

Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

# Efforts for Energy-Based Regionalisation in the Turkic World: The Organization of Turkic States\*

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## Abstract

The main objective of this article is to analyse the energy policies of partner countries of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), established over two energy regions, within the context of “energy regionalism.” The study, based on the premise that energy is one of the fundamental sources of motivation for the organisation, discusses the contributions of energy to the development and deepening of cooperation among the Turkic States. The paper explores the expectations of member countries from the organisation in terms of energy within the context of energy regionalism analysis criteria and seeks to answer questions regarding the level of fulfillment of these expectations. The findings suggest that the organisation has special importance in energy issues, with energy being a prominent subject in its written materials. The analysis reveals that the union broadly satisfies the criteria of energy regionalism, indicating the potential for implementing concrete cooperation projects related to energy among member countries in the medium term.

## Keywords

Organization of Turkic States, fossil energy resources, energy policies, energy security, energy regionalism.

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# Türk Dünyasında Enerji Temelli Bölgeselleşme

## Çabaları: Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı\*

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### Öz

İki enerji bölgesi üzerinde kurulmuş Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı (TDT) ortağı ülkelerin enerji politikalarının “enerji bölgeselciliği” bağlamında analizi bu makalenin temel amacını oluşturmaktadır. Birlik ortaklarının enerji kaynakları bakımından oldukça önemli rezerve sahip olmalarının yanında transit ülke olma bakımından da önemli bir coğrafi konumda yer almaları enerjiiyi birliğin temel motivasyon kaynaklarından biri hâline getirmektedir. Bu düşünceden hareketle hazırlanan çalışmada, enerjinin Türk Devletleri arasında iş birliğinin gelişmesine ve derinleşmesine katkıları tartışılmış; “enerji bölgeselciliği” analiz kriterleri bağlamında üye ülkelerin enerji konusunda örgütten beklentilerinin neler olduğu ve bu beklentilerin karşılanma seviyesinin hangi düzeyde olduğu sorularına cevap aranmıştır. Elde edilen bulgularda örgütün enerji konusuna özel önem atfettiği, yazılı metinlerinde enerjinin önemli başlıklardan birini oluşturduğu, ortak ülkelerin birlikten enerji meseleleriyle ilgili önemli beklentilerinin bulunduğu, birliğin “enerji bölgeselciliği” kriterlerini büyük oranda karşıladığı ve orta vadede üye ülkeler arasında enerji ile ilgili somut iş birliği projelerinin hayata geçirilebileceği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

### Anahtar Kelimeler

Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı, fosil enerji kaynakları, enerji politikaları, enerji güvenliği, enerji bölgeselciliği.

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## Introduction

With the end of the Cold War, the former USSR geography, consisting of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Caspian region, began to attract more political and economic interest from the world. In the new era, major powers seeking to benefit from the emerging geopolitical vacuum have aimed to establish a security system that suits their interests, while the regional countries have engaged in efforts to form alliances with the aim of finding solutions to the common problems they face.

The Turkic Republics, as significant actors in the Eurasian region, have participated in international organisations such as the CIS, GUAM, CSTO, SCO, and the EAEU in the context of seeking solutions to their regional issues and cooperation. In pursuit of resolving regional issues, the Turkic States, which have participated in numerous cooperation projects, have focused on policies to enhance their economic prosperity through the utilisation of their energy resources. Russia's self-perception as the hegemonic power in the region, along with the hegemonic endeavors of the USA and China towards the area, have unsettled the Turkic States, which are rich in energy resources, prompting them to seek different alternatives. According to Özsoy et al. (303), the primary priority for the countries in the region has been to manage the process in line with national interests by learning from the experiences of countries that have become targets of global powers, such as Iraq, Iran, and Venezuela.

During the USSR period, the Turkic States were subjected to cultural assimilation, and their fate frequently depended on the discretion of Russian administrators (Allworth 3). Concurrently, there was an effort to manipulate Turkestan's history and drive a wedge between fraternal nations. Nonetheless, the Soviet Union's endeavours to delineate boundaries between these peoples served as a catalyst for the leaders of Turkestan, compelling them towards unity and close collaboration, as the shared memory of a united Turkestan proved indelible.

