

No. 8 Cultural and other relations - Mapping Central Asia's relations with other Asian states

Main editor(s): Gussarova, Anna; Andžāns, Māris

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POLICY PAPER

No. 8 Cultural and other relations Mapping Central Asia's relations with other Asian states

September 2018



Main editor(s): A. Gussarova, CAISS (Kazakhstan)¹, M. Andžāns, LIIA (Latvia)

Contributor(s): A. Balcer and A. Legieć, WiseEuropa (Poland), N. Momosheva and Y. Berenaliyev, KNU (Kyrgyzstan), V. Nouwens, L. Bos, and R. Pantucci, RUSI (United Kingdom)



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¹ Corresponding editor: Anna Gussarova, e-mail: gussarova.anna@caiss.expert

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Executive Summary

Cultural relations between Central Asian and the other Asian states (defined here as India, Japan, South Korea, Iran and Turkey) mostly transpire through classic and modern culture imports, shared historical narrative, and cooperation in education. South Korea, Iran and Turkey have particular historical links, established through diaspora and linguistic ties. There are few shared cultural touch-points to speak of, and there is a lack of comment on human rights or other values.

Nevertheless, that has not prevented the identified powers investing in cultural relationships with the Central Asian states. The popularity and reach of the Asian countries’ cinematic industries into Central Asia is extensive. Countries have likewise sought to forge cultural ties by establishing cultural centres and funding educational institutions and scholarships. The presence of foreign media outlets in these Central Asian countries is significantly lower, leaving a more open space to non-Chinese or Russian sources of information and media.

It is unclear to what extent this has an impact on political relationships. Overall, there are few close or intimate leadership links between the countries. Likewise, diaspora seem to do little in bringing significant value to bilateral relationships.

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to outline the cultural relationship between Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan) and other key Asian players in the region (India, Japan, Iran, Turkey and South Korea).

The mapping of these relationships has been undertaken in a variety of categories: shared identity and values; leadership links; foreign media outlets operating; cultural influence; diasporas; and financial support to cultural activities and people-to-people cooperation.

Information collected as part of this paper was found through open sources, largely online. Desk-based research was conducted primarily in English, but also drawing on regional linguistic material (direct and translated). The period examined for this paper is 2007-2017, so as to capture the most recent developments in the region. Information beyond this scope has been included where relevant.

This paper identifies over-arching trends between Asian and Central Asian countries in the cultural sphere. In addition, the findings of this mapping exercise will provide a comprehensive basis for the following analysis of the Asian cultural relations with Central Asian countries and policy recommendations for future priorities for European policy making vis-à-vis Central Asia to be elaborated in the course of the H2020 project "SEnECA – Strengthening and Energizing EU-Central Asia Relations".

2. Mapping Central Asia - rest of Asia cultural relations

2.1. South Korea

From the value perspective, the "Asian" emphasis on social collective and family relationships instead of western models of individualism are valued in South Korea and Central Asian countries alike.²

Following Stalin's death, Korean diaspora rose through the ranks of various national institutions in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, being elected to parliament, appointed to ministerial posts, and made generals in the Soviet armed forces.³

There are no Korean foreign media outlets in the Central Asian countries, or Central Asian ones in Korea. Korean dramas, K-Pop, and Korean radio broadcasts are highly popular in Kazakhstan,⁴ Uzbekistan,⁵ and Tajikistan. In Kazakhstan, Korean dramas are translated into the Kazakh language and shown with Russian subtitles.⁶ Uzbekistan holds 24 Korean centres, eleven of them in and around Tashkent and 13 of them located outside the capital.⁷

Koreans from the Soviet Far East were deported in great numbers to Kazakhstan (approximately 100,000), Uzbekistan (approximately 74,000) and Kyrgyzstan under Joseph Stalin.⁸ In 2012, it was

² Dr. Balbina Hwang, "A New Horizon in South Korea-Central Asia Relations: the ROK Joins the 'Great Game'", Korea Compass, Korea Economic Institute, last modified in December 2012, keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/kei_koreacompass_template_balbinahwang.pdf

³ German Kim, "Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan: question of topical problems for minorities in post-Soviet space," accessed June 19, 2018, <http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/publicn/89/contents-63.pdf>

⁴ Chong Jin Oh, "Diaspora nationalism: the case of ethnic Korean minority in Kazakhstan and its lessons from the Crimean Tatars in Turkey," Nationalities Papers -The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity 34, Issue 2 (2006): 111-129.

