

THE ORGANIZATION OF TURKIC STATES AS AN EMERGING MODEL OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN EURASIA

Oleh Matsovityi

^A PhD Student, expert, e-mail: cenzor50@proton.me, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-2973-1584>

National Aviation University, Kyiv, Ukraine

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Abstract

Purpose. This study examines the institutional evolution of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) and evaluates its contribution to regional integration, transport connectivity, energy security, and geo-economic cooperation in Eurasia. **Methodology.** The research applies an integrated qualitative framework combining comparative institutional analysis, systems analysis, document analysis, and regional integration theories, including neofunctionalism, constructivism, and intergovernmentalism. **Findings.** The study demonstrates that the OTS has evolved from a platform of cultural cooperation into a multidimensional regional organization promoting transport connectivity, economic integration, energy cooperation, digital transformation, and defense-industrial collaboration. The Middle Corridor is identified as the organization's principal geo-economic project, enhancing Eurasian connectivity, trade diversification, and institutional coordination. The analysis also highlights the growing importance of renewable energy initiatives and technological cooperation in strengthening regional resilience. **Theoretical implications.** The article proposes an integrated analytical framework that explains the hybrid institutional development of the OTS and conceptualizes it as an emerging model of geo-economic regionalism. **Practical implications.** The findings may support policymakers in strengthening regional governance, transport infrastructure, energy cooperation, digital modernization, and institutional coordination within the Organization of Turkic States.

Key words: Organization of Turkic States; Middle Corridor; Regional Integration; Energy Security; Eurasia; Turkic World; Geoeconomics; Transport Corridors; Defense-Industrial Cooperation; Green Energy.

Introduction

Therefore, the scientific novelty of the study lies in its comprehensive and multidisciplinary assessment of the Organization of Turkic States as an evolving regional integration platform operating at the intersection of geopolitics, geoeconomics, transport connectivity, and energy security.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the contemporary evolution of the Organization of Turkic States and to identify the principal directions of its future development in the fields of regional integration, logistics, energy security, and strategic cooperation.

To achieve this purpose, the study pursues the following objectives:

- to examine the theoretical approaches used in the analysis of the Organization of Turkic States;
- to evaluate the geopolitical and geo-economic significance of the Middle Corridor;
- to assess the mechanisms of economic, financial, and defense-industrial cooperation within the OTS;
- to analyze the role of green energy initiatives in strengthening regional integration; and
- to identify the principal strategic opportunities and challenges facing the Organization of Turkic States.

Literature Review

Theoretical Perspectives on Regional Integration

Regional integration has long been examined through diverse theoretical approaches that explain how states develop institutionalized forms of political and economic cooperation. Among the most influential frameworks are neofunctionalism, constructivism, and intergovernmentalism, each offering a distinct interpretation of the mechanisms driving regional integration and institutional development. Together, these approaches provide a comprehensive conceptual foundation for analysing the evolution of the Organization of Turkic States (Avcu, 2025; Ünver, 2023).

Neofunctionalism: Functional Cooperation and Institutional Expansion

Neofunctionalist theory explains regional integration as a gradual process in which cooperation in one policy area generates incentives for integration in related sectors. Haas (1958) argued that collaboration in technical and economic fields creates functional spillover, encouraging states to establish broader institutional arrangements and policy coordination. Subsequent scholarship further developed this concept by demonstrating that increasing economic interdependence gradually expands the scope of regional governance (Avcu, 2025; Ünver, 2023).

The institutional evolution of the Organization of Turkic States reflects several characteristics associated with neofunctionalist integration. Although the organization initially emphasized cultural cooperation and political dialogue, its agenda has progressively expanded to include transport connectivity, customs harmonization, trade facilitation, investment policy, digital transformation, and energy cooperation. The development of the Middle Corridor illustrates how cooperation in transport infrastructure has stimulated institutional coordination in multiple policy areas, thereby strengthening regional integration without establishing supranational governance structures (Jumayev, 2023; Ünver, 2023).

Nevertheless, the applicability of neofunctionalism remains limited because the OTS lacks the supranational institutions characteristic of the European integration process. Consequently, functional spillover within the organization operates primarily through voluntary policy coordination rather than legally binding institutional delegation (Avcu, 2025).