As the USSR neared its dissolution, the idea of a United Turkestan<sup>1</sup> began to be voiced in search of solutions to regional issues and problems originating from Moscow. The news of independence that arrived in 1991 marked a new beginning in the integration efforts of the Turkic republics,

as it created opportunities for new collaborations. During the summit held in Ashgabat in 1991, Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed the formation of a Turkic Union, citing the European Union as a model (Karasar and Kuşkumbayev 21-25; Anderson 198; Sarı 139). However, the first concrete step towards developing political, economic, and cultural cooperation among the Turkic States, which share a common history and culture, was initiated in 1992 under the leadership of Türkiye<sup>2</sup>, thus commencing the process leading to the establishment of the OTS. Initially established on October 3, 2009, with the Nakhchivan Agreement as the “Turkic Council,” the structure was later renamed to the “Organization of Turkic States” on November 12, 2021, thereby formally instituting the OTS as a regional international organisation. The fact that two of the world’s nine total energy regions (Central Asia and the Caspian Basin) fall within the geographical boundaries of the organisation and that the members of the organisation also hold strategic significance as points of energy transit, has made the issue of energy one of the fundamental sources of motivation for the organisation.

The primary aim of this paper, which analyses the energy policies of OTS, a regional organisation established on the basis of multilateral cooperation, is to assess to what extent OTS meets the analysis criteria for “energy regionalism,” given its significant potential in energy supply and transit, and to explore the energy-related what expectations of the member countries from the organisation. The goal of the paper is to serve as a stepping stone for further research by elucidating the significance of energy from the perspective of the Turkic States within the context of energy regionalism. The study initially investigates the expectations of member countries regarding energy from the organisation. Subsequently, it examines the extent to which these expectations are met within the organisation, with support from the analysis criteria of energy regionalism. In the paper, which is confined to fossil energy resources, data from international energy agencies, official organisational documents, relevant literature, and policy-makers’ statements have been utilised. The research, prepared using descriptive research methodology and qualitative research techniques, has analysed quantitative energy data pertaining to the member countries.

The fundamental hypothesis of the study is that despite OTS predominantly appearing as an entity aimed at fostering cultural cooperation between

member countries, energy-related issues constitute one of the organisation's core motivational drivers. The analysis of OTS's energy policies within the framework of "energy regionalism" criteria, then, forms the unique contribution of the research. Given the absence of studies in the literature that address OTS in this context, the conducted research is expected to make a significant contribution to the field.

### **Regionalisation and Energy Regionalism**

The concept of "regionalisation," a significant subject within the discipline of International Relations, lacks an agreed-upon definition. Andrew Hurrell defines regionalisation as the growth of social integration within a region and often as undirected social and economic processes, whereas Jean Monnet describes it as the coordination, implementation, or theoretical approach to social, economic, or political activities within a geographic region encompassing a certain number of states (Hurrell 39; Monnet 644). Regionalisation, categorised into two distinct waves, acknowledges the post-World War II era as the commencement of the first wave, while the post-Cold War period is regarded as the beginning of the second wave (Söderbaum 23).

Although there were few regional groups before the Second World War, the war's end resulted in the transition from a multipolar structure of the international system, which had lasted for three centuries, to a bipolar system. This not only increased the significance of regions for the superpowers but also enhanced the self-reliance and self-awareness of the regions themselves (Hansen and Heurlin 1; Fawcett and Hurrell 12). During the Cold War, the world was divided into two ideological camps led by two superpowers, which fostered the prominence of regionalism as a legacy of the era. With the influence of globalisation, the theoretical underpinnings of the subject began to take shape from the early 1990s onwards.

According to Marianne Marchand and Morten Boas (899), the process of regionalisation has constituted a significant aspect of global restructuring. The comprehensive structure of regional organisations, which can take various forms depending on the fields where states prefer to cooperate and are often established to serve multiple purposes (Hettne 543), has necessitated considering regionalisation efforts at the sectoral level.

Regionalism activities have been the subject of research under headings such as security regionalism, financial regionalism, socio-cultural regionalism, trade blocs, economic regionalism, developmental regionalism, political regionalism, energy regionalism, etc. Energy, one of these areas, has emerged as a significant and new field of study and has been incorporated into definitions of regionalism from the 20th century onwards. Energy regionalism, as defined by Zehra Aksu (41-42), is characterised by initiatives that facilitate the convergence of a group of countries in the international arena and enable the execution of energy projects that strengthen them politically, economically, and in terms of security. Energy regionalism, constructed as a new design model derived from elements of economic, political, and security regionalism and, in this sense, representing a model of theoretical eclecticism, was introduced to the International Relations literature following the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951, which is acknowledged as the first instance of an energy regionalism model.