⁵ Ji-eon Lee, "'Korean Wave' in Uzbekistan: its popularity and strategy for sustainability," Advanced Science Letters 22, No.11 (November 2016), 3676-3679.

⁶ Sogaku Miyamoto, "South Korea's energy diplomacy towards Central Asia," in SAIS U.S.-Korea Yearbook 2009 (Washington: Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, 2010); Svetlana Son, "Korean diaspora of Kazakhstan: new changes - new language perspectives," accessed Jun 19, 2018, <http://repository.enu.kz/bitstream/handle/123456789/6378/Korean-Diaspora.pdf>

⁷ Petr Kokaisl, "Koreans in Central Asia: a different Korean nation," Asian Ethnicity (February 2018).

⁸ German Kim, "Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan: question of topical problems for minorities in post-Soviet space," accessed June 19, 2018, <http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/publicn/89/contents-63.pdf>; Chong Jin Oh, "Diaspora nationalism: the case of ethnic Korean

estimated that more than 107,000 ethnic Koreans lived in Kazakhstan,⁹ around 6,000 in Tajikistan,¹⁰ around 19,000 in Kyrgyzstan,¹¹ and around 3,000 in Turkmenistan.¹² Latest numbers from Uzbekistan are from 2010, when it was estimated that 200,000 ethnic Koreans lived in the country,¹³ making it the fourth largest Korean diaspora community after China, the U.S., and Japan.¹⁴ Korean diaspora living in former Soviet states refer to themselves as 'Korvo Saram'.

In 2003, it was estimated that 80 percent of ethnic Koreans living in Kazakhstan resided in cities.¹⁵ A 2012 study cited polling that suggested 90 percent of ethnic Koreans in Kazakhstan regard themselves above all else as citizens of Kazakhstan and estimated that approximately 2,000 South Koreans had immigrated to Kazakhstan since the fall of communism.¹⁶

Ethnic Koreans began to leave Central Asia for South Korea in the late 1980s, but few of them made the move, having come originally from the Soviet Far East, not South Korea.¹⁷ Seoul has taken an ambivalent stance on their repatriation, permitting it yet restricting the access of 'Soviet Koreans' to the South Korean labour market. As of 2004 'Soviet Koreans' were the second largest group among undocumented workers in South Korea.¹⁸

Seoul has established some cultural programmes and financed others in an attempt to revive a Korean cultural identity among the heavily Russified Koreans of Central Asia whose distinct identity has given rise to the term "Soviet Korean".¹⁹ Citing the composition of the Almaty Korean Education Center's student body, a 2012 article suggested that the Korean language is studied by more ethnic Kazakhs than ethnic Koreans in Kazakhstan,²⁰ figures from 2001 found that few ethnic Koreans in Kazakhstan spoke Korean on a daily basis, though some understood it.²¹ There are significant educational exchanges between South Korea and Kazakhstan; in 2012 the Almaty-based Kazakh Ablai

minority in Kazakhstan and its lessons from the Crimean Tatars in Turkey," *Nationalities Papers -The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 34, Issue 2 (2006): 111-129.

⁹ Dr. Balbina Hwang, "A New Horizon in South Korea-Central Asia Relations: the ROK Joins the 'Great Game'", Korea Compass, Korea Economic Institute, last modified in December 2012, keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/kei_koreacompass_template_balbinahwang.pdf

¹⁰ Matteo Fumagalli, "South Korea's engagement in Central Asia from the end of the Cold War to the 'New Asia Initiative,'" *Journal of Northeast Asian History* 9, No.2 (2012): 67-97.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Sogaku Miyamoto, "South Korea's energy diplomacy towards Central Asia," in *SAIS U.S.-Korea Yearbook 2009* (Washington: Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, 2010): 48-49.

¹⁴ Dr. Balbina Hwang, "A New Horizon in South Korea-Central Asia Relations: the ROK Joins the 'Great Game'", Korea Compass, Korea Economic Institute, last modified in December 2012, keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/kei_koreacompass_template_balbinahwang.pdf

¹⁵ German Kim, "Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan: question of topical problems for minorities in post-Soviet space," accessed June 19, 2018, <http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/publicntn/89/contents-63.pdf>

¹⁶ Svetlana Son, "Korean diaspora of Kazakhstan: new changes - new language perspectives," accessed Jun 19, 2018, <http://repository.enu.kz/bitstream/handle/123456789/6378/Korean-Diaspora.pdf>

¹⁷ Matteo Fumagalli, "South Korea's engagement in Central Asia from the end of the Cold War to the 'New Asia Initiative,'" *Journal of Northeast Asian History* 9, No.2 (2012):80.

