

# One Nation, Many Voices? External Cohesion of the Turkic Council States in the United Nations General Assembly, 1993-2011

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## Abstract

This article examines the degree to which the members of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkey), known as CCTS or the Turkic Council, act cohesively in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Analyzing UNGA voting cohesion of the Turkic Council countries from 1993 to 2011 and comparing them to that of all UN members, the article finds that the Turkic Council states' voting agreement on foreign policy issues has been increasing steadily, which may indicate that their overall foreign policy preferences have been converging. In fact, their voting cohesion has been higher than that of the UN average since 2007. Moreover, the research reveals that the Turkic states are most cohesive on Middle East and colonial issues but least cohesive on nuclear armament and development issues in the UNGA.

## Keywords

The Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, Turkic States, Turkish foreign policy, United Nations General Assembly, UN voting cohesion.

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## Introduction

Several works have analyzed the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voting cohesion of country groups. However, no work to this date has examined the degree to which the Turkic states (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) display external voting cohesion in the UNGA. Since the end of the Cold War, these states – in some part because of Turkey’s attempts – have been trying to improve their political, economic and cultural ties. The Summits of the Heads of Turkic Speaking States that have convened since 1992 on the initiative of Turkey were held at regular intervals. These attempts were intensified notably over the last decade when Turkey has managed to become a highly active regional actor under the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party). Within this context, it is remarkable to note the speech made in 2007 in the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Turkic Friendship, Brotherhood, and Cooperation Organization by the Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, where he proposed a political alliance of Turkic-speaking countries to coordinate efforts to face the pressing international issues (see Независимая газета, 26.11.2007). Eventually, summits of the Heads of Turkic Speaking States that have convened since 1992 were institutionalized by the Nakhchivan Agreement of 2009 as the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States<sup>1</sup> with the overarching aim of promoting cooperation among Turkic Speaking States.

This article is an attempt to analyze the degree to which the four founding member states of the Turkic Council (Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkey) act cohesively in the UNGA.<sup>2</sup> The literature, as discussed in the next section, suggests that states’ UNGA votes may be used as an indicator of their foreign policy preferences. Thus, this research explores whether the Turkic Council countries have common foreign policy preferences and whether they have been able to develop a common foreign policy identity over time. The data for this study are drawn from the “United Nations General Assembly Voting” dataset. Prepared by Erik Voeten and his colleagues, this dataset includes all UN member states’ UNGA voting records from 1946 to 2011 (Voeten et al. 2009).

The study compares the voting cohesion of the Turkic Council countries to the UNGA average, finding that the Turkic Council states’ voting agreement on foreign policy issues has been increasing steadily, which may indicate that their overall foreign policy preferences have been converging. However, their voting cohesion was significantly below UNGA cohesion until 2000s, and the Turkic Council states’ voting cohesion has exceeded

that of the UN body after 2006. Further examining the Turkic countries' cohesion scores across five issue areas (Middle East issues, human rights, nuclear armament, development issues and economic issues), the research also reveals that the Turkic states are most cohesive on Middle East, colonialism and economic issues but least cohesive on nuclear armament and development issues.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The next section goes over the relevant literature, provides information on why one may expect the member countries of the Turkic Council to display external foreign policy cohesion, and present the research questions. Then, data and methodology are explained. Next, the results of the research are presented, and the factors that might influence Turkic Council member states' voting cohesion are discussed. The final section summarizes the study and makes suggestions for future research.

### **The Literature Review**

The General Assembly, as the main deliberative and representative body of the United Nations, discusses about and votes on various issues of international relations such as international security, international economic relations and trade, armament, decolonization, and human rights. Although most UNGA resolutions pass with a consensus (Wills 1994: 3), some resolutions, especially those ones on which states have diverging views and interests, require a vote. Unlike the Security Council of the United Nations, where only five states hold a permanent seat, all 193 members of the United Nations are represented in the General Assembly. Moreover, each nation, irrespective of its size or power, has only one vote in the Assembly. Thus, the UNGA provides a platform where states, small or large, find a chance to discuss and express their policy preferences on important political, economic and security matters of international relations. For that reason, UNGA voting records have been extensively utilized by scholars to examine states' foreign policy orientations and alliances (See, for examples, Wills 1994, Barromi and Feldman 1974, Chai 1979, Weiner 2002, Aral 2004, Datta 2009, Jacobson 2009, Graham 2011, Yuvacı and Kaplan 2013a, Yuvacı and Kaplan 2013b). The underlying assumption in these studies is that states' foreign policy, at least to some extent, are reflected in how they cast their votes in the UNGA. In fact, the evidence suggests that there is an empirical relationship between a state's foreign policy attitude and UNGA voting behavior. For example, states change their voting behavior or reevaluate their UNGA alliances in response to the changes in

the international system (Kim and Russett 1996) or to their domestic power transitions (Hagan 1989).

A number of scholars have recently examined to what extent states with commonalities display voting cohesion in the General Assembly. If UNGA votes are reflective of states' foreign policy positions, it then should be the case that states that are closely integrated in political, economic, social and cultural terms should also have a common foreign policy agenda, because their level of integration leads to a convergence of their foreign policy interests and preferences. This line of research especially focuses on the European Union, testing this theory by examining whether or not the EU member states' UNGA votes are cohesive (see Hurwitz 1974, Hosli et.al 2010, Jakobsson 2009). In line with the expectation, these studies demonstrate that the EU states vote more cohesively than non-EU states, or all UN members. As compared to all UN member states, one may indeed expect to see the EU member countries vote cohesively, as these countries have established an institutional channel of communication and have pledged to pursue a common foreign policy under the framework of the EU. However, perhaps a more decisive factor influencing their voting cohesion is that the EU member states have a similar level of economic, political, cultural and democratic development, resulting in a common foreign policy outlook and worldview on foreign policy issues like international security, international trade and democracy. Thus, the observed voting cohesion of the EU member countries should be interpreted as a reflection of this common ground on foreign policy issues.