The establishment of the ECSC led to Europe being characterised as the first energy region, while the use of energy in regional and regionalism definitions from the 20th century onwards has facilitated the recognition of energy regionalism as a new type of regionalisation (Sopilko et al. 14). Energy regionalism, which remains in the early stages of both conceptual and empirical development, has been attempted to be defined through three fundamental elements: open governance arrangements<sup>3</sup>, actor-centred regional structures<sup>4</sup>, and analytical tools<sup>5</sup> (Johnson and VanDeveer 3). This classification has provided insight that the definition of energy regionalism can be made through political spaces that emerge as a result of official or semi-official initiatives (formal/semi-formal cooperations that facilitate alliances among states regarding energy resources) and through energy regions (geographical areas where energy resources are heavily concentrated). The presence of various dimensions of energy up to its consumption stage has driven states to act jointly and form regional alliances, resulting in the emergence of formal/semi-formal energy regionalism initiatives. In their article analysing studies on energy regionalism around the world, Hancock and colleagues (3-4) have highlighted that the majority of the studies and research on energy regions have predominantly focused on non-renewable energy sources, especially fossil energy resources.

## **Organization of Turkic States and Energy**

The OTS, was established among the Turkic Republics to enhance mutual relations. The total population of the OTS partners<sup>6</sup> amounts to 165.340.211 while the total land area covers 4.826.844 km<sup>2</sup> (The World Bank; T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı). The organisation holds geopolitical and geostrategic significance due to its strategic energy resources, demographic composition, and the geography it encompasses (Purtaş 6).

A significant portion of the historical Silk Road is located within this geography, and the region is the focus of various projects due to it representing one of the pieces that constitute Mackinder's "Heartland" of the World Island and encompassing the states in Spykman's "Rimland" belt. The geopolitical position and natural resource wealth of the organisation, which encompasses a geography surrounded by power centres such as Russia, China, the USA, and India, necessitate the development of a comprehensive cooperation framework among the Turkic States, including in the field of energy.

In this section of the study, the Turkic States are examined as an energy region, and the OTS, established among these countries, as well as the energy strategies of the member states of the organisation, are discussed.

### **Turkic States as an Energy Region**

According to Hancock et al. (3-4), there are a total of nine fossil energy regions in the world, which are Europe, the Arctic, MENA, Asia, North America, Latin America/Caribbean, Africa, Eurasia/Central Asia, and the Caspian Basin. OTS partners such as Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan are located within the specified fossil energy regions of Central Asia and the Caspian Basin, indicating that the organisation spans two energy regions.

**Table 1**  
 Fossil Energy Resources of OTS Partners<sup>7</sup>

State	Full Members						
	Coal Reserves	Coal Production Quantity	Oil Reserves	Oil Production Quantity	Natural Gas Reserves	Natural Gas Production	Share of Fossil Fuels in Total Exports
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	-	-	7.0	38.1	100.5	24.3	87%
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	25.605	2.08	30.0	91.4	93.7	23.4	63%
<b>Kırgızistan</b>	s	0.033	s	s	s	s	5%
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	1.375	0.05	0.6	2.8	42.7	56.3	19%
<b>Türkiye</b>	11.525	0.76	0.4	s	0.1	S	4%
Observer Members							
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	-	-	0.6	12.5	688.1	63.2	88%
<b>Hungary</b>	2.909	0.06	s	s	s	s	-
<b>TRNC</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	41.414	2.983	38.6	144.8	925.1	167.2	-

Source: BP; EIA; The World Bank

According to Table 1, the total coal reserves of the OTS partners are 41.414 thousand million tons, the total oil reserves are 38.6 thousand million barrels, and the total natural gas reserves are 925.1 trillion cubic feet (tcf). Furthermore, the total coal production of the OTS partners is 2.983 kilotonnes of oil equivalent (ktoe), the total oil production is 144.8 million tonnes, and the total natural gas production volume is 167.2 billion m<sup>3</sup>. From this perspective, the OTS partners are countries capable of exporting, and within these countries, the revenue streams are largely dependent on energy resources. Particularly among the full members, a significant portion of the total exports of Azerbaijan (87%), Kazakhstan (63%), and Uzbekistan (19%), as well as the observer member Turkmenistan (88%), are made up of fossil fuels. These specified countries are the energy centers of the organisation.