¹⁸ Seunghyun Seo, "A comparative study of the Korean, German, and Polish diasporas in the Russian Far East and Central Asia and the results of repatriation to their homelands," *Asian Social Science* 6, No.4 (2010): 66.

¹⁹ Matteo Fumagalli, "Growing inter-Asian connections: links, rivalries, and challenges in South Korean-Central Asian relations," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 7 (2016): 40; German Kim, "Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan: question of topical problems for minorities in post-Soviet space," accessed June 19, 2018, <http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/publicntn/89/contents-63.pdf>

²⁰ Svetlana Son, "Korean diaspora of Kazakhstan: new changes - new language perspectives," accessed Jun 19, 2018, <http://repository.enu.kz/bitstream/handle/123456789/6378/Korean-Diaspora.pdf>

²¹ Chong Jin Oh, "Diaspora nationalism: the case of ethnic Korean minority in Kazakhstan and its lessons from the Crimean Tatars in Turkey," *Nationalities Papers -The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 34, Issue 2 (2006): 122.

Khan University of International Relations and World Languages alone had 17 partner universities in South Korea.²²

Korea's Culture, Sports, and Tourism Ministry has organized festivals of Korean culture in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.²³ Uzbekistan's Tashkent University of Information Technologies has more than ten partner universities in South Korea, and Seoul has supported the creation of a House of Korean Culture and Art in Uzbekistan.²⁴ Turkmenistan used the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of its foreign relations to promote Turkmen culture abroad.²⁵

2.2. Japan

There are no Japanese foreign media outlets in the Central Asian countries, or Central Asian ones in Japan. Kazakhstan's capital, Astana, was designed by Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa.²⁶ A Kazakh-Japanese Centre for Human Resource Development was established in the early 2000s; it is now based in Almaty, on the campus of Narxoz University, and holds events on Japanese culture and Japanese language and calligraphy classes.²⁷ An Uzbek-Japanese Centre for Human Resource Development was established in Tashkent in 2000; it organizes Japanese language classes, professional development and IT courses, and cultural events.²⁸ In 2011, it received a monthly average of 5,933 visitors.²⁹ A Kyrgyz-Japanese Centre for Human Resource Development was set up in Bishkek in 2003.³⁰ The Japanese language is also increasingly studied in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, but as of 2014 there was no joint centre for human resource development facilitating cultural exchange.³¹ There are no leadership links between Japan and the Central Asian countries.

In late 2009, there was a total of 400 Japanese citizens (excluding diplomatic personnel) living in the region.³² Japan's embassy in Kazakhstan helps organize days of Japanese culture,³³ as does the Kazakh-Japanese Center for Human Resource Development, while Japan's government has supported Kazakh artists touring Japan.³⁴

²² Svetlana Son, "Korean diaspora of Kazakhstan: new changes - new language perspectives," accessed Jun 19, 2018, <http://repository.enu.kz/bitstream/handle/123456789/6378/Korean-Diaspora.pdf>

²³ Sogaku Miyamoto, "South Korea's energy diplomacy towards Central Asia," in SAIS U.S.-Korea Yearbook 2009 (Washington: Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, 2010).

²⁴ "Bilateral relations," Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the Republic of Korea, accessed June 19, 2018, <http://uzbekistan.or.kr/bilateral-relations/>

²⁵ "Culture," Embassy of Turkmenistan – Republic of Korea - Seoul, accessed June 19, 2018, <https://korea.tmembassy.gov.tm/en/turkmenistan/culture>

²⁶ B. Bryan Barber, "Far, yet so near: normativity in Japan's diplomacy with the Central Asian republics," *Asian Affairs* 45, No.1 (2018): 25.

²⁷ Zhanna Shayakhmetova, "Culture centre brings Kazakhstan and Japan closer, promotes Japanese traditions, language learning," *The Astana Times*, last modified November 17, 2017, <https://astanatimes.com/2017/11/cultural-centre-brings-kazakhstan-and-japan-closer-promotes-japanese-traditions-language-learning/>

²⁸ "Home," Uzbeksko-Yaponskij Tsent, accessed June 19, 2018, <https://www.ujc.uz/>

²⁹ Timur Dadabaev, "Japan's search for its Central Asian policy: between idealism and pragmatism," *Asian Survey* 53, No.3 (2013): 529.