Voting cohesion has also been examined for non-EU countries. For example, Volgy et al. (2003) examines the Group of Seven - also known as the G7 - members (Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan and the United States). Comparing their cohesion scores to those of the UNGA average, the authors demonstrate that they display higher levels of voting agreement than the UNGA average, especially on issues related to the North-South economic matters, on which the G7 member states are more likely to have a common worldview. Furthermore, according to their findings, G7 cohesion in the UNGA has increased substantially with the end of the Cold War. While Volgy and his colleagues focus on strong states (G7), Lida (1988) studies relatively weaker states, members of the Group of 77, and demonstrates that these countries also display certain level of voting cohesion. Graham (2011), on the other hand, studies the voting cohesion of India, Brazil and South Africa, which have formed the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialog Forum (IBSA) in 2003, and tests wheth-

er the formation of the IBSA and the increasing communication between these countries resulted in a convergence of their foreign policy preferences. Graham finds that India, Brazil and South Africa vote cohesively in the UNGA, yet they also have diverging policy positions on several issues such as nuclear armament, human rights and the Security Council reform issue. In short, scholars have also focused on non-EU countries to analyze whether countries with commonalities act in agreement in the UNGA, to what extent their foreign policy preferences converge, and on what issue areas their differences are most visible.

Although several works have analyzed the UNGA voting cohesion of country groups, no work has so far examined the degree to which the Turkic Council countries (Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan) act cohesively in the UNGA. Indeed, there might be cultural, political and economic reasons that one might expect these countries to display some level of voting agreement in the UNGA. Culturally, these countries have ethnic, linguistic, geographic and religious commonalities and affinities. In fact, the leading statesmen of the Turkic countries frequently say that although their countries are independent sovereign states, their peoples represent a “single nation,” referring to the fact that the peoples of these countries share the same ethnic, linguistic and religious roots (see for example, *Today’s Zaman*, 17 September 2010). Investing on these cultural bonds, largely under the leadership of Turkey, these countries have made steps to integrate their politics, economics, and culture through such organizations as *Congress of Friendship, Brotherhood and Cooperation of Turkic Speaking Countries and Communities* (TUDEV, launched in 1993), *the International Organization of Turkic Culture* (TURKSOY, established in 1993), *Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic Speaking Countries* (TÜRKPA, established in 2008).

The establishment of Turkic Council as a further step to this end was occurred in 2009 by the signing of Nakhchivan Agreement as the founding document of the Turkic Council. The structure of the Council as foreseen in the Nakhchivan Agreement consists of five main bodies. The first one is the Council of Heads of States as the ultimate decision-making body, with the Council of Foreign Ministers and the Senior Officials Committee under it. The fourth one is the advisory body which is the *Council of Elders* or the *Aksakallar Keneşi*. The other executive body of the Turkic Council is the International Secretariat based in Istanbul where officials from four Member States work together.

Moreover, the agreements on the establishment of Turkic Academy as an international organization, and of *Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation* were signed during Second Heads of State Summit held in August 2012, in Bishkek. Together with TURKSOY and TURKPA, these initiatives constitute affiliated organizations of the Turkic Council that acts as their umbrella organization. *Turkic Business Council* established in 2011 during the Bishkek Summit can also be considered under this classification as an affiliated body. Thus, bound by common values, today Turkic Council countries sustain balanced, cooperative and close relations based on the gnomic saying “one nation, two states” (Amanov 2013). Since previous research suggests that increasing communication and interactions, common values and cultural links might influence voting likeness between nations (see Wills 1994, Hosli et. al 2010, Graham 2011, Dreher and Sturm 2012), it may then be safe to assume that the Turkic countries, compared to the UN average, may display higher levels of voting agreement on UNGA resolutions.

### **Policy Coordination Efforts among Turkic States since 1990s**

Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey and the post-Soviet Turkic nations of the Caucasus and Central Asia – largely because of Ankara’s attempts and claim of “leadership” – have been trying to promote closer cultural, economic, and political ties. Diplomatic relations were taken up as early as 1991. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, these Turkic states have rediscovered their linguistic and cultural affinities with Turkey. For Turkey, it became necessary to revise its foreign policy orientations towards the post – Soviet space and to think about the role it could play in a post-Cold War world that created new opportunities and challenges. In the last two decades, Central Asia and Caucasus have emerged as areas of growing strategic importance for Turkey (Amanov 2013). Since the early 1990s, Turkey has followed important foreign policy steps toward these regions, aiming to establish an alliance and further economic and political integration. Especially in Turkey and Azerbaijan, where the nationalist pan-Turkic sentiments are most pronounced, the idea of further integration of the Turkic - speaking world and creating a political alliance has, in fact, become the ruling elites’ *idée fixe*, though, still seems a distant goal.

Toward this end, regular consultations amongst Turkic Speaking States were launched in the early 1990s. Since then, investing on the cultural bonds and proximity, these countries, both at the governmental and non-governmental levels, have been holding regular meetings and conferences to deepen their political and economic links. For example, since 1992, ten

“Summits of the Heads of Turkic Speaking States” have been held. The last of these summits was the Istanbul Summit of 16 September 2010. During the Summit, the Heads of State declared their appreciation for the signing of Nakhchivan Agreement and welcomed the progress achieved for the establishment of its Permanent Secretariat to be located in Istanbul. With the establishment of the Turkic Council as a permanent body, the Summits are renamed as CCTS Summits.<sup>3</sup>

These summits have provided a regular channel of communication and created an institutional platform for the leaders of the Turkic states to discuss and seek a common ground on matters of foreign policy. Since the very beginning of the summit process, the Turkic countries have spent efforts to “search for common positions on foreign policy issues of mutual interest, including those in the framework of international organizations and at international fora.”<sup>4</sup>

As it could be expected, strong commitment to foreign policy coordination and enhancing concerted policy approaches in international organizations, most notably the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), were in one way or another explicitly mentioned in all Declarations<sup>5</sup> of the summits. For example, the Nakhchivan Agreement of 2009, in Article 2, made a crystal clear reference to the search for common positions in international organizations. Perhaps reflective of the existing mood and political will, the declarations of the earlier Summits had included rather shallow statements and used “soft tune”, though the Antalya Declaration of 2006 stands as an exception, as the signatories of the Declaration announced that they decided to maintain consultations and solidarity in international organizations and meetings. In fact, like the Nakhchivan Agreement, the Antalya Summit should also be considered to be a big step forward in institutionalizing the process of summits and endorsing the efforts of cooperation, that would eventually lead up to the establishment of the Turkic Council in 2009.