Constructivism: Identity as a Driver of Regional Cooperation

Constructivist approaches emphasize that regional organizations are shaped not only by material interests but also by shared identities, collective memories, historical narratives, and common cultural values. According to this perspective, institutions emerge because states perceive themselves as belonging to a common political and cultural community (Egamberdiyev, 2023; Jumayev, 2023).

This perspective is particularly relevant for understanding the Organization of Turkic States. Shared linguistic heritage, historical traditions, and cultural affinity have provided important normative foundations for institutional cooperation. The concept of the Turkic World functions simultaneously as a cultural narrative and a political framework that facilitates diplomatic dialogue, strengthens mutual trust, and legitimizes long-term regional initiatives. Strategic documents such as the Turkic World Vision–2040 demonstrate how identity-based cooperation has gradually evolved into broader institutional collaboration encompassing economic, educational, scientific, and technological dimensions (Egamberdiyev, 2023; Organization of Turkic States, 2021; Musabay Baki, 2022).

However, identity alone cannot fully explain the organization's recent transformation. The growing emphasis on transport infrastructure, logistics, investment, and energy security indicates that pragmatic economic interests increasingly complement cultural solidarity as drivers of regional integration (Koçak, 2023).

Intergovernmentalism and Institutional Flexibility

Intergovernmentalism theory argues that regional organizations develop through negotiations among sovereign governments pursuing national interests. According to this approach,

states remain the principal actors in regional integration and retain ultimate authority over institutional decision-making (Avcu, 2025; Ulutaş & Tanrısever, 2019).

The Organization of Turkic States closely corresponds to this model. Decisions are adopted through consensus, member states preserve full sovereignty, and institutional development depends on voluntary cooperation rather than supranational authority. This flexible governance structure enables countries with diverse geopolitical orientations to expand cooperation while maintaining independent foreign and security policies (Avcu, 2025; Demir, 2022).

The intergovernmental character of the OTS also explains its capacity to adapt to changing geopolitical conditions. Rather than replacing existing international commitments, the organization complements the foreign policies of its members by providing an additional platform for economic coordination, transport development, and diplomatic cooperation (Koçak, 2023; Yermekbayev & Yekibassova, 2026).

Goeconomic Transformation of the Organization of Turkic States

Recent studies increasingly interpret the Organization of Turkic States through the concept of goeconomics, which emphasizes the strategic use of economic instruments to advance political and security objectives. Within this perspective, transport infrastructure, investment mechanisms, energy cooperation, and digital connectivity are regarded as essential components of contemporary geopolitical influence (Demir, 2022; Koçak, 2023).

Particular attention has been devoted to the development of the Middle Corridor, which has become the organization's most visible strategic initiative. Researchers generally agree that the corridor enhances Eurasian connectivity, facilitates trade diversification, and strengthens the international competitiveness of participating economies. Moreover, improvements in transport infrastructure have stimulated broader cooperation in customs modernization, logistics management, digitalization, and cross-border investment (Çetinkaya & Demirel, 2023; Jumayev, 2023).

Energy security has emerged as another important area of scholarly interest. Existing studies emphasize the growing strategic significance of renewable energy projects, electricity interconnections, and regional energy diversification. The proposed Green Energy Corridor reflects broader international efforts to strengthen resilient energy systems while reducing dependence on traditional transit routes (Abasova & Yuzbashiyev, 2025; Koçak, 2023).

More recently, scholars have also examined the expansion of defense-industrial cooperation within the OTS. Rather than interpreting these developments as evidence of military integration, most researchers view them as instruments of technological modernization, industrial cooperation, and capability development that support broader regional resilience (Dunyamaliyeva, 2025; Kocatepe, 2024).

Research Gap

Despite the rapid expansion of the literature, several important limitations remain.

First, most studies analyse individual dimensions of the Organization of Turkic States—such as cultural diplomacy, transport policy, or regional geopolitics—without integrating these perspectives into a comprehensive analytical framework (Avcu, 2025; Demir, 2022; Jumayev, 2023).

