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KAZAKHSTAN–KYRGYZSTAN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY (2015–2025): THE ROLE OF TURKSOY AND OTHER CULTURAL PLATFORMS

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Abstract. Introduction. The article examines the development of cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan during 2015–2025 and its impact on cooperation between the two countries. In recent years, processes of integration and strategic partnership among Central Asian countries have intensified. In this context, cultural diplomacy has become a key tool for fostering intergovernmental trust and mutual understanding. Cultural ties between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan represent one of the most stable and effective examples in this regard. **Purpose and objectives.** The aim of the study is to analyze the development of cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and to determine its influence on political, cultural, and humanitarian cooperation between the two countries. To achieve this aim, we sought to evaluate the outcomes of cultural diplomacy at both institutional and societal levels, demonstrate its role in strengthening national identity and historical continuity, and provide recommendations for the further development of cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. **Materials and methods.** The material base of the study consisted of official documents, interstate agreements and memoranda, decisions and statements adopted within the framework of TURKSOY and the Organization of Turkic States during 2015–2025. Additionally, official data from the ministries of culture and foreign affairs of both countries, media publications, materials from cultural forums and symposia, as well as scientific articles from Scopus and Web of Science databases were used. The research methodology was based on theoretical and comparative approaches to the analysis of cultural diplomacy. The comparative-historical method allowed for identifying the development dynamics of cultural cooperation and historical continuity between the two countries. The systemic analysis method revealed the structural elements and institutional levels of cultural diplomacy. **Results.** The results of the study demonstrated that cultural diplomacy positively influences regional stability and integration processes within the framework of cultural partnership between Kazakhstan

and Kyrgyzstan. *Conclusion.* The study showed that cultural diplomacy plays a key role in strengthening cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan while preserving national identity and historical continuity.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, TURKSOY, OTS, cultural diplomacy, cooperation.

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ҚАЗАҚСТАН МЕН ҚЫРҒЫЗСТАН АРАСЫНДАҒЫ МӘДЕНИ ДИПЛОМАТИЯ (2015-2025): TURKSOY ЖӘНЕ БАСҚА ДА МӘДЕНИ ПЛАТФОРМАЛАРДЫҢ РӨЛІ

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Аңдатпа. *Kіріспе.* Мақалада 2015–2025 жылдар аралығындағы Қазақстан мен Қырғызстан арасындағы мәдени дипломатияның дамуы мен оның екі ел ынтымақтастығына тигізген ықпалы қарастырылады. Соңғы жылдары Орталық Азия елдері арасында интеграциялық және стратегиялық серіктестік үдерістері жанданды. Бұл процесте мәдени дипломатия — мемлекетаралық сенім мен өзара түсіністікті қалыптастырудың негізгі құралына айналды. Қазақстан мен Қырғызстан арасындағы мәдени байланыстар осы бағыттағы ең тұрақты және нәтижелі тәжірибелердің бірі болып саналады. *Мақсаты мен міндеттері.* Қазақстан мен Қырғызстан арасындағы мәдени дипломатияның дамуын талдау және оның екі ел арасындағы саяси, мәдени және гуманитарлық ынтымақтастыққа тигізген ықпалын анықтау. Осы мақсатқа жету үшін екі ел арасындағы мәдени дипломатияның институционалдық және қоғамдық деңгейдегі нәтижелерін бағалауға, мәдени дипломатияның ұлттық бірегейлік пен тарихи сабақтастықты нығайтудағы рөлін көрсетуге және Қазақстан мен Қырғызстан арасындағы мәдени дипломатияны одан әрі дамытуға бағытталған ұсыныстар беруге тырыстық. *Материалдар мен әдістер.* Зерттеудің материалдық базасын 2015–2025 жылдар аралығындағы Қазақстан мен Қырғызстан арасындағы мәдени ынтымақтастыққа қатысты ресми құжаттар, мемлекетаралық келісімдер мен меморандумдар, ТҮРКСОЙ, Түркі мемлекеттері ұйымы шеңберінде қабылданған шешімдер мен мәлімдемелер құрады. Сонымен қатар, зерттеу барысында екі елдің мәдени саясат жөніндегі министрліктерінің, сыртқы істер ведомстволарының ресми деректері, БАҚ жарияланымдары, мәдени форумдар мен симпозиумдардың материалдары, сондай-ақ Scopus және Web of Science базаларындағы ғылыми мақалалар пайдаланылды. Зерттеу әдіснамасы мәдени дипломатияны талдаудың теориялық және салыстырмалы тәсілдеріне негізделді. Салыстырмалы-тарихи әдіс екі ел арасындағы мәдени ынтымақтастықтың даму динамикасын және тарихи сабақтастығын анықтауға мүмкіндік берді. Жүйелік талдау әдісі арқылы мәдени дипломатияның құрылымдық элементтері мен институционалдық деңгейлері айқындалды. *Нәтижелер.* Мәдени дипломатияның Қазақстан мен Қырғызстан арасындағы мәдени серіктестіктің өңірлік тұрақтылық пен интеграциялық үдерістерге оң әсер еткенін көрсетті. *Қорытынды.* Зерттеу көрсеткендей, мәдени дипломатия Қазақстан мен Қырғызстан арасындағы ынтымақтастықты нығайтып, ұлттық бірегейлік пен тарихи сабақтастықты сақтауда негізгі рөл атқарады.