³⁰ "Kyrgyz Republic-Japan Center for Human Development Implements a Joint Business Course in Neighboring Tajikistan," Japan International Cooperation Agency, accessed June 19, 2018, https://www.jica.go.jp/english/news/field/2014/140827_01.html

³¹ Olga Dobrinskaya, "'Japan's soft power' in Central Asia," Center for Strategic Assessment and Forecasts, last modified January 30, 2014, <http://csef.ru/en/politica-i-geopolitica/491/myagkaya-sila-yaponii-v-stranah-czentralnoj-azii-5100>

³² Lutfullah Mangi, "The political and economic strategy of Japan towards Central Asia," accessed June 19, 2018, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/145121/The%20Political%20and%20Economic%20Strategy%20of%20Japan%20towards%20Central%20Asia.pdf>: 9

³³ Zhanna Shayakhmetova, "Culture centre brings Kazakhstan and Japan closer, promotes Japanese traditions, language learning," *The Astana Times*, last modified November 17, 2017, <https://astanatimes.com/2017/11/cultural-centre-brings-kazakhstan-and-japan-closer-promotes-japanese-traditions-language-learning/>

³⁴ "Cultural and humanitarian cooperation," Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Japan, accessed June 19, 2018, <http://mfa.gov.kz/en/tokyo/content-view/kulturno-gumanitarnoe-sotrudnicestvo>

The Uzbek-Japanese Centre for Human Resource Development and the Kyrgyz-Japanese Centre for Human Resource Development are supported by the governments of the two countries, and the Japanese government has subsidized study at institutions of higher education in Japan for Uzbek nationals.³⁵

2.3. India

There are no Indian foreign media outlets in the Central Asian countries, or Central Asian ones in India. There is an Indian Cultural Centre in Astana since 2007, after it moved from Almaty, where it had been based since 1994. The Centre promotes yoga, dance, Hindi studies, and Bollywood films,³⁶ which are all highly popular in Kazakhstan.³⁷ It also hosts performances by both Indian and Kazakh musicians.³⁸ Indian and Kazakh cultural days have been celebrated by the two countries.³⁹ Kazakh folk dance and music is also popular in India.⁴⁰

Indian music and Bollywood films are highly popular in Tajikistan, as is the study of Hindi-Urdu; by one estimate, the annual number of Indian films translated into the Tajik language is just shy of that of Iranian films.⁴¹ An Indian Cultural Centre was inaugurated at the Indian Embassy in Dushanbe in 2003; it holds dance, yoga, and Hindi classes.⁴²

Bollywood films are highly popular in Uzbekistan, to such an extent that one Pakistani newspaper declared “the fall of Uzbekistani cinema” and reported that Uzbekistan's government was contemplating the aggressive promotion of Uzbek films over Indian films.⁴³ In Tashkent the Lal Bahadur Shastri Centre for Indian Culture, run by the governmental Council for Cultural Relations, holds yoga events and Hindi lessons. Hindi is taught at many educational institutions in Uzbekistan, and Uzbek Radio has broadcast in Hindi for more than 50 years.⁴⁴

A Centre for Indian Studies at Osh State University in Osh, Kyrgyzstan was set up in 1997 but closed in 2010 amid unrest. An Indian studies centre named after Mahatma Gandhi was opened at Bishkek Humanities University in 1997.⁴⁵ Kyrgyzstan's literature commands great interest in India,⁴⁶ while Indian cinema is highly popular in Kyrgyzstan, with a number of Indian film festivals held over the past decade.⁴⁷

³⁵ “Sotrudnichestvo v kul'turno-gumanitarnoy sfere,” Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Japan, <http://japan.mfa.uz/ru/cooperation/cultural-sphere/>

³⁶ “Indian Cultural Centre,” Embassy of India – Astana, Kazakhstan, accessed May 31, 2018, <http://www.indembastana.in/page/icc/>

³⁷ Mushtaq A. Kaw, *Central Asia in Retrospect and Prospect* (Readworthy Publications Pvt Ltd: 2010), 369.

