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TITLE: Hungary's Role in the Organization of Turkic States as an Observer State: Limitations and Opportunities

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PAGES: 121-136

ORIGINAL PDF URL: <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/2559571>

## ARTICLE

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# Hungary's Role in the Organization of Turkic States as an Observer State: Limitations and Opportunities

Tamás Péter BARANYI\*

## Abstract

*This article seeks to analyze the evolution of Hungary's relations with the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). In the first part, the challenges and opportunities of cooperation within the OTS is evaluated from a Hungarian perspective. The second part focuses on the Hungarian approach to international cooperation, the emergence of Hungary's "Eastern Opening" policy and Hungary's specific relations with the Turkic states. The third part elaborates on Hungary's role as an observer country in the OTS. Finally, in the conclusion, the article provides some practical recommendations as to how Hungary could further contribute to the development of regional cooperation among the Turkic states, and to cooperation between Europe and the Turkic world.*

## Keywords

Organization of Turkic States, Hungary, regional cooperation, Eastern Opening, Turkic world.

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Received on: 06.03.2022

Accepted on: 22.05.2022

## Introduction

There is a growing Hungarian-language literature about the nations of the OTS and their cooperation, although a comprehensive volume in any language is still missing.<sup>1</sup> Literature on the workings of observer states in international organizations is also very scarce, although the topic is becoming more important; organizations in the international arena are thriving, and both full-fledged and observer states are increasing in numbers, as are their interactions. The present study tries to contribute to this latter question as well.

This study has three main objectives: it seeks to portray the OTS as a distinctly new international organization from a Hungarian perspective; it discusses Hungary's pattern of participation in international organizations and explores how the OTS fits into this pattern; and it proposes ideas as to how Hungary might develop its cooperation with the OTS as an observer member. Even though there is a shortage of scholarly literature about the OTS in English-language academia, the existing material and noted achievements of the organization provide for a sound analysis against which a Hungarian assessment can be formulated.<sup>2</sup> A short overview of the identifiable problems facing the OTS and the organization's potential is thus followed by an overall presentation of Hungarian participation in the international arena and its relation to the Turkic states. The study concludes with some practical remarks about Hungary's role in the organization as an observer state.

## Problems and Potential of the OTS

When it comes to assessing the performance of the OTS as an enhanced regional economic cooperation model, three distinct problems must be kept in mind. First, the region in which the OTS members are situated is not

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geographically contiguous, which makes it harder to establish some of the elements necessary for successful and enhanced economic cooperation.<sup>3</sup> Second, the Turkic states are quite diverse in their political structure, geography and foreign policy traditions. The third hindrance of collaboration facing the OTS is the role of outside actors in the regions involving OTS members, especially Central Asia. In the section below,

this study highlights those hindrances and evaluates the development of the OTS against this background.

The OTS consists of a diverse set of countries: founding members Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are located in Central Asia, like Uzbekistan which joined a decade later in 2019; Azerbaijan is located in the South Caucasus region; and Türkiye stretches across Anatolia and Southeastern Europe. These countries are separated by the Caspian Sea and Armenia, thus not making a unified bloc that would enhance trade, logistics and other forms of cooperation. Yet the OTS members are not completely disconnected either. Since the Azerbaijani victory in the 44-day war in 2021, plans have been formulated to develop the Zangezur corridor and other interconnections in the Caucasus region. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway has been operational since 2017, which greatly enhances the connection between this region and Türkiye. Nonetheless, the connection between Central Asia and the Caucasus entails crossing the Caspian Sea, which requires extra investments to develop ports and logistical facilities in the coastal countries.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that most forms of global economic cooperation do not involve countries so far apart. Yet even though the geographical divisions among the OTS members are quite significant, efforts to overcome these differences are making progress in the region.

The reason these countries seek to cooperate lies in the cultural dimension of the Turkic nations—the basis of their cooperation is their shared cultural background, rather than geographical proximity or easily interfacing economies. In this sense, the European parallel is not the EU, nor even the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) at its high time of significance, both of which have to do with geographical proximity, but rather international alignments of countries based on shared cultural heritage, like Francophonie or Lusophonia. If international significance beyond cultural cooperation is taken into account, it can safely be said that the OTS has much higher aims and more elaborate cooperative structures than any of the aforementioned culturally defined organizations. In short, given its geographical hindrances, the OTS is progressing quite well and strives to resolve problems of distance through infrastructural investments.

