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Article

A. Imankulova, G. Kortabayeva*Al-Farabi Kazakh National University,**Almaty, Kazakhstan**(E-mail: aiga1709@gmail.com)***Arabic-Persian Borrowings In Political Terminology: A Comparative Analysis Of Turkish And Kazakh**

Abstract. This article examines Arabic-Persian borrowings in the political vocabulary of Turkish and Kazakh, two Turkic languages that shared a common historical substrate but followed divergent paths of standardisation during the twentieth century. Drawing on comparative-historical and lexical-semantic analysis, the study traces the etymological origins of a set of attested political terms, documents their phonological and morphological adaptation, and accounts for differences in their modern usage. The analysis shows that Arabic-Persian elements constitute a significant historical layer in both terminological systems, but that deliberate lexical replacement in Turkey and Soviet-period standardisation in Kazakhstan produced structurally distinct outcomes. These divergences carry implications for cross-linguistic interpretation in political and institutional discourse.

Keywords: Arabic-Persian borrowings, political terminology, Turkish; Kazakh, language contact, lexical comparison

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Introduction

The lexicon of political discourse in any language reflects the institutional and cultural history through which that language has passed. In the case of the Turkic languages, one of the most consequential episodes in that history is the long-term contact with Arabic and Persian, which began no later than the eighth century and intensified with the adoption of Islam and the integration of Turkic rulers into the administrative traditions of the Islamic world (Johanson & Csató, 1998, pp. 81-125). Through this contact, a large number of terms associated with governance, law, and social organisation entered Turkic languages, many of which persist in contemporary use.

Turkish and Kazakh offer a particularly instructive comparison because they represent the two most widely spoken Turkic languages and because their modern histories diverged sharply. The Turkish language reform, launched in earnest after 1928, pursued a systematic replacement of Arabic and Persian elements with words collected from popular speech or coined from native roots (Lewis, 1999, pp. 1-25). In Kazakhstan, the development of a standardised literary language was shaped by Soviet policy, which promoted unified terminology across the Union's languages and favoured forms that were internationally recognisable, often transmitted through Russian (Johanson & Csató, 1998, pp. 312-325). The result is that two languages which shared much of their classical political vocabulary now organise that vocabulary in markedly different ways.

The present study addresses the following questions: which Arabic-Persian terms entered both Turkish and Kazakh political vocabulary; how were they adapted phonologically and

morphologically; and where and why do the two languages now diverge? The aim is not to produce a comprehensive lexical inventory, but to analyse a representative set of terms in sufficient depth to illuminate the structural patterns at work.

Materials and methods

The analysis is based on a corpus of twelve political terms of confirmed Arabic or Persian etymology, selected on the following criteria: (1) secure etymological attestation in Clauson's *Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish* (1972); (2) functional relevance to political or legal discourse; (3) attestation in both Turkish and Kazakh in contemporary official sources, including the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey (1982, as amended) and the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan (1995, as amended). Where a direct borrowing is absent in one language, a functionally equivalent term is examined in its place.

Each term is examined with regard to its Arabic or Persian source form, its phonological adaptation to Turkic phonology (including vowel harmony and consonant shifts), its morphological integration, and its semantic development from the source language to contemporary usage. This procedure follows the framework for loanword analysis established by Haugen (1950, pp. 210-231), who distinguished importation (the reproduction of foreign phonological substance) from substitution (the replacement of foreign elements with native equivalents). Terms showing substitution rather than importation are treated as evidence of terminological restructuring.

The comparative component follows Weinreich's (1953, pp. 1-40) principle that contact-induced changes can be identified by comparing the structural positions occupied by formally related items in two or more languages. The analysis is qualitative; no statistical claims are made.

Results and discussion

Arabic entered the Turkic languages in two principal channels. The first was religious and scholarly: as the language of the Quran and of Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic supplied terminology for concepts of law, governance, and moral obligation. The second channel was administrative and literary Persian, which served as the prestige language of the courts of the Seljuq and subsequent dynasties and which had itself extensively borrowed from Arabic in these domains. Clauson (1972, pp. 3-15) notes that pre-Islamic Old Turkic had a vocabulary of political organisation centred on native terms such as *qağan* 'supreme ruler' and *el* 'realm', but that after Islamisation the Arabic-Persian layer came to supply much of the vocabulary for abstract political and legal concepts.

