

Earthquake Diplomacy in the Turkic World From Past to Present

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<https://doi.org/10.33993/TR.2026.2.08>

The major Turkestan earthquake of 3 January 1911 and the 6 February 2023 Kahramanmaraş-centered earthquakes in Türkiye have been recorded as major disasters with significant loss of life and property in this region.

Introduction

TURKESTAN, LOCATED in a key region of Central Asia, has a long and distinguished history. Starting with the Saka people in the 5th century BC and continuing with the Huns, this region has been a major location for crucial events in Turkish history, as noted by those who have passed through it. Positioned in the heart of Central Asia, its location on the historic Silk Road has always made it crucial for trade and cultural interaction, giving it great strategic importance. Turkestan, where various Turkish tribes emerged on the historical stage and established great civilizations, has also stood out for its cultural and social dynamism.

However, if we look at today's world maps, the name "Turkestan" does not appear as the name of any country or region. This concept started to be banned in 1920 and was completely eradicated by 1924 (Abazov 2005, 155; İpek and Güler 2023, 143). This process was a result of policies implemented by the Soviet Union to solidify its dominance over Central

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Asia and to eliminate regional identities. The Soviet administration created new administrative divisions and names to suppress the ethnic and cultural identities of the region, leading to the erasure of Turkestan's historical identity.

In this historically examined geography, various aspects such as the histories of Turkish states, the first regions they inhabited, their ways of life, cultures, arts, political and social lives have captivated the interest of researchers, leading to numerous studies in the field. Each research endeavor has shed light on the obscure aspects of Turkestan, enabling a better understanding of the region. These studies not only cover historical events but also reveal the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of the area. This study serves such a purpose and highlights the solidarity between two peoples with a shared past, by way of a specific event.

The Turkestan earthquake of 1911, which occurred in the Kemin region of present-day Kyrgyzstan, was a significant event due to its impact, resonating worldwide given the circumstances of the time. The manner in which such an event was received in the region and by neighboring states, and the nature of their responses, naturally differs from today's standards. Despite the limitations in communications and transportation of that era, the Ottoman Empire's effort to extend a helping hand to their brothers in Turkestan illustrates the spirit of the time and the Ottoman Empire's penchant for international solidarity. The Ottoman Empire closely monitored the event and promptly initiated aid campaigns upon receiving the news. These aid campaigns comprised not only financial assistance but also messages of encouragement and support.

Similarly, it was observed that the Turkic states in the Turkestan region did not remain indifferent to the 2023 earthquake in Türkiye. Countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan demonstrated their solidarity with Türkiye by sending search and rescue teams and humanitarian aid. This study examines Turkish solidarity in the context of these two major earthquakes, which occurred more than a century apart. The echoes of two earthquakes that occurred in different geographies at different times are analyzed within the cultures that share a common history.

The primary reason for using the concept of Turkestan in this study is that, although the earthquake in Turkestan in 1911 occurred in what is now Kyrgyzstan, at that time the countries had not yet separated, and the region was considered as a whole. In this context, the main aim of the study is to analyze how the relationships between the Turkestan region and the Ottoman Empire and later the Republic of Türkiye have evolved during times of natural disaster. The findings indicate that, during natural disasters, the relationships between the Ottoman Empire, Türkiye, and Turkestan went beyond the customary ones between two different societies or states, being instead defined by a spirit of brotherhood.

This research highlights not only the political and economic aspects of the relationships between Turkestan and the Ottoman Empire-Türkiye, but also the human and cultural solidarity, emphasizing the depth and importance of the brotherhood bonds extending from the past to the present. In this context, it can be said that this solidarity, present since the past and continuing today, is a solid foundation for future relationships. Furthermore, recent geopolitical shifts in Central Asia, as well as Türkiye's expanding contacts with this region, have helped revive the concept of Turkestan. The growing cooperation and solidarity among Turkish states on platforms such as the Turkic Council and other international forums demonstrates the strength of these historical links.

In this regard, the historical significance and the modern strategic role of Turkestan hold great meaning for the efforts to preserve the common identity and cultural heritage of the Turkic world. Turkestan emerges not only as a part of the past but also as a symbol of future cooperation and strategic partnerships. Therefore, the historical and cultural heritage of Turkestan is considered a significant reference point in contemporary relationships and for future strategic planning.