The second major obstacle to cooperation among the Turkic states has to do with the different political and foreign policy traditions of the participating members. Türkiye is a nation that has long been part of the European state system and is even militarily integrated into NATO. Other OTS members were part of the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union, and thus have a distinctly Russian-influenced state structure. Azerbaijan differs even further, since it is not a Central Asian but a Caucasian country with strong cultural

ties to the Persian-speaking world. The Central Asian members and Azerbaijan gained their independence from the Soviet Union recently in 1991, and thus they legitimately guard their sovereignty even against the lure of regional cooperation.<sup>5</sup> Although these countries are protective of their national sovereignty, some are ensnared in the economic gravity of their major neighbors: Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and thus can be considered part of a Russia-dominated economic space, while Türkiye is in a customs union with the EU. Such a diverse situation in trade makes the establishment of a free trade area cumbersome, and creates hurdles even for any seriously aligned trade policy. A heavily coordinated trade policy, let alone a customs regime, would inevitably increase tensions within the already established economic cooperation agreements by which these countries are bound.<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, the OTS is still a major driving force for enhancing international trade, logistics and infrastructure investments in its member countries. The hindrances mentioned above do not render the OTS a superfluous organization. On the contrary, they highlight the importance of this cooperation as a way to enhance trade and logistics. These countries have great potential. For example, the ancient Silk Road ran through their territory and, since 1993, the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) program has operated there with several railway and ferry routes.<sup>7</sup> The Chinese-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is centered on the idea of reviving a transcontinental trade route that could rival existing patterns of maritime trade and transport goods from China and East Asia to Europe through Central Asia, bypassing Russia. The present Russian-Ukrainian conflict makes the relevance of the Central Asia-Caucasus-Anatolia route all the more important, and these geographical regions are precisely where the OTS nations are situated.

A third problem facing Turkic cooperation is the role of external powers. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a power vacuum emerged in Central Asia, since the outgoing great power lacked both the capacity and the will to act as an economic and political hub. Türkiye was the first country to try to fill this void, but its initial success was rather limited. In the 2000s, however, a more pragmatic Turkish political outreach yielded better results.<sup>8</sup>

The old/new external actors are indeed Russia and China, and specifically for integration, their respective projects, the EAEU and the BRI deserve attention. Central Asian states tend to see the EAEU as the more restrictive organization, with its rigid structure and its proposals to transform the entity to a real supranational organization with a (possibly) common currency, while the BRI is more flexible, and participation does not require any loss or pooling of

sovereignty. So far, China's presence has been mostly confined to the economic domain, while Russia tends to play an important political as well as economic role in the region (see for example Russia's intervention in Kazakhstan in January 2022). While great power logic would dictate increasing competition between Beijing and Moscow, the larger political context (deteriorating relations between Europe and Russia due to the war in Ukraine) and economic necessities rather push for cooperation between the EAEU and the BRI. Such cooperation could be advantageous for the Central Asian countries, as they try to minimize unwanted influence while maximizing economic benefits.<sup>9</sup> In this respect, under the present circumstances, great power proximity and their competition do not hinder, but rather support the economic development of Central Asia. The rest of the OTS members are further removed from this competition and their pragmatic relationship with both major external actors could contribute to the economic and infrastructural development of the whole organization.

### Hungary's Attitude toward International Cooperation

Hungary is a middle-sized country in European terms and one of the most open economies in Europe, which makes the issue of economic cooperation key to the country's foreign policy. The country lost roughly two-thirds of its territory and one-third of its Hungarian-language population with the Treaty of Trianon, which concluded the First World War in this part of Europe. After a brief interval of independence, the country was dragged into the next world war, and was occupied first by Germany and then by the Soviet Union. Though never a part of the Soviet Union, Hungary became embedded in the so-called Socialist Eastern Bloc, which defined the country's position in the international system for many years to come. In this sense, the country's position is quite unique: Hungary was part of the military (Warsaw Pact) and economic integration (COMECON) of the Eastern bloc, but its economic ties were increasingly strong with Western Europe. Given its limited room for maneuver, Hungary's position was to maintain loyalty to Eastern integrational models and develop a social and political fabric that was as far as possible from the Russian-designed Soviet type. Hungary's participation in COMECON, specifically, where it supported market-orient-

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ed reforms and close cooperation in trade with Western Europe, is a case in point.<sup>10</sup>