This process was neither uniform nor instantaneous. As Johanson (1998, pp. 81-125) shows, the rate and character of borrowing varied across time and across different registers. Chancery Persian supplied administrative terms; theological Arabic supplied normative and juridical vocabulary; and popular bilingualism produced phonologically adapted forms that departed substantially from the source language shapes. The result, by the Ottoman and Chagatai periods, was a political lexicon in which Arabic-Persian elements were so deeply integrated that they were no longer perceived as foreign by educated speakers.

Comparative Analysis of Selected Terms. Justice: adalet / әділет

Both Turkish *adalet* and Kazakh *әділет* derive from Arabic 'adl, meaning 'rectitude, justice'. The Arabic root 'd-l carries both a juridical sense (the equitable application of law) and a moral one (uprightness of character). In Ottoman Turkish, *adalet* was the primary term for the concept of just rule and figured centrally in the political theory of the Sultanate (Lewis, 1999, p. 15). The Turkish form preserves the Arabic phonological structure with adaptation to Turkic phonotactics: the pharyngeal ' is lost, and vowel harmony is not applied since the word entered as an established loanword. In contemporary Turkish constitutional usage, the

term appears in formulations such as *adalet ilkeleri* ('principles of justice') and in the name of the Ministry of Justice (*Adalet Bakanlığı*).

The Kazakh form *әділет* shows vowel harmony applied to the borrowed stem: the initial Arabic /a/ is fronted to /ä/ (orthographic *ә*) in accordance with the front-vowel environment of the word. The term functions identically in institutional usage, appearing in the name *Әділет министрлігі* ('Ministry of Justice'). The semantic range of the two forms is parallel: both retain the dual juridical-ethical dimension of the Arabic source, and both have been recontextualised within the framework of modern state institutions without loss of this original semantic content.

Politics: siyaset / саясат

Turkish *siyaset* and Kazakh *саясат* both derive from Arabic *siyāsa*, a verbal noun from the root s-w-s, meaning the management or governance of affairs, particularly the governance of a polity. In classical Arabic political thought, *siyāsa* designated the practical art of governance as distinct from normative jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The Ottoman term *siyaset* had a somewhat narrower punitive sense in certain administrative contexts, but by the modern period both forms had converged on the general meaning of 'politics, political activity'.

The Turkish form *siyaset* retains the Arabic consonantal skeleton with standard adaptation; the Arabic diphthong /aw/ has been monophthongised to /e/ (*siyāsa* → *siyaset*), and the word takes Turkish case suffixes productively: *siyasi* ('political', adjectival derivative), *siyasetçi* ('politician'). The Kazakh form *саясат* shows the back-vowel harmony variant, with Arabic /i/ rendered as /a/ in the initial syllable. The Kazakh adjective *саяси* ('political') is formed in the same way as Turkish *siyasi*. Both forms appear in parallel constitutional phrases: Turkish *siyasi partiler* and Kazakh *саяси партиялар* ('political parties').

State: devlet vs. мемлекет

Turkish *devlet* derives from Arabic *dawla*, originally meaning 'turn, rotation' and by extension the cycle of dynastic power; in political Arabic it came to mean the state or ruling dynasty. It entered Ottoman Turkish early and became the central term for the concept of the state. In Republican Turkish, *devlet* survived the language reform and remains the unmarked term for 'state' in constitutional and administrative usage: *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devleti* ('the State of the Republic of Turkey').

Kazakh, by contrast, uses *мемлекет* for 'state'. This form derives from Arabic *mamlaka*, meaning 'kingdom, realm'. The two Arabic source forms — *dawla* and *mamlaka* — are semantically related but distinct; their differential survival in Turkish and Kazakh reflects the different vocabularies that were selected for standardisation in the respective contexts. Clauson (1972, p. 769) records the Old Turkic use of *el* for 'realm', but the Arabic-derived forms displaced it at different rates and in different forms across the Turkic world. The result is that the two most widely spoken Turkic languages use different Arabic-derived words for the same fundamental political concept.

Law: hukuk / құқық

Turkish *hukuk* and Kazakh *құқық* both derive from Arabic *ḥuqūq*, the plural of *ḥaqq* ('right, truth, entitlement'). The Arabic plural was borrowed as a singular collective noun in both languages, designating the body of law or the field of legal rights. In Turkish, *hukuk* is the standard term in legal and academic discourse: *hukuk fakültesi* ('faculty of law'), *hukukçu* ('jurist'), *hukuki* ('legal, juridical'). The form preserves the Arabic emphatic consonant *ḥ* as an aspirated /h/ in Turkish.