Ottoman-Turkestan Relations in Historical Perspective

TURKESTAN, LOCATED in the heart of Asia, the largest continent on Earth, extends from Iran's Khorasan region, including northern Afghanistan, to the northern slopes of the Pamir and Hindu Kush-Kunlun Mountains, reaching China's Tun-Huang region, and stretching westward to Manchuria, encompassing all of Mongolia and southern Siberia. Historically, the name Turkestan was first used by the Iranians to describe the regions inhabited by the Turks (Taşağıl 2012, 556).

Due to the presence of Turkish and Mongolian nomads in this region, Turkestan has been referred to as Central Asia and Inner Asia in different cultures. Its location in the center of Asia has endowed it with special geopolitical significance. Serving as a commercial hub between China in the east and the countries situated in the west, it facilitated trade along the historic Silk Road. The Seljuks, Karakhanids, and Ghaznavids, prominent states that emerged in Turkestan, were societies aware of the region's geopolitical importance (Togan 1981, 1: 95–101).

Historically, the Ottoman Empire, which shared the same origins and beliefs as the people of Turkestan, maintained multifaceted relations with this region and its inhabitants. The first contact dates back to the 14th century, although the

data on these early relations are limited. When the Turks in this region came under the control of the Timurid Empire, their relations with the Ottoman Empire also fell under this state's influence. Relations between the Timurid Empire and the Ottoman Empire remained tense until the Battle of Ankara of 1402, but they began to improve by the late 16th century. During this period, Iran played a crucial role in shaping bilateral relations. Whenever the Ottoman Empire took steps to regulate its relations with Iran, it distanced itself from Turkestan and its khanates; conversely, it sought allies against Iran when relations with Iran deteriorated. Despite this, the khanates consistently aligned themselves with the Ottoman Empire, reinforcing their loyalty. For instance, the Treaty of Istanbul, signed between the Ottoman Empire and Iran in 1590, was realized largely due to the efforts of the Uzbek Khanate in Turkestan (Andican 2009, 140–141; Macit 2009).

After the 16th century, the growth of the Moscow Principality into the Russian Tsardom posed a threat to Central Asia. The Russians began expanding into the relatively weaker Turkestan khanates during this period. This expansionist policy threatened and put significant pressure on the local khanates of Central Asia. In response to Russia's expansionist efforts, the khanates in Turkestan sent letters through envoys to the Ottoman Empire, seeking protection against the Russian pressure. During this period, Sultan Selim II of the Ottoman Empire did not ignore these requests from the Turkestan khanates. He assured them that he would take steps to allay their concerns by countering Russian incursions into the Turkestan region (İnalçık 1948, 363–380).

By the 17th century, the Ottoman Empire's relations with the khanates in the Turkestan region were largely driven by the search for alliances against a rising Iran. This pursuit of anti-Iranian alliances began with Sultan Mehmed III and continued under Sultans Ahmed I and Osman II, as the Ottomans sought to protect the interests of the khanates in the region (Andican 2009, 163–164). The attempts of Shah Abbas of Iran to reclaim territories lost following the Treaty of Ferhad Pasha reignited the Ottoman–Iranian conflict. In this context, Sultan Murad IV sent letters to the Khan of Bukhara, proposing joint action against Iran before his campaigns to Revan and Baghdad. As can be seen, under various sultans, the Ottoman Empire's alliance policies with the Turkestan khanates remained consistent. Relations continued amicably, with the khans expressing their loyalty through envoys and letters sent to Istanbul (Saray 1994, 9–11).