The Turkic Council’s Istanbul Declaration of 2010 reemphasized more forcefully the importance of cooperation and joint action among member states. In fact, Article 9 stipulated “to hold meetings among Turkic Speaking States before important international meetings and to discuss possibilities of cooperation.” The Almaty Declaration of 2011 made further institutional steps and, in fact, marked a “new era in the development of bilateral and multilateral relations and cooperation amongst Turkic States.”<sup>6</sup> Even though it is not legally binding, the Declaration included a code of conduct to coordinate the member states’ foreign policy actions, which

would allow the four countries to speak with one voice. Furthermore, with the Almaty Declaration, the summit decisions were, for the first time, grouped together under separate titles, such as General Issues, Economic Issues, International Projects, Security Issues, Social and Cultural Issues, Cooperation within International Organizations and Other Issues. Article 18 of the Declaration also noted that member states would “hold discussions on security issues involving Member States within the framework of Turkic Council with a view to develop common positions.”

Summing up, especially since the Antalya Summit of 2006, the coordination of actions in search for common positions on foreign policy has gradually been expanded, encompassing four Turkic speaking countries, namely, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. There is much reason to expect that the institutionalization of the Summits of Turkic Speaking countries may have strengthened the cooperation amongst these nations and increased the external cohesion of the member states. In fact, regular summits and meetings since the early 1990s came to fruition in 2009 with the establishment of the Turkic Council, which also included a Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM). The first unofficial meeting of the CFM was convened in New York in 2011, in the margins of the 66<sup>th</sup> UNGA, that allowed a “fruitful exchange of views on the current and future activities, projects as well as upcoming meetings of the Turkic Council.”<sup>7</sup> This mechanism of foreign political coordination allows the top officials to consult and discuss a wide range of issues of common concern, including but not limited to Iran’s nuclear issue, Afghanistan, Iraq, Cyprus, Nagorno-Karabakh, Israel, and Syria. Today, Turkic Council was even considered to be the Turkic world’s EU or Arab League,<sup>8</sup> bringing together four out of the six Turkic speaking countries under an institutional framework.

It should be noted at the onset that the analysis in this paper excludes two Turkic speaking countries, namely Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, for two reasons. First, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have a tendency not to participate into UNGA meetings. Thus, because of their low level of participation to UN General Assembly votes, their inclusion to the analysis would lead to methodological problems. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have been reluctant to take part in the summits as well as the Turkic Council. Although Turkmenistan was represented at different levels in all summits of Turkic speaking countries since its first inception back in 1992, it neither signed the Nakhchivan Agreement nor has been party to any Declaration or initiative led by the Turkic Council on the grounds that the country’s foreign policy

is based on *positive neutrality*. After the 5<sup>th</sup> Summit held in 1998, Uzbekistan has not been represented at the presidential level. It was represented at the level of Speaker of Parliament in Summits of Baku (2000) and Istanbul (2001), however chose not to attend the 8<sup>th</sup> (Antalya, 2006), 9<sup>th</sup> (Nakhchivan, 2009) and 10<sup>th</sup> (Istanbul, 2010) Summits. Because of these reasons, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are not included into the analysis in this paper, but their UNGA voting attitudes may nevertheless be suggested for future research.

### **The Research Questions**

Although the level of integration and cooperation among the Turkic Council states has been increasing, we, however, don't know the degree to which the Turkic countries have policy convergences on issues related to foreign policy. Thus, this paper, through an analysis of UNGA voting records of the Turkic Council members, aims find an answer to three questions:

- (1) In comparison to the UN average, do the Turkic Council countries have a higher or lower level of voting agreement in the UNGA?
- (2) Has the voting cohesion of the Turkic Council states been increasing or decreasing – or remaining about the same - since the early 1990s?
- (3) Do the Turkic Council states vote more cohesively in some issue areas than others? Do the Turkic Council states vote more or less cohesively on issue areas such as Middle East, Nuclear, Colonialism, Human Rights, Development, and Economic issues?

Finding answers to these questions is important as they may shed some light on the level of policy convergence among the Turkic Council states. In fact, if their voting cohesion is significantly below the global cohesion level observed in the UNGA, one may then conclude that almost 20 years of integration efforts have produced only limited convergence in their foreign policy preferences, and perhaps the differences in their foreign policy interests are too wide and incompatible that might even jeopardize further economic and/or political integration.

### **Measuring Voting Cohesion**

This research explores whether the Turkic Council countries have common foreign policy preferences and whether they have been able to develop a common foreign policy identity over time, as reflected in their UNGA voting behavior. The data for this study are drawn from the “United Nations General Assembly Voting” dataset. Prepared by Erik Voeten and

his colleagues, this dataset includes all UN member states' UNGA votes from 1946 to 2011. A UN member country may display its voting preference on a UNGA resolution in one of four ways: "yes", "no", "abstain" and "absent". When quantifying UNGA votes, the study codes "yes" votes as 1, "no" votes as 0, "abstaining" as 0.5, and count "absences" as "missing" (see Hosli et al. 2010, Voeten 2004). "Abstaining" is considered in the literature as a "softer" way of saying "no" and it is therefore assigned a value of 0.5 (between "yes" and "no") (see Hosli et al. 2010, Voeten 2000, Marin-Bosch 1998). When measuring cohesion, this article follows Hosli et al. (2010), who calculate cohesions through the following formula in their research of the EU cohesion in the UNGA:

$$C = |AVx - 0.5| \times 2 \times 100,$$

where C is cohesion score and AVx is the average vote on a resolution, calculated through adding states' votes on a resolution ("yes" is coded as 1, "no" is coded 0, and "abstaining" 0.5) and dividing it by the total number of resolutions. A cohesion score is 100 when all states vote identically, and 0 when votes are split equally (equally between "yes" and "no", e.g.).