The Kazakh form *құқық* is phonologically more substantially adapted: the Arabic initial *ḥ* is rendered as a uvular stop /q/ (Kazakh қ), and the vowels conform to the back-vowel harmony of Kazakh (Arabic /u/ and /u:/ → Kazakh /ү/). The resulting form looks quite different from the Turkish cognate but is historically the same borrowed item. This case illustrates how the same Arabic source form can undergo substantially different phonological adaptation in two closely related languages, producing cognates that are not immediately recognisable as such.

Ambassador: büyükelçi vs. елші

The term for ‘ambassador’ illustrates a case in which an Arabic-Persian borrowing has been replaced in one language but not the other. Classical Ottoman Turkish used *sefir*, from Arabic *safir* (‘envoy, ambassador’). During the Republican language reform, *sefir* was largely displaced by *büyükelçi*, a calque constructed from the native Turkish elements *büyük* (‘great’) and *elçi* (‘envoy, messenger’). The latter word, *elçi*, is itself an ancient Turkic term documented in Old Turkic texts (Clauson, 1972, p. 140).

Kazakh retains and uses *елші* directly as the standard term for ‘ambassador’, appearing in constitutional formulations such as *Қазақстан Республикасының елшісі* (‘Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan’). The word is cognate with Turkish *elçi*; both continue the Old Turkic *el + çī* formation. The difference between the two languages is that Turkish moved the native term from a lower-register position to the highest formal register through the calque *büyükelçi*, while Kazakh used *елші* directly at that register without the need for a calque. This case shows that the reform process in Turkey sometimes created new formations from native elements rather than simply retaining borrowings or creating them, and that Kazakh preserved an older Turkic solution that Turkish had partially sidelined.

Structural Patterns and Their Causes

The cases analysed above reveal three structural patterns. First, parallel semantic continuity: terms such as *adalet/әділет* and *siyaset/саясат* show that the Arabic-Persian layer maintains conceptual frameworks inherited from classical Islamic political thought, even when the institutional contexts have changed entirely. The semantic fields of these terms have not contracted or expanded dramatically; they have been recontextualised within modern state structures while retaining their core meaning.

Second, differential phonological adaptation: the comparison of *hukuk/құқық* shows that the same Arabic source form can be phonologically restructured in substantially different ways depending on the phonological system of the recipient language and the period and channel of borrowing. Turkish preserves more of the Arabic phonological surface, while Kazakh subjects borrowings more consistently to its own phonological rules, particularly vowel harmony and the uvular articulation of back consonants.

Third, deliberate lexical replacement in Turkish: cases like *büyükelçi* for *sefir*, and *devlet* retained while Kazakh chose *мемлекет*, reflect the asymmetry introduced by the Turkish language reform. Lewis (1999, pp. 67-89) documents extensively how the reform drove by the Turkish Language Society (*Türk Dil Kurumu*) after 1932 aimed systematically at reducing the Arabic-Persian component of Turkish vocabulary. In Kazakh, no comparable programme of replacement was undertaken; the Soviet-period standardisation aimed at consistency and at facilitating terminology parallel to Russian scientific and administrative discourse, but it did not treat Arabic-Persian elements as inherently undesirable (Johanson & Csató, 1998, pp. 312-325).

The two processes produced structurally different outcomes. In Turkish, the terminological system shows a relatively sharp cleavage between the older Ottoman layer (which survives in *adalet*, *siyaset*, *hukuk*, *devlet*) and a newer Republican layer of native or calqued terms (*büyükelçi*). In Kazakh, the system is more continuous: Arabic-Persian elements were adapted and retained alongside native terms and international vocabulary, without systematic purge of the borrowed layer.

Implications for Cross-Linguistic Communication

The divergences documented above have practical consequences for translation and for the interpretation of political texts across the two languages. Formally cognate terms – those derived from the same Arabic or Persian source – occupy overlapping but not identical semantic and stylistic positions in Turkish and Kazakh. A term that carries a formal, institutional register in one language may carry a slightly different range of connotations in the other,

partly because of differences in the history of reform and partly because of differences in the institutional structures through which terminology is produced and validated.