In the 18th century, the focus of these relationships shifted from Iran to the emerging threat of Russia. The Russian Tsardom had already subdued the Kazan and Astrakhan khanates in the 16th century and was seeking to capture the Crimean Khanate, advancing towards the Black Sea. At that time, the Crimean Khanate was under the protection of the Ottoman Empire. Russia initiated the

Ottoman-Russian War of 1768–1774 to seize the region, inflicting a heavy defeat on the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, signed after the war, rendered Crimea independent from the Ottoman Empire. Subsequently, Russia installed its ally Şahin Giray as Khan, effectively taking control of Crimea (Roux 2015, 422). This situation signaled that Russia's presence north of the Black Sea would become a significant threat to the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, the Ottomans sought allies to address this issue and turned to the Turkestan khanates, with which they had close relations. During the reigns of Sultan Abdul Hamid I and Sultan Selim III, envoys were sent to the khanates in Turkestan to seek support against Russia (Saray 1994, 21–29).

From the beginning of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire, facing difficulties against Russia, began to handle both its general policy and its relations with the Turkestan khanates with caution. Throughout the first half of this century, the Turkestan khanates were engaged in internal struggles against each other. The internal conflicts among the khanates, indifferent to the Russian invasions just beyond their borders, were the greatest misfortune for the Turkestan region. The clashes between Bukhara and Kokand led to the depletion and weakening of the khanates, thereby facilitating the Russian conquest of the region (Macit 2009, 71–72).

After the Crimean War and the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1856, Russia had to abandon its ambitions in the Black Sea and the Balkans, turning its attention to western Turkestan (Kurat 1987, 346–347). In addition, the disregard for regional sovereignty shown by England and China, driven by their own interests, led to a significant expansionist movement. In response to this situation, the Turkestan khanates, unwilling to lose their territories to foreign powers, once again sent envoys to Istanbul to seek help from the Ottoman Empire. In their letters to the Ottoman Empire, the khanates requested military and diplomatic support, expecting the Ottoman Empire, as the leader of the Islamic world, to intervene on their behalf. However, due to internal economic difficulties and diplomatic concerns, the Ottoman Empire was unable to respond to these requests (Saray 1999, 575).

During this period, the Ottoman Empire's economic hardships were greatly exacerbated by domestic debt and the financial dependence on foreign states. Additionally, the Ottoman Empire's engagement on multiple fronts against various enemies strained its military resources. Diplomatic concerns also made a direct intervention in Turkestan challenging for the Ottoman Empire. The delicate balance with the European states was a significant factor that prevented the Ottomans from undertaking any military action in the region.

As we have seen, Ottoman–Turkestan relations in the 19th century largely consisted of official letters sent by the khanates of the Turkestan region to the

Ottoman Empire seeking assistance. The khans, troubled by Russian activities and attacks in the region, sought the sultan's protection and requested help due to his status as the caliph of Islam. However, as mentioned earlier, the internal and external problems faced by the Ottoman Empire limited its ability to support the khanates in Turkestan.

In the early years of the 20th century, Turkestan held a significant place in the foreign policy of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, although this issue was not considered independently of the Russian factor. The Ottoman Empire's major interests were in conflict with those of the Russian Tsardom, which led to the need for careful and strategic policymaking. Sultan Abdul Hamid sought to reinforce his claim as the protector of Islam, and the khanates of Turkestan requesting protection and support from the Ottoman caliph strengthened this position. Despite the financial strain it placed on the state, the budgets allocated to support Muslims in need helped solidify his influence and credibility as a caliph (Eraslan 1992, 334–336). During Sultan Abdul Hamid's reign, the Ottoman Empire extended a helping hand to everyone in need across the Islamic lands, with a particular emphasis on Turkestan. The sultan took serious steps to establish multifaceted relations, demonstrating a high level of commitment to supporting the region and fostering strong ties.

The Turkestan Earthquake and the Attitude of the Ottoman Empire

CENTRAL ASIA has been one of the world's most significant regions due to both its human and geological history. In the past century, important discoveries in the social and natural sciences have made it easier to study historical geological events. Turkestan, historically considered the homeland of the Turks, is noteworthy not only for the events on its surface but also for the intriguing geological activities beneath it.