Кілт сөздер: Қазақстан, Қырғызстан, ТҮРКСОЙ, Түрік кеңесі, мәдени дипломатия, ынтымақтастық.

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КУЛЬТУРНАЯ ДИПЛОМАТИЯ КАЗАХСТАНА И КЫРГЫЗСТАНА (2015–2025): РОЛЬ TURKSOY И ДРУГИХ КУЛЬТУРНЫХ ПЛАТФОРМ

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Аннотация. *Введение.* В статье рассматривается развитие культурной дипломатии между Казахстаном и Кыргызстаном в период с 2015 по 2025 год и её влияние на сотрудничество между двумя странами. В последние годы процессы интеграции и стратегического партнерства между странами Центральной Азии активизировались. В этом процессе культурная дипломатия стала основным инструментом формирования межгосударственного доверия и взаимопонимания. Культурные связи между Казахстаном и Кыргызстаном являются одним из самых стабильных и результативных примеров в этом направлении. *Цель и задачи.* Целью исследования является анализ развития культурной дипломатии между Казахстаном и Кыргызстаном и определение её влияния на политическое, культурное и гуманитарное сотрудничество между двумя странами. Для достижения этой цели мы стремились оценить результаты культурной дипломатии на институциональном и общественном уровнях, показать роль культурной дипломатии в укреплении национальной идентичности и исторической преемственности, а также представить рекомендации по дальнейшему развитию культурной дипломатии между Казахстаном и Кыргызстаном. *Материалы и методы.* Материальной базой исследования стали официальные документы, межгосударственные соглашения и меморандумы, решения и заявления, принятые в рамках ТЮРКСОЙ и Организации тюркских государств в период с 2015 по 2025 год. Кроме того, в ходе исследования использовались официальные данные министерств культуры и внешних дел обеих стран, публикации в СМИ, материалы культурных форумов и симпозиумов, а также научные статьи из баз Scopus и Web of Science. Методология исследования основана на теоретических и сравнительных подходах к анализу культурной дипломатии. Сравнительно-исторический метод позволил определить динамику развития культурного сотрудничества и историческую преемственность между двумя странами. Метод системного анализа выявил структурные элементы и институциональные уровни культурной дипломатии. *Результаты.* Результаты исследования показали, что культурная дипломатия оказывает положительное влияние на региональную стабильность и процессы интеграции в рамках культурного партнерства между Казахстаном и Кыргызстаном. *Заключение.* Исследование показало, что культурная дипломатия играет ключевую роль в укреплении сотрудничества между Казахстаном и Кыргызстаном, сохраняя при этом национальную идентичность и историческую преемственность.

Ключевые слова: Казахстан, Кыргызстан, ТЮРКСОЙ, ОТС, культурная дипломатия, сотрудничество.

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Introduction. Cultural diplomacy can contribute not only to foreign policy but also to domestic objectives at the national level, and it is described as a significant instrument closely associated with presenting a nation's image on the international stage and building a national brand [Mark, 2010: 63]. Regional partnership between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan is acquiring new significance within the context of geopolitical, cultural, and social transformations in Central Asia. Over the past decade, the institutional foundations for expanding cultural and humanitarian cooperation between the two countries have been strengthened, with initiatives aimed at fostering national identity, historical continuity, and the development of a shared Turkic cultural space gaining momentum.