³⁸ “India-Kazakhstan relations,” Ministry of External Affairs – Government of India, last modified August 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Bilateral_Brief_India_Kazakhstan_Aug_2017.pdf

³⁹ “Cultural and People-to-People Cooperation,” Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in India, accessed June 19, 2018, <http://mfa.gov.kz/en/delhi/content-view/kulturno-gumanitarnoe-sotrudnicestvo-10>

⁴⁰ “India-Kazakhstan relations,” Ministry of External Affairs – Government of India, last modified August 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Bilateral_Brief_India_Kazakhstan_Aug_2017.pdf

⁴¹ Sanjay Sharmal, “Central Asia is best place to host centenary of Indian cinema next year,” *The Times of India*, last modified April 1, 2012, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chandigarh/Central-Asia-is-best-place-to-host-centenary-of-Indian-cinema-next-year/articleshow/12494040.cms>

⁴² “India-Tajikistan relations,” Ministry of External Affairs – Government of India, last modified January 2016, https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Tajikistan_Jan_2016_english.pdf

⁴³ Maha Mussadaq, “Bollywood calling: the fall of Uzbekistani cinema,” *The Express Tribune*, last modified May 8, 2011, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/161829/bollywood-calling-the-fall-of-uzbekistani-cinema/>

⁴⁴ “India-Uzbekistan relations,” Ministry of External Affairs – Government of India, last modified 2013, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Uzbekistan.pdf>

⁴⁵ U. Orakbayeva and Zh. Medeubayeva, “Historical and cultural links between Kyrgyzstan and India” (2016):110-111, http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/119852/9/09_chapter%204.pdf

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 109.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 113.

As of December 2016 there were 5,500 'non-resident Indians' and 250 persons of Indian origin in Kazakhstan.⁴⁸ A 2017 document estimated that there were 7,000 'non-resident Indians' and persons of Indian origin in Kazakhstan, 2,400 of them medicine students and 3,200 of them construction workers involved in the construction of Abu Dhabi Plaza in Astana.⁴⁹ Similarly, in December 2016, there were 590 'non-resident Indians' and 20 persons of Indian origin in Tajikistan,⁵⁰ 650 'non-resident Indians' and 47 persons of Indian origin in Uzbekistan,⁵¹ 4,786 'non-resident Indians' and 28 persons of Indian origin in Kyrgyzstan⁵² (many of them medicine students due to cheaper tuition costs),⁵³ and 309 'non-resident Indians' and no persons of Indian origin in Turkmenistan⁵⁴.

In October 2016, the Indian Ministry of Culture supported a festival of Indian culture in Kazakhstan.⁵⁵ As of 2017, more than 200 Kazakh nationals had received scholarships for study at higher education institutions in India offered by the Council for Cultural Relations.⁵⁶

As of early 2016, more than 1,000 Tajik nationals had taken advantage of government scholarships for professional training and study at institutions of higher education in India offered by, respectively, the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Program and Council for Cultural Relations.⁵⁷ The Indian government's Council for Cultural Relations offers 20 scholarships per year to Uzbek nationals for study at higher education institutions in India.⁵⁸

India's government has promoted the study of yoga and the Hindi language in Kyrgyzstan, materially supported Kyrgyz artists touring in India,⁵⁹ and held days of Kyrgyz culture in India.⁶⁰ The Council for Cultural Relations offers Kyrgyz nationals scholarships for study at higher education institutions in India, and the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Program similarly offers scholarships for professional training in India.⁶¹ Turkmenistan's government has supported festivals of Turkmen culture in India; India has done the same for festivals of Indian culture in Turkmenistan. In 2015, a Centre of Yoga and Traditional Medicine was inaugurated in Ashgabat with New Delhi's support.⁶²

⁴⁸ "Population of Overseas Indians," Ministry of External Affairs – Government of India, last modified December 2016, <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/NRIs-and-PIOs.pdf>

⁴⁹ "India-Kazakhstan relations," Ministry of External Affairs – Government of India, last modified August 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Bilateral_Brief_India_Kazakhstan_Aug_2017.pdf

⁵⁰ "Population of Overseas Indians," Ministry of External Affairs – Government of India, last modified December 2016, <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/NRIs-and-PIOs.pdf>

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Subhash Kumar Baitha, "India-Kyrgyzstan relations: future prospects and challenges," *International Journal of Applied Social Science* 2, No.9-10 (2015): 316-317.

⁵⁴ "Population of Overseas Indians," Ministry of External Affairs – Government of India, last modified December 2016, <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/NRIs-and-PIOs.pdf>

⁵⁵ "Festival of India in Kazakhstan," Ministry of Culture – Government of India, last accessed June 19, 2018, <http://www.indiaculture.nic.in/festival-india-kazakhstan>

⁵⁶ "India-Kazakhstan relations," Ministry of External Affairs – Government of India, last modified August 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Bilateral_Brief_India_Kazakhstan_Aug_2017.pdf

⁵⁷ "India-Tajikistan relations," Ministry of External Affairs – Government of India, last modified January 2016, https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Tajikistan_Jan_2016_english.pdf

⁵⁸ "India-Uzbekistan relations," Ministry of External Affairs – Government of India, last modified 2013, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Uzbekistan.pdf>

⁵⁹ Subhash Kumar Baitha, "India-Kyrgyzstan relations: future prospects and challenges," *International Journal of Applied Social Science* 2, No. 9-10 (2015): 316.