Second, relatively little attention has been devoted to examining the interaction between transport connectivity, energy security, institutional development, and defense-industrial cooperation. These dimensions are frequently analysed independently despite their increasing interdependence (Abasova & Yuzbashiyev, 2025; Çetinkaya & Demirel, 2023; Kocatepe, 2024).

Third, the theoretical literature has not yet adequately explained how identity-based regional cooperation evolves into multidimensional geo-economic integration while preserving an intergovernmental institutional structure (Avcu, 2025; Egamberdiyev, 2023; Ünver, 2023).

Accordingly, this study addresses these limitations by applying an integrated analytical framework that combines institutional analysis with theories of regional integration to explain the

contemporary evolution of the Organization of Turkic States. This approach enables a more comprehensive assessment of the organization's institutional transformation and its emerging role within the changing geopolitical landscape of Eurasia.

Materials and methods

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative explanatory research design to investigate the institutional evolution of the OTS and its contribution to regional integration, transport connectivity, energy security, and geo-economic cooperation. Given the multidimensional nature of the research problem, the study combines institutional analysis with comparative and systems approaches to examine the interaction between political, economic, and strategic processes shaping the organization's development.

Data Sources

The analysis draws upon a broad range of qualitative sources.

Primary sources include official documents adopted by the Organization of Turkic States, strategic development programmes, summit declarations, institutional reports, and policy documents defining the organization's priorities and long-term objectives. Particular attention is devoted to the Turkic World Vision–2040, official summit declarations, and documents related to the development of the Middle Corridor and regional investment initiatives (Organization of Turkic States, 2021).

Secondary sources comprise peer-reviewed academic publications, policy reports, analytical studies produced by international organizations, and recent scholarly literature addressing regional integration, Eurasian geopolitics, transport connectivity, energy security, and geo-economic transformation. These materials provide the theoretical and empirical foundation for interpreting the institutional evolution of the OTS.

The study also incorporates publicly available information on infrastructure development, transport connectivity, logistics modernization, and regional energy initiatives to contextualize the organization's evolving strategic role within Eurasia.

Research Methods

Several complementary research methods were employed.

Comparative Institutional Analysis

Comparative institutional analysis was used to examine the organizational development of the OTS relative to other regional organizations. This approach facilitated the identification of institutional characteristics that distinguish the OTS from traditional models of regional integration while highlighting similarities in governance structures, decision-making mechanisms, and strategic priorities.

Systems Analysis

Systems analysis was applied to investigate the interrelationships among political cooperation, transport infrastructure, energy security, technological development, and defense-industrial collaboration. Rather than considering these dimensions independently, the study examines how they interact within a broader regional integration framework.

Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis was employed to evaluate the evolution of the OTS over time and to identify major shifts in its institutional agenda. Particular attention was given to changes in strategic priorities, policy coordination, infrastructure development, and regional cooperation mechanisms.

Theoretical Interpretation

The empirical findings were interpreted through three complementary theoretical perspectives:

- Neofunctionalism, which explains the expansion of regional integration through functional spillover;
- Constructivism, emphasizing the importance of shared identity, historical memory, and cultural values;
- Intergovernmentalism, highlighting the continued centrality of sovereign states in regional decision-making.

The combination of these theoretical perspectives provides a comprehensive framework for explaining the hybrid character of the OTS and its multidimensional institutional evolution.

Analytical Framework

The analytical framework adopted in this study integrates four interconnected dimensions:

1. Institutional development, including governance structures, strategic documents, and policy coordination;
2. Geo-economic integration, focusing on transport connectivity, trade facilitation, investment, and logistics;
3. Energy security, including diversification of transport routes, renewable energy cooperation, and regional infrastructure development;
4. Strategic cooperation, encompassing technological modernization, defense-industrial collaboration, and geopolitical adaptation.

These dimensions are analysed as mutually reinforcing components of the organization's broader transformation into a multidimensional regional institution.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be acknowledged.

First, the research is based primarily on qualitative analysis of institutional documents and scholarly literature. Although this approach facilitates an in-depth understanding of organizational development, it does not permit quantitative measurement of causal relationships between institutional reforms and economic outcomes.

