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## WASHINGTON SHOULD WORK WITH THE TURKIC STATES

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Earlier this month, thousands of miles from Washington, an important meeting that few U.S. policymakers noticed took place in the historic Silk Road city of Turkistan in southern Kazakhstan. Leaders of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) gathered to discuss a wide range of geopolitical, technology, and economic issues. Washington should take notice.

The OTS is an intergovernmental grouping linking the ethnically Turkic countries of Eurasia. The idea of closer Turkic cooperation was championed by then-Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2006. It was institutionalized in 2009 as the Turkic Council and renamed the Organization of Turkic States in 2021. Today, its full members are Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Turkmenistan, Hungary, and the de facto Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus are observers.

At first glance, the significance of this grouping may not be obvious. A closer look tells a different story. OTS members sit in the heart of the Eurasian landmass, astride some of the world's most important trade and transit routes. They also hold major oil, gas, and critical mineral reserves. Together, the OTS countries and observers represent roughly 175 million people and more than \$2.4 trillion in combined GDP, placing the Turkic world in the same economic weight class as several G20 economies.

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