The chronological framework of this study, spanning the years 2015–2025, has been selected because this period represents the most active phase of cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. During this decade, various agreements on cultural, humanitarian, political, and economic cooperation were concluded between the two countries. For instance, in 2015, new agreements on cultural and humanitarian cooperation were signed. Between 2018 and 2020, cultural forums and “Friendship Days” were organized under the auspices of TÜRKSÖY and the Turkic Council. In 2022, cultural and educational partnerships between the two nations reached a new level, culminating in the declaration of the Year of Kazakhstan in Bishkek and the organization of several joint ethnofestivals. During 2023–2025, cultural cooperation was further strengthened through digital diplomacy and new media, resulting in joint projects and the stimulation of cultural initiatives on social media platforms.

Thus, the significant development of practical mechanisms of cultural diplomacy—such as joint festivals, cultural exchanges, literary and creative projects, collaboration among professional artistic groups, and youth programs—between 2015 and 2025 underscores the necessity of a comprehensive scientific analysis of this topic. Moreover, cultural ties between the two states have become an integral component of national policy and external cultural strategy, serving as an important element of “soft power” that reinforces regional stability. Collectively, these factors highlight the scientific and practical relevance of the research topic.

The primary aim of this study is to analyze the trends in cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan during the period 2015–2025 and to identify its contribution to bilateral cooperation. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set:

1. To identify the content and directions of cultural diplomatic initiatives implemented between 2015 and 2025;
2. To assess the impact of cultural ties between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on regional integration, national identity, and the revitalization of historical memory;
3. To develop scientifically grounded recommendations for the further enhancement of cultural diplomacy between the two countries.

The development processes of cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan during 2015–2025 constitute the object of this research. Moreover, the study treats the content, institutions, and mechanisms of cultural diplomacy, as well as its influence on political, cultural, and humanitarian cooperation, as the subject of investigation. In conducting the research, the authors employed empirical data generalization and inductive reasoning techniques to evaluate the role of cultural diplomacy in ensuring regional stability.

Materials and Methods. The empirical basis of the study is composed of official normative documents, bilateral intergovernmental agreements, cultural and humanitarian programs, reports on joint events, and statistical data related to cultural cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan during 2015–2025. In addition, the study utilized official publications and online archives of the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports, and Youth Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as foreign affairs agencies. Information on cultural forums, festivals, exhibitions, literary meetings, and youth exchange programs held in both countries was also considered as supplementary sources.

The methodological foundation of the study is supplemented by contemporary works on the theory of cultural diplomacy, the concept of «soft power» in international relations, regional integration theories, and articles on humanitarian cooperation published in Scopus, Web of Science, and other scholarly databases. The research employed comparative analysis, systemic analysis, content analysis, historical-dynamic, and qualitative methods. Comparative analysis was used to identify similarities and differences in the cultural policies of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Systemic analysis allowed for a comprehensive examination of the structural elements of cultural diplomacy, including institutions, mechanisms, actors, and directions. Content analysis was applied to examine the content of official documents, media materials, and scholarly publications. The historical-dynamic method aimed to reveal the phased character of cultural cooperation between 2015 and 2025. Qualitative analysis was employed to assess the impact of cultural and humanitarian projects on public opinion and national identity. The integration of these methods enabled a comprehensive description of the decade-long development trajectory of cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

A historiographical review has been conducted in the field of research, covering studies on cultural diplomacy in Central Asia as well as the activities of the TÜRKSOY organization. The data indicate that the impact of cultural diplomacy on Kazakhstan–Kyrgyzstan relations has been insufficiently studied. In the scholarly literature, the actual effectiveness of events and projects, as well as their influence on the bilateral relations between the two countries, has not been fully addressed. From this perspective, the topic presents new scientific significance for further research.

