



THE ECONOMIC POTENTIALS AND POSSIBLE AREAS OF COOPERATION AMONG THE MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE ORGANIZATION OF TURKIC STATES

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Review Article	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article Process:</i></p> <p>Submitted: 06/12/2024 Revised: 13/03/2025 Accepted: 25/03/2025 Available: 26/03/2025</p> <p>This article checked by  iThenticate score: 5%</p> <p>JEL Codes: A13, B27, F02.</p> 	<p><i>The Turkic World represents an ancient history, a great civilization, a strong economic potential, and a strategic geography located between Asia and Europe. Approximately 300 million Turkish cognates live in this geography based on common historical ties, common language, culture and traditions. The Organization of Turkic States (OTS), established by the independent Turkic states in this geography, is taking significant and systematic steps towards enhancing cooperation and solidarity among Turkic states and peoples. These steps, which can be referred to as Turkic cooperation, create added value for Member States both strategically and politically. This added value stems from the opportunities it offers, especially for various joint development projects, and from bringing the Member States and their citizens closer together. Politically, Turkic cooperation contributes to addressing the regional and global challenges faced by the Member States in a spirit of collaboration. The OTS serves Member States by developing and harmonizing cooperation capacities in relevant fields, enabling them to make more effective use of this capacity. Additionally, the OTS functions as an overarching framework for establishing good neighborly and friendly relations and strengthening cooperation between states to maintain regional and international peace, security, and stability.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Organization of Turkic States, Turkic Cooperation, Turkic Development, Middle Corridor, Central Asia.</p>
	<p style="background-color: #e0f2f1;">EXTENDED ABSTRACT</p> <p><i>The concept of the Turkic World, a geographical and cultural term, encompasses Turkic regions in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Turkey, Europe, China, and Russia, as well as the Turkic diaspora. The Turkic World can be analyzed in both broad and narrow senses. In its broad sense, the Turkic World includes independent Turkic republics, autonomous Turkic republics, Turkic communities, and the Turkic diaspora. Additionally, it is necessary to include under the umbrella of the Turkic World those non-Turkic ethnic groups who identify themselves with the Turkic nation or construct their identities in relation to it. In this sense, the concept of the Turkic World encompasses both the Turkic Nation and communities associated with it. Therefore, the term "Turkic World" serves as an umbrella concept that incorporates various elements related to ethnicity, geography, politics, sociology, culture, and civilization. In its narrower sense, the Turkic World refers specifically to the independent Turkic states. From this perspective, the Turkic World is a geographical region located at the</i></p>

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<p> Makale/Article Doi: 10.52703/ay.211</p> <p>License:</p> <p> This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution- NonCommercial 4.0 International License</p>	<p>intersection of Asia and Europe, serving as a transit route for trade between East and West and occupying a central position in global geopolitics.</p> <p>When examining the economic status of the member and observer states of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), the Turkic World spans an area of 4.8 million square kilometers, with a population of 300 million, a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$1.9 trillion, a foreign trade volume of \$1.9 trillion, and an economic purchasing power of \$4.8 trillion. The Turkic World ranks as the 13th largest economy globally. As Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has stated, "The Turkic World is a large family, possesses great potential, and is spread across a vast geography. The transportation routes, energy resources, human capital, growing population, and favorable demographic conditions of the Turkic states make it a significant power potential." According to Aliyev, it is the responsibility of the Turkic states to transform this potential into a global power, and this reality will inevitably be realized in the future.</p> <p>Currently, more than 20 multifaceted initiatives and projects are being implemented under the framework of the OTS, covering areas such as economy, transportation, tourism, education, youth and sports, and health. These include the Turkic Investment Fund, the Trans-Caspian transport corridor, the "Brother Ports" initiative, the Orkhon student and academic exchange program, international youth camps, youth festivals, university sports games, the Modern Silk Road Joint Tourism Package, Tabarruk Pilgrimages, and many others. Additionally, in the field of health, various mechanisms such as the Council of Central Banks of Turkic States, the Judicial Council, the Turkic World Mediators Union, the Turkic World Notaries Union, the OTS Media and Information Working Group, the Health Science Board, the Health Coordination Committee, and the Supply Chain Group are conducting joint efforts among member states.</p> <p>As a result of the momentum gained from the restructuring of the OTS at the Istanbul Summit, there has been a significant increase in trade relations among member states. However, the current level of cooperation remains far below its potential. According to 2021 data, the total foreign trade volume of OTS countries is approximately \$700 billion (around \$1.2 trillion as of 2023). However, the trade volume among member states is around \$40 billion, which accounts for only about 5.5% of the total foreign trade volume. This issue has been raised at summits, and the OTS countries have demonstrated a shared political will to increase this volume. Nevertheless, significant progress has yet to be achieved in this regard. This remains a critical issue for operationalizing the core policies of the OTS. Furthermore, within the framework of the Turkic World 2040 Vision Document, which serves as a roadmap for the OTS, important provisions aim to create favorable conditions for mutual trade and investment. In this context, the facilitation of customs procedures and the development of cooperation in science and technology, education, health, culture, tourism, and sports are among the key objectives. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Turkey recognized the independence of the newly established Turkic republics without exception, established diplomatic relations, and pursued economic cooperation. To establish the legal framework for cooperation, Turkey signed numerous protocols with each of these countries. The collaboration, which began immediately after independence, has continued to grow to the present day. Although the volume of economic cooperation between Turkey and the Turkic States has not yet reached the desired level, Turkey has become one of the top five partners for the Central Asian Turkic republics in terms of both investment and foreign trade. Moreover, bilateral relations reveal that joint investments in the energy sector have significantly strengthened the economic ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan. In general, while Turkey is one of the most important partners of the Turkic States in terms of both exports and imports, its trade volume and share in total foreign trade remain limited. Nevertheless, strategic and concrete steps are being taken to enhance foreign trade and investment between Turkey and the Turkic States.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