Second, many of the infrastructure and energy initiatives examined remain under implementation. Consequently, their long-term economic and geopolitical impacts cannot yet be fully evaluated.

Third, regional integration is influenced by numerous external political and economic factors that extend beyond the institutional capacity of the OTS itself. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the broader context of contemporary geopolitical transformation rather than as evidence of direct causal relationships.

Results

1. Institutional Evolution of the Organization of Turkic States

The analysis demonstrates that the Organization of Turkic States has undergone a substantial institutional transformation since its establishment. Initially conceived as a platform for cultural dialogue among Turkic-speaking countries, the organization has progressively expanded its mandate to encompass economic cooperation, transport connectivity, investment policy, digital transformation, energy security, and technological collaboration. This evolution reflects a broader shift from identity-based cooperation toward functional regional integration (Jumayev, 2023; Kylychev et al., 2026; Ulutaş & Tanrısever, 2019).

Institutional development has occurred through the gradual expansion of strategic priorities, the adoption of long-term policy frameworks, and the establishment of specialized mechanisms for coordinating cooperation across multiple sectors. Rather than creating supranational institutions, the OTS has strengthened intergovernmental coordination by promoting common strategic objectives while preserving the sovereignty of its member states (Avcu, 2025; Organization of Turkic States, 2021).

The adoption of Turkic World Vision–2040 represents a significant milestone in this institutional evolution. The document provides a comprehensive strategic framework that integrates political dialogue, economic cooperation, transport development, digital transformation, education, scientific collaboration, and cultural interaction into a coherent long-term agenda (Organization of Turkic States, 2021; Musabay Baki, 2022).

The principal stages of the institutional evolution of the Organization of Turkic States identified in this study are presented in Figure 1.

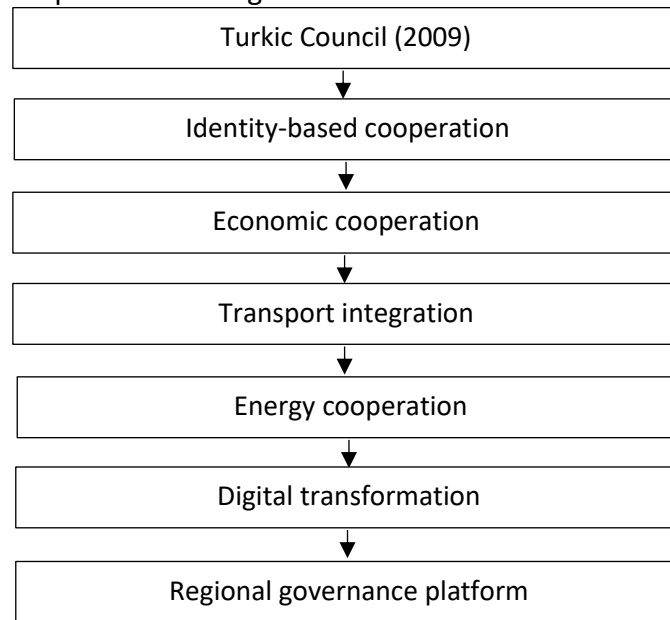


Figure 1: Evolution of the Organization of Turkic States

Source: developed by the authors

2. Strategic Dimensions of Regional Cooperation

The principal strategic dimensions of regional cooperation identified through the analysis are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Principal Dimensions of Cooperation within the Organization of Turkic States

Strategic Dimension	Main Contribution
Political cooperation	Strengthens regional dialogue, mutual trust, diplomatic coordination, and conflict prevention.
Economic integration	Promotes trade liberalization, investment cooperation, and sustainable economic growth among member states.
Transport connectivity	Develops multimodal transport infrastructure through the Middle Corridor and improves regional logistics.
Energy cooperation	Diversifies energy routes, supports renewable energy projects, and strengthens regional energy security.
Digital transformation	Promotes customs digitalization, electronic documentation, and integrated logistics management systems.
Science, education and innovation	Expands academic cooperation, research networks, technological innovation, and human capital development.
Cultural and humanitarian cooperation	Strengthens shared identity while promoting educational exchanges and cultural diplomacy.