Discussion. The selection of the period 2015–2025 for analyzing cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan is based on several objective factors. After 2015, new formats of cultural programs began to develop actively within the framework of the Turkic Council, TÜRKSOY, and other regional institutions, which significantly intensified bilateral humanitarian cooperation. During this period, the two states signed a number of cultural and humanitarian agreements that strengthened official interagency collaboration. Moreover, the number of joint festivals, cultural forums, theatre tours, creative projects, and youth exchange programs increased substantially. The years 2020–2025 were marked by the digitalization of cultural diplomacy, as the pandemic accelerated the transition to online platforms, remote creative cooperation, and virtual cultural events, thereby shaping a new phase in bilateral cultural interaction. Taken together, these factors make 2015–2025 the most appropriate timeframe for comprehensively examining the evolution of Kazakh–Kyrgyz cultural relations.

In many countries, the concepts of «soft power» and «public diplomacy» are closely associated with cultural diplomacy [Isar, 2017: 705]. «Public diplomacy» or «soft power» refers to the «delicate» aspect of a state's policy in engaging with the populations of other countries [Karimova, Medelbay, 2021: 179]. Geopolitical changes increasingly underscore the importance of cultural diplomacy in fostering interethnic understanding to maintain stability. In this context, the Turkic world is gaining strength, with culture positioned at the forefront of its integration [astanatimes.com]. Turkey's growing activity in Central Asia has also influenced Kazakh–Kyrgyz cultural diplomacy. The strengthening of Turkic organizations led by Turkey, such as TÜRKSOY and the Organization of Turkic States, has expanded the institutional foundations of cultural cooperation between the two countries [Altunışık, 2024: 716]. Membership in these organizations positively affects cultural and trade relations among their members, including those between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan [Çetinkaya, Demirel, 2023: 343].

The current issues in the historiography of Central Asian peoples are closely interrelated, making it difficult to study the closely related Kyrgyz and Kazakh populations separately [Karamen-dina, 2021: 51]. Between 2015 and 2025, cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan became one of the key factors in establishing a stable and pragmatic channel for bilateral relations. Analysis indicates that, during this period, the expansion of cultural exchanges at both institutional and societal levels elevated the humanitarian ties between the two countries to a new qualitative level. It is natural that cultural-diplomatic initiatives are driven by various interests [Mikkonen, 2019: 349]. Examination of these interests revealed that the historical and cultural proximity of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan provides a natural foundation for cultural diplomacy. Shared Turkic cultural heritage, along with linguistic and ethnographic similarities, created favorable conditions for deepening cultural cooperation between the two nations. These factors positively influenced the acceptance of cultural projects and their support by the public.

Secondly, during the period under consideration, a targeted use of “soft power” instruments in the cultural policies of both states was clearly observed. Joint cultural festivals, tours by creative ensembles, literary and educational events, and youth cultural exchange programs not only facilitated the sharing of

cultural experiences but also contributed to strengthening political trust. This demonstrates that cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan provides additional advantages in the context of foreign policy. In this regard, cultural projects under the auspices of TÜRKSOY play a particularly significant role. TÜRKSOY serves as a primary channel for cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, enhancing trust and unity between the two nations by engaging youth, preserving historical heritage, promoting national values, and fostering international cooperation.

Thirdly, the study revealed that the institutional foundations of cultural diplomacy have been strengthened. Ministries of Culture, foreign affairs agencies, national cultural centers, and creative associations acted as key mechanisms. The active role of these structures enabled the systematic implementation of cultural programs.

Furthermore, the widespread recognition of cultural and humanitarian projects between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan at the societal level demonstrated that cultural diplomacy positively influenced the reinforcement of national identity and historical memory in both countries. Programs targeting youth, in particular, played a crucial role in fostering cultural understanding and mutual respect. However, the analysis also identified several challenges.

Cultural cooperation between the two countries has at times been limited to seasonal events, indicating that the long-term sustainability of programs and their funding mechanisms still require improvement. In addition, the potential of digital cultural diplomacy has not been fully utilized, representing an area for future development. The practice of multichannel diplomacy highlights the importance of considering cultural norms and informal cooperation processes beyond formal legal frameworks [Yasuda et al., 2018: 642]. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that, over the past decade, cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan has made a significant contribution to regional stability, mutual trust, and humanitarian cooperation.

Results. The research findings indicate that, between 2015 and 2025, cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan experienced significant revitalization and became an important instrument of bilateral cooperation. For example, TÜRKSOY was selected as the research platform because it holds official intergovernmental status and organizes over 190 cultural events annually. The organization plays a unique role in preserving the shared cultural heritage of Turkic peoples, while both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan demonstrate a high level of engagement within its structures. Through its stable institutional framework, TÜRKSOY supports a wide range of projects in the fields of art, music, literature, and youth initiatives. Although cultural cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan can take place outside this organization, TÜRKSOY provides the most institutionalized and sustainable platform, making it particularly effective for studying the mechanisms and impact of cultural diplomacy.