Hosli et al. (2010) compares the voting cohesion of the EU states to the UNGA voting cohesion through graphical illustrations. This research also adopts a similar methodology, in which it compares the Turkic Council countries' 1993-2011 UNGA voting cohesion to that of the entire UNGA body through graphical illustrations. The main goal of the paper is to examine whether the Turkic countries are more or less cohesive than the UNGA in general and whether their cohesiveness, as compared to that of the UNGA average, is increasing or decreasing over time. However, besides analyzing the aggregate votes on all resolutions, the 'United Nations General Assembly Voting' dataset also enables us to study subsets of resolutions, as it categorizes UNGA resolutions according to their issue areas. These issue categories are Middle East issues, human rights, nuclear issues, economic issues, colonialism and development issues. What these categories stand for, although somewhat open to interpretation, is self-explanatory. For example, Middle East issues, as the title implies, are about the resolutions that deal with the Middle East (e.g., Israeli – Palestinian conflict), human rights issues refer to resolutions about human rights (condemning human rights violator states, urging states to adopt human rights policies, etc.), and so on.

In this research, UNGA cohesion (global cohesion) serves as a reference category to compare the Turkic Council members' voting cohesion. Hav-

ing such a reference category is useful in empirical analysis for comparative purposes. In other words, because different cohesion assessment methods yield different cohesion scores, what matters most is whether the level of cohesion is increasing or decreasing over time in comparison to the reference category (UNGA cohesion) and whether the cohesion score is below or above global cohesion on certain issue categories.

### **Analysis: The UNGA Voting Cohesion of the Turkic Council Member States**

Through graphical illustrations of the percentage of cases in which all Turkic Council states voted identically and comparing the voting cohesion of the Turkic Council states to the UNGA average, the study examines the degree to which the Turkic Council states have an external cohesion in the UNGA. It has to be kept in mind that the empirical results evaluated in this paper only covers the period starting from 1993 through the end of 2011, as the Turkic states of the former Soviet Union joined to the UN in 1992. Again, as discussed earlier, the paper excludes Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as they chose not to be part of the Turkic Council and have not been a regular and enthusiastic participant to the integration efforts outlined above.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 1.** *Average Voting Cohesion for UNGA and Turkic Council Countries*

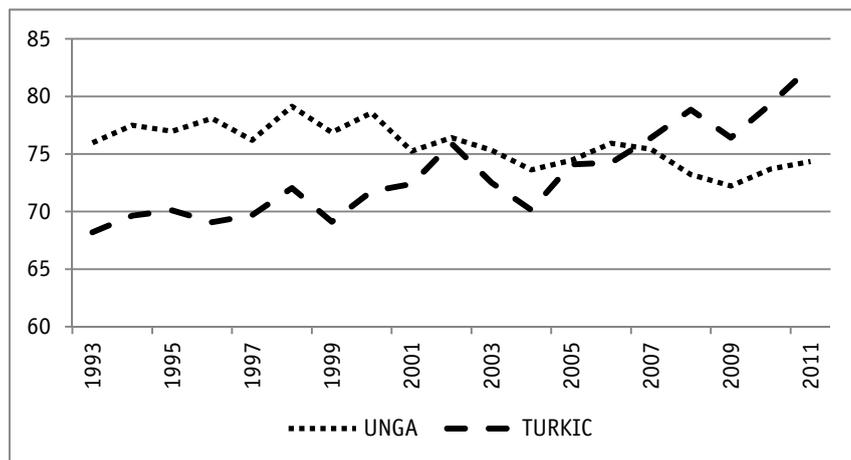
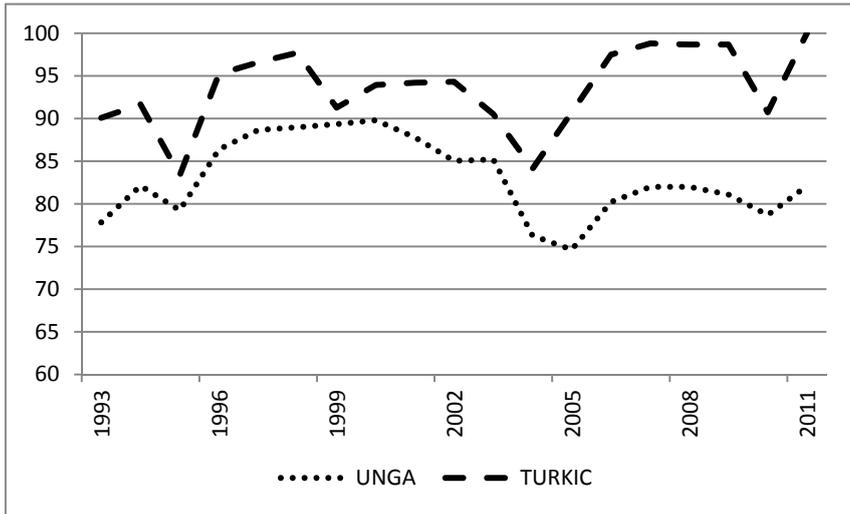


Figure 1 is designed to illustrate the aggregate measures of the voting cohesion rates of the Turkic Council countries and the broader UN membership. Accordingly, Figure 1 reveals that, while the UNGA average remains about the same from 1993 to 2011, the voting cohesion of the Tur-

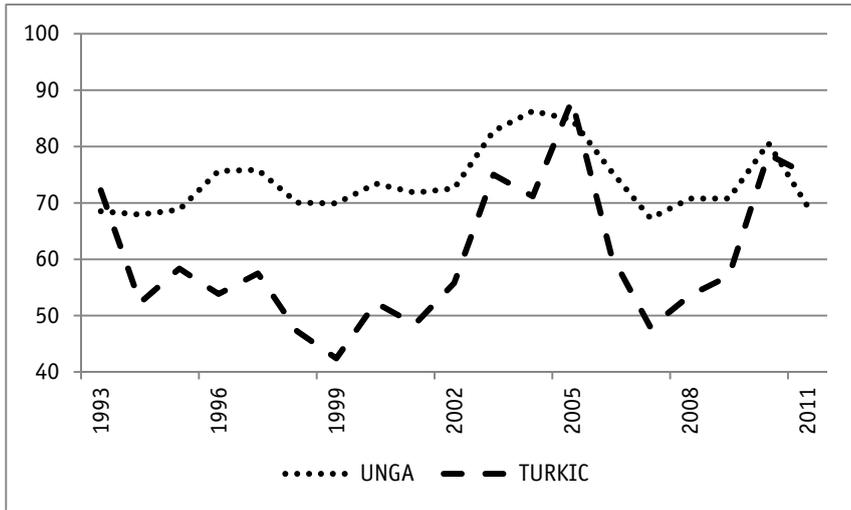
tic states has been increasing gradually since 1993. Moreover, the Turkic states' voting cohesion has been higher than that of the UN body since 2007. In other words, the Turkic Council states had significantly more converging policy positions in 2011 than they had in 1993. In 1993, the Turkic Council states voted identically on 68.2 percent of all UNGA resolutions, whereas the same percentage reached to 82.6 percent in 2011. Overall global cohesion was 75.98 percent in 1993 and 74.35 percent in 2011. Interestingly, an observable upward trend in the voting cohesion of the Turkic states begins in around 2005, according to the above graph, and their cohesion surpasses global cohesion in 2007, after which its cohesion rate increases at a faster pace and finally becomes 82.6 percent in 2011. This relatively high degree of consensus among the Turkic Council countries was attained during the years of further institutionalization of the summits of the Turkic speaking countries' heads of states through CCTS. Thus, it may be no coincidence that this trend coincides with the Antalya Summit of 2006, which, as mentioned earlier, was an important breakthrough as the participant states formally declared, for the first time, their commitment to increase cooperation and solidarity in major international organizations such as UN, OSCE, etc.<sup>10</sup>