The climate in Turkestan varies from north to south but generally features a harsh continental climate. This results in significant temperature differences between day and night, with very severe winters and hot summers (Kayabali and Arslanoglu 1978, 16). Geographically, one of Turkestan's most important mountain ranges is the Tien Shan and Altai Mountains. Although these mountains appear to be isolated, there is a route connecting them known as the Dzungarian Gate. Turkestan's borders, which include these mountain ranges, begin in the Urals and extend eastward through the Akmola Plateau, then northward to the Greater Khingan Mountains in southern Siberia. From there, the border

extends south across the Gobi Desert and across the Tibetan Plateau. Turkestan thus comprises both large sandy steppes and rich pastures. Because of its geopolitical location, Turkestan has been home to numerous civilizations and adopted as a homeland by various tribes throughout history. Its strategic location, proximity to trade routes, and availability of natural resources have increased its relevance. Turkestan's historical and cultural richness allows us to better grasp its role and significance in human history.

Turkestan is divided north-south by the Tien Shan Mountains, which are a key element of its topography. This separation has allowed numerous peoples to dwell and build different civilizations, while also aiding the progression of commercial and military routes from east to west. Southern Turkestan is largely a trade route that runs from China in the east to Syria and Anatolia. The northern Turkestan route, on the other hand, begins and ends at a single site in the Orkhon region and is largely used for military purposes (Gökalp 1973, 5–6).

The Turkestan region, while providing various advantages to its inhabitants, has also posed significant challenges due to its geological and meteorological features, which are conducive to natural disasters. The most notable natural disaster in this area is the major earthquake of 1911.

Although there is no consensus on the exact date of the 1911 Turkestan earthquake, later research suggests that it occurred on 3 January. The earthquake, which struck at around 04:26 AM (Caddick and Ball 2016, 147–160) along the Chon-Kemin-Chilik fault zone, had a magnitude of 8.2. Surface ruptures occurred over approximately 190 km, along the Kazakhstan platform and the Tien Shan fold belt, causing tens of millions of cubic meters of landslides and rock avalanches. This earthquake was part of a series of powerful quakes in the region, following the 7.3 Verny earthquake near Alma-Ata in 1887, the 8.3 Chilik earthquake in 1889, and preceding the Kemin-Chu earthquakes of 1938. Therefore, the 1911 Kemin earthquake, which is the focus of this study, is one of the most significant seismic disasters in the Trans-Ili Alatau Mountain range between 1887 and 1938. Surface ruptures occurred along various fault segments, leading to significant events such as landslides, rockfalls, and debris flows.

Reports indicate that 452 people lost their lives, and 740 were injured due to this powerful earthquake. The relatively low number of casualties can be attributed to the fact that the earthquake primarily affected the mountainous areas between Issyk-Kul Lake and Alma-Ata (formerly Verny), specifically the Dzungarian Alatau and Trans-Ili Alatau Mountain ranges (Delvaux et al. 2001, 1583).

This event in the geography of Turkestan was closely followed by the Ottoman public, primarily through the foreign media. The magazine *Swat-ı Müstakim* played a significant role domestically, first reporting on the event under the

headline “Turkestan Earthquake” in its issue dated 12 January 1911 (Yılmaz and Atar 2021, 34–37). Following this initial report, the magazine continued to cover the geological changes, tremors, and the casualties and property losses caused by this major earthquake, calling for public assistance. As the reports were being drawn up, special emphasis was laid on the fact that the victims of the disaster were religious brothers and Turks, in an attempt to secure more aid for this region. *Sırat-ı Müstakim* made considerable efforts to publicize the aid campaigns and gather support from the public (Yılmaz and Atar 2021, 38–41).

Regarding the response of the authorities, the Ottoman Empire aimed to assist the people affected by the earthquake in Turkestan as soon as the news reached it. The Iane Commission (Relief Commission) established in the Bâb-ı Meşihat (Sheikh al-Islam’s office) began collecting donations from state institution employees both domestically and abroad through official channels. This can be tracked in the archival records. For instance, a document dated 3 May 1911 shows that tickets printed on behalf of the Iane Commission for the Turkestan earthquake victims were sold to employees at the Grand Vizier’s office, raising a significant amount of aid. Specifically, fifteen tickets of 100 *kuruş* (penny), one hundred sixty-four tickets of 20 *kuruş*, one hundred twenty tickets of 5 *kuruş*, and six tickets of 50 *kuruş* were sold, totaling 5680 *kuruş*. Including cash donations, around seven thousand *kuruş* were collected from this department (BOA, BEO. 3889/291634, n.d.).