The International Organization of Turkic Culture (TÜRKSOY)—the first intergovernmental body for cooperation in the Turkic world—was established in 1993 through an agreement signed by the Ministers of Culture of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Turkey. Since its inception, TÜRKSOY has been actively engaged in preserving the shared cultural heritage of Turkic peoples, promoting their unified cultural values, and presenting them to the international community.

TÜRKSOY serves as a significant platform for cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, as it strengthens the historical and cultural ties between the two countries and contributes to the preservation of national identity. Through the organization, cultural figures, artistic ensembles, writers, and young talents from member states engage in international exchanges, participating in the creation of a common Turkic cultural space. It is a culturally, humanitarily, and strategically important institution for both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (Figure 1), facilitating the deepening of cultural and political relations between the two nations.

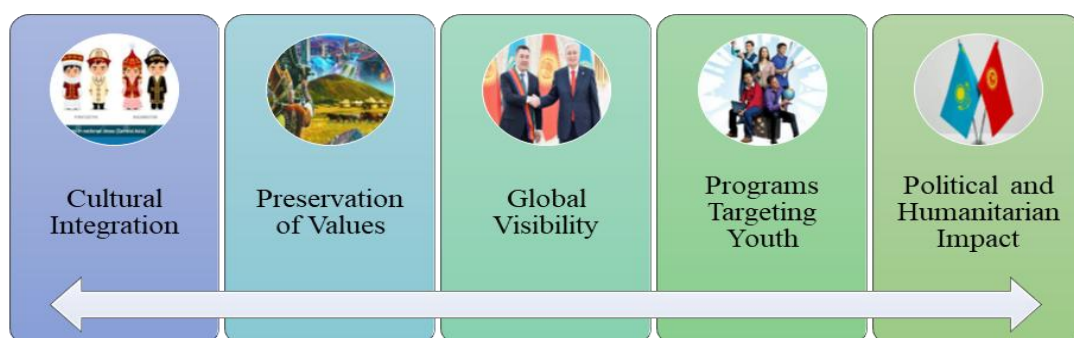


Fig. 1. Key Aspects of TÜRKSOY for Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

Annual artists' meetings, opera festivals, literary congresses, and other forums organized by TÜRKSOY constitute a core foundation of cultural diplomacy, as they facilitate the exchange of experience among cultural and scientific figures, strengthen intergovernmental relations, and create a common platform for interaction among the countries of the Turkic world [turksoy.org].

«The great historical heritage of the Turkic states holds enormous potential for cultural integration. Primarily, it is our language, followed by our culture, and finally our traditions and way of life. We must preserve our uniqueness», stated Sultan Raev, a prominent Kyrgyz literary figure and Secretary-General of TÜRKSOY elected in March 2022 [astanatimes.com]. According to Raev, TÜRKSOY annually organizes over 190 thematic and strategic events. Large-scale transnational projects in various cultural fields, including the designation of the cultural capital of the Turkic world and the highly successful “Korkyt Ata” Film Festival, contribute to strengthening the cultural unity of Turkic peoples and establishing a distinct cultural brand within the contemporary Turkic space.

Special projects play a significant role in promoting cultural integration among Turkic peoples. As a result of the joint creative work of cultural figures from Turkic countries, numerous international cultural projects have been successfully implemented within the organization. Notably, in recent years, Uzeyir Hajibeyov's opera Koroglu staged in the theaters of six countries, as well as the performance of the opera Birzhan–Sara by Kazakhstan's prominent composer Mukan Tolebaev on a leading theater stage in Turkey, are of particular significance. Additionally, the performance of Adnan Saygun's oratorio Yunus Emre, featuring artists from the United States and Turkey, became one of the key cultural events that strengthened the connection between Turkic and global culture.

TÜRKSOY's international creative ensembles have also made a significant contribution to promoting the musical heritage of the Turkic world on a global scale. Performing in various countries, the organization's ensembles have widely showcased both folk and professional music of Turkic peoples, receiving high acclaim from international audiences. Notably, TÜRKSOY's Youth Chamber Orchestra and Youth Chamber Choir have been three-time gold medalists at European choral competitions, demonstrating the competitiveness of Turkic music on the international stage.