Figures 2 through 7 below graphically portray the voting cohesion of the Turkic states and UN member countries on various issue areas such as human rights, economic issues, development, Middle East and nuclear issues. Before discussing the results presented in below figures, one should keep in mind that interpreting the graphical illustrations of the Turkic Council states' votes in the UNGA on specific issue areas require some caution, in a way that the reader should focus on general trends, instead of sharp ups and downs. Sharp fluctuations in figures below may be caused because of the fact that the research's attention is limited to only four countries (Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), and that UN resolutions are further categorized into issue areas, which decline the number of votes on which each country casts a vote. In other words, cohesion rates may be subject to sudden rise and falls even when a single country opposes the majority.

**Figure 2.** *Voting Cohesion among UNGA and Turkic Council Countries on Middle East Issues*



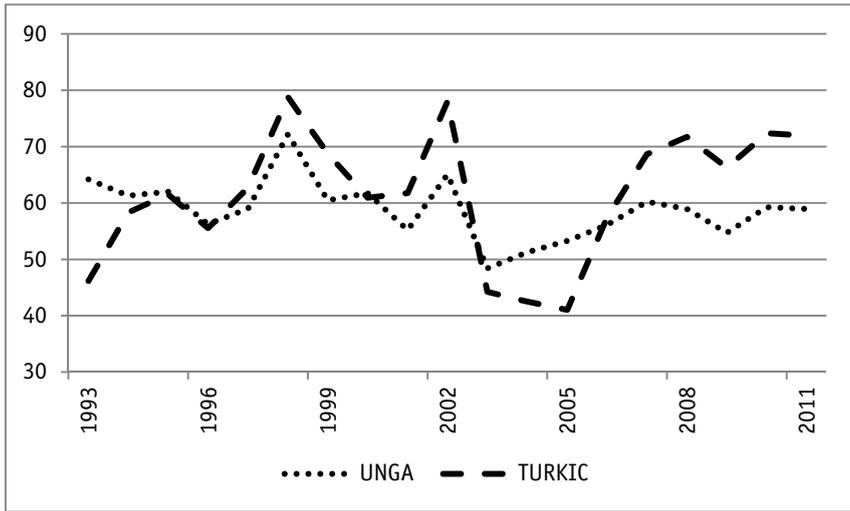
Figures 2 to 7 reveal several intriguing results. On Middle East issues, as Figure 2 portrays above, the Turkic Council states had already high voting agreement since the early 1990s. In fact, their level of agreement usually hovered above 90 percent and even reached to near 100 percent, perfect cohesion, in 2011. The Middle East is the only issue area in which the Turkic countries consistently had a higher voting cohesion level than the UN body. In other words, this high degree of consensus among the Turkic Council countries has never been attained in other issues areas. This is perhaps one area in which culture and religion might have some effect. Most UNGA resolutions categorized under “Middle East” issues<sup>11</sup> are, by and large, related to the Israeli – Palestinian conflict. Expectedly, the Islamic countries tend to take consistently a pro-Palestinian stance on the Israeli – Palestinian question. Turkic Council countries are no exception. They share, to varying degrees, common religious values, certain cultural traits and historical backgrounds with Palestinians. In fact, the words “Palestine” and “Lebanon” find a place in Article 5 of the 2006 Antalya Declaration, confirming our finding that the Turkic Council countries display an important level of consensus on Middle East issues.

**Figure 3.** Voting Cohesion among UNGA and Turkic Council Countries on Nuclear Issues

The security and/or nuclear issues demonstrate substantial divisions among the Turkic Council member states. The Figure 3 clearly shows that the Turkic countries didn't "speak with one voice" on security, nuclear and disarmament affairs. A closer examination of nuclear issues resolutions reveals that while Azerbaijan remained a staunch ally of Turkey, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan appears to have taken a somewhat different stance, casting opposing votes to Turkey and Azerbaijan in the UNGA. This finding may be explained by the fact that the latter two have long been an ardent supporter of a nuclear free world and even signed the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone (CANWFZ) Treaty<sup>12</sup> along with other countries in the region (Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). Indeed, Kazakhstan, as a strong sign of its anti-nuclear policy, voluntarily eliminated or relinquished its nuclear materials that it had inherited from the Soviet Union. On the other side, Turkey and, to some extent Azerbaijan, vote in much different manner on issues related to nuclear weapons, disarmament and security. This is interesting as neither Turkey nor Azerbaijan has sought to acquire nuclear capabilities. These diverging viewpoints on nuclear issues, then, may be attributed to the fact that Turkey still relies "for its security on the nuclear and conventional deterrence provided by U.S./NATO security guarantees."<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Turkey has heavily been investing in its military capabilities to deal more effectively with its internal and external security threats, such as PKK terrorism. Along similar lines, Azerbaijan has been "building stronger military capabilities due to a

long-standing conflict with neighboring Armenia over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh enclave.”<sup>14</sup> Whatever reasons might be behind it, Turkic Council states still disagree on questions of nuclear issues, and this divergence is clearly visible in the countries’ voting behavior<sup>15</sup> on UNGA disarmament resolutions and decisions.