More practically, cases of lexical non-correspondence – such as devlet versus мемлекет for ‘state’, or büyükelçi versus елші for ‘ambassador’ – require translators and comparative lawyers to treat etymological similarity with caution. The shared Arabic-Persian substrate creates a false impression of terminological equivalence that a careful comparison of usage reveals to be only partial.

This observation connects to a broader point made by Weinreich (1953, pp. 47-63) about interference between languages in contact: when two languages share a large common lexical layer, the divergences in that shared layer are often more consequential for communication than the differences in vocabulary that have no common source. Speakers familiar with the shared Arabic-Persian substrate of Turkic languages may assume equivalence where careful analysis reveals systematic divergence.

Conclusion

The analysis confirms that Arabic-Persian borrowings form a historically central layer of political vocabulary in both Turkish and Kazakh and that this layer continues to organise key conceptual categories in contemporary political discourse. At the same time, the two languages have processed this shared inheritance in structurally different ways: Turkish through a reform programme that selectively replaced borrowings with native or calqued terms, Kazakh through a standardisation process that retained and adapted the borrowed layer without systematic replacement.

The practical consequence is a set of terminological systems that are partially convergent and partially divergent. Pairs such as adalet/әділет and siyaset/саясат represent genuine functional and semantic parallels. Pairs such as devlet/мемлекет represent differential selection from the same historical borrowing stock. Cases such as büyükelçi/елші represent fundamentally different structural solutions to the same terminological problem.

These findings suggest that the comparative study of political terminology in Turkish and Kazakh requires attention not only to etymology – which may suggest a shared substrate – but also to the specific histories of lexical reform and standardisation through which each language has processed that substrate. Further research based on larger corpora drawn from constitutional texts, diplomatic correspondence, and parliamentary debate would allow the patterns identified here to be tested on a broader empirical base.

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Араб-парсы кірме сөздерінің саяси терминологиядағы орны: түрік және қазақ тілдерінің салыстырмалы талдауы

Аңдатпа. Бұл мақалада ортақ тарихи негізге ие болғанымен, XX ғасырда тілдік стандарттандыру үдерісі әртүрлі бағытта дамыған екі түркі тілі – түрік және қазақ тілдеріндегі саяси лексика құрамындағы араб-парсы кірме сөздері қарастырылады. Салыстырмалы-тарихи және лексика-семантикалық талдау әдістеріне сүйене отырып, зерттеуде саяси терминдердің этимологиялық төркіні анықталып, олардың фонетикалық және морфологиялық бейімделу ерекшеліктері сипатталады, сондай-ақ қазіргі қолданыстағы айырмашылықтарының себептері түсіндіріледі. Зерттеу нәтижелері араб-парсы тілдік элементтерінің екі тілдің де саяси терминологиялық жүйесінде маңызды тарихи қабат құрайтынын көрсетеді. Сонымен қатар, Түркиядағы мақсатты түрде жүргізілген лексикалық жаңарту саясаты мен Қазақстандағы кеңестік кезеңдегі тілдік стандарттандыру нәтижесінде бұл терминологиялық жүйелердің құрылымдық тұрғыдан әртүрлі сипат алғаны айқындалды. Аталған айырмашылықтар саяси және институционалдық дискурстағы тілдер арасындағы өзара түсіністік пен терминдерді интерпретациялау үдерісіне ықпал етеді.

Түйін сөздер: араб-парсы кірме сөздері, саяси терминология, түрік тілі, қазақ тілі, тілдік байланыс, лексикалық салыстыру

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Арабо-персидские заимствования в политической терминологии: сравнительный анализ турецкого и казахского языков

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются арабо-персидские заимствования в политической лексике турецкого и казахского языков — двух тюркских языков, имеющих общую историческую основу, но прошедших различные пути языковой стандартизации в XX веке. На основе сравнительно-исторического и лексико-семантического анализа исследуются этимологическое происхождение ряда политических терминов, особенности их фонетической и морфологической адаптации, а также причины

различий в их современном употреблении. Результаты исследования показывают, что арабо-персидские элементы образуют значительный исторический пласт в терминологических системах обоих языков. Вместе с тем целенаправленная политика лексического обновления в Турции и стандартизация языка в советский период в Казахстане обусловили формирование структурно различных терминологических систем. Выявленные различия имеют значение для межъязыковой интерпретации политического и институционального дискурса.

Ключевые слова: арабо-персидские заимствования, политическая терминология, турецкий язык, казахский язык, языковые контакты, лексическое сопоставление.

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