhibition in Pleven entitled 'The Ornamentation of the Yatagan'. It is perverse to honor the weapon of the bloody massacre in Batak. (2025)

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