## Organization of Turkic States and the Energy Strategies of Member Countries

The Turkic Republics, significant actors in the Eurasian region, faced a series of problems, including energy security, following the dissolution of the USSR. They have participated in numerous cooperation projects established within the framework of bilateral and multilateral agreements aimed at resolving regional issues and seeking collaboration. However, none of these establishments consisted solely of Turkic States, which share a common history, identity, language unity, and cultural ties.

In the Nakhchivan Agreement, which was established on the basis of cultural solidarity among member countries, energy is specified as one of the fundamental purposes of the OTS's establishment. Energy, defined as a common area of interest, has been recognised as a field of cooperation among the member states (TDT, "Türk Dili Konuşan Ülkeler": madde 2). The fact that the organisation's partners both possess significant reserves of energy resources and face energy security issues has necessitated a special emphasis on energy matters in the founding documents.

Energy-based issues in the region can be categorised as follows:

- Problems arising from the sharing of energy resources,
- Problems associated with the transportation of the produced energy sources,
- Environmental security concerns encountered during.

The aforementioned problems, due to their scale that prevents a single state from resolving them alone, drive the OTS partners to act collectively and form one of the fundamental motivational sources of the organisation. Each state that is a party to the organisation aims to develop full-scale energy dialogue, in addition to practical cooperation, through regional collaboration while considering its national interests.

Each Turkic State develops separate policies and takes steps in this direction to ensure energy security. At times, states engage in bilateral or multilateral agreements, and at other times, they aim to solve both energy security issues and achieve economic gains by joining a regional organisation like OTS. Below, the OTS partner states are categorized as producers, transit, and consumer countries, and their expectations and strategies from the organisation are discussed. These objectives vary for producer, consumer,

and transit countries. While the alignment of the energy strategies of the OTS partners presents a significant advantage in terms of energy regionalism, conflicts of interest can complicate the successful execution of regionalisation activities.

The expectations<sup>8</sup> of the OTS's producer countries<sup>9</sup> include:

- Resolution of issues that directly threaten their national interests and energy security through regional cooperation,
- Combating unregistered energy trade based on mafia-oligarch relationships (Starr 31),
- Reducing dependence on foreign companies (originating from countries like Russia, USA, UK, Netherlands) due to economic and technological inadequacies,
- Decreasing dependency on Russia for the transportation of produced energy resources,
- Developing efficient trade and economic ties with major trade partners,
- Minimising environmental damage in the exploration and extraction phases of resources,
- Utilising new drilling methods and technologies,
- Contributing to the resolution of some border disputes stemming from legal status issues in the Caspian Basin, Central Asia, and the South Caucasus,
- Enhancing commercial and economic ties within the framework of the organisation to reduce the influence of external powers in the region.

The expectations<sup>10</sup> of the OTS's transit countries<sup>11</sup> include:

- Gaining a strategic advantage by ensuring the transit of produced energy resources,
- Becoming an energy corridor, or energy hub/centre,
- Establishing reciprocal relationships with transit countries in line with mutual benefits,
- Ensuring and diversifying the uninterrupted flow of energy needs,
- Preventing leaks at onshore and offshore deposits,
- Enhancing the efficiency of pipelines by eliminating neglect or inadequacies in maintenance and repair,

- Ensuring high-level safety measures in the legal restrictions of countries through which pipelines pass, in international standards, and in the engineering choices and construction,
- Facilitating international cooperation and coordination in the event of destructive incidents such as theft, breaches/accidents, low-level vandalism, commercial espionage, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, cyberattacks, and sabotage,
- Minimizing land damage and regulating more robust security and environmental laws related to the transportation of natural resources.

Finally, the expectations<sup>12</sup> of the OTS's importing countries<sup>13</sup> include:

- Gaining easy, cost-effective, uninterrupted, and reliable access to needed energy resources,
- Increasing their state's levels of production and growth,
- Ensuring energy security by providing a diversity of supply.