⁶⁰ U. Orakbayeva and Zh. Medeubayeva, "Historical and cultural links between Kyrgyzstan and India" (2016): 112, http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/119852/9/09_chapter%204.pdf

⁶¹ Ibid, 110.

⁶² "Joint statement between Turkmenistan and India during the prime minister's visit to Turkmenistan," Ministry of External Affairs – Government of India, last modified July 11, 2015, http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/25456/Joint_Statement_between_Turkmenistan_and_India_during_the_Prime_Ministers_visit_to_Turkmenistan

2.4. Turkey

Turkey and the countries of Central Asia have common historical, linguistic, religious and cultural ties. Most of the peoples of the region speak Turkic languages, with the exception of Tajikistan, where the Persian language predominates. It allows Turkey to talk about a “single Turkic world” and claim leadership in the region, promoting the idea of pan-Turkism.

Turkey has led the Summits of Turkic Speaking Countries' Heads of States, an annual forum held since 1992 that is designed to improve cooperation between Turkish-speaking countries.⁶³ To this end, the Nakhichevan Treaty was signed between Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkey in 2009, which laid the groundwork for the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (Turkic Council) with a general secretariat in Istanbul.⁶⁴ In April 2018, Uzbekistan indicated its intention to join the Council in future – the Council is currently chaired by the President of Kyrgyzstan Sooronbai Jeenbekov, and met recently in September 2018 to discuss deepening economic and trade cooperation between member states, particularly on the development of land transport routes between Central Asia and the EU.⁶⁵

The Turkish International Cooperation and Development Administration (TIKA) under the Office of the Prime Minister of Turkey was established in 1992 with the purpose of providing technical assistance for developing countries and establishing relations with them in areas of economy, trade, technology, culture, education and social development through implementation of projects and programs by TIKA.⁶⁶ The projects of TIKA include all countries of Central Asia. In providing technical assistance and implementing cooperation projects, TIKA attaches particular importance to the national features, social and cultural characteristics of the country and the use of the experience of these countries.

Among the projects of recipient countries, preference is given to projects in the field of human resource development and technical assistance. The projects and programs implemented by the TIKA Office can be divided into two parts: technical assistance and cooperation. TIKA continues its activities, providing social, financial and, mainly, technical assistance. Technical assistance includes training programs, the provision of equipment and specialist services. In addition, TIKA continues to implement cooperation projects, the purpose of which is to develop bilateral relations in the sphere of culture.⁶⁷

In Central Asia, Turkish TV channels are shown through satellite and cable TV. There are no newspapers published in Turkish in the countries of Central Asia. “The International Organization of Turkic Culture” (TURKSOY) issues special magazine “Turkic World” four times a year in Turkish and Russian languages.

In 1993, the Ministers of Culture of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Turkey, established a special organization in the sphere of culture – the “International Organization of Turkic Culture” (TURKSOY) with the aim of reviving spiritual ties between Turkic people. To date, TURKSOY members are all independent Turkic language states: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan. The headquarters of TURKSOY are located in Ankara (Turkey). The official languages of the organization are Turkish, English and Russian. TURKSOY

⁶³ “Turkey’s Relations With Central Asian Republics,” Republic of Turkey - Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed June 19, 2018, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-relations-with-central-asian-republics.en.mfa

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ “Home,” Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, accessed June 19, 2018, <http://www.tika.gov.tr/en>

⁶⁷ “Central Asia and Caucasus - Projects and Activities,” Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, accessed June 19, 2018, <http://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/2016/INGILIZCE%20SITE%20ESERLER/TANITIM%20BRO%20C5%9E%20C3%9CRLER%20C4%B0/PDF/Central%20Asia%20and%20Caucasus%20-%20Projects%20and%20Activities.pdf>

works on the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the Turkic peoples. In particular, work is underway to recreate historical and cultural monuments, study folklore, traditions and customs, as well as preserve the historical, cultural, architectural and archaeological monuments of the Turkic peoples.⁶⁸

The Yunus Emre Institute was opened in Astana (Kazakhstan) in March 2010. The center introduces the culture, art and history of Turkey, and teaches Turkish. The Institute also translates Kazakh books into Turkish. Turkey pays great attention to the development of ties in education. But the policy of Turkization and Islamization has led either to the closure of educational institutions, or to a transfer of their functions to local ministries of education. Most of the joint educational institutions were opened in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. However, after the coup attempt of 2016, many of them were accused of relations with Fethullah Gülen by the Turkish side, which led to the change in their status.