The Turkic World is a cultural and geographical concept that refers to the Turkic peoples and states, generally spread across the regions of Central Asia, Anatolia, the Caucasus, Russia-Siberia, the Middle East, Iran, and the Balkans. This geography, located between Asia and Europe, is also a distinguished region positioned at the geopolitical heart of the world, lying on the trade routes between the East and the West. The Turkic World, with a land area of 4.5 million km², a population of 300 million, a GDP of 1.9 trillion dollars, a purchasing power of 4 trillion dollars, and a foreign trade volume of 1.9 trillion dollars, possesses significant socio-economic power. The concept of the Turkic World not only includes the independent Turkic states but also the autonomous republics and Turkic communities living in various countries. Therefore, the concept of the Turkic World is a broader, overarching term that encompasses the independent Turkic states. However, this study will focus only on the potential areas of cooperation among the countries that are members or observer members of the Organization of Turkic States. The Organization of Turkic States, which embodies the concrete will of the Turkic World, has 5 full members and 3 observer members. According to official data, the main socio-economic indicators of the Turkic States are as follows:

Table 1: Socio-Economic Outlook of OTS Member States (Year 2023)

Country	Population (Million People)	GDP (Billion \$) (Current)	Unemployment (%)	Inflation (%)	Per Capita Income (\$) (Thousand).
Türkiye	86,3	1.120,00	8,6	64,8	13,1
Azerbaijan	10,4	76,64	5,6	8,2	7,5
Kazakhstan	20,0	260,51	4,8	14,6	13,1
Uzbekistan	37,0	90,88	8,4	8,9	2,5
Kyrgyzstan	7,0	12,80	9,0	10,8	1,8
Turkmenistan	6,6	77,11	5,2	- 1,7	11,8
Hungary	10,0	212,61	4,1	17,1	22,1
Total	177,3	1.850,55			

Source: IMF (2023). *World Economic Outlook 2023*, Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Trade.

The bilateral or multilateral cooperation opportunities that member countries will carry out among themselves, as well as the cooperation to be undertaken within the framework of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), will allow the organization's sphere of influence to expand and deepen. Certain sensitive projects initiated under the OTS may attract attention or provoke reactions. However, when the same projects are executed through bilateral or trilateral cooperation between OTS member states, they are less likely to draw attention and may encourage the member countries involved to take ownership of the project. As a result of the success achieved in these initiatives, other member countries may eventually join the project over time. Unlike other forms of integration, this will ensure that areas of cooperation become

projects of the organization through the voluntary bilateral or multilateral cooperation of member countries, rather than being imposed by the organization. This approach will also eliminate the criticism often directed at integration efforts, which argue that such initiatives undermine the sovereignty of member countries (Yüce, 2022: 9-10).

In this study, which is based on a literature review, the economic potentials and possible areas of cooperation among the member countries of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) will be emphasized. Within this framework, the socio-economic data of the member countries will be examined first, followed by an analysis of the areas of cooperation between these countries.