After the collapse of Communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Central European countries felt that they were now free to develop ties with Western countries. There was considerable optimism at the prospect of European integration, which went hand in hand with increased security and prosperity.<sup>11</sup> In the 1990s, basically every Central European country, and Hungary in particular, downgraded their foreign policy interests in a global sense, and concentrated almost exclusively on the development of European relations with the aim of joining the EU. This exclusive interest in Western integration was viewed by some with caution, but it was said that no country was wholly independent in a globalized world, thus a pooling of sovereignty was critical for the functioning of a modern state in Europe.<sup>12</sup> Hungary's admission to the EU was ultimately successful in 2004, but by this time, over-dependence on Western Europe was already identified as a problem. Since 2003, an opening to China has been started with rather moderate results, but a global Hungarian foreign policy was not in sight. Although European integration brought great results, it did not bring about a radical shift from the periphery to the core in terms of economic progress. Disillusionment was quite widespread across the whole Central European region, and was further exacerbated by the global financial crisis of 2008–2009.<sup>13</sup>

Hungary's new foreign policy from 2010 on emphasized the importance of two global trends: a weakening of the neoliberal consensus, especially in its Western-inspired form throughout the globe, and the strengthening of Asia in international relations. The 2010s highlighted many of the EU's shortcomings while stressing the importance of a global opening.<sup>14</sup> According to the official policies of the newly elected government of Viktor Orbán, a diversification of external relations, with a special emphasis on foreign trade, was essential in achieving economic growth. The direction of such diversification was to-

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ward the fast-growing countries in the East; the policy thus became known as the "Eastern Opening." This opening was not only supported by the general disillusionment with the EU as a panacea to all economic problems; it supported an old reflex in Hungarian political discourse, so-called Turanism, which emphasized the Eastern origins of the Hungarians. Besides all that, the compelling

rise of China and its ambitious foreign policy ideas related to the BRI gave additional backing to the concept of the Eastern Opening. This Eurasia narrative even reverberated with old Hungarian concepts of getting past its peripheral position in Europe by becoming a bridge between East and West.<sup>15</sup>

An Eastern Opening is of course not an abandonment, or even drop in interest vis-à-vis the EU: in fact, without strong embeddedness in the European structure, Hungary could not serve as a bridge between East and West. The country's commitment to the values of Europe and the integrational structures of the EU are indeed strong; its renewed interest in the East is rather dictated by economic pragmatism. Hungarian foreign policy has been complemented by a very strong foreign economic dimension that permeated the whole structure of the country's foreign relations—the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was even renamed the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2014. The establishment of the Hungarian Investment Promotion Agency (HIPA), the network of commercial attachés and the dual effort to draw investments and enhance exports were all visible expressions of this new strategy.<sup>16</sup>

In this new policy, all sorts of new foreign policy directions that have a potential for economic benefits are welcome. In the case of the OTS, both the rich resources of the participating countries and their economic freedom provide fertile ground for cooperation. What is lacking is their logistical capacity for trade: The Logistical Performance Index (LPI), which measures countries' logistical trade capacity on a scale of 1–167 (1 being the best), ranks Kazakhstan at 71, Uzbekistan at 99, Azerbaijan at 125 and Hungary at 31.<sup>17</sup> However, the relatively underdeveloped logistical infrastructure of the Turkic states is deemed a good field of future cooperation in the region. Added to this fact are the very ambitious plans on the part of the Turkic nations to improve precisely those areas with foreign direct investment (FDI). These countries are also very much keen on diversifying their economies and their foreign relations. One highly promising field of cooperation is agriculture, if only considering the fact that the area of Kazakhstan's wheat-producing lands are 150% larger than Hungary's entire territory. However, as Kazakhstan's yields are lower than the Hungarian average, this indicates the need for agrotechnical know-how that Hungary could export in the long term.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the OTS members, especially the Central Asian nations of the organization, represent fruitful directions for Hungary's Eastern Opening policy. Not to mention the fact that Hungary has much deeper and essential foreign economic ties with Türkiye and Azerbaijan.

Hungary's policy of Eastern Opening is not confined exclusively to the area of economy. As the world grows increasingly multipolar and power competition returns as a defining trait of the international system, Central Asia is yet again a major field of international politics,<sup>19</sup> and some OTS countries, most



notably Türkiye and Azerbaijan, have proven to be rising middle powers in their respective regions.<sup>20</sup> As foreign economic relations are always supported by trustworthy and active foreign political relations, it is interesting to see the diplomatic representation of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries in the OTS nations.

