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EDITOR'S NOTE

MUHİTTİN ATAMAN

The 10th Summit of the Heads of State of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) is a significant event for the Turkic World, scheduled for November 3, 2023, in Astana, Kazakhstan. Hosted by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, this summit is set to be a vital gathering for the leaders of Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Türkiye, Uzbekistan, and observer states, along with the Secretary General of the OTS. The Summit was crowned with the central theme, “TURKTIME,” a visionary proclamation from the leaders to future generations. This theme embodies a unified, cooperative spirit, and a collective determination to steer the Turkic World toward a trajectory of prosperity and comprehensive development. The acronym “TURKTIME” encapsulates key principles that serve as the guiding framework of the Summit: Traditions, Unification, Reforms, Knowledge, Trust, Investments, Mediation, and Energy.

Each pillar of “TURKTIME” represents a fundamental commitment and strategic focus area:

- *Traditions*: Upholding and valuing the rich cultural and historical heritage of the Turkic nations.
- *Unification*: Fostering a sense of unity and solidarity among the Turkic States, enhancing regional integration.
- *Reforms*: Advocating for progressive changes and modernization across various sectors to meet contemporary challenges.
- *Knowledge*: Promoting the exchange of knowledge, information, and best practices among member states.
- *Trust*: Building a foundation of trust, both within and outside the Turkic community, essential for effective collaboration.
- *Investments*: Encouraging investment flows within the region, focusing on sustainable and mutually beneficial economic growth.
- *Mediation*: Engaging in constructive mediation to resolve conflicts, thereby ensuring regional stability and peace.
- *Energy*: Intensifying cooperation in the energy sector, recognizing its critical role in the economic vitality and security of the Turkic states.

This holistic roadmap, anchored by the “TURKTIME” ethos, charts a transformative course for the OTS. It emphasizes the importance of unity, cooperation, and sustainable development as cornerstones for the future. The Summit’s strategic vision, as encapsulated by “TURKTIME,” aligns the collective efforts of the Turkic World towards achieving shared goals and facing global challenges with a united front.

While cooperation is gaining momentum in the Turkestan region, the global landscape simultaneously confronts multifaceted challenges. Politically, the rise of populist movements and shifts in global leadership dynamics have introduced new complexities. Escalating regional conflicts and the proliferation of non-state actors have amplified security concerns. Economically, the world faces uncertainty, marked by fluctuating markets, trade tensions, and concerns over sustainable development. Environmentally, the escalating impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion present critical challenges. Furthermore, the rapid advancement and integration of technology in every sphere poses opportunities and unprecedented challenges, particularly in cybersecurity, digital privacy, and the ethical implications of artificial intelligence. This intricate tapestry of political, security, economic, environmental, and technical issues encapsulates the multifaceted nature of contemporary global difficulties.

Besides resurgence of traditional security issues such as the return of power politics and the intensified global rivalry, the world now faces unconventional threats such as food crisis, health issues, climate change, global warming, and illegal refugee problems. The United States (U.S.) lost much of its constructive power and political will to act as an effective hegemon. Neither the U.S. nor the challenging powers such as Russia respect the main principles of international law and decisions of global international organization such as the United Nations (UN). Enforcement and respect for international law are critical challenges in current International Relations. International law acts as a framework for global governance, but its effectiveness largely depends on the willingness and power of states. The U.S. and Russia, as permanent members of the UN Security Council, profoundly influence the interpretation and enforcement of international norms and laws. However, their actions often reveal a selective adherence to international legal obligations, influenced by national interests and political objectives. This selective adherence of states above, brings to light the complexity of applying international law, where balancing national interests and political agendas with international legal commitments becomes a delicate task.

A significant instance of this selective adherence is the U.S.’ exercise of its veto power at the UN Security Council, obstructing a widely supported resolution for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. This act is indicative of

the U.S.'s distinct role in international decision-making, which should ideally contribute to global welfare rather than represent a form of exceptionalism. Against this backdrop, the “World is Bigger than Five” discourse by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan becomes increasingly relevant, calling for a more inclusive, just and representative global decision-making process for the UN.

