

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ROOTS OF AZERBAIJAN-TURKEY RELATIONS: SHARED LANGUAGE, RELIGION, ETHNIC AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES

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Abstract. The historical and cultural roots of relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey are based on a common ethnic, religious and linguistic unity formed over millennia. The fact that both nations originate from the Oghuz lineage, belong to the same language group and share Turkic statehood traditions demonstrates that Azerbaijan-Turkey relations are not merely diplomatic ties but a brotherhood built upon shared identity. Throughout history, the migration of Turkic people, the rule of the Seljuks and the Ottoman Empire, as well as the influence of states such as the Qara Qoyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu, played an important role in shaping the cultural and social structures of both nations. The common linguistic unity is the strongest identity element connecting Azerbaijan and Turkey. The inclusion of Azerbaijani Turkish and Turkey Turkish within the same Oghuz branch has strengthened the unifying role of the language in both daily communication and cultural heritage. Shared folklore traditions, similar forms of oral creativity - epics, ashig art, proverbs and mythological thinking - have united the spiritual memory of both people. In addition, the common Islamic religion, particularly the religious-spiritual system grounded in Sunni-Shia tolerance, has created parallels in both the social relations and spiritual identity of the two nations. Throughout history, religious and spiritual figures - Yunus Emre, Haji Bektash Veli, Fuzuli and Shah Ismail Khatai have formed a common spiritual heritage for both Anatolia and Azerbaijan. In the sphere of cultural identity, social structures such as folklore, music, dance, art, customs and traditions and family models have developed similarly in both nations. Common holidays such as Novruz, the wedding-ceremony system, social values, hospitality and strong family ties show that Turkic cultural heritage continues in parallel forms in both Azerbaijan and Turkey. This article extensively analyzes the historical roots of Azerbaijan-Turkey relations in the context of common language, religion, ethnic and cultural identity and explores how these similarities influence the political and ideological convergence of the two states in the modern era.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, Turkiye, historical roots, common language, cultural identity, religious unity, Turkic world, Oghuz.

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1. Introduction

Relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey represent one of the unique and exemplary partnerships in the history of world politics. The foundation of these relations lies not only in the political interests of the modern era, but also in the shared ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic unity that has been formed over millennia. As a result, the ancient history of the Turkic people and the large-scale migration of the Oghuz tribes, both Azerbaijan and the Anatolian region developed on the same ethnic roots. From this

perspective, Azerbaijan-Turkey relations constitute a unique model in which the concept of “brotherhood” is expressed not only metaphorically, but also in a historical and cultural sense.

Historical sources indicate that the spread of the Oghuz tribes into the Caucasus and Anatolia laid the groundwork for the formation of a common national identity, while subsequent historical processes further strengthened this identity. The influence of the Seljuk Empire, the establishment of the Qara Qoyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu states and later the formation of the Ottoman state developed the Turkic concept of statehood across a broad geographical area. The people of Azerbaijan and Turkey were equally influenced by the administrative systems, social structures and cultural policies of these states. As a result, the identity of both people was shaped on the basis of the same cultural foundations, which has formed the basis of modern political relations.

The shared language factor is one of the most important elements of relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey. Since Azerbaijani and Turkish belong to the same Oghuz group, there is a strong linguistic closeness between them. Similarities in grammatical structure, phonetics and vocabulary not only facilitate communication between the two people, but also serve to preserve a common cultural memory. This linguistic proximity also strengthens the mutual influence in folklore, ashug (bardic) art, epic traditions and oral heritage. The “Book of Dede Korkut”, as a shared epic heritage, is one of the fundamental sources of both Azerbaijani and Turkish cultures.