**Table 1: Diplomatic Representation of CEE countries in OTS member states**

	HU	PL	CZ	SK	BG	RO	CR	A	SRB
Azerbaijan	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Kazakhstan	E, CG	E, CG	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Kyrgyzstan	E								
Uzbekistan	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E

Source: László Vasa, "A Türk Tanács közép-ázsiai és kaukázusi országai a magyar külgazdaság perspektívájából (The Countries of the Turkish Council in Central Asia and the Caucasus from the Perspective of the Hungarian Foreign Economy)," KKI-elemzések, No. 8 (2021), p. 9.

Note: HU – Hungary, PL – Poland, CZ – Czech Republic, SK – Slovakia, BG – Bulgaria, RO – Romania, A – Austria, SRB – Serbia, E – Embassy, CG – Consulate General

As Table 1 indicates, Hungary is the only Central European country to have a full-fledged diplomatic representation in OTS countries. This could amount to a serious potential, but it is not yet fully implemented. Foreign economic data show that traditional trading partners and great economic powers (China, Russia, Korea, Germany, etc.) come first in most OTS member states as the largest trade partners, and even some Central European countries come before Hungary.

**Table 2: Largest import partners of OTS member states by ranking**

	Poland	Czech Republic	Hungary	Slovakia
Azerbaijan	20	24	29	41
Kazakhstan	17	20	31	44
Kyrgyzstan	16	30	25	49
Uzbekistan	21	22	32	50

Source: László Vasa, "A Türk Tanács közép-ázsiai és kaukázusi országai a magyar külgazdaság perspektívájából (The Countries of the Turkish Council in Central Asia and the Caucasus from the Perspective of the Hungarian Foreign Economy)," KKI-elemzések, No. 8 (2021), p. 9.

These data practically mean that political relations might enhance economic ties, but further work needs to be done to fully implement the potential evident in the positive cultural attitudes and positive political attitude be-

tween OTS members, including Hungary. Hungary's interest in enhancing ties with the OTS members is thus clearly in line with its general policy of Eastern Opening as well as its cultural ties with Turkic-speaking countries. This renewed interest also has its roots in the recognition of a global shift in economic preferences, with countries striving to diversify and the political environment becoming increasingly multipolar. Given the potential fields of cooperation and immense richness of the OTS countries, combined with Hungary as a bridgehead to the EU, this cooperation has great potential that is not yet fully exploited, and traditional trade ties are still very strong.

## Hungary's Role as an Observer State in the OTS

In international organizations, full membership procures full rights and obligations within the organization. In most cases, it involves the right to vote and, by extension, the right to block decisions. In situations in which certain obstacles prevent a country from fully joining an international organization, observer status can often be offered and accepted. Such a status can derive from international disputes, i.e., not every member recognizes the prospective member country to the same degree; or it can derive from the fact that the specific country cannot or does not wish to fully join the organization. In this respect, observer status as such differs radically from international organization to international organization and from observer state to observer state.<sup>21</sup> An observer can never vote, but is usually present at every session of a given international organization. Its role is thus largely informal, but nonetheless has great significance.<sup>22</sup> Observer status can be an antechamber to full membership in some cases; in others, it is a special status with limited rights and obligations and a very distinctive role in the life of the organization.<sup>23</sup>

Hungary's place as an observer state in the OTS is appropriate, since the country is further away geographically than the rest of the states. Moreover, its membership in a set of other international organizations would render it difficult to effectively work together with other states in very different circumstances and a different geographical and international environment. The other observer state of the OTS, Turkmenistan, is situated in an ideal trajectory toward full membership, since it is situated in one of the regions the OTS covers, and shares

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a common history and largely similar political and economic structures with the rest of the Central Asian OTS member states.

From the point of view of international cooperation, an observer status can have multiple benefits at different levels. Those levels are identifiable as the organization level and the state-to-state level. At this latter level, Hungary's participation at the meetings and projects of the OTS is beneficial, as semi-institutional ties can be developed at these fora. Indeed, some of the higher education cooperation and think-tank level meetings were inspired by and originated at OTS meetings, not between individual member-states, and the whole community benefits from those types of relations. Yet another field of enhancing member-to-member relationship could be foreign economic policy, since some of the sectors of the economy have a high degree of state incentives in many OTS member states; thus, political decision made at the OTS level have a deep influence on the future directions of the economy. A great example of this could be the Uzbek-Hungarian Potato Research Institute in Tashkent.<sup>24</sup> This initiative resulted from a state visit of Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán to Uzbekistan within the framework of the cooperation of Turkic states. Overall, as a direct meeting point between countries that otherwise have no strong cooperative structures through which to interact on a day-to-day basis, such an institutional framework is very useful to identify and initiate projects to enhance foreign economic relations.

