

Marking 5 years since Karabakh victory: Turkic resurgence in focus

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NOV 08, 2025



"The geopolitical landscape is increasingly favoring a Turkic resurgence, with the Karabakh War II playing a pivotal role in solidifying the Azerbaijan-Türkiye alliance." (Illustration by Erhan Yalvaç)

Five years ago, the Karabakh victory, strengthening Azerbaijan-Türkiye ties, fueled Turkic resurgence

The dominance of the Ottoman and Safavid Empires in the Balkans and in the region stretching from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea was shaken by the treaties of Karlowitz (1699), Kuçuk Kainardji (1774), Gulistan (1813) and Turkmanchay (1828), and Tsarist Russia's playing a leading role. The Ottoman Empire, withdrawing from its broader territories, lost its economic, political and military impact in the regions. On the other hand, the territory of present-day Azerbaijan, where the Safavid Empire was born, was divided into two parts by the Treaties of Gulistan and Turkmenchay. The First Republic of Azerbaijan, where the Islamic Army of the Caucasus played a key role in liberating the capital, Baku, fell due to the Soviet invasion in 1920.

Nevertheless, Turkic resistance continued and concluded in the proclamation of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1918 and the Republic of Türkiye in 1923. However, the establishment of the Turkic world, which began with the works of pioneering intellectuals, including Ismail Gaspirali, Hasan Bek Zerdabi, Ali Bek Huseynzade and Mehmet Emin Resulzade, was interrupted by the Soviet invasion in 1920 and the Armenian invasion in the 1990s.

From invasion to victory

Azerbaijan regained its independence on the eve of the dissolution of the USSR and the end of the Cold War. However, the restoration of independence after 70 years proved challenging due to the emergence of a separatist movement that developed alongside the national independence movement. Since the First Karabakh War and invasion, the newly independent republic of Azerbaijan lost its sovereignty over the full territory, which has been recognized by international law.

The liberation of occupied territories became the main priority on the political agenda. In that sense, Türkiye stood with Azerbaijan throughout the 1990s on all platforms, closing its borders with Armenia. There were only two requests: that Armenia must end the invasion and that Azerbaijan's territorial integrity must be recognized. These two aims could have only been achieved as a result of the Second Karabakh War, or the 44-Day Patriotic War, which changed the region's geopolitical fate, including in the Turkic world.

During and after the war, Azerbaijan-Türkiye relations within the “one-nation, two-states” principle would promote cooperation among Turkic states. The leaders of Turkic states visited the liberated territories of Azerbaijan. Moreover, they contributed to the restoration of the liberated areas by constructing schools, cultural centers and other facilities that will help establish cultural unity among Turkic states. The Azerbaijani-Turkish alliance has been identified as “one nation, one army,” promoting military cooperation among [member states of the Organisation of Turkic States \(OTS\)](#). Owing to their efforts, member states began discussing the establishment of joint military forces. As Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev highlighted during his speech at the opening ceremony of Karabakh University, the victory not only ended the invasion but also enabled and energized efforts to address and eliminate the traces of colonialism, which would be a key step toward strengthening unity among the Turkic states.

In this context, the liberation of Shusha has been critical. The city, which was established in 1752, is considered Azerbaijan's cultural capital, and without it, the victory in Karabakh would have been incomplete. Its liberation made victory meaningful for the Turkic and Islamic world. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was the first leader to visit Shusha right after the historic victory. Aliyev and Erdoğan signed the historic Shusha declaration on June 15, 2021, which would facilitate the establishment of a secure and peaceful environment in the region and promote cooperation among Turkic states.

Empowering Turkic unity

The idea of the Turkic world emerged in the work of pioneering intellectuals in the late 19th century. However, due to the circumstances of the time, the initiative was interrupted and had to wait 70 years until the Iron Curtain was overthrown. Nevertheless, the Turkish initiative toward rebuilding the Turkic world in the 1990s and the Nakhchivan agreement, signed in 2009, that promoted the establishment of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council), could have been considered a significant step. However, due to the invasion in Karabakh and fragility and dependence in the [military industry](#), the formation of a fully fledged Turkic organization remained incomplete. These challenges have been surpassed today.

As Erdoğan stated at the opening ceremony of the TRT World Forum 2025, states cannot confine themselves to their own territories when faced with challenges that require regional and even global collaboration. In this context, the establishment of the OTS and the active pursuit of its policies by member states marks a historical milestone. The OTS embodies a pursuit of autonomy through economic and military cooperation among member and observer states, rather than functioning solely as a counterbalance to Russia or Western regionalism.

In this context, joint public diplomacy mechanisms and activities have become as crucial as alliance mechanisms. The media platform developed in conjunction with the Shusha Declaration, signed by Türkiye

and Azerbaijan, is being implemented under the coordination of the Baku Communications Advisory Office. This model, created by the Presidency Communications Directorate and the Azerbaijan Presidency and Media Development Agency, is also applicable to the Organisation of Turkic States.

The geopolitical landscape is increasingly favoring a Turkic resurgence, with the Karabakh War II playing a pivotal role in solidifying the Azerbaijan-Türkiye alliance. This strengthened partnership within the OTS has created opportunities to address the legacies of past destructive agreements and lay the groundwork for the broader construction of a Turkic resurgence.

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