Religious and spiritual identity also occupies an important place in Azerbaijan-Turkey relations. The encounter of the Turkic world with Islam, the spread of Sufi traditions and the influence of the Bektashi and Mevlevi orders shaped the spiritual worldview of both people in similar ways. Azerbaijan’s Shiite-Sunni tolerance and Turkey’s Anatolian Sufism have long been indicators of spiritual harmony. Sufi thinkers such as Yunus Emre, Rumi (Mevlana) and Haji Bektash Veli enjoy great respect in Azerbaijan as they do in Turkey. At the same time, the works of poets such as Khatai, Fuzuli and Nasimi are embraced by readers in both Anatolia and Azerbaijan. This spiritual parallelism has always had a special impact on the development of cultural relations between the two countries.

The shared cultural identity between Azerbaijan and Turkey is manifested not only in art and literature, but also in everyday lifestyle, traditions and systems of social behavior. The structure of wedding ceremonies, the family model, the value placed on kinship relations, hospitality and social solidarity carry the same essence in the cultural codes of both people. Nowruz, the Feast of Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha) and the month/Feast of Ramadan (Eid al-Fitr) are observed by both states as equally significant cultural and religious values. These similarities strengthen the social foundations of relations between the two people.

The historical experiences of Azerbaijan and Turkey have also developed in parallel. During difficult historical periods, the two people supported each other and provided both moral and political assistance in each other’s struggles for freedom and independence. The liberation of Baku by the Caucasian Islamic Army in 1918, the volunteers sent from Azerbaijan to the Ottoman Empire and the struggles of both people for independence in the twentieth century all testify to a shared destiny. These events have strengthened Azerbaijan-Turkey relations not only at the diplomatic level, but also at the emotional and spiritual level.

In the modern era, political and economic cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey develops precisely on the basis of this historical, cultural and ethnic unity. For

this reason, relations between the two states, unlike other international relations, are deeper, more natural and more sustainable in character. The principle of “one nation, two states” is not merely a political slogan, but a modern manifestation of a shared identity.

The purpose of this article is to systematically analyze the historical and cultural roots of Azerbaijan-Turkey relations, to examine the factors of shared language, religion, ethnic and cultural identity through a scientific approach and to determine the geopolitical and social impacts of this unity in the modern era. For this purpose, the structural elements of the concept of identity are analyzed on the basis of both historical sources and contemporary academic research and the cultural foundations of the sustainability of Azerbaijan-Turkey relations are explained.

2. Main part

2.1. The historical roots of Azerbaijan-Turkey relations

The roots of the relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey are based on a shared Turkic history that goes back thousands of years. The role of the Oghuz tribes occupies a special place in the formation of these relations. From the perspective of the ethnogenesis of the Turkic people, the migration of the Oghuz from Central Asia to the Caucasus and various regions of Anatolia was decisive in the formation of the cultural and ethnic identity of both Azerbaijani and Anatolian Turks. Historical sources prove that the Oghuz tribes not only established political power, but also spread their language, traditions and worldview over a wide geographical area.

Between the 9th and 11th centuries, the emergence and rapid expansion of the Seljuk Empire became one of the main factors that strengthened both the political and cultural unity of the Turkic world. The Seljuks laid the foundation for cultural ties between the Caucasus region, Azerbaijan and Anatolia and ensured the spread of the Turkic language, traditions and worldview throughout this geography. It was precisely in this period that the main stage of the ethnic formation of the Anatolian Turks began. At the same time, Seljuk rule in the territory of Azerbaijan also created conditions for the strengthening of Turkic identity.

Another important stage in these historical roots is the period of the rule of the Qara Qoyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu states. These two states played an important political role in the history of both Azerbaijan and Anatolia and preserved the connection of Turkic statehood to its Oghuz origins. Their political culture, administrative structure and social order influenced the state traditions of later states, especially the Safavids and the Ottomans. During the rule of the Qara Qoyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu, political, cultural and economic ties between the territories of Azerbaijan and Anatolia were further strengthened.

