



Not Just an Observer, but a Key Player

Hungary's Role in Security Cooperation within the
Organization of Turkic States

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NOT JUST AN OBSERVER, BUT A KEY PLAYER - HUNGARY'S ROLE IN SECURITY COOPERATION WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION OF TURKIC STATES

Amid the geopolitical realignments of the twenty-first century, the Turkic states—Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan—are increasingly close in their security cooperation. The basis for this is the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), which could strengthen future coordination between member states in a range of areas from joint military exercises to critical infrastructure protection and digital security. In recent years, Hungary has gradually strengthened its relations with the Organization of Turkic States, in which it has been an observer since 2018. The country will host the first informal summit of the organization in May 2025, marking a significant diplomatic step forward. In addition, in April 2025, Hungary signed a declaration of defense cooperation with Uzbekistan, covering military training, technology transfer and counterterrorism. In addition, the NATO liaison function of the Hungarian embassy in Tashkent will also help to maintain contacts between the alliance and Central Asia. The Hungarian Competition Authority is also involved in regulating digital economic cooperation, while the Defense Innovation Research Institute is working with the Turkish TÜBİTAK to develop intelligence systems. Hungary is thus increasingly positioning itself as a geopolitical bridge between the Turkish world and Europe through security, economic and cultural cooperation.

From a security perspective, it is of great importance for Hungary that Istanbul hosted the first direct talks between the Russian and Ukrainian sides since the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war. The Turkish world is committed to promoting peace, as is Hungary, and this understanding can strengthen cooperation both diplomatically and politically.

DEVELOPMENT AND PERSPECTIVES OF SECURITY COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TURKISH STATES

Over the past decade, cooperation between the Turkish states has deepened considerably, especially in the areas of security and defense. The OTS, formerly known as the Turkic Council, is playing an increasingly prominent role in the development of the regional security architecture. Although it is primarily a nonmilitary alliance, member states have recognized the strategic importance of coordinated security cooperation in addressing common challenges. OTS activities cover more than 35 areas of cooperation, with security policy cooperation playing an increasingly important role. With the adoption of the [Bishkek Declaration](#), the organization has clearly expressed its commitment to strengthening security in the context of economic integration, sustainable development and a digital future.

An important institutional mechanism is the regular meeting of the heads of the national security councils. At the third such meeting, held [in Kazakhstan](#) (in the city of Turkistan) on September 18-19, 2024, participants paid particular attention to transport security and the development of transport and logistics infrastructure along the Middle Corridor.

The Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic States (TURKPA) plays an important role in strengthening security cooperation. At the [second meeting](#) of the chairs of the defense committees of TURKPA member parliaments held in Baku on April 15, 2025, TURKPA Secretary General Mehmet Süreyya Er stressed the strategic importance of defense and security cooperation between the Turkic states. He underlined that in the current global security environment, deepening mutual solidarity and integration between the Turkic states is key. The chairman of the Turkish parliament's national defense commission, former Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, [underlined](#) that Azerbaijan's victory in Karabakh is a source of pride for the Turkic world and stressed the importance of a strong army in the defense of national security.

DEFENSE AND MILITARY COOPERATION

One of the most important aspects of defense cooperation between the Turkic states is the organization of joint military exercises. The [Birlestik-2024](#) exercise, held in July 2024 in Kazakhstan on the Caspian Sea coast, involved four Central Asian countries and Azerbaijan. Nearly 4,000 troops and 700 military vehicles took part in the exercise, demonstrating the growing importance of military cooperation between Turkic states. The exercise aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and interoperability between the armed forces of the

participating countries. The exercises involved the conduct of a variety of operations, including ground and air reconnaissance, naval special forces, artillery, assault and armored units, as well as air force and naval vessels. The joint exercises, called Birlig (a word for “unity” common to Turkic languages), reflect the collective strength and shared aspirations of the region, and are not merely symbolic gestures, but critical steps towards establishing mechanisms to protect common interests and ensure regional security.

One of the most dynamic areas of security cooperation between the two countries is [military industrial cooperation](#), which is based primarily on Turkey’s leading role. The Turkish defense industry has developed significantly over the past decades and has built strategic relationships with the independent Turkish republics. The Turkish defense industry has always maintained close links with state actors and the leadership of the Turkish armed forces. The development of the defense industry has gone through several important periods since the establishment of the Republic in 1923. The structural changes of the past few decades and the objectives of the AKP government, which has been in power for twenty years, have transformed the defense industry into a multibillion dollar enterprise. Under the leadership of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, [major transformations](#) have taken place in all dimensions of the military, with expanded capabilities and substantial public support for the Turkish defense industry, enabling Turkey to apply its hard power capabilities in a number of regional and global domains, including the independent Turkish republics. This process has strengthened Turkey’s position as a central actor for defense cooperation in the Turkish world. Turkey’s defense industry plays a key role in strengthening its arms technology self-reliance. Azerbaijan has gained a decisive advantage in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war by deploying Bayraktar TB2 drones. Companies in the Turkish defense industry, such as Roketsan and Aselsan, have played a central role in diversifying the Turkic states’ arms supply chain, reducing dependence on external suppliers. Despite the Turkish-Russian procurement of the S-400 air defense system (2019-2020), Turkic states continue to develop their own systems. The deployment of indigenously developed HISAR air defense missiles and Akıncı combat drones will not only provide technological autonomy but will also make the Turkic armed forces compatible with NATO standards.