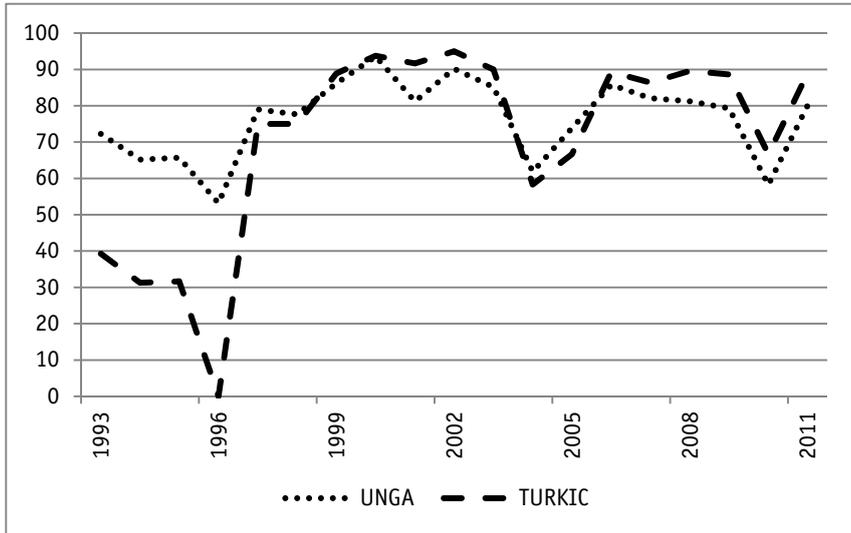
**Figure 4.** *Voting Cohesion among UNGA and Turkic Council Countries on Human Rights*



According to the Figure 4, Turkic Council cohesion was generally above the UNGA average on resolutions concerning human rights. What stands out markedly is that Turkic Council cohesion follows a trend in parallel with the overall UNGA average until about 2002, after which it suddenly drops to nearly 40 percent in 2005, but sharply increases again to 70 percent by 2007. In fact, Turkic Council cohesion has been above the UNGA average since 2006. The reason for this sharp fluctuation might lie in the fact that Turkic countries, although sharing a similar ethnic and religious heritage, have different historical and socialization experiences. In fact, most of them share a Soviet legacy, possibly leading to inefficacious coordination of their voting behavior on human rights resolutions. Most notably, Turkey, with a higher level democratic development and closer ties with the European community, tends to display different voting attitudes than Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on human rights. Draft Resolution 60/174 may be a case in point. This resolution was put forward to condemn Uzbekistan’s human rights abuses. The resolution was adopted by 74 votes in favor and 39 against, with 56 abstentions.<sup>16</sup> Inter-

estingly, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan voted against the resolution<sup>17</sup> while Turkey voted for.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, it should be reemphasized that Turkic Council cohesion on human rights has been increasing since 2005, and today it is well above the average of the entire UNGA, which supports the assumption that through socialization processes, Turkic Council cohesion within the UNGA is likely to increase over time.

**Figure 5.** *Voting Cohesion among UNGA and Turkic Council Countries on Economic Issues*



In the early 1990s, as is corroborated in Figure 5, Turkic Council states had rather disparate voting conduct on economic issues. The voting cohesion fell to the lowest level in 1996 reaching almost to the level *perfect disagreement*. This is the only instance in which the lowest possible degree of cohesion among Turkic Council countries was attained in our analysis. This low level disagreement in most parts of the 1990s might be attributed to the economic confusion of the immediate post-Cold War period, when the newly independent states did not have a clear-cut view points on issues pertaining to domestic and international economic matters. But the voting cohesion increased quite rapidly to about 70 percent around 1997 and then to 90 percent in the 2000s, at times surmounting, the global level.

**Figure 6.** *Voting Cohesion among UNGA and Turkic Council Countries on Development Issues*

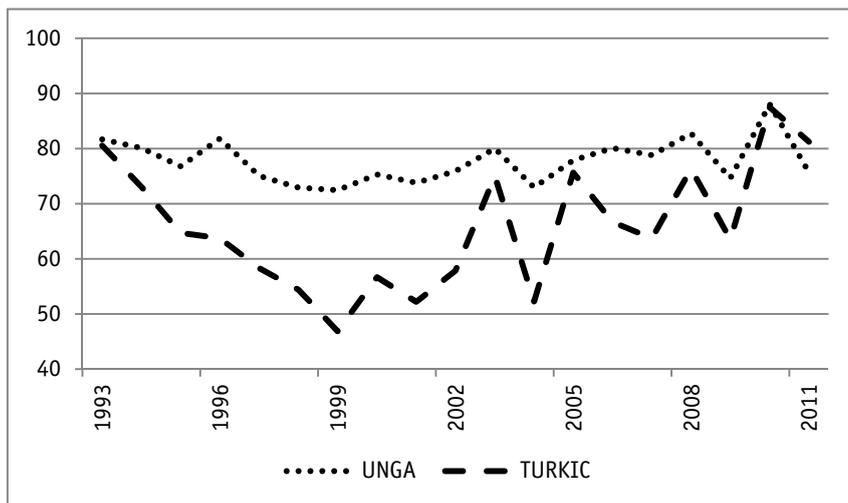
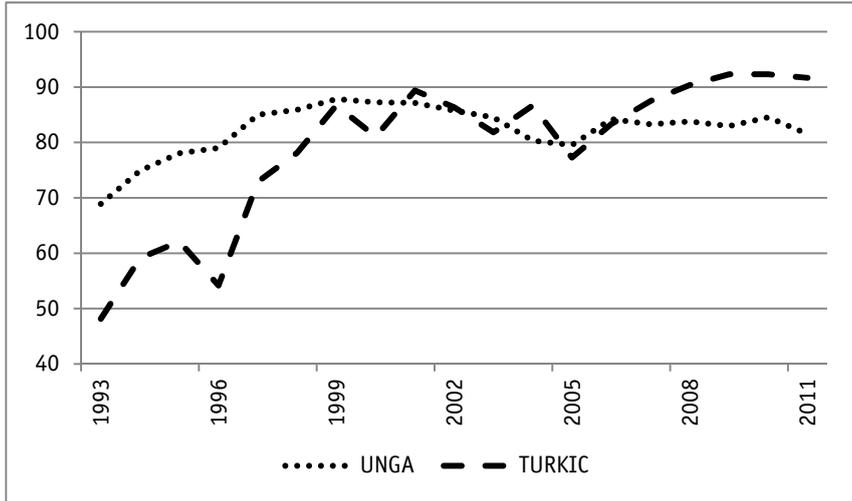