The relations that emerged between the Safavids and the Ottomans in the 16th century encompass an important historical period in the formation of both countries. The establishment of the Safavid state on the basis of Azerbaijani Turkmen tribes and the origin of the Ottoman state from the Oghuz-Kayı tribe confirm that both empires were political entities representing Turkic culture. Although there were political conflicts between the two empires during this period, the process of preserving a common Turkic-Muslim identity continued. While the Safavid state played a central role in the development of the political and cultural identity of the Azerbaijani Turks, the Ottoman state ensured that the Turks became a leading power in the Islamic world.

One of the key factors demonstrating the continuity of these shared historical roots is the cultural exchange that existed between the two people for centuries. The Anatolian ashug (bardic) tradition, which influenced the development of Azerbaijani ashug art and likewise, Azerbaijani folklore, which influenced the formation of the Anatolian epic tradition, occupy an important place in the spiritual life of both people. Epics such as “Koroglu” and “The Book of Dede Korkut” are examples of shared spiritual heritage for both Azerbaijan and Turkey. The motifs, heroic archetypes, family models and social structures in these epics clearly reflect the common culture of the Turkic people.

The 19th and 20th centuries represent a new stage in Azerbaijan-Turkey relations. During this period, both political and intellectual ties between the Ottoman Empire and Azerbaijan played an important role. Azerbaijani intellectuals such as Ahmad bey Agaoglu, Ali bey Huseynzade and Huseyn Javid played a major role in the formation of the ideology of Turkism and this ideology had a wide influence on the intellectual environment of Anatolia. At the same time, the reforms that took place in Turkey especially the modernization movement during the Ataturk era were met with great interest in Azerbaijani society as well.

In 1918, when the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was established, occupies a special place in the political rapprochement between the two countries. During this period, the assistance provided by the Caucasian Islamic Army in the liberation of Baku left a deep mark in the memory of the Azerbaijani people as an example of brotherhood. During the Republican period, the ideological and political closeness created by Azerbaijani intellectuals with Turkey became one of the foundations of the friendship between the two countries that continues into the modern era.

At the end of the 20th century, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the restoration of Azerbaijan's independence marked the beginning of a new historical phase in Azerbaijan-Turkey relations. Turkey went down in history as the first state to recognize Azerbaijan's independence and this was regarded as the political manifestation of the historical bond between the two people. From this period, relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey continuously strengthened and large-scale cooperation was carried out in the fields of energy, economy, education, defense and culture.

The main reason why these historical roots have had such a strong impact in the modern period is that Azerbaijan and Turkey possess relations built not only on political interests, but also on a shared identity. Language, religion, ethnic and cultural identity have historically caused both people to remain in close contact with one another and to preserve a spiritual bond. These historical foundations now constitute the basis of strategic cooperation between the two states.

Thus, the historical roots of Azerbaijan-Turkey relations stem from a shared Turkic identity, Oghuz origin, the Seljuk-Ottoman-Safavid line and cultural ties that have continued for centuries. This historical unity forms the basis of political, economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries in the modern era and makes interstate relations unshakable (Hasanov, 2014).

2.2. Shared language and ethnic identity

One of the strongest bonds between Azerbaijan and Turkey is the relationship formed on the basis of a shared language and ethnic identity. Since both people belong to the Oghuz Turks, the Azerbaijani and Turkish languages are part of the same language group and this closeness manifests itself not only in everyday communication, but also in cultural, historical, literary and folkloric dimensions. This degree of linguistic proximity

has both facilitated communication between people and made it possible to preserve a shared identity. In terms of the classification of the Turkic languages, Azerbaijani and Turkish constitute a single "Oghuz branch" and this unity has led to the sharing of the same cultural memory both in the processes of ethnogenesis and in the modern era.