Source: developed by the authors

The interaction among the principal strategic dimensions of regional cooperation identified in this research is presented in Figure 2.

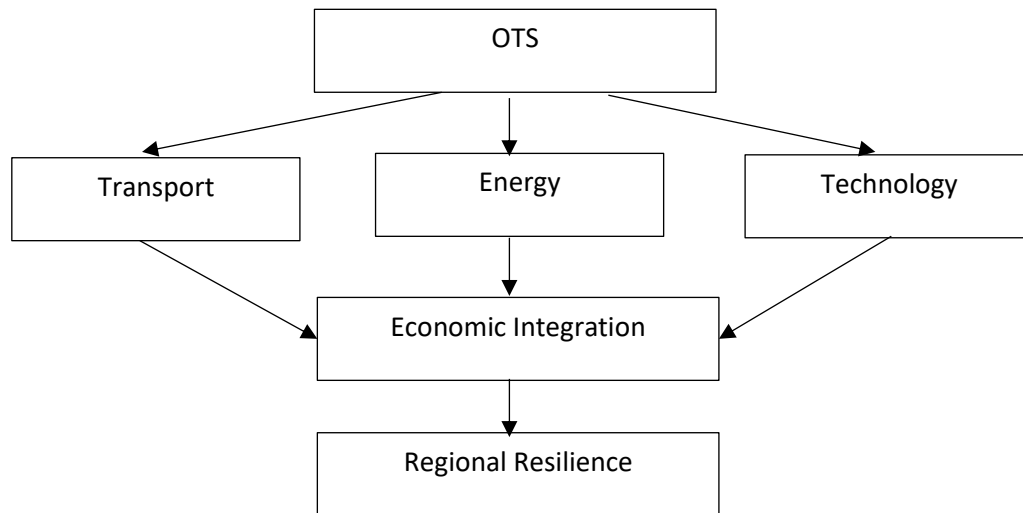


Figure 2: Integrated Model of OTS Regional Cooperation

Source: developed by the authors

3. The Middle Corridor as the Core Integration Project (Çetinkaya & Demirel, 2023; Koçak, 2023)

The empirical analysis identifies the Middle Corridor (Trans-Caspian International Transport Route) as the central strategic initiative driving the contemporary development of the Organization of Turkic States (Çetinkaya & Demirel, 2023).

Originally designed as a transport route connecting East Asia with Europe, the corridor has evolved into a comprehensive framework integrating logistics, customs modernization, digital governance, infrastructure investment, and regional economic cooperation (Çetinkaya & Demirel, 2023; Koçak, 2023).

First, the corridor substantially improves transport connectivity across Eurasia by reducing transit times and expanding alternative routes between Asian and European markets (Koçak, 2023; The Diplomat, 2025).

Second, investments in railways, ports, logistics terminals, and border infrastructure strengthen regional competitiveness while facilitating international trade.

Third, institutional coordination among participating countries has promoted harmonization of customs procedures, tariff policies, and digital documentation, thereby reducing administrative barriers and increasing transport efficiency (Abasova & Yuzbashiyev, 2025; Koçak, 2023).

Finally, the corridor has attracted growing international interest as an important component of resilient global supply chains. Its development increasingly complements broader initiatives aimed at diversifying transport networks and strengthening economic resilience across Eurasia.

4. Energy Security as a Strategic Dimension of Regional Integration

The findings indicate that energy security has become one of the principal strategic priorities of the Organization of Turkic States. Although transport connectivity remains the organization's most visible area of cooperation, the empirical analysis demonstrates that energy initiatives are increasingly integrated into the broader framework of regional economic and institutional development.

Unlike traditional approaches that focus primarily on hydrocarbon exports, the contemporary energy agenda of the OTS encompasses renewable energy, electricity transmission, critical infrastructure, and the diversification of regional energy supply chains. This broader

interpretation reflects ongoing changes in the global energy landscape, where resilience, sustainability, and infrastructure integration have become essential components of energy security.

The analysis identifies three major directions of energy cooperation within the Organization of Turkic States.