1. THE ECONOMIC POTENTIALS OF TURKIC STATES

When examining the economic structures of the Turkic states, it is evident that Türkiye and Hungary are distinguished by their manufacturing industries, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan by their human resource potential, and Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan by their energy production. Particularly, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan, with their significant energy resources, have the ability to supply the energy resources needed by countries with strong manufacturing industries. This is also true for Türkiye and Hungary, which have made significant progress in the manufacturing sector. Türkiye, with its deep industrial and production experience, can be viewed as a complementary economic power capable of utilizing the raw materials and energy resources of the Turkic Republics, which are rich in such resources. Therefore, there is always potential for strategic energy cooperation between the Turkic Republics, which possess abundant underground and energy resources, and Türkiye and Hungary. Furthermore, a strong energy partnership has already been established between Türkiye and Azerbaijan. This cooperation is not limited to meeting Türkiye's energy needs. Türkiye also serves as both a transfer country and a partner in supplying Azerbaijani energy resources to global markets. In addition to the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, the construction of the Southern Gas Corridor, consisting of the South Caucasus Pipeline, the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP), and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), which delivers natural gas from the Shah Deniz 2 field to Türkiye and Europe, has elevated the relationship between the two countries to a strategic level (Yüce, 2022a: 69).

Table 2: Economic Outlook of OTS Member States (Year 2021)

Country	Exports (in US\$ Mil):	Imports (in US\$ Mil)	Trade Volume (in US\$ Mil)	Trade Balance (% of GDP):	Trade (% of GDP):	Country Growth (%)
Türkiye	225.214	271.426	496.640	-0,23	70.83	16.82
Azerbaijan	22.208	11.696	33.904	16.69	76.29	36.04

Kazakhstan	60.321	41.415	101.736	9.55	57.54	20.42
Uzbekistan	14.092	23.886	37.978	-16.49	63.85	4.36
Kyrgyzstan	2.752	5.580	8.332	-30.20	105,71	26.04
Turkmenistan (2020)	2.506	1.786	3.292	6.89	103.58	38.48
Hungary	141.157	139.132	280.289	0.31	160.20	8.25
Source: The World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS), https://wits.worldbank.org/countryprofile/en/country/wld/year/ltst/summary . (Access Date: 20.09.2024).						

The geopolitical situation created by the Azerbaijan-Türkiye cooperation has made the option of opening up Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to the EU through Azerbaijan more attractive. On one hand, Azerbaijan offers Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan an appealing cooperation opportunity regarding energy export diversification through existing energy pipelines. On the other hand, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway infrastructure, or the opening of the Zangezur corridor, provides an attractive opportunity for the transportation of goods from these countries to Türkiye and Europe, or conversely, for the transportation of EU goods to these countries. This cooperation opportunity is not limited to Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan; it also offers the same possibility for Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, which have no sea access. Cooperation in this area will reduce transportation costs for the OTS member countries along the historic Silk Road route and will serve the development expectations of the OTS.

Among the OTS member countries, Uzbekistan is one of the largest producers of products such as cotton, gold, and uranium in the world. These products, which also represent a significant portion of the country's total exports, are important for the Uzbek economy. In imports, the prominence of the manufacturing industry indicates that the country's production capacity is not at the desired level (İstikbal, 2021: 14). Likewise, OTS member Kazakhstan, along with Azerbaijan and observer member Turkmenistan, possesses very rich energy resources. It is well-known that the Caspian Sea holds a significant share of the energy reserves owned by the Turkic states in Central Asia. Kazakhstan is one of the countries with the largest oil reserves in the Caspian Sea. Turkmenistan, which has significant oil reserves along the Caspian Sea, is estimated to have proven oil reserves of approximately 600 million to 1 billion barrels. Azerbaijan is an important country exporting oil through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline. Azerbaijan's Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli (ACG) field is the country's largest oil field, with estimated reserves of around 7 billion barrels.