The Iane Commission sought to increase the contributions by distributing the printed tickets to different institutions. A document dated 12 March 1911 indicates that tickets worth a total of 1745 *kuruş* were sent to the Directorate of Darülmualimin to be distributed to the employees, with the proceeds to be collected accordingly (BOA, MF. MKT. 1168-1, n.d.). In the following week, letters were sent to the Directorates of the Leyli and Nehari Girls’ Industrial Schools, the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of Education, the Ottoman University and School of Civil Service Directorate, the Ottoman Museum Directorate, and the Medical School Presidency. These letters requested donations for the Turkestan victims in exchange for the tickets sent. The amounts were as follows: 1941 *kuruş* for the Leyli and Nehari Girls’ Industrial Schools Directorate, 3315 *kuruş* for the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of Education, 2855 *kuruş* for the Ottoman University and School of Civil Service Directorate, 1944 *kuruş* for the Ottoman Museum Directorate, and 1740 *kuruş* for the Medical School Presidency. However, the archival records do not provide information on the actual amount collected from these institutions. The Iane Commission extended its efforts beyond domestic institutions by reaching out to embassies and consulates abroad through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The aim was to sell tickets printed for the earthquake victims in Turkestan at these foreign missions to garner more

support. For instance, a letter dated 22 March 1911, sent to the London Embassy, indicated that tickets for Turkestan victims were being dispatched to the embassy, urging the staff to support this campaign. It was also requested that the matter be communicated to the consulates associated with the embassy to broaden the scope of the assistance (BOA. HR. SFR.3.. 650-12, n.d.). Similarly, on 24 March 1911, a letter was sent to the Varna Consulate, reiterating the need for aid for the Turkestan earthquake victims (BOA. HR. SFR.04.. 852-49, n.d.). A document dated 27 March 1911 features a letter to the Vidin Consulate, asking how much the consulate would contribute to the campaign and stressing that the aid be sent along with a note (BOA. HR. SFR.04.. 372-91, n.d.). Responses from some consulates are documented in the archives. For example, the Ruse (Ruşuk) Consulate replied on 28 March 1911, confirming a donation of thirty francs for the Turkestan earthquake victims (BOA. HR. SFR.04.. 624-14, n.d.). Additionally, the Sofia Embassy, in response to the aid request, donated ten francs and noted that the Islamic Youth Club in the city had also participated in the assistance effort (BOA. HR. SFR.04.. 402-75, n.d.). Therefore, the İane Commission, established within the Bâb-ı Meşihat, conducted fundraising campaigns both domestically and internationally to mitigate the impact of this tragic event. The funds raised were directly allocated to the affected region to aid the victims.

The Earthquake of 6 February and Kyrgyzstan's Response

EARTHQUAKES ARE among the natural disasters frequently occurring worldwide, often causing significant devastation. Particularly, the Anatolian region has experienced many large-scale earthquakes throughout history. These earthquakes frequently occur due to the region's geological structure and fault lines.

The earthquakes centered in Kahramanmaraş on 6 February 2023 caused great destruction and sorrow in the region. Two main tremors occurred at 04:17 AM and 1:24 PM local Turkish time, centered in the Pazarcık and Elbistan districts, respectively. The magnitudes of the earthquakes were measured at 7.7 and 7.6 (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı 2023, 25), classifying them as extremely powerful and destructive earthquakes. According to AFAD data, the earthquakes were severely felt in cities across the Southeastern Anatolia Region. Cities such as Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, Hatay, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Osmaniye, Kilis, Adıyaman, Malatya, Adana, and Elazığ (AFAD

2023, 1) experienced significant panic and damage. Collapsed buildings, damaged infrastructure, and loss of life deeply affected the region.