In celebration of the 25th anniversary of the independence of the Turkic peoples, TÜRKSOY established the Folk Instruments Orchestra, further expanding the scope of the organization's cultural initiatives. This orchestra unites the performing traditions of Turkic peoples and represents a major cultural project that vividly presents a shared musical heritage. These cultural projects have played a particularly important role in invigorating cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Firstly, joint opera productions and music projects have strengthened the cooperation of professional artists from both countries, systematizing the process of creative exchange. For example, the international staging of the operas Koroglu and Birzhan–Sara enabled collaborative participation of Kazakh and Kyrgyz artists, deepening their professional ties.

Secondly, the participation of Kazakh and Kyrgyz young musicians in TÜRKSOY's international orchestras and choirs has fostered closer connections between the new generation in the cultural spheres of both countries. This represents one of the most important aspects of cultural diplomacy – establishing sustainable ties among youth. The joint presence of young performers on the international artistic stage also positively contributed to the global recognition of Kazakh and Kyrgyz cultures.

Thirdly, the Folk Instruments Orchestra created by TÜRKSOY highlighted the shared historical and cultural foundations of the two peoples by integrating their traditional music. Kazakh qobyz and Kyrgyz komuz traditions, similarities in epic storytelling schools, and Turkic musical modes were presented to international audiences as a unified cultural phenomenon. This, in turn, became an element of “soft power” that emphasizes the cultural proximity of Kazakhs and Kyrgyz on the global stage.

Fourthly, TÜRKSOY's festival movement, literary and artistic congresses have contributed to maintaining harmony in the cultural policies of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and to the formation of a shared cultural space. The Ministries of Culture of both countries have regularly made joint decisions within the framework of TÜRKSOY, coordinating cultural programs with each other. This has strengthened institutional interdependence in cultural diplomacy. Overall, such targeted projects have elevated cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to a new level, ensuring that cultural relations acquire a stable and institutionalized character. This process strengthens bilateral relations within the framework of Turkic integration and allows Kazakh and Kyrgyz peoples to jointly present their shared cultural heritage on the international stage.

The directions and content of Kazakh–Kyrgyz cultural diplomacy during 2015–2025 were extensive. During this period, cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan was implemented through several practical mechanisms. Cultural cooperation between the two countries took on a stable institutional character through joint festivals, partnerships of professional art ensembles, literary and creative projects, youth-oriented programs, and large-scale cultural exchanges. These initiatives highlighted the historical, ethnocultural, and spiritual commonalities of the two states and established the main channels for cultural interaction. For instance, in 2018, the forum titled «National Traditions of the Great Steppe» was held in Atyrau, Kazakhstan, with the participation of national artists from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, directors and chairpersons of various cultural institutions, writers from the Turkic world, and over 700 artists from five countries [turksoy.org]. Such quantitative indicators allow us to assess the high qualitative level of the event.

Additionally, on October 9, 2021, the opera Abai was performed in Bishkek as part of Kazakhstan's Cultural Days project [Kabar, 2021]. The event, held at the Kyrgyz National Opera and Ballet Theater named after Malydybaev, was attended by high-level state representatives from both countries. The performance by the creative team of the Kazakh State Academic Opera and Ballet Theater named after Abai represented a concrete step toward strengthening cultural and humanitarian cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Cultural diplomatic initiatives were multifaceted both in content and direction. While folklore festivals and theater tours aimed to promote national music and dance, literary and creative projects enhanced interactions among writers, poets, and researchers from both countries. Youth exchange programs and educational projects deepened mutual understanding among the future cultural elite, laying the foundation for long-term humanitarian partnership. These initiatives were also supported within the framework of regional institutions such as the Turkic Council, TÜRKSOY, and the Turkic Academy, thereby expanding the institutional basis of Kazakh–Kyrgyz cultural integration. In other words, the main institutions organizing cultural diplomacy between the two countries include the Organization of Turkic States, the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Culture of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Turkic Academy, as well as the International Organization of Turkic Culture.

