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Media Cooperation of Turkic Speaking States

Arestakes Simavoryan

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After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkish foreign policy strategy has undergone a radical change and the importance of establishing relationships with Turkic-speaking states has become a priority. Furthermore, in 1993 “The International Organization of Turkic Culture” was created, aiming to embrace those countries in the Turkic cultural realm.

This policy gained new ground during the years of AKP power. Already in 2006, Erdogan announced that he was putting forward initiatives to create a union for Turkic-speaking states’, adding: “History gives us a unique chance to unite the efforts of our countries, having common cultures and historical roots. We cannot just sit and wait, watching what happens on the world stage. Either we will become the subject of world politics, or its object” [1].

In 2008, the [“Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-Speaking Countries”](#) was founded to develop inter-parliamentary relations between Turkic-speaking states. Besides the above-mentioned two formats, the “Turkish Council” an international organization also uniting Turkic-speaking nations was created in 2009 with the ratification of the Nakhichevan agreement. The founding members were Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. On April 30, 2018, Uzbekistan, another Turkic-speaking country joined the Council, who had been non-officially been attending the Council’s works and events [2].

Hungary was granted observer status in 2018, during the 6th Summit of the Council, which would give an opportunity to deepen and broaden its relations with the Turkic-speaking countries [3]. Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban, who attended the Summit, said that they were proud with his convergence with Turkic-speaking countries [4]. Now an opening a Turkish Council’s office in Budapest is under discussion.

Although Turkmenistan has not yet joined the Council (is a potential candidate), it is actively involved in the Council’s activities. In 2019, Erdogan announced that they are also considering the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to become an observer member of the Turkish Council [5].

Since the time of its establishment, the Council has taken political, economic (including customs) and scientific-educational areas as a basis for cooperation with the member states of the organization. Later, issues of tourism, diaspora and common transportation agenda were also included. Information was also chosen as a strategic field, which implies a development and cooperation of traditional and the new media of Turkic world.

¹ Source: <https://orbeli.am/en/post/271/2019-09-10/Media+Cooperation+of+Turkic+Speaking+States>

The Media Policy Coordinating Working Group comprising of financial, technical and news program specialists started to work from 2014, within the frameworks of the Council to accelerate the process of information exchange and joint project creation. There is a particularly close cooperation between the Public Television Company of Azerbaijan, TRT TV channels of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkey. At the same time, dozens of events have been implemented aimed to develop cooperation between the media of the member states [6].

The Council held discussions on the concept of creating a common network for the member states, on the idea of having a joint international news and educational Channel in English, Russian and Turkish as well as financial and technical possibilities. In 2015, the Member States of the “Turkic Council” signed a protocol on the establishment of the “International Turkish News Channel” (INTC) [7].

The idea of having a pan-Turkic TV Company was also discussed in Baku, May of this year with the representatives of Mass Media and top officials of the Turkic Council’s Member States. Mustafa Akiş, Erdogan’s chief advisor and member of the directors of the Turkish State Radio and Television (TRT) also attended the conference, who believed that the Turkish TV Channel [“TRT avaz”](#) had all the conditions for becoming a joint media platform [8]. Even today, “TRT avaz” channel broadcasts TV programs about history, culture and politics of Turkic speaking people. Notwithstanding the fact that the TV channel broadcasts programs of anti-Armenian content [9]. It is also not a coincidence, that Ali Hasanov, assistant to Azerbaijani President for Public and Political Issues mentioned in his speech, that they want the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to be more widely covered by the mass media of the “Turkic Council” Member States [10]. Conversely, he complained that the member states’ TV channels are not represented on the local cable networks. [11] The meeting also touched upon the issue of necessity for broadcasting documentaries, cognitive videos and TV series together with the organization’s member states, content issues, as well as cooperation opportunities in various formats within the “100 outstanding Figures of the Turkish World” and “Holy Places in the Turkish World” projects [12].