As noted in the previous section, there are many steps to be taken on the grounds of good political relations, but without them, these developments

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are not viable at all; a special and permanent body that facilitates dialogue among full OTS members and Hungary is the Representation Office in Budapest opened in 2021. This office connects the cultural and economic activities of the full OTS members and Hungary, and is a hub for further cooperation.

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zation has the potential to reach out beyond its actual membership with an already identified common set of interests. This is clearly observable in the history of many established international organizations; as they grew, more states

became interested in their developments and activities. Even if they were not in the same geographical region, nor at the same level of development, were not eligible for or could not see the exact benefits of full memberships, such states could opt to become observer states.

Another very important field where the benefits of the observer status can be seen is agenda-shaping. It is not by chance that the term 'agenda-setting' is used more commonly, as it remains the purview of the more influential full members, but even an observer state, through its right to speak at the organization's fora, has a great role in shaping its agenda. A demonstrating example could be the Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade in Hungary (IFAT), which is part of the think-tank cooperation of the OTS member states. IFAT takes part in international conferences through this framework, and regularly contributes to academic and policy discussions. It was through an IFAT initiative that a major conference was held in Budapest in November 2021 regarding economic cooperation.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, it is highly valuable to have a long-range view of an organization's cooperation; the perspective of an observer state is at the same time within the context of the organization and also presents the view of the "outside world". Hungarian participants in OTS fora thus try to shed light on topics that could enhance the coordinated action of the OTS members in the international system. A positive example is the support given by OTS members to Azerbaijan in the 44-day war, which made Turkic cooperation visible on the world stage and enhanced the prestige of the OTS as a working platform.

Still at the institutional level, international connections are essential in this period of development for the OTS. Practically, this means that the more institutional cooperative frameworks the OTS has with other organizations, the more embedded it becomes in the international arena. In this context, a member state, and even an observer state, brings to the table the added value of those other organizations in which it takes part as a member. For Hungary, the most important points of contact are obviously NATO and the EU. Official connections with these organizations through Hungary as an observer state could be very important to the OTS, through informal networking and in the future potentially through inter-institutional working groups. The EU, due to its sheer economic importance, is a very important place of cooperation, as is NATO.

Hungary's other participations, for instance in the Lusophonia, could serve as an inventory of know-how, as the association of those countries in the Portuguese cultural sphere could provide useful best practices for the OTS as an organization also founded on shared cultural values. Access to the successful

workings of already established international organizations could help develop the cooperation of Turkic nations at higher speed, as the OTS could then bypass some of the early problems those institutions have already overcome. In this sense, the international embeddedness of the OTS is a point where an observer state could play a very significant role.

## Conclusion

In light of the factors underlined in the previous sections of this study, there are some practical recommendations to consider for the future regarding the development of the OTS framework and for deepening relations between Hungary and the Turkic world.

*Enhancing cooperation in twinning and other technical issues.* As the regions of the OTS member states are at the doorstep of major changes in their urban life, there could be a broad avenue of cooperation between cities from Hungary and Central Asia and the Caucasus. Given the increasing need for enhancing public transport, initiating smart city solutions and planning more sustainable cities with higher living conditions, sharing the experiences of city planning, urbanization and the implementation of new technologies could provide fertile ground for cooperation. Twin city programs and other kinds of technical cooperation would require limited investment, and could potentially yield great results. In November 2021, the core topic at the OTS summit was indeed green technologies and smart cities, so important work has already begun in this direction.

*Enhancing higher education cooperation.* Due to different models in education and science transfer, Turkic countries have a limited number of programs and only a narrow scope of cooperation in this field. Hungary brings added value to its participation in the OTS through its access to those mechanisms in the EU and Europe more broadly, which it could channel fruitfully into OTS cooperation. Hungary has always been a leading partner in higher education cooperation, for instance with the *Stipendium Hungaricum* program, which not only provides training for talented students, but also serves as a gateway to European institutions of higher learning. In a broader sense, all sorts of academic and educational cooperation programs are useful in furthering people-to-people contact. This would benefit both Hungary and the full OTS members, because although there is a deep cultural affinity and affection between Hungary and the OTS member states, in the broader society, there is very little close contact between peoples.