Another area providing potential job opportunities among the Turkic States located along the ancient Silk Road is the cooperation to be achieved in the logistics sector. The Turkic Republics, located along the ancient Silk Road, have the opportunity to unite their strengths to offer a new alternative to the world in the energy and transportation sectors through the Caspian Sea Crossing Middle Corridor. This corridor is considered the shortest and most

economically efficient route connecting Asia to Europe. Due to the insecurity of the Northern Corridor caused by the Russia-Ukraine war and the long and costly nature of the Southern Corridor passing through Iran, the importance of the Caspian Sea Crossing Middle Corridor has recently increased. In other words, the Middle Corridor serves as an alternative to the "Northern Corridor" associated with Russia and the "Southern Corridor" involving Iran, and it holds significant importance for the integration of China with Europe. The cooperation regarding the Middle Corridor among Türkiye-Azerbaijan, Türkiye-Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan-Uzbekistan has transformed into a trilateral cooperation with the Tashkent Declaration. In August 2022, after a meeting where the foreign ministers, trade ministers, and transport ministers of Türkiye, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan discussed issues related to coordination and cooperation in areas on the common agenda of the three countries, including the Caspian Sea Crossing East-West Middle Corridor, the ministers signed the Tashkent Declaration regarding the outcomes of the meeting. Thus, bilateral cooperation has transformed into trilateral cooperation.

As is well known, one of the agreements signed during Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Kazakhstan on May 10, 2022, is the agreement commonly referred to as the "Middle Corridor Agreement." This agreement foresees that a significant portion of transportation between Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Far East will be provided via the Caspian Sea Crossing-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Türkiye route. This agreement will contribute not only to the transportation between the two countries but also to enhancing the effectiveness of the Trans-Asia Middle Corridor along the East-West Corridor, particularly facilitating the trade potential of the landlocked Central Asian countries toward this region.

Additionally, a roadmap for the development of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (Middle Corridor) for the period of 2022-2027 has been signed by the foreign and transport ministers of Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Georgia. Thus, the aim is to increase the capacity of the Middle Corridor to 10 million tons annually by 2025. In his speech at the informal Summit of the Turkic States Organization held in Shusha on June 6, 2024, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev stated that, thanks to Azerbaijan's additional investments, the annual freight transport capacity of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway has been increased from 1 million to 5 million tons. He also emphasized that Azerbaijan, with over 50 commercial vessels in the Caspian Sea, provides significant transit services for Turkic states. Considering the increasing freight transports, it is currently under construction in the Baku Shipbuilding Plant. He mentioned that Azerbaijan's 9th International Airport in Lachin will become operational next year, and the loading capacity of the Elet International Trade Port will be increased from 15 million tons to 25 million tons (Aliyev, 2024).

This area of cooperation has also attracted the attention of Turkmenistan, which has expressed a desire to participate in transportation projects. In this context, Turkmenistan is interested in the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line and actively supports efforts to establish the Lapis Lazuli Route, which envisions the transportation (land and railway) and trade corridor of Afghanistan-Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Türkiye, as well as the establishment of the “Caspian Sea-Black Sea” international transport line. The integration of the Turkmenbashi International Sea Port with this route will not only increase the strategic importance of the Caspian Sea but also reduce transportation costs. Thus, the Baku International Sea Trade Port, along with the increased capacity of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway and the utilization of Georgian ports, will create a new geostrategic situation in the region by establishing a logistics line between Asia and the West. This route connects the Turkic states of Central Asia to Europe via Azerbaijan and Türkiye, and to Africa through the Port of Mersin.

The Middle Corridor provides a strong alternative to other transportation corridors in terms of distance and time. On November 25, 2022, at the second meeting of the foreign and transport ministers of Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Georgia in Aktau, a port city on the Caspian Sea in Kazakhstan, Türkiye’s then Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Adil Karaismailoğlu, stated that if a freight train from China prefers the Middle Corridor and Türkiye, it travels 7,000 kilometers in 12 days. In contrast, if the same train prefers the Northern Trade Route of Russia, it would cover a distance of 10,000 kilometers with a minimum travel time of 15 days. In the Southern Corridor, however, it is only possible to reach Europe by sea via the Suez Canal after traveling 20,000 kilometers, taking between 45 to 60 days (Türkiye Azerbaycan Dergisi, 25.09.2024). The short transport time and low transportation costs make the Middle Corridor more attractive than other alternatives. Thus, the Middle Corridor, which extends from Türkiye, reaching China through railway and road connections to Georgia, Azerbaijan, and the Caspian Sea, and then following the route through Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan (using the Caspian Sea crossing), will also provide concrete cooperation among the Turkic states, serving as a strategic corridor.