In Kazakhstan today there are 27 Kazakh-Turkish lyceums in different cities and one college in Taraz.⁶⁹ In the city of Turkestan (Kazakhstan) the Turkish-Kazakh International University named after Khoja Ahmed Yassawi operates, where the training is conducted in Kazakh, Turkish, Russian and English. The contingent of students is about 10,000 students, undergraduates and doctoral students (including more than 1,000 students from Turkic-speaking countries).⁷⁰

In Kyrgyzstan, there is a network of Kyrgyz-Turkish educational institutions – 16 lyceums, six schools, one Ataturk-Alatoo University, where more than 11,000 students study.⁷¹ Also on the basis of the interstate agreement in 1995 the Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University was established, in which about 6,000 students study.⁷²

In 1993, 65 Turkish educational institutions were opened in Uzbekistan. However, in 1999 they were almost all closed. In 2008, Uzbekistan annulled all agreements with Turkey in the sphere of education. However, after President Erdogan's visit to Uzbekistan in May 2018, the situation changed and Uzbek-Turkish relations have normalized.

In Tajikistan, until August 2015, there were six Tajik-Turkish lyceums, which were completely transferred later to the Tajik side. In Turkmenistan, 14 Turkmen-Turkish secondary schools operated, as well as the Turkish primary school, the educational centre "Bashkent" and the International Turkmen-Turkish University, whose branches were in all regional centres. In August 2011, the authorities of Turkmenistan closed Turkish schools. In 2016, the International Turkmen-Turkish University, established in 1994, was transformed into the University of Engineering Technologies of Turkmenistan named after Oguz Khan. Turkey conducts a wide scholarship program "Scholarships of Turkey" for students from Central Asia.⁷³

The Turkish soft power in the region was gravely weakened by internal political struggles erupting in Turkey between president Erdogan and Fethullah Gülen, a conservative preacher who is very active in promoting Turkish education abroad. His followers became victims of massive persecution by the Turkish authorities. In consequence, many Turkish private Gülen schools were closed or experienced serious administrative problems.

⁶⁸ "Home," Turksoy. International Organization of Turkic Culture, accessed June 19, 2018, <https://www.turksoy.org/en>

⁶⁹ "Home," Bilim-Innovation. International educational fund, accessed June 19, 2018, <https://bil-edu.kz/en/>

⁷⁰ "History of the University", Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, accessed June 19, 2018, <http://ayu.edu.kz/en/about/history>

⁷¹ "Home," El aralık "Capat" bilim berüü mekemesi, accessed June 19, 2018, <http://sebat.edu.kg>

⁷² "Home," Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University, accessed June 19, 2018, <http://intl.manas.edu.kg/en>

⁷³ "Home," Türkiye Burslari, accessed June 19, 2018, <https://www.turkiyeburslari.gov.tr/en/>

Since 2002, Turkey has intensified its interaction with the Meskhetian Turks, ethnic Turks, refugees from Georgia, deported to Central Asia during the Soviet period. Turkish embassies and consulates in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan support the Meskhetian Turks by granting them Turkish citizenship and providing scholarships for school graduates to study at Turkish universities.

Turkey pays much attention to religion. The Turkish side finances the construction of mosques – the largest mosque in Central Asia was built in Bishkek with the money of a Turkish religious foundation with the support of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Turkey.

2.5. Iran

The cultural and civilizational relations between Iran and the Central Asian region have a long history. At the beginning of the 1990s, Iran focused on the ethnic and linguistic affinity, having launched an active policy in the region with the culturally close Tajikistan. In contrast to the dominant Turkic people in the region, Tajiks like Iranians, belong to the Indo-European family of languages. But subsequently Iran established relations with all the countries of the region.

There are no leadership links between Iran and the Central Asian countries.