Historical sources show that during the settlement of the Oghuz tribes in the Caucasus and Anatolia, linguistic unity was one of the main factors of identity. Despite the division of the Oghuz languages into various dialects, communication between the populations of Azerbaijan and Anatolia was never lost; on the contrary, it was further strengthened through folklore and the ashug (bardic) tradition. Epics, bayatis, proverbs, anecdotes and other examples of oral culture prove that language functioned as a means of both cultural and ethnic integration.

One of the important factors demonstrating linguistic closeness is the breadth of the shared lexical fond. The lexical similarity between Azerbaijani and Turkish is over 60-70 percent and this similarity is evident not only in everyday vocabulary, but also in historical, religious, social and cultural concepts. This is directly derived from the same ethnic origin. At the same time, phonetic correspondences especially vowel harmony and word structure - demonstrate the parallel development of the two languages.

In terms of ethnic identity, the similarities between the people of Azerbaijan and Turkey are evident at both the anthropological and the cultural-linguistic levels. The ethnic origin of both people is based on Oghuz roots and these roots have been preserved over time within the political and social structures of various states. In the vast geography ruled by the Seljuks, the language and culture of the Turkic tribes created a common ethnic memory. This memory has continued for centuries without significant change, causing both Azerbaijani and Turkish Turks to draw their identity from the same source.

Shared language and ethnic identity are processes that exist not only in historical contexts, but also in the modern era. Cultural integration between Azerbaijan and Turkey, cooperation in the field of education, exchange in television and media, mutual recognition of literature and folkloric events have further strengthened the living power of the language. Turkish television series and films in Azerbaijan and Azerbaijani music and literature in Turkey, are widely followed and appreciated by broad audiences. This mutual cultural influence ensures both the vitality of the language and the strengthening of a shared ethnic consciousness.

The role of folklore traditions in preserving ethnic identity is invaluable. The works of Azerbaijani ashugs such as Ashig Alasgar, Dede Alasgar and others run parallel to the Anatolian ashug school. Likewise, the great representatives of Turkey's ashug tradition - Ashik Veysel and Neşet Ertaş are also beloved in the Azerbaijani musical environment. This mutual appreciation demonstrates the existence of a shared musical language among the Turkic people.

The epic tradition is also one of the strongest proofs of ethnic and linguistic unity. The Book of Dede Korkut is considered a national and cultural treasure for both Azerbaijan and Turkey and the language used in it, the typology of heroes, family models and social values constitute an artistic reflection of a common ethnic root. The existence of both Caucasian and Anatolian versions of this epic is regarded as a result of a shared historical and cultural experience.

The support of shared linguistic unity at the official level in the modern era is also reflected in the activities of the Organization of Turkic States. One of the organization's main priorities is the formation of a common alphabet, common terminology and a common linguistic framework among the Turkic people. This process is one of the

principal ideological priorities of both Azerbaijan and Turkey and serves to further expand shared communication opportunities in the future.

Thus, the shared language and ethnic identity between Azerbaijan and Turkey, while being a continuation of historical roots, is also a strengthening factor for modern political, cultural and social relations. This identity creates a natural closeness between the people and contributes to the stability of interstate relations. Language not only a means of communication, but also a carrier of national identity, remains one of the strongest pillars of Azerbaijan-Turkey unity (Aliyev, 2019).

3. Shared religion and spiritual identity

One of the most important foundations of relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey is their shared religious and spiritual identity. The religious identity of both people have primarily been shaped by Islam and for centuries this unity has led to the development of moral, social and cultural values in the same direction. The adoption of Islam profoundly shaped the worldview, lifestyle, social behavior and public relations of the Turkic people and this process created common spiritual codes for both the Azerbaijani and Anatolian Turks. Islam functioned not only as a religious system, but also as a philosophy of life and a source of spiritual identity.

The spread of Islam to the Caucasus and Anatolia occurred as a result of similar historical processes. From the 10th century, the acceptance of Islam by the Turkic tribes was synthesized with their earlier beliefs, giving rise to a distinctive Turkic-Muslim culture. This culture developed within the frameworks of both Sufism and the ideology of statehood. The formation of Anatolian Sufism, in turn, had a direct influence on the spiritual environment of Azerbaijan and provided conditions for the exchange of religious thought between the two regions.