Figure 6 demonstrates that cohesion levels of Turkic Council countries suffer, in comparison to the global cohesion, when it comes to the UNGA resolutions on development issues, as is the case with nuclear issues shown previously in Figure 3. On both development and nuclear issues, the Turkic Council states' cohesion levels are below global cohesion levels throughout the years under examination. With regards to development issues, most UNGA resolutions on development issues, in one way or another, are related to the long-standing North-South conflict, in which the industrialized “North” (developed countries) seek to maintain the existing international economic order and free-trade system while the less developed “South” seek to replace this system with a new order that takes the interests of the South into consideration. Turkey, as a member of the OECD, is officially associated with the North and also has close economic and political ties with European Union and the United States. On the other hand, it may be speculated that Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, although not members of the Group of 77, may be more sympathized with the cause of the South, reflecting their level of economic integration into the liberal order. Another important point worth to note is that the Turkic Council cohesion level on development issues, although subject to ups and downs, has nevertheless been increasing slowly and continuously since the early 2000s. In fact, in 2010 and 2011, the Turkic Council states are no less cohesive than the UN average. However, a more detailed examination of how each country casts its votes on development

issues may be required to gain a better insight into the underlying reasons of divergences and convergences on development policy. This goes beyond the scope of this paper, but such an undertaking may nevertheless be suggested for future research.

**Figure 7.** *Voting Cohesion among UNGA and Turkic Council Countries on Colonialism*



According to the Figure 7, voting cohesion among Turkic Council states on colonialism issues was lower than that of the entire UNGA in the early 1990s, but it increased steadily over time. Interestingly, since late 1990s, cohesion in the Turkic Council has been close to the global level on colonialism issues and remained by and large stable until 2011. However, eyeballing the resolutions on colonialism and how countries vote on these resolutions, one may notice that Turkey appears to be voting differently from the rest of the group members (Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan) on issues related to colonialism. This deviation might be explained in some part that such resolutions usually call for granting independence to various ethnic groups living in different countries, and Turkey might therefore vote cautiously on such resolutions since it has been fighting against an ethnic terrorist organization, called PKK, that has an ultimate goal of establishing an independent Kurdistan within the boundaries of Turkey.

## Conclusion

Assuming that UNGA votes are reflective of states' preferences on foreign policy issues, this article examines the degree to which the Turkic Council

states (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey) display external voting cohesion in the UNGA. Methodologically, the article compares the Turkic states' cohesion levels on various UNGA issue areas to global cohesion levels through graphical illustrations from 1993 to 2011. The article finds that the Turkic Council states' voting agreement level has been increasing, which may indicate that their overall foreign policy preferences have been gradually converging. In fact, since 2007, their voting cohesion has been higher than that of the UN average. In 2011, the Turkic Council states' voting cohesion stood at 82.6 percent, while global cohesion was 73.45 percent for the same year. Finally, the research reveals that the Turkic states are most cohesive on Middle East, colonialism and economic issues but least cohesive on nuclear and development issues in the UNGA. In fact, their voting agreements on nuclear and development issues are below global voting agreement scores.

What might explain the increasing voting cohesion levels of the Turkic Council members in the UNGA? Obviously, increasing interactions through summits and meetings might have played an important role in converging the Turkic states' foreign policy preferences. In other words, such interactions might have induced more coordinated behavior among the Turkic Council members even in foreign policy. Moreover, as the Turkic countries increase their economic and political cooperation and get integrated into the liberal economic system, their interests gradually converge, which is ultimately reflected in the UNGA as increasing convergence on various issues of global politics. However, it should also be noted that it is Turkey that votes most differently on certain resolution categories, which might be partly explained by Turkey's strong Western orientation, and its deep-rooted engagement with Western political, economic and military structures.

Future studies may complement this research by comparing the level of cohesion that the Turkic Council states display to that of some other countries with similarities, like those of the Arab countries, the other Turkic countries (Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) or even to the European Union. In fact, one should bear in mind that the countries in question are at the same time members of different international or regional organizations, notably, among others, NATO, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). While it is beyond the scope of this

paper to fully investigate the degree to what extent the membership in different international organizations with discrete or overlapping mandates can impact the country's voting behavior in UNGA, a future study may analyze, individually or as a group, the voting similarity of the Turkic Council states to those of other countries and/or organizations. This may also shed light on where the Turkic Council countries are, especially in comparison to other country groups, in terms of establishing a common position on issues of foreign affairs, as it might be assumed that having a similar outlook on foreign economic and political issues might make it easier to establish a closer political and economic union. Finally, a future study may further investigate how policy convergence is happening by focusing on specific cases, resolutions and countries. For example, does policy convergence among the Turkic Council members happen when some members change their positions to confirm their preference with some others? Or, does it happen when all members realign their initial positions or take similar positions on new issues as they emerge?

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The term "Turkic Council" will be used to refer to the formal name of "the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States" (CCTS), throughout the article for convenience.
- <sup>2</sup> The goal of this paper is to quantitatively analyze the voting behavior of the Turkic Council countries in the UN General Assembly. It should be noted at the onset that explaining the politics and foreign policies of the each Turkic Council states is beyond the scope of this research.
- <sup>3</sup> For more details, see the official website of the Turkic Council, available online at [http://www.turkkon.org/Assets/dokuman/INFORMATION\\_NOTE.pdf](http://www.turkkon.org/Assets/dokuman/INFORMATION_NOTE.pdf)
- <sup>4</sup> See Article 2 of the Nakhchivan Agreement of 2009, on the establishment of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (CCTS).
- <sup>5</sup> Examples of such phrasing, that has appeared in every Declaration of the Summit since 1992 through 2010, could be found in Article 10 of Ankara Declaration of 1992; Articles 3, 6 and 23 of Istanbul Declaration of 1994; Articles 11, 14, and 19 of Bishkek Declaration of 1995; Articles 15 and 16 of Tashkent Declaration of 1996; Articles 2, 9, 11, and 15 of Astana Declaration of 1998; Articles 1, 11, and 15 of Baku Declaration of 2000; Articles 13, 14, 15, and 16 of Istanbul Declaration of 2001; Articles 3, 7, and 19 of Antalya Declaration of 2006; Articles 8, 11, 17, 18, 21, 23, 27, and 28 of Nakhchivan Declaration of 2009; Articles 9, 14, and 36 of Istanbul Declaration of 2010; Articles 1, 4, 18, 42, 43, and 44 of Almaty Declaration of 2011 of the 1st Summit of the Turkic Council; Article 4 of Baku Declaration of 2009 of TÜRKPA.
- <sup>6</sup> See Almaty Declaration of 2011 of the 1st Summit of the Turkic Council, available online at [http://turkkon.org/Assets/dokuman/Declaration\\_ENG\\_20141021\\_151023.pdf](http://turkkon.org/Assets/dokuman/Declaration_ENG_20141021_151023.pdf)