*Supporting connections between OTS and EU members.* Deriving from the theoretical approach provided above, one key element of cooperation with members of other organizations is that they can facilitate contacts with states of other organizational backgrounds. Hungary, as member of the EU, could play a key role in bringing the outlook of the Turkic nations and the European states closer together. A breakthrough in this sense was Prime Minister Orbán's proposal to hold a summit between OTS members and the Visegrád Group (V4) members at some point during the Hungarian presidency of the V4.<sup>26</sup> Although the limelight of the 2022 V4 Summit was taken away by the war in Ukraine and the idea is yet to be accomplished, it is well worth pursuing and bringing to fruition. Such an event could be the first European-Turkic meeting, which would definitely enhance the legitimacy of the OTS in the non-Turkic world and facilitate better understanding among those participating. Pursuant to such a first step, a series of further consultations could be called to action.

*Supporting action in the EU in areas of common interest.* In spite of their geographical distance, there are many issues of common interest among Hungary and different groupings of the OTS members. Since Hungary is a member of the EU and takes part in its decision-making processes, it could use its leverage to shape the EU agenda in a direction beneficial to a better understanding of the Turkic nations. In fact, there are a set of issues that could be addressed to the benefit of the OTS, the EU and Hungary, most prominently in the fields of security, migration and energy. In terms of security, an outstanding issue is the collapse of Afghanistan and its consequences. Consultations between states that actually neighbor Afghanistan and key donor countries would be beneficial for a better understanding of the problems the country faces and how to address them.

Similarly, Türkiye's unique location gives it a perspective on regional security that would greatly benefit the EU. In one recent example, Hungary supported Türkiye when Ankara shared its concerns over the proposed NATO membership of Sweden and Finland regarding the lenient policies of those countries toward certain terrorist organizations that Ankara deems a security threat.<sup>27</sup> Yet another field is migration, especially irregular mass migration. Even though this problem has been temporarily alleviated by the COVID-19 pandemic, it still looms large, especially given the collapse of Afghanistan and the ongoing instability in the Middle East. Türkiye, an OTS member, is already the main country bearing the burden of illegal migration, and the 2015 deal between the EU and Türkiye should be updated. This point is often supported by Hungary in the EU.

Hungary could also serve as a bridge between the EU and the Turkic nations in the field of energy. Due to the Russian war in Ukraine, the EU initiated a series of sanctions vis-à-vis Russia that started with the financial sector; the question of oil imports has been broached, and sanctions may eventually extend to natural gas as well. European economies and industries would have a very hard time without Russian hydrocarbons, so Hungary is not inclined to support a full-scale embargo on Russian gas and oil, but it does have a

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long-stated policy to help diversify Europe's hydrocarbon supply. In this sense, new opportunities will open in the long run in the field of energy transport and trade, in which Central Asia and the Caucasus could play a central role. Although serious in-

vestments need to be made in this field, the OTS could be a safe and sustainable partner in helping to secure European demand, especially in the wake of a devastating war and very uncertain Russian-European relations in the coming year(s). There are other contenders trying to fill some of the gaps left by the Russians, so imports from OTS members will need additional advocacy from within the EU, which can be facilitated by Hungary.

## Endnotes

- 1 Sources available on the OTS are limited and the organization as a topic has not yet fully reached the Western-centered international scholarly community. The most important authority on the matter is a book by Humbatov and Sari, which gives a comprehensive account of what the title promises. See Mahir Humbatov & Kazım Sari, *Turkic Council Countries: Infrastructure, Trade, Logistics and Transportation*, SAM: Baku, 2017.
- 2 A wider scope of secondary literature has been written on Central Asia as a region and its distinctive models of economic cooperation. For the purpose of the present study, the work of Krapohl and Vasileva-Dienes was consulted. See Sebastian Krapohl & Alexandra Vasileva-Dienes, "The Region that Isn't: China, Russia and the Failure of Regional Integration in Central Asia," *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2019), pp. 347–366.
- 3 According to different academic traditions, in terms of national policy and study areas, "integration" has different meanings. As the current use of integration is very limited in the academic traditions of the Turkic world (unlike those in Hungary, for instance), this study uses the wording "enhanced cooperation" established by the OTS document "Turkic World Vision–2040". For details of the document, see "Turkic World Vision-2040," *Organization of Turkic States*, <https://www.turkkon.org/assets/pdf/haberler/turkic-world-vision-2040-2396-97.pdf>.
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- 5 Farkhod Tolipov, "Central Asia: The Disintegration Theory," in Marlene Laruelle & Aitolkyn Kourmanova (eds.), *Central Asia at 25: Looking Back, Moving Forward*, Washington DC: George Washington University, 2017, pp. 23–25.
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