The analysis of these mechanisms allows for a comprehensive identification of the content and strategic directions of cultural diplomatic initiatives implemented between 2015 and 2025. These initiatives focused on key objectives such as the preservation of cultural heritage, the promotion of shared Turkic values, the development of cultural industries to an international level, and the enhancement of mutual trust and closeness among peoples. Thus, Kazakh–Kyrgyz cultural diplomacy during the period under study consistently developed at practical, institutional, and creative levels, making a significant contribution to the strengthening of humanitarian ties between the two countries. Based on the analysis of the above data, it can be concluded that cultural diplomacy between the Kazakh and Kyrgyz peoples had clearly defined primary and specific objectives (Figure 2).



Fig. 2. The main goal of cultural diplomacy between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

By strategically utilizing cultural diplomacy [Eggeling, 2017: 717], the institutional foundations of cultural diplomacy were strengthened as a result of such joint activities, and the interaction between the cultural institutions and state structures of the two countries acquired a stable character. Moreover, the joint cultural and humanitarian projects implemented during this period contributed to an increase in political trust, the expansion of cultural exchange, and the enhancement of mutual understanding between societies. Within the framework of cultural and humanitarian cooperation, exhibitions, international scientific symposia, round tables, poetry evenings, and seminars are regularly held with the participation of intellectuals and civil society representatives from both countries. On 7–8 October 2021, Kazakhstan's Culture Days were held in Bishkek. More than 350 prominent Kazakh artists, representatives of the creative intelligentsia, and over 10 leading creative teams participated in the ceremonial events.

On 26 May 2022, during the official visit of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, K. Tokayev, to Kyrgyzstan, the unveiling of the Abai Qunanbaiuly monument in Bishkek and the opening of the branch of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University took place. Subsequently, from 27 to 29 October 2022, Kyrgyzstan's Culture Days in Kazakhstan were successfully held in Astana [gov.kz, 2022]. Cultural diplomacy demonstrated itself as an important factor in strengthening national identity and historical continuity, particularly through programs and creative initiatives aimed at young people. For example, on 19 April 2024, Erlan Karin, Chair of the Council on Youth Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and State Counsellor of Kazakhstan, met with representatives of Kyrgyz youth in Astana. During the meeting, the State Counsellor emphasized that President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev pays special attention to expanding the rights and opportunities of Kazakhstan's youth. Projects and programs such as the Presidential Youth Personnel Reserve, the development of youth entrepreneurship, and support for talented young people to establish the creative industry were highlighted as clear evidence of consideration for the interests and needs of the younger generation [gov.kz, 2024]. Currently, the state youth policy concept for implementation until 2029 is under development. In 2025, the city of Aktau was awarded the title of "Cultural Capital of the Turkic World." In Bishkek, the "Golden Bridge of Friendship" monument dedicated to Mukhtar Auezov and Chingiz Aitmatov was inaugurated [gov.kz, 2025]. All of these events demonstrated the high potential of Kazakh–Kyrgyz cultural diplomacy in deepening international dialogue and cultural integration. Thus, the impact of cultural diplomacy has been extensively examined in this study. It contributes to strengthening political dialogue, building trust, fostering communication among youth, and enhancing the international image of both countries. The analytical section presents specific indicators and effects, including organized events, projects, and the participation of creative collectives. In this way, the influence of cultural diplomacy on Kazakhstan–Kyrgyzstan cooperation is demonstrated clearly and systematically.

Conclusion. The conducted study demonstrated that cultural diplomacy played a significant role in strengthening bilateral cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan during the period 2015–2025. The expansion of cultural and humanitarian projects, the stabilization of institutional mechanisms, and the increase in mutual understanding between societies have consolidated cultural diplomacy as an effective "soft power" tool within the foreign policy of both countries.

The findings of the study indicate that cultural diplomacy is not only crucial for preserving national identity and historical continuity but also plays a decisive role in enhancing regional stability and fostering humanitarian cooperation. Furthermore, the long-term development of sustainable programs and the strengthening of digital cultural diplomacy remain among the key priorities for the future.

For future research, it is recommended to consider digital cultural diplomacy in line with contemporary demands. A comprehensive analysis of the role of social media, online platforms, and virtual cultural projects in the cultural interaction between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan is particularly relevant. This direction allows for an assessment of how new media tools influence mutual understanding and cultural dialogue among the youth of the two countries.

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