One of the most significant aspects of religious identity between Azerbaijan and Turkey is the position held by Sufism in the spiritual life of both people. Sufism gained particular prominence in the Turkic world and exerted widespread influence in both Anatolia and Azerbaijan, especially during the 13th and 14th centuries. One of the main figures of Anatolian Sufism, Jalal al-Din Rumi and his teachings, left a profound impact on the Azerbaijani literary and spiritual environment. Rumi's emphasis on concepts such as love for humanity, tolerance, spiritual perfection and unity was received in the same way in both Anatolia and the Caucasus.

In the development of Azerbaijan's spiritual culture, the role of figures such as Khatai, Fuzuli and Nasimi, who were carriers of Sufi thought, is of great importance. These personalities enriched not only Azerbaijani literature but also the spiritual environment of Anatolia. Magnificent poetic works such as Fuzuli's Layla and Majnun were highly valued in Turkish literature and have been read for centuries. Similarly, Nasimi's Hurufi worldview also had a strong impact on the Sufi schools of Anatolia. These spiritual bridges are clear proof that the religious and spiritual identities of the two people were formed on the same foundation.

Haji Bektash Veli, Yunus Emre and other great representatives of Anatolian Sufism are also widely recognized in the Azerbaijani cultural environment. The principles of humanism, sharing and spiritual purity promoted by Haji Bektash Veli influenced Azerbaijani ashug creativity and popular thought. The mysticism of Yunus Emre, based on simple language, profound meaning and divine love, played an important role in strengthening the tradition of Sufism in Azerbaijani poetry. This mutual spiritual

influence demonstrates the parallel development of the religious consciousness of the two people.

Shared religious values manifest themselves not only through the works of historical figures, but also in everyday spiritual and religious practices. The main acts of worship in Islam, such as prayer, fasting and almsgiving, are observed in similar cultural forms in the lives of both people. The celebration of the month of Ramadan, the preparation of iftar tables, mawlid ceremonies and the observance of religious holidays are organized in Azerbaijan and Turkey on the basis of similar social motives. The traditions of Eid al-Adha - the distribution of sacrificial meat and assistance to those in need - reinforce values such as compassion and sharing in the moral systems of both people.

From the perspective of spiritual identity, the family model is also an important element. The family structures of Azerbaijan and Turkey were shaped under the influence of Islamic culture and this model has maintained its continuity over centuries. Respect for elders within the family, parent-child relationships, the sanctity of the family and the moral status attributed to women and men are all based on the same religious and cultural foundations. This similar family model ensures the constant strength of social and spiritual closeness between the two people.

The coexistence of the Shiite and Sunni sects in Azerbaijan has played an important role in the formation of religious tolerance. This model of tolerance runs parallel to the social influence of the Sunni-Sufi tradition present in Turkey. In both countries, religious tolerance is also reflected in state policy and the unifying role of religion in society is given particular importance. This spiritual approach is one of the most significant identity markers of the Turkic world.

The shared religious identity has also had a strong influence on culture. Mosque architecture, religious music, hymns and chants, Muharram ceremonies, holiday traditions and religious rituals are artistic and social manifestations of the same spiritual roots. For example, the ornaments and religious symbolism used in the Shirvan architecture of Azerbaijan and the Seljuk architecture of Turkey show great similarities. This parallelism proves that religious representations and aesthetic principles originate from a common source.

In the modern era, religious and spiritual cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey continues to expand. Cooperation agreements signed between the Caucasus Muslims Office and the Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkey have created mutual support in religious education, public enlightenment, cultural events and mosque construction. This cooperation demonstrates that religious identity is not only a historical factor, but also a living spiritual bond actively maintained today.