The Kahramanmaraş-centered earthquakes of 6 February 2023 caused a major disaster in the region. The earthquakes affected a wide area and a large number of people, with utterly painful outcomes. Compared to the largest recorded earthquake in the region since 1900, with a magnitude of 6.8, the earthquakes of 6 February 2023 were exceptionally destructive. The earthquakes on 6 February 2023, centered in Kahramanmaraş, affected a large area, of 110,000 square kilometers, directly impacting approximately 13.5 million citizens across eleven neighboring provinces. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), the number stands at 14,013,196, accounting for about 16.4% of Türkiye's population, highlighting the wide impact of the earthquake (TMMOB Mimarlar Odası 2023, 5).

The earthquakes also displaced nearly 3 million people, aggravating the region's displacement and migration-related concerns—BM İnsani Yardım Koordinasyon Ofisi (UNOCHA) 2023, 1. Humanitarian aid and reconstruction activities are critical in helping the impacted populace rebuild their life. National and international aid campaigns were already underway to help the community heal from the calamity and rebuild. The overall number of buildings in the impacted cities was around 2.6 million. Of these, 90% were used as homes, 6% as workplaces, and 3% as government offices. The overall number of residents in the impacted cities was around 5.6 million (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı 2023, 6). These data demonstrate the scale of the devastation and the pressing need for homes.

The earthquakes killed 50,783 people and injured 115,353 (AFAD 2023, 1). These figures emphasize the earthquakes' destructive force and the urgent need for help in the region. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), 9.1 million people were directly affected by the earthquakes that struck Kahramanmaraş on 6 February. Many of these individuals were left homeless and struggled to meet their basic needs.

Following the earthquakes, many buildings were either destroyed or severely damaged, deepening the housing crisis in the region. Although temporary housing solutions were quickly implemented, long-term reconstruction and permanent housing projects became a major priority. Additionally, the destruction or inaccessibility of workplaces has severely disrupted economic activities in the region.

The collapse of government offices and public buildings has hindered public services and complicated coordination and relief efforts. Consequently, both local and international efforts have been intensively mobilized to address the aftermath of the earthquake. Aid campaigns, donations, and reconstruction projects are vital for helping those affected rebuild their lives.

Given all these numerical data, following the earthquakes of 6 February, which caused severe damage in all aspects, “National Mourning” was declared in Türkiye. Immediately after the earthquake, urgent aid poured in from all over the world.

Focusing on the aid and solidarity messages directed towards Türkiye’s earthquake disaster from the Eurasian region, it can be said that both the governments and the people of these countries, as well as the Turkish citizens living there, mobilized in response. Firstly, the highest authorities in all countries in the region sent messages of support and condolences to Türkiye, and Turkish embassies and consulates in these countries were visited to convey solidarity messages. Additionally, public institutions, organizations, and civil society groups did not hesitate to express their support through their representatives. High-level support and solidarity visits were made to earthquake zones and to Ankara from various countries, particularly Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Greece (Turgunov 2023).

Albania and Macedonia declared public mourning in their own countries to show their solidarity with Türkiye. Besides the financial support provided by states, various aid campaigns raised more than 70 million dollars from Central Asia, Russia, and the Balkans. Additionally, over five thousand tons of in-kind aid, including tents, blankets, and heaters, were sent from these regions. Support campaigns were also conducted by numerous other countries. Among the search and rescue teams that came to the earthquake zone from all over the world, countries like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Russia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania, and Hungary stood out with their intensive performance. These countries deployed approximately three thousand search and rescue personnel to the disaster sites. They also urgently sent 7,135 tents to Türkiye, addressing the most immediate needs in the severely affected areas (Turgunov 2023).

The Organization of Turkic States (OTS) immediately contacted personnel and institutions in Türkiye and swiftly organized search and rescue teams from member countries. Due to Türkiye’s declaration of national mourning, the OTS also flew the flags of member countries at half-mast. Additionally, the Secretary-General of the OTS, Kubanychbek Omuraliev, visited Kahramanmaraş and handed over the prepared aid to AFAD (Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı 2023). The aid campaigns led by public institutions and civil society organizations in Turkic state were increasing daily.