During the meeting, the member of “Anadolu” Agency’s Board of Directors Pirtini mentioned, that they are developing relations with the Council’s member state media and correspondents. What’s more, since 2011, Anadolu Agency’s [“Media Academy”](#) has been organizing training courses and workshops aimed to increase the qualification of journalists, with more than 110 journalists participating from the Middle Asia [13]. The courses cover internet journalism, media technical issues, economic-political and social-cultural issues, as well as military and diplomatic journalism. For instance, “Diplomatic Journalism” program teaches international relations, public diplomacy and conflict resolution, as well as observes the impact of mass media on foreign and regional policy [14].

During the meeting with journalists and experts in Ankara, in June 2019, Baghdad Amreyev, Secretary General of the Turkish Council and Kazakh diplomat, emphasized that there will be negotiations for establishing an entirely new Turkish TV Channel, covering the aims and objectives of the Council [15]. In October 2019, a conference on the 10th anniversary of Turkic States’

Cooperation and Establishment of the Council will be held in Baku, which will touch upon the development prospects of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Generally, in recent years, the events devoted to the media-cooperation within the “Turkic Council” have contributed to the development of relations between the news agencies and Radio and Television of the Council’s member states and are fixed by different contracts. Above all it is not just the organization around which the Turkic countries media-policy is formed.

“Media forum of the Turkic-speaking countries and communities” platform established by Turkey has quite another format of cooperation and has ran for more than 10 years. Not only the media employees of Turkic-speaking countries but also media specialists of Turkic origin from Russia, Moldova, Ukraine, the Balkans and other countries are engaged in the forum’s activities. The issues on the enrichment of information resources on the internet, cooperation between professional journalists, role of media in economic, social and cultural fields, as well as public diplomacy and ethics were discussed at the forum (mainly within the frameworks of the Turkic world). Moreover, Turkey and Azerbaijan have had a cooperation format for anti-Armenian and anti-Greece propaganda [16].

Furthermore the “Media Platform of Turkic-speaking Communities” (TÜRKMEP) was established in 2013 within the forum’s frameworks in line with the information-analytical website covering its activities, which hasn’t worked since 2018 for unknown reasons.

The Directorate General of Press and Information of the Turkish Government (BYEGM), which was renamed Public Relations Department in summer 2018 started to operate under the Office of the President of Turkey. To add, TÜRKMEP stopped its activities in the earliest stage of these structural changes.

At this time the Directorate General of Press and Information of the Turkish Government has been organizing “Turkish Media Training Program” (TÜMEP) since 2013. Together with Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) and “Anadolu” agency their aims are to share Turkey’s media experience with young journalists (age 18-35) from other countries. Turkic speakers were not the only ones who attended, participants from Macedonia, Kosovo, the Middle East and Africa also joined the theoretical and practical media training (taught in Turkish) [17]. In terms of training and experience exchange, these courses give young professionals the opportunity to gain knowledge on internet journalism, radio and television work, as well as to get acquainted with the modern opportunities of social media.

Media cooperation is carried out through other structures as well. In 2018, the Office for Turks Abroad and Related Communities in cooperation with Anadolu News Agency and Turkish Agency for Cooperation and Coordination (TİKA) held diplomatic journalism courses for journalists from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Georgia, Ukraine and other countries within the context of the “Program for Cooperation with the Diaspora” [18, 19]. Besides this, “The Federation of Journalists of Turkey” in support with the state institutions of Turkey organized [“Turkic World’s Journalists”](#) workshops, which is another format of cooperation [20, 21]. Also, during the last year’s conference a declaration was adopted, calling on Turkish states’ NGOs and the mass media

to disseminate the “truth” about the Artsakh conflict to the international community by means of information and propaganda [22].

The language issue is often discussed within the format of common issues. Let’s quote the words by a Turkish writer Yusuf Kaplan, which were placed in his article [“The Idea of Common Civilization and the Media Regime of the Turkish World”](#). The author states that the common communication language of the Turkish States, as well as the Turkic peoples of Russia is not Turkish, but Russian. According to him, Turkish can exclude Russian, in case of uniting around common ideas: “enough amount of intellectual, human and technological capital enables Turkey to be the leader of a joint media regime”.

Ultimately, the processes on forming a joint agenda has taken place in the Turkic World under the various systems where the mass media is utilised. This article cannot touch upon all the issues and all the content of the work done. Many which are still under discussion and we believe that new formats will be added to the previous ones stated in order to provide strategic depth to these relations in the future.

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