Thus, the shared religion and spiritual identity in Azerbaijan-Turkey relations are not only a unifying factor, but also one of the important foundations of political and cultural closeness. Islam has shaped the worldview of both people for centuries, created common spiritual values and played a significant role in the development of cultural heritage. This spiritual unity continues to remain one of the ideological pillars of inter-state cooperation in the modern era (Gasimov, 2016).

4. Shared cultural and folkloric identity

One of the deepest layers of the relationship between Azerbaijan and Turkey is their shared cultural and folkloric identity. Since both people share the same ethnic and linguistic roots, their cultures have developed in parallel and influenced each other over

the centuries. The common cultural memory of the Turkic people has been preserved in both the Azerbaijani and Anatolian regions, making this a key factor that unites the two countries not only politically but also culturally.

Folklore serves as a carrier of both people's historical experience, social behavior patterns, worldview and spiritual values. The structure, motifs, hero types, mythological elements and rhythmic-poetic forms of Azerbaijani and Anatolian folklore exhibit numerous similarities. These resemblances are not merely the result of cultural influence, but a reflection of parallel development originating from a shared cultural root.

One of the most important shared elements of Azerbaijani and Turkish folkloric culture is the epic tradition. The Book of Dede Korkut, as the shared epic heritage of the Turkic world, has become an integral part of folk culture in both Anatolia and Azerbaijan. The heroism, family values, social order, bravery, justice and spiritual integrity depicted in the Dede Korkut epics reflect the common worldview of the two people. The language, character system, mythological structure and social messages of the epic hold the same significance in the cultural identities of both Azerbaijan and Turkey.

The epic of Koroğlu is also one of the strongest examples of shared folkloric memory. Koroğlu is recognized as a symbol of justice and heroism in both Azerbaijani and Anatolian cultures. The music, lyrical compositions, characters and heroic motifs of the epic create the same emotional impact in the folklore of both people. The connections between the Azerbaijani ashug tradition and Anatolian ashug art were further strengthened through the dissemination of this epic.

The ashug (bard) tradition is one of the strongest cultural bridges between Azerbaijan and Turkey. The performance of the saz, the tradition of epic storytelling and the poetic forms such as qoşma and geraylı exhibit similar structures in the musical and folkloric environments of both people. The works of Anatolian ashugs such as Ashig Veysel and Neşet Ertaş, alongside Azerbaijani artists like Ashig Alasgar, Dede Alesger and Növres İman, unite not only musically but also in terms of shared cultural spirit. The sacred status of the saz, the power of words and the artist's spiritual mission are based on the same principles in both cultures.

4.1. Music, customs and folklore in shared cultural identity

Musical culture is also an important manifestation of the shared identity between Azerbaijan and Turkey. Although mugham and Anatolian Turkish music differ technically, their melodic structures, emotional depth, poetic texts and the spiritual elements used in performance reflect common roots. Musicologists have extensively studied the similarities between certain melodic segments of mugham modes - such as segah, shur and rast - and Anatolian Turkish music.

In the field of customs and traditions, deep similarities exist between Azerbaijani and Turkish cultures. The structure of wedding ceremonies, engagement traditions, social norms for starting a family and the practice of match-making demonstrate that the social and cultural codes of both people are aligned. From the music performed at weddings to the organization of the ceremony itself, identical elements are present. For example, Azerbaijan's xınayaxdı ceremony and Turkey's kına gecesi are derived from exactly the same cultural base.

Folk games and dance traditions are also a crucial part of the shared folkloric system. Azerbaijani dances such as Yalli, Tərəkəmə and Uzundərə show significant rhythmic, movement and social-message similarities with Turkish dances like Halay,

Horon and Zeybek. Each of these dances conveys concepts such as collective unity, social cohesion, heroism and festivity.