First, member states are strengthening the diversification of regional energy corridors. The expansion of transport and logistics infrastructure along the Middle Corridor facilitates the movement of energy resources while reducing dependence on traditional transit routes. This diversification enhances the strategic flexibility of both energy producers and consumer markets by providing alternative export pathways across Eurasia (Abasova & Yuzbashiyev, 2025).

Second, increasing attention is being devoted to the development of integrated energy infrastructure. Investments in ports, railway systems, logistics hubs, and digital management platforms contribute not only to transport efficiency but also to the implementation of large-scale energy projects. Consequently, transport and energy infrastructure are becoming mutually reinforcing components of regional integration.

Third, the Organization is gradually expanding cooperation in renewable energy and low-carbon technologies. Joint initiatives involving solar and wind energy, electricity transmission systems, and green industrial development indicate a transition from conventional energy cooperation toward broader sustainability-oriented regional policies.

A particularly significant initiative is the proposed Caspian–Black Sea–Europe Green Energy Corridor, which represents one of the most ambitious infrastructure projects associated with the Organization of Turkic States. The project aims to establish an integrated electricity transmission network linking renewable energy generation in Central Asia and the South Caucasus with European energy markets through high-voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission systems (Abasova & Yuzbashiyev, 2025; Koçak, 2023).

The analysis suggests that the Green Energy Corridor has strategic significance beyond electricity exports. By integrating renewable energy production with regional transport infrastructure, digital communication systems, and cross-border investment mechanisms, the project strengthens both economic cooperation and long-term energy resilience. Furthermore, it supports the development of new industrial value chains associated with green hydrogen, battery technologies, critical minerals, and advanced manufacturing.

Nevertheless, several constraints continue to influence the implementation of these initiatives. High investment requirements, technological complexity, regulatory harmonization, and geopolitical uncertainty remain important challenges for the successful realization of large-scale cross-border energy projects. Addressing these issues will require sustained institutional coordination among member states as well as continued cooperation with international financial institutions and external partners.

5. Geoeconomic Transformation and the Strategic Role of the Middle Corridor

The corridor stimulates institutional modernization. Cooperation in customs digitalization, unified transport documentation, tariff coordination, and border management has encouraged participating countries to harmonize administrative procedures and improve cross-border governance. These institutional changes enhance operational efficiency while strengthening confidence among investors and international partners.

The development of the corridor generates significant multiplier effects across multiple sectors of the regional economy. Investments in transport infrastructure stimulate industrial production, logistics services, construction, digital technologies, and financial cooperation. Consequently, the corridor functions as a catalyst for broader economic transformation rather than solely as a transport route.

The analysis further indicates that the strategic importance of the Middle Corridor has increased as international partners seek reliable alternatives for Eurasian connectivity. Growing cooperation with international financial institutions, infrastructure initiatives, and external investment programmes demonstrates that the corridor is increasingly recognized as a critical component of emerging global logistics networks (Geopolitical Futures, n.d.; Koçak, 2023).

The conceptual model of geo-economic regionalism developed in this study is presented in Figure 3.

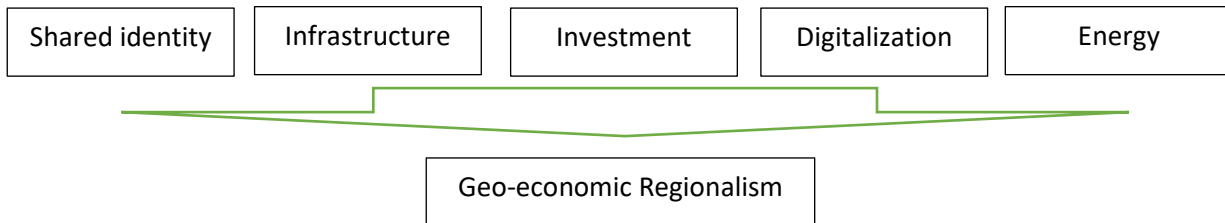


Figure 3: Drivers of Geo-economic Regionalism

Source: developed by the authors

6. Defense-Industrial Cooperation as a Component of Regional Resilience

The findings indicate that defense-industrial cooperation has become an increasingly important component of the Organization of Turkic States' broader strategy for regional cooperation. Although the OTS is not a collective defense organization and does not provide mutual security guarantees, collaboration in defense technologies, industrial production, military education, and technological innovation has expanded considerably over the past decade (Dunyamaliyeva, 2025; Kocatepe, 2024).