Another area of strategic cooperation among the Turkic states is the defense industry and security. Türkiye's increasing influence at regional and global levels creates an alternative cooperation environment for the Turkic states, and its progress in the defense industry provides an important assurance for the security of all Turkic states. The advanced technology products of the Turkish defense industry played a crucial role in ensuring the advance of the Azerbaijani army during the 44-day homeland war, being one of the key elements that brought victory through the psychological impact created in the most critical moments of the war. Vehicles such as Cobra, Ural, Vuran, and Amazon, as well as mine-resistant vehicles like Kirpi, play a

vital role in Turkmenistan's defense, while Turkish drones serve as a significant deterrent force in Kyrgyzstan, which acts as a gateway to China for Turkistan. Türkiye also has significant cooperation in the defense industry with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, which are central countries in Central Asia. Given these developments, strategic investments in defense and military sectors can be realized among the Turkic states.

Another area of strategic cooperation among the Turkic states is in the field of information and communication technologies. Joint investments in digitalization, which is gaining increasing strategic importance today, will transform the Turkic states into strategic partners. First and foremost, prioritizing trade, transportation, health, and education, it will be essential to develop joint programs and projects in e-government and e-services, enhance partnerships in information technology services and infrastructure development, and establish regional technological ecosystems by creating collaborative platforms and networks. Additionally, common investments in cybersecurity and space technologies will enable the Turkic states to secure a larger share of the added value generated in the global economy.

In conclusion, as stated in the Vision Document for the Turkic World 2040, Turkish cooperation provides both strategic and political added value for the member states. The strategic added value primarily stems from the opportunities it offers for various joint development projects and its ability to bring member states and their citizens closer together. Politically, Turkish cooperation contributes to addressing the regional and global challenges faced by member states in the spirit of collaboration. The organization will serve as an important tool to achieve this more effectively by harmonizing national capacities where appropriate.

CONCLUSION

The Turkic States Organization, which brings together Turkic states with a common history and civilization, operates based on the principles of equality, mutual trust, and common benefit, aiming to create a high level of added value for the member states through a multilayered, systematic, and structured multilateral cooperation. The member countries of the TDT have significant potential power due to their socio-economic capabilities and strategic locations. As expressed by Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev during the Informal Summit of the Turkic States Organization held in Shusha on June 6, "The Turkic States Organization should become one of the centers of power in the world. We cover a vast geographical area; positive demographic dynamics are observed in the member countries, and our military potential has repeatedly demonstrated itself on the battlefield. Our rich natural resources, modern infrastructure for their transportation, and transport corridors connecting Central Asia

and the Caucasus with Mediterranean and Black Sea ports, along with our rich and ancient history and culture, are our great wealth. The commitment of our peoples to traditional values and their common ethnic roots tightly binds our countries together. The 21st century should be the age of development for the Turkic world." The reference made by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in his speech at the 10th Summit of the Turkic States Organization Council of Heads of State in Kazakhstan to the words of Bilge Kagan, one of the Khans of the Second Göktürk State—"O Turkic nation; turn to yourself, understand yourself, and you will rise even higher"—indicates that the socio-economic strength of the Turkic peoples united under the Turkic States Organization will continue to grow.

The potential areas of cooperation among the member states of the Turkic States Organization are quite broad. The synergy created by the cooperation of Turkic states, which possess a young population, rich energy resources, and a strong entrepreneurial spirit, will significantly contribute not only to regional development but also to the global economic cycle. Especially the strategy to make the International East-West Middle Corridor via the Caspian the shortest and safest transport link between East and West, and to integrate member states into regional and global supply and production chains through this Corridor, creates new cooperation opportunities for Turkic states. Additionally, establishing energy cooperation among member states by emphasizing energy diversity and clean/green energy, rather than merely a pure supplier-consumer relationship, can reshape the global energy map by ensuring energy security and efficiency through advanced technology-based collaboration.

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KATKI ORANLARI VE ÇIKAR ÇATIŞMASI/ CONTRIBUTION RATES AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Etik Beyan	Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur.	Ethical Statement	It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.
Yazar Katkıları	<i>Çalışmanın Tasarlanması:</i> MY (%100) <i>Veri Toplanması:</i> MY (%100) <i>Veri Analizi:</i> MY (%100) <i>Makalenin Yazımı:</i> MY (%100) <i>Makale Gönderimi ve Revizyonu:</i> MY (%100) <i>Sorumlu Yazar:</i> Yazar ad-soyad baş harfleri ile belirtilmelidir ve iki kişilik çalışmalarda katkı oranları %50-%50 olarak belirtilmemelidir.	Author Contributions	<i>Research Design:</i> MY (%100) <i>Data Collection:</i> MY (%100) <i>Data Analysis:</i> MY (%100) <i>Writing the Article:</i> MY (%100) <i>Article Submission and Revision:</i> MY (%100)
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