Strong parallels also exist in mythology. Beliefs from Turkic mythology - including Goddess worship, the concept of the Sky God (Göy Tanrı), spirits of earth and water, the Great Mother (Ulu Ana) and heroic figures (Alp) are present in both Azerbaijani and Anatolian culture. The virtues of mythical heroes, such as strength, wisdom and justice, form a shared foundation for the moral and spiritual worldview of both people.

Similarities are also evident in traditional medicine and ethnographic practices. Both people use herbal remedies, protective rituals linked to beliefs, divination practices and remnants of ancient shamanistic traditions. Although many of these customs originate from pre-Islamic Turkic beliefs, over time they have been integrated into Islamic and spiritual cultural frameworks. This shared musical, folkloric and cultural heritage continues to reinforce the deep historical and spiritual connection between Azerbaijan and Turkey.

4.2. Novruz and shared cultural identity

Novruz holiday is one of the strongest symbols of shared culture between Azerbaijan and Turkey. In both countries, Novruz is celebrated as a symbol of the arrival of spring, renewal and abundance. Customs such as growing samani (sprouted wheat), jumping over bonfires, preparing papaqatdı and making festive sweets are observed similarly in both societies, further strengthening the sense of shared cultural identity.

The similarities in oral literature are closely linked to the common linguistic structure. Bayatılar (folk quatrains), proverbs, sayings and jokes share the same semantic structures in both countries. The central motifs of folk wisdom such as intelligence, courage, honest labor, family bonds, respect and conscience stem from the same worldview in Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Thus, shared cultural and folkloric identity forms the most enduring, natural and unshakable foundation of Azerbaijan-Turkey relations. This identity is not only a cultural heritage from the past but also an active, living phenomenon that continues to strengthen spiritual and social bonds between the people (Mammadli, 2017).

5. Modern cultural and ideological convergence

In the contemporary era, the cultural and ideological convergence between Azerbaijan and Turkey continues the historical and ethnic bonds while also becoming a key dimension of strategic cooperation against the backdrop of global geopolitical processes. Since the early 21st century, Azerbaijan-Turkey relations have developed intensively not only in political and economic spheres but also in cultural, ideological, informational and social fields. This convergence is evident both at the state policy level and across all layers of society.

One of the most significant aspects of modern cultural integration is cooperation in education. Thousands of Azerbaijani students study at Turkish universities, while Turkish educational institutions and lyceums operate in Azerbaijan. This exchange fosters closer mutual understanding, preserves shared cultural values and strengthens Turkic identity among new generations. Educational programs also act as strategic channels for the ideological alignment of future political and intellectual elites.

Media and information exchanges represent another major area of integration. Turkish TV series are widely viewed in Azerbaijan, producing deep cultural impact.

Azerbaijani audiences gain closer familiarity with the Turkish language, family model and social behaviors. Conversely, Azerbaijani music, literature and art are widely disseminated in Turkey. This mutual influence constitutes not only cultural exchange but also the social foundation of ideological convergence.

A crucial element of ideological cooperation is the revival of Pan-Turkic ideas and the unity of the Turkic world. The establishment of the Organization of Turkic States represents a prominent modern manifestation of this process. Azerbaijan and Turkey play leading roles within this organization, prioritizing shared language, history, culture and political interests. Projects such as a unified alphabet, joint media platforms and common educational programs institutionalize this ideological rapprochement.

Cultural convergence is also strongly reflected in the arts and literature. Azerbaijani authors are published in Turkey, while Turkish writers gain wide readership in Azerbaijan. Similarities in poetic language, imagery and social themes demonstrate the parallel development of the two literatures. Joint projects in theater and cinema further illustrate that both people share the same cultural and emotional codes.

6. Contemporary cultural and ideological convergence: modern manifestations

One of the strongest expressions of ideological convergence between Azerbaijan and Turkey was demonstrated during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In the 2020 Patriotic War, Turkey's unequivocal support for Azerbaijan went beyond politics it reflected the shared historical memory, national solidarity and ideological unity of the two people in the modern era. The slogan "One nation, two states" became a tangible political force and further strengthened emotional bonds between the societies.