The above-mentioned expectations will encourage each member state of the union to adopt a strategy that serves its national interest, which, in turn, may lead to increased mutual dependency among the organisation's members. The general status of the OTS partners as developing countries and the shared common identity facilitate the development and deepening of relations based on the principles of mutual benefit. Because a shared identity provides states with an advantage in creating economic regional cooperation within a common structure and resolving security issues. Therefore, the Turkic identity is a driving force that brings these states together, making it possible to construct a regional area among sibling countries and develop relations in fields such as energy, trade, and transportation.

### **Analysis of the Energy Policies of the OTS**

Energy, as the source and driving force of all kinds of development, holds a very important place in the continuation of human life as an element whose demand is rapidly increasing. Therefore, issues related to economic and political life that develop over the assurance of energy security, the diversification and control of energy resources are deepening (Pamir 40; Ediger 3). Energy security, due to its transboundary nature, creates mutual dependence, necessitating collective action by multiple states. This is also

true for Turkic States, which are experiencing numerous problems that require regional solutions in the field of energy.

The issues at hand not only affect the political and economic development of the countries possessing resources by causing delays but also negatively impact the potential gains of transit countries from pipelines and other countries in the region that are dependent on energy. Faced with fundamental problems such as security challenges and capacity deficiencies, regional cooperation is seen as a necessity. Aware of this situation, Turkic States are emphasizing regionalisation policies within the framework of the organisation. Within the organisation, policies related to energy's security and economic dimensions are being developed, and strategic partnerships are being sought. The development of political, economic, and security policies within the organisation for engaging in energy-related activities allows for the analysis in the context of an eclectic model of energy regionalism. This analysis provides the opportunity to reveal the energy policies of the chosen establishment/member countries as empirical cases, as well as assists in measuring the success level of the organisation's energy policies.

Energy regionalism analyses can be conducted based on three criteria: driving forces, institutional structure, and the impact of decisions taken and activities on energy regionalism (Hancock et al. 10). In the driving forces criterion, the factors that prompt member countries in an international organisation to engage in energy regionalism are examined; in the institutional structure criterion, whether there is an organ solely dedicated to working in this field for successful management of energy regionalism, and if so, what its level of influence is; and in the impacts of decisions taken and activities on energy regionalism criterion, what kind of work is being done within the organisation concerning energy and energy security is investigated. Below, the OTS is analysed within the context of these three criteria.

- *Driving Forces:* In energy regionalism, driving factors are divided into mandatory and auxiliary factors. Mandatory factors include the quantity of energy resources possessed, energy security issues, and interdependence of—all elements that are necessary in all energy regionalism initiatives. Other auxiliary factors, on the other hand, relate to the potential of the member countries of the organisation, identity, the desire to increase social and economic welfare, the role of regional hegemony, etc. (Aksu 139).

Based on Table 1, which provides data on fossil energy resources, the organisation fulfils the mandatory criterion in energy regionalism concerning the *quantity of energy resources* available. However, despite the significant advantages, the ownership of these resources also leads to various economic, political, and environmental problems<sup>14</sup>. The challenges encountered during the extraction or transit phases of energy resources signify that the essential criterion of *energy security problems* is being met. The presence of producer, consumer, and transit countries within the OTS creates interdependence of among the organisation's partners and compels them to cooperate in the context of energy policies. In this respect, the OTS also fulfils the third mandatory criterion *interdependence of*. On the other hand, the OTS partners possess serious potential due to the quantity of their energy resources, their geopolitical and geostrategic positions, and their populations. This fulfils the first auxiliary criterion of the *potential of the member countries*. The presence of a shared Turkish identity meets the second auxiliary criterion of a *common identity*; and the fact that the OTS mainly consists of developing countries suggests that the partners share *a desire to improve social and economic welfare*, thereby meeting this additional auxiliary criterion as well. Another auxiliary criterion is the investigation of whether there is one or several states in international organisations that guide cooperation and take on a leverage role within the organisation. Türkiye is the state that has led the OTS partners to come together, thus fulfilling the factor regarding the *role of regional hegemons* within the organisation. In conclusion, the OTS meets all the mandatory criteria as well as all the other auxiliary factors in the context of “driving forces.”