Echoing UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' comments on the U.S.' veto in the Security Council —where he noted, “The delay comes at a cost, the (Security) Council's authority and credibility were severely undermined, and the resolution is not being implemented”— there is an urgent need for reform in the UN system. Such reforms are vital to confront challenges like the U.S.' veto power, ensuring the UN's capacity to effectively prevent wars and maintain international peace and security. At the end, the world system has totally collapsed, especially after the most recent violations of the system such as the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and the Israeli genocidal acts in the Gaza Strip against the innocent Palestinians. While the Western states, which are considered as the pro-status quo powers, fiercely opposed the Russian invasion of Ukraine, they did not oppose the Israeli atrocities. On the contrary, Western countries, particularly the U.S., have provided unconditional and limitless military, political, and economic support to Israel. As mentioned earlier, such selective adherence exacerbates the crisis on this matter. Furthermore, global international organizations such as the UN, as Secretary General Guterres underlined, fail to prevent regional and global conflict and to punish the states who violates basic human rights and commit war crimes.

In this chaotic and unstable world, many middle power states have been trying to form regional coalitions to increase their deterrent powers and to establish balance of power against real or potential threats. Türkiye, as a regional power and a global actor, has also been trying to form bilateral and multilateral regional coalitions with certain countries to maximize its national interests and also to increase its regional effectiveness.

Within this context, the AK Party government, under the leadership of President Erdoğan, has declared the establishment of a Turkish Axis at the beginning of the second century of the Turkish Republic. When examined closely, it can be easily inferred that there are two main groups of states that Türkiye can improve its relations to form the Turkish Axis, namely Turkic and Muslim states. Türkiye has accordingly tried to improve its relations with the Turkic states in the context of ongoing geopolitical turbulence and shifts at the global and regional levels. In alignment with its broader geopolitical strategy, Türkiye has played a crucial role in shaping the OTS, particularly since the 8th Turkic Summit, which took place in İstanbul on November 12, 2021. This influential role was further highlighted in the wake of Türkiye's significant support to Azerbaijan during the Second Karabakh War. This involvement not only

solidified Türkiye's relations with fellow Turkic states but also expanded its strategic and economic engagement in the (Turkestan) region. Such developments are indicative of Türkiye's escalating influence within the Eurasian geopolitical sphere, characterized by a harmonious blend of diplomatic, economic, and cultural cooperation under the auspices of the OTS framework. Türkiye recognizes the strategic significance of its engagement with the Turkic states located in Central Asia and the Caucasus, the regions that have long attracted the attention of global powers due to their abundant natural resources, strategic location, potential for economic development, transportation, logistics, and connectivity.

Türkiye has consistently nurtured and progressively strengthened its relationships with fellow Turkic states since their independence. As previously mentioned, this bond was further reinforced by Türkiye's pivotal role in the Second Karabakh War, highlighting its significant strategic influence in shaping the region's geopolitical landscape. During this conflict, Ankara played an instrumental role in facilitating the liberation of Azerbaijani territories and at the same time underscored Türkiye's strategic importance and bolstered its standing among these nations. Türkiye's successful interventions in regional crises such as Libya and Syria also had a positive impact on its image. In this context, the Turkic states' decision to align with Türkiye can be seen as a strategic move to leverage Türkiye's increasing influence in regional geopolitics and global affairs. This collaboration allows them to amplify their voice on the international stage, enhancing their bargaining power and positioning in global geopolitics. The alignment with Türkiye is not just about leveraging Türkiye's capabilities; it's also about cultivating a unified front to address the complex dynamics of global challenges, thereby fostering regional stability, economic growth, and cultural exchange among the Turkic states.

The establishment of OTS has increased expectations for the Turkic states to initiate a multidimensional and multi-level relations within the Turkic world. Considering that many states want to become part of OTS as observer members, it is clear that the organization will serve as the main locomotive of a possible regional integration of the Turkic world and make a great contribution to the institutionalization of cooperation among the Turkic states. OTS has a great potential in political, economic, strategic, and social dimensions within international and regional systems.