There are no Iranian foreign media outlets in the Central Asian countries, or Central Asian ones in Iran. But the Iranian state radio is broadcasted in Kazakh, Uzbek, Tadjik and Turkmen languages in Iran.⁷⁴ In Kazakhstan, there is an internet portal of the cultural representation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Kazakhstan in Kazakh, Russian and Farsi.⁷⁵ In Kyrgyzstan, there is a news internet portal of the cultural representation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Kyrgyzstan in Kyrgyz and Russian languages.⁷⁶

Cultural and humanitarian policy of Iran in relation to the countries of Central Asia is based on the historical, cultural and religious interaction of the people of Iran and Central Asia. However, the absence of linguistic community with Turkic-speaking ethnic groups of Central Asia region (except Tajikistan) significantly reduces the chances of spiritual interaction and the idea of disseminating and promoting Farsi and traditional Iranian culture does not have absolute priority in the Turkic-speaking area of Central Asian region. The majority of Central Asian Muslims belong to the Sunni branch of Islam, making religious integration problematic with Shia Iran.

There are Iranian cultural centres in Astana, Bishkek, Ashgabat. In 2017 as a result of deterioration of political relations between Iran and Tajikistan cultural representation was closed in Hudjand. The proportion of the permanent Iranian population in the countries of Central Asia is inconsiderable and is not reflected in statistical materials.

Iran provides financial and technical assistance to the offices of Iranian Studies, which exist in many Universities of the region. According to the agreement between the Eurasian National University (Kazakhstan) and the Tabatabai University (Iran), the office of Kazakh studies is planned to be opened in the Tabatabai University.⁷⁷ Days of culture are held with the screening of Iranian films and

⁷⁴ "About us," Pars Today, accessed June 19, 2018, http://parstoday.com/en/about_us

⁷⁵ "Home," Cultural representation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Kazakhstan, Astana, accessed June 19, 2018, <http://fa.astana.icro.ir/>

⁷⁶ "Home," Iran.kg - News portal, accessed June 19, 2018, <http://iran.kg/>

⁷⁷ "Evraziyskiy universitet otkroet kabinet kazakhovedeniya v uiversitete Tabatabai v Tegerane," March 26, 2018, <http://ru.astana.icro.ir/index.aspx?fkeyid=&siteid=471&pageid=40441&newsview=702178>

performances of folklore ensembles. For instance, Days of Iranian Culture are held annually in Turkmenistan.⁷⁸

3. Conclusions

Cultural ties between the five Central Asian countries and Japan, India, Iran, South Korea, and Turkey are shaped by a combination of historical, ethnic and linguistic trends. Of all the Asian countries, Turkey and South Korea seem to have had the greatest cultural links, both financially and historically.

South Korea has in many ways the most comprehensive cultural relations with the region, which is partially founded in ethnic links – considerable numbers of diaspora Koreans live across the region – mostly as a result of forced migrations during Soviet times. Though, by no means a majority anywhere, this community has done very well in the region with numerous individuals rising to positions of affluence and prominence, helping South Korea's image in the region. In addition to this, contemporary Korean culture is popular across the region with South Korean television dramas and K-Pop widely enjoyed.

Japan has very little cultural influence in the region. Japanese culture is enjoyed and technology appreciated, but there is little evidence of this having much wider impact. In contrast to the relations with South Korea, the number of people with Japanese ancestry living in Central Asia is negligible, thus lowering the potential for wider interaction.

India has considerable soft power projection into the region through its cultural exports. Bollywood movies are immensely popular and widely translated, while Yoga Centres and other Indian cultural exports like food are widely enjoyed across the region. This stands in contrast to India's inability to realize its economic or strategic objectives in the region.

Turkey has historically had considerable cultural reach into the region through its shared linguistic and cultural history. The languages of all of the countries except Tajikistan are at root Turkic. This has created a considerable linkage, which Turkey has sought to capitalize on at various points. This has caused some tensions, as well as considerable unfulfilled expectations as Turkey's economy was unable to live up to the cultural promise. It also has to be mentioned that the presence of Turkey has been significantly reduced with the tension over alleged links of Turkish educational institutions to Fethullah Gülen in Central Asia after the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey.

Iran in contrast has a much more limited cultural and linguistic link to the region except with Persian Tajikistan. While the two countries will emphasise their cultural proximity, more recent relations have been marked with considerable tension, putting the role of cultural and linguistic proximity into question. In the immediate post-Soviet period, Iran sought to expand its influence into the region, but was unable to follow through in part due to regional resistance, but also due to differing practices of Islam – the region is majority Sunni in contrast to Shia Iran.

⁷⁸ "В Туркменистане начали знакомится с иранской культурой," TurkmenPortal, accessed June 19, 2018, <https://turkmenportal.com/blog/7653>; "V Turkmenistane proydut Dni kul'tury Irana," TurkmenPortal, accessed June 19, 2018, <https://turkmenportal.com/blog/13370/v-turkmenistane-proidut-dni-kul'tury-irana>

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