The analysis demonstrates that defense cooperation within the OTS is primarily driven by three interrelated objectives: strengthening technological capabilities, reducing dependence on external suppliers, and enhancing the resilience of national defense industries. Rather than pursuing military integration, member states seek to improve industrial competitiveness, promote technological modernization, and expand opportunities for joint research and production (Kocatepe, 2024).

Türkiye occupies a central position within this process due to the maturity of its defense-industrial sector and its experience in developing indigenous military technologies. Cooperation with other member states increasingly includes technology transfer, industrial partnerships, professional training, and joint production initiatives. These activities facilitate the dissemination of technological expertise while supporting the modernization of national defense industries across the region (Kocatepe, 2024; Yermekbayev & Yekibassova, 2026).

The empirical analysis identifies several priority areas of cooperation.

First, member states are expanding collaboration in the development, production, and maintenance of unmanned aerial systems (UAS). The rapid evolution of unmanned technologies has significantly altered contemporary military operations, making joint research, production, and operator training an important area of regional cooperation.

Second, cooperation increasingly encompasses secure communications, command-and-control systems, cyber resilience, and digital defense technologies. These initiatives improve interoperability, strengthen technological capabilities, and contribute to the digital modernization of national defense institutions.

Third, industrial collaboration extends to the modernization of armored platforms, logistics support systems, maintenance facilities, and specialized military education and training centres. These initiatives strengthen domestic industrial capacity while creating opportunities for greater technological specialization among participating countries.

The study further indicates that defense-industrial cooperation generates broader economic effects beyond the security sector. Joint production projects encourage industrial diversification, stimulate innovation, promote workforce development, and facilitate investment in advanced manufacturing technologies. Consequently, defense-industrial collaboration contributes not only to military capability development but also to wider technological modernization and industrial competitiveness (Kocatepe, 2024).

7. Strategic Prospects for the Development of the Organization of Turkic States

The analysis identifies four strategic priorities that are likely to shape the future evolution of the OTS.

First, continued institutional consolidation will be essential. The effectiveness of regional cooperation increasingly depends on the implementation of coherent governance mechanisms, harmonized regulatory frameworks, and specialized institutional structures capable of coordinating activities across multiple policy sectors. Further institutional development is therefore expected to strengthen both policy coherence and the long-term sustainability of regional initiatives (Avcu, 2025; Modern Diplomacy, 2025).

Second, transport connectivity will remain the principal catalyst for regional integration. Continued investment in the Middle Corridor, digital logistics, customs modernization, and multimodal infrastructure is likely to reinforce the strategic role of the OTS within Eurasian transport networks. Improved connectivity will also enhance the competitiveness of member states by facilitating trade, investment, and participation in global value chains (Çetinkaya & Demirel, 2023; The Diplomat, 2025).

Third, the transition toward sustainable energy systems will increasingly influence the organization's strategic agenda. Expanding cooperation in renewable energy, electricity transmission, green industrial development, and critical infrastructure is expected to strengthen regional energy security while supporting long-term economic modernization and environmental sustainability (Abasova & Yuzbashiyev, 2025).

Fourth, technological innovation and human capital development will become increasingly important drivers of regional competitiveness. Investment in research and development, higher education, digital transformation, and advanced manufacturing technologies will enhance the organization's capacity to respond to emerging economic and technological challenges.

Beyond these priorities, the analysis demonstrates that the Organization of Turkic States is likely to continue pursuing a flexible model of intergovernmental cooperation. Rather than evolving toward supranational governance, the organization appears to favour institutional arrangements that preserve national sovereignty while facilitating pragmatic cooperation in areas of shared strategic interest (Avcu, 2025; Koçak, 2023).