The Turkic nations, who have a common language, culture, and religion, are likely to collaborate economic and technical sectors such as in trade, transport, energy, agriculture, education, and high-tech ventures and tackle common challenges such as water resource management. Furthermore, the security and military dimension has become increasingly prominent within the multidimensional areas of cooperation among the Turkic states in recent years.

In conclusion, the ascendance of the OTS in the Eurasian geopolitical landscape signals a transformative phase in the region's dynamics, with the OTS poised to enhance economic and strategic connectivity between Europe and Asia. This evolving role of the OTS, indicative of a new geopolitical order, is significantly influenced by Türkiye's active participation and leadership. Türkiye's role in the OTS has been instrumental in transitioning the organization from a platform for dialogue to a powerful union of states committed to trade enhancement, economic cooperation, and bolstering regional stability. This pivotal role played by Türkiye, leveraging its unique geographical and cultural position as a linchpin between Europe and Asia, has been crucial in steering the OTS towards greater regional integration and a heightened global presence.

As mentioned above, the 10th Summit of the OTS, themed "Turk Time!" encapsulates the essence of this transformation. The acronym "TURKTIME" symbolizes the core principles guiding the Summit. These principles reflect not only the Summit's focal areas but also the overarching goals and aspirations of the OTS with Türkiye's stewardship. They highlight a commitment to preserving cultural heritage, fostering unity, driving meaningful reforms, expanding knowledge, building trust, promoting strategic investments, facilitating mediation in conflicts, and prioritizing energy cooperation. This thematic framework of "TURKTIME" not only shapes the discourse of the Summit but also mirrors the broader strategy of the OTS in its quest for a more interconnected and influential role on the global stage. Thus, the OTS, with Türkiye's significant influence, stands as a testament to the evolving nature of regional alliances and their capacity to shape international relations in the 21st century.

In its special issue highlighting the importance of the Turkic World, *Insight Turkey* presents 4 commentaries and 4 research articles related to the subject. Additionally, it includes 4 off-topic publications which touch upon the Palestinian issue focusing on the aftermath of October 7 operation and the role of energy in Türkiye-Russia relations.

Our first commentary, with the contributions of Farid Shafiyev, begins by discussing the evolution of the OTS, emphasizing its transformation from a consultative mechanism to a powerful international organization of geostrategic importance. In his analysis, Shafiyev highlights Azerbaijan's goal of promoting Turkic unity by examining significant events such as the Shusha Declaration, the aftermath of the Second Karabakh War, and the strategic alliance between Turkic states. By focusing on current trends in regional and global politics that have given rise to the development of the OTS, the author argues that it is imperative to strengthen and enhance cooperation among Turkic states and that the importance of Turkic unity in today's complex geopolitical landscape is only growing.

In the second commentary, Yerkin Tukomov focuses on the relations between the Turkic World and Kazakhstan. Tukomov argues that Kazakhstan is fully cognizant of the strategic importance of its relations with the OTS member states and is actively engaged in managing the complex balance between geopolitical challenges and opportunities. In his commentary, Tukomov endeavors to provide a comprehensive summary of Kazakhstan's short and medium-term strategic priorities. On the other hand, Ferrukh Khakimov examines the current bilateral and multilateral relations between Uzbekistan and Türkiye in the context of ongoing geopolitical turmoil and changes at global and regional levels. Khakimov argues that strengthening a comprehensive strategic partnership between Uzbekistan and Türkiye is vital to maintaining the geopolitical balance of power in the region and effectively addressing the common challenges of sustainable development.

Later, the analysis provided by Ömer Kocaman presents a comprehensive and nuanced account of the OTS. The evaluation traces the evolution of the OTS from the dissolution of the Soviet Union to its recent summits, examining aspects such as its establishment, institutionalization, and regional and international involvement. Additionally, the analysis delves into the organization's development, project implementation, and increasing global influence while emphasizing the OTS' dedication to fostering cooperation and solidarity among Turkic states.