Among the foreign aid sent to the earthquake zone, those from the Turkic republics constitute a significant portion. Aid from Kyrgyzstan amounted to approximately three tons. Coordinated by Kyrgyzstan’s Minister of Interior, Ulan

Niyazbekov, the aid included items such as tents, beds, sleeping bags, heaters, and blankets. The six-ton aid collected at collection centers by Türkiye's embassy in Bishkek was transported to the earthquake zone via Pegasus and Turkish Airlines. Primary needs such as winter clothing, diapers, cleaning supplies, and food items comprised the majority of the aid. Additionally, 124 tents were sent and set up in the region (Anadolu Ajansı 2023).

All these support and solidarity messages not only alleviated Türkiye's pain but also contributed to strengthening regional relations. This process once again highlighted the importance of humanitarian values and solidarity. Kyrgyzstan's people and government demonstrated strong unity and cooperation in coordinating this relief. Kyrgyzstan's contribution was critical in satisfying the earthquake victims' immediate needs and proved the great links of brotherhood with Türkiye.

This assistance demonstrated the depth of Kyrgyzstan and Türkiye's friendship and their desire to help each other in times of need. Kyrgyzstan's efforts not only offered material support, but also improved the morale and motivation of earthquake sufferers. The aid supplied during the chilly winter days improved the living circumstances of the inhabitants in the affected region and gave them the sense that Kyrgyzstan stood with Türkiye throughout difficult times.

Financial donations to the relief account established by the Kyrgyz Ministry of Finance played an important role in Kyrgyzstan's aid. As of 6 March 2023, a total of 117,000 dollars had been transferred to this account (Anadolu Ajansı 2023). Contributions to this relief account came from officials and employees of the Kyrgyzstan Presidency, Batken Governorship, Batken Municipality, the Kyrgyzstan State Radio and Television Corporation (UTRK), Bishkek Municipality, Bishkek district municipalities, and officials and employees of the Bishkek Provincial Health Directorate.

This financial aid provided substantial support in meeting the urgent needs of the earthquake victims. The monetary assistance from Kyrgyzstan demonstrated not only the solidarity of the government and institutions but also the strong sense of unity among the people. The collected funds were transferred to the earthquake zone to be used for shelter, food, healthcare, and other urgent needs of the earthquake victims in Türkiye.

Additionally, the Friendship Health, Education, and Solidarity Foundation, established by the Ahıska Turks living in Bishkek, organized a special night where the Quran was recited, and prayers were said for those who had lost their lives in the earthquakes of 6 February. Representatives from the Turkish Embassy in Bishkek, the TİKA Bishkek Program Coordination Office, Kyrgyzstan-Türkiye Manas University, and the Kyrgyzstan Ahıska Turks Association came

together on this special night. The collected monetary and in-kind donations were sent directly to the earthquake region (Tayfur 2023).

Conclusions

THE ASIAN region, where a significant portion of Türkiye is located, lies on a seismic belt due to its geological position, and for centuries, earthquakes here have caused significant material and moral destruction. The major Turkestan earthquake of 3 January 1911 and the 6 February 2023 Kahramanmaraş-centered earthquakes in Türkiye have been recorded as major disasters with significant loss of life and property in this region.

The 1911 Turkestan earthquake occurred at 04:26 on 3 January, along the Chon-Kemin-Chilik fault line, and caused massive destruction with a magnitude of 8.2. This earthquake led to surface displacements over approximately 190 km, landslides, and rockfalls totaling tens of millions of cubic meters. This disaster, which resulted in 452 deaths and 740 injuries, was recorded as one of the strongest seismic events in the Trans-Ili Alatau range between 1887 and 1938. The Ottoman public closely followed this event, with the magazine *Sırat-ı Müstakim* publishing news about it under the title “Turkestan Earthquake” on 12 January 1911, with a plea for public assistance. The Ottoman Empire, through the İane Commission, coordinated local and international relief initiatives to assist victims of the disaster.

Newspapers, which were an important mode of communication at the time, kept the people informed within the empire’s borders, while the state organized financial aid for earthquake victims through relief and assistance commissions established both domestically and internationally. Even during difficult times, the Ottoman Empire demonstrated its dedication to its ancestral homeland by actively assisting the affected provinces. The great Turkestan earthquake of 3 January 1911 had a magnitude of 8.2, causing severe destruction and loss of life in the region. The Ottoman public closely followed this event, and magazines like *Sırat-ı Müstakim* pleaded for public assistance. The Ottoman Empire, through the İane Commission established within the Bab-ı Meşihat, organized relief campaigns domestically and internationally and directly transferred the collected aid to the region.