Economic projects have also reinforced cultural and ideological alignment. Initiatives such as TANAP, TAP, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway have not only enhanced economic cooperation but also created an ideological unity, reshaping the geoeconomic map of the Turkic world. These collaborations demonstrate how the shared destiny of the two people is transformed into economic power in the contemporary era.

The tourism sector plays an important role in renewing cultural ties. Millions of Turkish and Azerbaijani citizens travel to each other's countries annually, strengthening everyday social connections, highlighting cultural similarities and fostering empathy. Cultural events - including film and music festivals, folklore programs and shared national celebrations - accelerate the process of cultural integration between the two nations.

Youth initiatives also contribute to deepening integration. Joint youth projects, sports competitions, student forums and innovation programs enable future generations to develop within a shared ideological environment. This underscores that culture is not merely a heritage of the past but a living system shaping the future.

Another significant aspect of modern cultural convergence is the coordination of religious and spiritual activities. Congresses, religious celebrations and the promotion of South-West Turkic religious-philosophical symbols strengthen spiritual unity. Cooperation between the Directorate of Religious Affairs of Turkey and the Caucasus Muslims Office ensures the parallel development of religious identity in both countries.

In conclusion, in the modern era, cultural and ideological convergence between Azerbaijan and Turkey has been systematically structured. Historical unity is reinforced through modern institutions and social mechanisms. Shared language, religion, history

and culture naturally unite the two people, while contemporary political and economic cooperation makes this unity more durable and strategic. This process indicates that both intergovernmental relations and societal bonds will deepen further in the future (Hajiyeu, 2020).

7. Conclusion

The relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey are considered a unique example in the world's political and cultural history. The main factors determining the strength of these relations - common language, shared religion, shared history, ethnic roots and cultural identity - have developed over centuries and remain relevant in the modern era. An analysis of historical processes shows that the ties between Azerbaijan and Turkey are not based solely on geographic proximity or contemporary political interests; rather, they reflect a deeper and more profound manifestation of ethnic and cultural unity.

The historical roots examined in the first chapter demonstrate that the spread of Oghuz tribes into the Caucasus and Anatolia laid the foundation for the ethnic formation of both people. States such as the Seljuks, Kara Koyunlu, Aq Qoyunlu, Safavids and Ottomans shaped the political memory of both Azerbaijan and Anatolia and this memory developed in parallel over centuries. As a result, despite passing through various historical stages, the common identity between Azerbaijan and Turkey has never weakened; on the contrary, it has grown stronger.

As discussed in the second chapter, the shared language and ethnic identity serve as a unifying force in the cultural and social life of the two people. The Azerbaijani and Turkish languages, both belonging to the Oghuz branch, ensure closeness both functionally and spiritually. Folklore, epics, oral creativity, the ashik tradition and poetic practices have further strengthened this linguistic unity, serving as a cultural bridge between the people.

The shared religious and spiritual identity explored in the third chapter represents another deep layer of relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey. The adoption of Islam shaped the worldview of both people according to the same principles and particularly the influence of the Sufi tradition strengthened spiritual integration between Anatolia and Azerbaijan. Figures such as Mevlana, Haji Bektash Veli, Yunus Emre, Nasimi and Fuzuli hold the same place in the shared spiritual memory of both people.

The cultural and folkloric identity highlighted in the fourth chapter is the artistic expression of this shared spirituality. Common epics like *The Book of Dede Korkut* and *Koroglu*, similar wedding and ceremonial traditions, folk games, music and dance culture and shared holidays such as Novruz demonstrate that both people possess the same cultural codes. This cultural closeness is not only a legacy of the past but also an actively lived common cultural system today.

In the fifth chapter, the modern cultural and ideological rapprochement is analyzed in detail, showing that Azerbaijan and Turkey have further strengthened their shared identity.

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