The findings also suggest that the growing international significance of the OTS will depend on its ability to maintain constructive engagement with a broad range of external partners. Cooperation with international organizations, financial institutions, and neighbouring regions will remain important for attracting investment, supporting infrastructure development, and integrating regional initiatives into wider Eurasian economic networks (Anadolu Agency, 2024; News Central Asia, 2026; Turkey Recap, 2026).

Discussion

The findings of this study provide new insights into the institutional evolution of the Organization of Turkic States and contribute to a broader understanding of contemporary regional integration in Eurasia. Unlike many previous studies that examine individual dimensions of the organization separately, this research demonstrates that the OTS has developed through the interaction of

institutional, economic, geopolitical, and technological factors rather than through a single integration mechanism (Avcu, 2025; Demir, 2022; Koçak, 2023).

The analysis indicates that the organization's transformation cannot be adequately explained by any individual theory of regional integration. Instead, the empirical evidence supports a hybrid analytical perspective combining neofunctionalism, constructivism, and intergovernmentalism (Avcu, 2025; Egamberdiyev, 2023; Ünver, 2023).

Nevertheless, the findings demonstrate that identity alone is insufficient to explain the current trajectory of institutional development. Economic interdependence, infrastructure connectivity, and shared strategic interests have become equally important drivers of regional integration (Egamberdiyev, 2023; Koçak, 2023).

Decision-making within the OTS remains consensus-based, while member states preserve full sovereignty over domestic and foreign policy. Consequently, institutional development is characterized by flexibility rather than supranational delegation of authority. This governance model enables countries with diverse geopolitical orientations to expand cooperation without compromising their existing international commitments (Avcu, 2025; Demir, 2022).

An important contribution of this research concerns the interpretation of the Middle Corridor. Existing literature frequently analyses the corridor as a transport initiative or a logistics project (Çetinkaya & Demirel, 2023; Koçak, 2023).

The findings similarly extend previous research on energy security. Rather than viewing energy cooperation exclusively through the lens of hydrocarbon exports, this study highlights the growing importance of renewable energy, electricity interconnections, digital infrastructure, and green industrialization (Abasova & Yuzbashiyev, 2025; Koçak, 2023).

Defense-industrial cooperation constitutes another area where the present findings refine existing interpretations. Previous analyses often evaluate defense cooperation primarily from a geopolitical perspective. By contrast, the results of this study indicate that cooperation within the OTS is driven principally by technological modernization, industrial development, and capability enhancement rather than by the creation of collective defense structures (Dunyamaliyeva, 2025; Kocatepe, 2024).

The study also contributes to the broader literature on regionalism by suggesting that the Organization of Turkic States represents an emerging model of geo-economic regionalism. Unlike traditional regional organizations established primarily for political integration or collective security, the OTS increasingly emphasizes transport connectivity, infrastructure development, investment cooperation, digital transformation, and technological innovation. This combination of cultural identity and pragmatic economic cooperation distinguishes the organization from many existing models of regional integration (Jumayev, 2023; Koçak, 2023; Sarı, 2026).

Conclusions

By integrating institutional, geopolitical, geo-economic, and technological perspectives, the research demonstrates that the OTS has evolved from a platform primarily focused on cultural cooperation into a multidimensional regional organization supporting economic integration, transport connectivity, energy security, technological modernization, and strategic coordination.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the literature on regional integration by proposing that the Organization of Turkic States represents an emerging model of geo-economic regionalism. Unlike traditional regional organizations that prioritize either political integration or collective security, the OTS combines cultural identity with pragmatic cooperation in transport, energy, digital transformation, technological innovation, and industrial development. This integrated approach broadens existing conceptualizations of regional governance and provides a useful analytical framework for examining other emerging regional organizations.

The practical significance of the research lies in identifying institutional priorities capable of strengthening the effectiveness of regional cooperation.

Future research should incorporate quantitative indicators of trade integration, logistics performance, transport efficiency, investment dynamics, energy cooperation, and institutional effectiveness.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Organization of Turkic States has entered a new stage of institutional development characterized by increasing functional diversification, geo-economic cooperation, and strategic adaptability.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence was used for language editing, translation, and technical verification of the manuscript.

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