Similarly, the earthquakes that occurred in Kahramanmaraş, Türkiye, on 6 February 2023, caused significant destruction. These earthquakes, with magnitudes of 7.7 and 7.6, struck at 04:17 and 13:24 local time, respectively, with epicenters in the Pazarcık and Elbistan districts. They directly affected 11 provinces, impacting approximately 14 million people. According to Turkish Statis-

tical Institute (TÜİK) data, this figure represents about 16.4% of Türkiye's population. Data from the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) confirm that the earthquakes were severely felt in Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, Hatay, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Osmaniye, Kilis, Adıyaman, Malatya, Adana, and Elazığ. As a result of these disasters, 50,783 people lost their lives, 115,353 were injured, and more than 3 million people were displaced. Immediately following the earthquake, national mourning was declared in Türkiye, and aid from around the world began to arrive.

The aid and solidarity messages in response to Türkiye's earthquake disaster were particularly noteworthy in Eurasia. The states and peoples of the region stood in solidarity with the earthquake victims in Türkiye. The aid from Kyrgyzstan is one example of this solidarity. The aid coordinated by Kyrgyzstan's Minister of Internal Affairs Ulan Niyazbekov included tents, beds, sleeping bags, heaters, and blankets. The aid collected at the gathering points of the Turkish Embassy in Bishkek was transferred to the earthquake zone via Pegasus and Turkish Airlines. Additionally, a relief account opened by the Kyrgyzstan Ministry of Finance received \$117,000 in donations by 6 March 2023. Contributions to this relief account came from officials and employees of the Kyrgyzstan Presidency, Batken Governorship, Batken Municipality, Kyrgyzstan State Radio and Television Corporation (UTRK), Bishkek Municipality, Bishkek district municipalities, and officials and employees of the Bishkek Provincial Health Directorate.

The Friendship Health, Education, and Solidarity Foundation, established by Ahıska Turks living in Bishkek, organized a special night for those who had lost their lives in the earthquakes of 6 February. During this event, the Quran was recited, and prayers were offered. Representatives from the Turkish Embassy in Bishkek, the TİKA Bishkek Program Coordination Office, Kyrgyzstan-Türkiye Manas University, and the Kyrgyzstan Ahıska Turks Association gathered for this special night. The collected cash and in-kind donations were sent directly to the earthquake zone.

Like other Turkic republics, Kyrgyzstan mobilized all its institutions, providing both cash and in-kind assistance, reminiscent of the Ottoman Empire's past support, thereby fulfilling a debt of gratitude. From the first moments of the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes of 6 February, Kyrgyzstan sent a search and rescue team to the region and later contributed financially and logistically to help alleviate the impact of the disaster that affected millions.

Therefore, through these two events, experienced in different periods and geographies, we have seen that Turks, alongside the peoples and institutions of the states they have established, have always succeeded in acting in unity and solidarity in the most challenging times. These examples of aid and solidarity

reflect the Turkish people's longstanding commitment to humanitarian duty throughout history.



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Abstract

Earthquake Diplomacy in the Turkic World: From Past to Present

This study seeks to examine the influence of earthquakes in two distinct periods and geographies within the Turkic world, separated by more than a century. The main contention of this study is that the relationships between the Ottoman Empire, Türkiye, and Turkestan evolved within the context of a fraternal link, with each side rushing to heal the wounds of the other, regardless of their own difficulties. In this perspective, the Ottoman Empire's response to the 1911 Turkestan earthquake, which included relief and support, demonstrates similar attitudes. Similarly, when it comes to the earthquakes in Türkiye in 2023, Turkestan countries responded faster than other cultures, indicating these continuing fraternal links. This study intends to provide a detailed approach based on the investigation of historical papers and archival information, analyzing the impact of earthquakes in two distinct periods and geographies of the Turkic world, separated by more than a century.

Keywords

Ottoman Empire, Türkiye, Turkestan, Kyrgyzstan, earthquake