- <sup>7</sup> “The Council of Foreign Ministers convened in New York”, Official web-site of Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, available online at <http://www.turkkon.org/en-US/the-council-of-foreign-ministers-convened-in-new-york/301/1130/1130/528>
- <sup>8</sup> “Bishkek summit vital for cooperation between Turkic-speaking countries”, *Today's Zaman*, 26 August 2012.
- <sup>9</sup> In fact, these countries were also reluctant to attend the Turkic Speaking Countries Summits. Moreover, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have a tendency not to participate into the UNGA meetings. Thus, even if they were members of the Turkic Council, their inclusion to the study would create methodological problems.
- <sup>10</sup> See Article 19 of Antalya Declaration of 8th Summit of the Turkic Speaking Countries' Heads of States, available online at [www.turkkon.org](http://www.turkkon.org)
- <sup>11</sup> Resolutions that fall within the Middle East Category contain keywords like "Syrian Golan", "Disengagement Observer Force", "Israel", "Jerusalem", "Gaza Strip", "Lebanon", "Palestine", "Palestinian" etc. For more information, see Hosli et.al 2010.
- <sup>12</sup> Text of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia (CANWFZ) can be reached online at <http://disarmament.un.org/treaties/t/canwfz/text>
- <sup>13</sup> Country Profiles – Turkey, the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), available online at <http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/turkey/>
- <sup>14</sup> Country Profiles – Azerbaijan, the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), available online at <http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/azerbaijan/>
- <sup>15</sup> Recorded votes of Turkic Council member states in the UNGA are available online at <http://www.un.org/en/ga/documents/voting.asp>
- <sup>16</sup> See Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 60/174: Situation of human rights in Uzbekistan, available online at <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4459bfb35.pdf>
- <sup>17</sup> For voting inventory, casted by the countries, see <http://unbisnet.un.org:8080/ipac20/ipac.jsp?profile=voting&index=.VM&term=ares60174>
- <sup>18</sup> Uzbekistan was discontent with Turkey's vote in the UN's 3<sup>rd</sup> Committee (the Social, Humanitarian Cultural Affairs Committee) against Uzbekistan's human rights record. See Ruzaliev 2006, p.42.

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# Tek Millet, Tek Ses? Türk Konseyi Ülkelerinin Birleşmiş Milletler Genel Kurulu Oy Yakınlaşması, 1993-2011

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## Öz

Bu makale, CCTS veya Türk Konseyi olarak bilinen Türk Dili Konuşan Ülkeler İşbirliği Konseyi üyelerinin (Azerbaycan, Kazakistan, Kırgızistan ve Türkiye) Birleşmiş Milletler Genel Kurulundaki (UNGA) oylamalarda ne ölçüde uyumlu hareket ettiklerini incelemektedir. 1993 – 2011 dönemi Türk Konseyi ülkelerinin Birleşmiş Milletler Genel Kurulu oy yakınlaşmasının analiz edildiği ve bunun tüm BM üyelerinin ortalamasıyla kıyaslandığı bu makalede, Türk Konseyi ülkelerinin dış politika meseleleriyle ilgili sergiledikleri oy yakınlaşmasının giderek arttığı gözlemlenmiştir. Bu durum söz konusu ülkelerin genel dış politika önceliklerinin birbirine yaklaştığını göstermektedir. Nitekim 2007 yılından bu yana bu ülkelerin oy birlikteliği BM ortalamasının üzerinde seyretmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, araştırma Türk devletlerinin Birleşmiş Milletler Genel Kurulunda en çok Orta Doğu ve sömürgecilik konularında birlikte hareket ettiklerini, en düşük birlikteliğin ise nükleer silahsızlanma ve kalkınma meselelerinde görüldüğünü ortaya koymaktadır.

## Anahtar Kelimeler

Türk Dili Konuşan Ülkeler İşbirliği Konseyi, Türk devletleri, Türk dış politikası, Birleşmiş Milletler Genel Kurulu, Birleşmiş Milletler oy yakınlaşması.

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# Одна нация, один голос? Сближение государств-членов Тюркского Совета на Генеральной Ассамблее Организации Объединенных Наций, 1993-2011

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## Аннотация

Эта статья исследует насколько сплочены были действия стран-членов ССТГ или Совета Сотрудничества тюркоязычных государств (Азербайджан, Казахстан, Кыргызстан и Турция), известного как Тюркский Совет, в процессе голосования на Генеральной Ассамблее Организации Объединенных Наций (ГА ООН). В данной работе на основе анализа сближения голосов стран-членов Тюркского Совета на Генеральной Ассамблее Организации Объединенных Наций в период 1993 – 2011 годов и сравнения этого со средним показателем всех членов ООН, отмечается, что сближение голосов стран-членов Тюркского Совета по вопросам внешней политики с каждым годом увеличивается. Данная ситуация показывает, что наблюдается сближение внешнеполитических приоритетов этих стран. Действительно, начиная с 2007 года единство голосов этих стран превышает средний показатель ООН. Также исследование показывает, что на Генеральной Ассамблее Организации Объединенных Наций тюркские государства наиболее сплочены по вопросам ситуации на Ближнем Востоке и колониализма и наименее сплочены по вопросам ядерного разоружения и развития.

## Ключевые слова

Совет сотрудничества тюркоязычных стран, тюркские государства, внешняя политика Турции, Генеральная Ассамблея Организации Объединенных Наций, сближение голосов Организации Объединенных Наций

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