CYBERSECURITY AS A NEW DIMENSION OF COOPERATION

Among modern security challenges, cybersecurity is becoming increasingly important and has also become an important area of cooperation between the Turkic states. On June 1, 2024, a [panel discussion](#) entitled, “Experiences of

the member countries of the Organization of Turkic States on the Security of Critical Information Infrastructure,” took place in Baku within the framework of the [3rd National Cybersecurity Forum](#), with the participation of the heads of the cybersecurity state institutions of Azerbaijan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. During the panel discussion, the experiences of the OTS member states on the security of critical information infrastructure in the OTS member states were presented in detail, including in the legal, organizational, scientific and technical fields. Participants made a number of recommendations and proposals to enhance cooperation between Turkic states to secure critical information infrastructure and to strengthen the fight against cyber threats.

Protecting critical energy infrastructure is now inseparable from cybersecurity challenges. OTS has designated Bishkek as the [as the Digital Capital of the Turkic World](#) for the year 2024 and established a working group on cybersecurity, one of whose main tasks is to prevent digital attacks on energy networks. Azerbaijan’s [2025 strategy for safeguarding critical infrastructure](#) explicitly highlights the importance of data sharing with Turkish and Kazakh system providers.

Developing digital connectivity, such as fintech platforms and e-government systems, adds a new dimension to security cooperation. In addition to bringing commercial transparency, the OTS [Digital Economy Partnership Agreement \(DEPA\)](#) has facilitated the development of common cybersecurity protocols.

THE MIDDLE CORRIDOR AS A PILLAR OF SECURITY

One of the most important dimensions of security cooperation between the Turkic states is the Middle Corridor initiative, which is key not only from an economic but also from a security perspective. This initiative connects Central Asia, the South Caucasus and Turkey and has paved the way for deeper cooperation between the regions concerned.

By fostering economic interdependence, the Middle Corridor offers an opportunity for the region to develop into a so-called “[security community](#)”—a framework where mutual trust and common interests reduce the likelihood of conflict. The Middle Corridor has become a critical element of Kazakhstan’s economic and strategic agenda. Diversification of transport routes is not only a matter of convenience but a national priority to reduce economic vulnerability. At the [September 2024 meeting](#) of the heads of the national security councils, particular emphasis was placed on transport security and the development of transport and logistics infrastructure along the Middle Corridor, indicating the growing importance of this dimension in the security thinking of the Turkic states.

The [strategic importance](#) of the Middle Corridor for the Turkic states is clear and of paramount importance for future [economic gains](#). The route, which connects Asia with Europe from Kazakhstan through Azerbaijan and Georgia, has become a symbol of stability in the midst of global tensions. The [150% increase](#) in container traffic since the start of the Russo-Ukraine war not only represents trade diversification but also demonstrates the region's ability to develop alternatives to routes traditionally dependent on Russia. An important finding for the future is that the operation of the Middle Corridor requires common logistics and security protocols.

HUNGARY'S ROLE AND PROSPECTS IN TURKIC SECURITY COOPERATION

For Hungary, it is of particular importance that Turkey hosted the Russo-Ukrainian talks on May 17. It was the first and only time since the start of the war that the two sides had held direct talks. For Hungary, this is extremely important, since our country is also committed to peace, and the Turkic states are important allies in this endeavor.

Regarding military cooperation with the OTS states, Hungary has gradually deepened its defense cooperation with several Turkic states in recent years. As a NATO ally, Hungary concluded a framework agreement with Turkey on military training, joint exercises and advice in 2023 and launched domestic production of Turkish Gidrán combat vehicles. Relations with Azerbaijan also reached the level of a strategic partnership in 2023, characterized by institutionalized cooperation and common security policy objectives, including military training, exchange of experience and mine clearance assistance. A strategic partnership agreement was signed with Kyrgyzstan in 2024, building on pro-peace engagement and cooperation within the Organization of Turkic States, although direct military-to-military relations are still limited.

In April this year, Hungary signed its first [defense cooperation declaration](#) with Uzbekistan, covering military training programs, technology transfer and counterterrorism cooperation. Hungary's embassy in [Tashkent](#) also serves as a NATO liaison office, facilitating dialogue between the NATO alliance and Central Asia. As an observer to the Turkic States Competition Council, the Hungarian Competition Authority (GVH) is involved in regulating [digital economic cooperation](#). And the [partnership](#) between the Defense Innovation Research Institute (VIKI) and the Turkish TÜBİTAK aims to develop intelligence systems.

Hungary has become a unique geopolitical bridge between the Turkic world and Europe, weaving economic, security and cultural links. Although the strategic

advantages (e.g. NATO links, energy security) are clear, long-term success will also depend on political balancing and the effectiveness of concrete projects (e.g. the Middle Corridor, TIF).

THE FUTURE AND CHALLENGES OF TURKIC SECURITY COOPERATION

The security challenges facing Central Asia, the Caucasus and Turkey are multifaceted, involving conventional military risks in addition to asymmetric warfare and cyber threats. Cooperation between the Turkic states is made more fragile by the rivalry between the various great powers than by Russia's traditional influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The activities of terrorist organizations in the region (e.g. ISIS, ETIM) continue to pose a serious risk, especially in the border regions of Central Asia. While information sharing between Turkish and Azeri intelligence services is improving, the culture of secrecy in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan often hinders real-time cooperation.

Water scarcity due to climate change can also be a source of conflict. Tensions over the use of water from rivers (e.g. Amu Darya, Syr Darya) are already being felt between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, which indirectly affects the unity of the Turkic states.

These threats require a collective response based on a shared understanding of regional roles and interests. Regional cooperation is the cornerstone of an effective strategy. A unified security framework will allow countries in the region to address these challenges in a cooperative manner, building resilience and speaking with one voice on global issues. This proactive approach will transform Central Asia and the Caucasus from reactive participants to influential actors in shaping the security environment.