This special issue of *Insight Turkey* centers on the importance of the Turkic World, and within it, Abzal Dosbolov and Göktuğ Sönmez present a research article that examines how the OTS supported Central Asian republics in addressing their historical legacies, specifically after Russian influence in the 18th century. Examining the post-independence phase of the Central Asian republics from a postcolonial perspective, the authors highlight the role of OTS in promoting regional cooperation, cultural revival, and social unity. The article provides a comprehensive overview of the role of OTS in promoting growth and development in Central Asia, while underlining the importance of strategic autonomy for Central Asia in the context of evolving regional dynamics. Similarly, in the second research article, with a focus on the intricate geopolitical landscape of Central Asia and the Caucasus, Muhammet Koçak thoroughly examines and analyzes the OTS and its potential in economic, strategic, and social dimensions within international and regional systems. In his analysis, Koçak delves into the various factors that impact the potential of OTS to foster cooperation and solidarity among the Turkic states. He also examines the mechanism at play in the interconnected strategic, economic, and social structures to provide a comprehensive understanding of the situation.

In our next research articles, the security aspect in Central Asia is discussed both under the umbrella of OTS and in the context of the Azerbaijan-Arme-

nia war. Based on the Turkic states' attempts to come together and become a comprehensive international organization, Buğra Sarı touches upon the issue of member states pursuing coordinated policies on security issues of mutual interest. According to Sarı, the security dimension has been added to the multidimensional cooperation areas within OTS in recent years. In this regard, the author aims to investigate the positive results of the security cooperation developed and strengthened between the Turkic states under the umbrella of OTS, focusing especially on basic security issues such as systemic security, regional security, counter-terrorism and military capacity. On the other hand, Sarwat Rauf examines the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict and explores the main factors that led Russia, the European Union and Türkiye to offer mediation to resolve the conflict. In her research, Rauf shows that a new geopolitical shift is taking place in the South Caucasus region, leading to complexities among some of the options identified by mediators.

Furthermore, to broaden the scope of our coverage, our Fall issue confidently presents two commentaries and one research article focusing on the Palestinian issue. In this respect, our two valuable authors evaluated the current situation in the commentaries section by emphasizing the latest events in Gaza and considering the historical perspective. Firstly, Salman Abu Sitta offers a rigorous and critical examination of the Palestinian Nakba and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, delving into its historical roots to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current situation in Gaza. Emphasizing that the ongoing conflicts in Gaza since October 7, 2023 have deeply affected the world and countless innocent lives have been tragically lost, Sitta defends the fundamental right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, claiming that this is an important element on the path to conflict resolution and permanent peace. Similarly, Muhammad Hüseyin Mercan's commentary discusses the Operation al-Aqsa Flood. Mercan also examines the possible impact of the operation on global and regional politics, taking into account that the ongoing process will change the political balances in the Middle East.

Next, Berdal Aral in his research article discusses the legal debates regarding the crisis caused by the military operation launched by the Palestinian forces of the Gaza-based resistance against Southern Israel on October 7, 2023. In his article, Aral answers questions such as which side of the conflict can rightfully claim the right to self-defense, did Israel commit genocide in Gaza, do Israel's statehood and territorial claims rest on firm legal grounds, is it legally sensible to argue that Israel is a threat to international peace and security, to elucidate the legal issues surrounding the current crisis and the broader context of Israel's legal status as a state and its territorial claims.

Finally, our last off-topic research article by Suinbay Suyundikov and Ahmet Gökbel examines the significance of energy in the relations between Türkiye

and Russia. Suyundikov and Gökbel first introduce the theory of interdependence and then analyze the energy policies and energy situation of Russia and Türkiye in detail. The authors argue that Russia plays an important role in Türkiye's energy supply with its rich energy resources and that Türkiye is an important market for Russia's energy exports and examine the energy relations between Türkiye and Russia within the framework of the theory of interdependence.

As we bid farewell to another eventful year, we are thrilled to present this latest issue of *Insight Turkey*, enriched with six thought-provoking commentaries and six in-depth research articles. Each piece has been carefully selected to enhance and diversify our coverage, providing our readers with a multifaceted and profound understanding of the various topics discussed. It is our earnest hope that this issue not only enlightens but also engages our readers in meaningful reflection and dialogue, furthering the pursuit of knowledge and understanding in these dynamic times. ■