- *Institutional Structure*: The Nakhchivan Agreement, which is of primary importance in the establishment documents of the OTS, specifies the organisational bodies of the OTS as the Council of Heads of State, Council of Foreign Ministers, Committee of Senior Officials, Council of Elders, and the Secretariat. The agreement provides details on the roles and powers of these established bodies<sup>15</sup>. In this respect, while the OTS possesses all the organs that are necessary for an organisation, it does not have a body specifically dedicated to conducting work in a specific field such as energy. All activities stipulated in the organisation's founding purpose are carried out by these five fundamental organs. Given that only a short time has elapsed since the official establishment of the organisation, there are no

additional auxiliary organs or working groups designed beyond these main bodies. Therefore, the organisation does not fully meet the second criteria of energy regionalism analysis pertaining to institutional structure.

- *The Impacts of Decisions Taken and Activities:* In the final stage of energy regionalism analyses, the functional side of the organisation is researched by examining the activities conducted in the field of energy. The analysis includes examining all kinds of activities, including signed agreements among members, summit meetings, and organised events, focusing on those related to energy. Indeed, within a historical chronology, the OTS is examined below to determine whether the organisation meets this last criterion and to what extent the expectations of the member countries (detailed in the second part of the study) are met.

To date, within the OTS, a total of eight declarations have been published concerning the fundamental issues of intergovernmental cooperation on non-renewable energy resources, including the foundational treaty. Significant decisions related to energy have been made starting from the organisation's founding Nakhchivan Agreement, and are included in the 1st Summit Declaration of the Turkic Council<sup>16</sup>, the 6th Summit Declaration, the 7th Summit Declaration, the Turkic Council Turkistan Informal Summit Declaration, the Turkic World 2040 Vision<sup>17</sup>, the 8th Summit Declaration of the OTS, and the 9th Summit Samarkand Declaration of the OTS.

The significant decisions and activities related to energy taken by the organisation at these meetings include:

- To establish and enhance cooperation in the field of energy efficiency among member countries, various events such as the EXPO-2017 International Fair, the 11th Energy Efficiency Forum-2020 (TDT, "Türk Konseyi 6. Zirve"; "Türk Konseyi 7. Zirve"), InnoWeek Uz-2021, InnoWeek Uz-2022, and forums on "The Role of Innovation and Technological Development in the Turkic Region" have been conducted,
- The establishment of the International Center for Green Technologies and Investment Projects based on the EXPO in Astana (TDT, "Türk Konseyi 6. Zirve"),
- Decisions were made at the "Trans-Caspian Multimodal Route Workshop" held in Istanbul in 2016 to further intensify customs cooperation among

member countries and to facilitate export and import procedures (TDT, “Türk Konseyi 6. Zirve”),

- Consensus has been reached on cooperation among member countries on issues such as supply security, liberalisation of the energy sector, establishment or operation of markets, strengthening cooperation in the transportation sector, conducting a joint fight against security issues, and providing incentives to share technical knowledge and expertise,
- The adoption of the “Turkic World 2040 Vision” as a strategic document to guide future cooperation and the directive to prepare the “2022-2026 OTS Strategic Roadmap” for the implementation of the said document (TDT, “Türk Konseyi Türkistan”),
- The decision to establish the “TURANSEZ” special economic zone,
- The project to establish a “Commercial Cooperation Research Center” and an “Engineering and Technology Center” for Turkic countries,
- The initiative to establish the Turkic World Investment Forum,
- The adoption of the Action Plan for the 2023-2027 OTS Energy Cooperation Program (TDT, “TDT 9. Zirvesi”),
- Agreement on diversifying transit corridors, including the Middle Corridor which primarily connects Europe to Central Asia, under the TRACECA framework, and the organisation of the International Intermodal Transport Forum on this matter (TDT, “TDT, TRACECA”),
- The decision to actively involve Turkmenistan in cooperation mechanisms within the OTS, including the Sister Ports Process and the introduction of digital tools (digital TIR, e-Permit, and eCMR) aimed at facilitating transportation and transit procedures, as well as the implementation of related transportation projects (TDT, “TDT Heyeti”),
- The project proposal to create an energy transmission corridor which involves constructing a 1,195-kilometer submarine power cable beneath the Black Sea, stretching from Azerbaijan (through Georgia and Romania) to Hungary (TDT, “TDT Enerji”),
- Proposal for the construction of Kambarata HPP-1, which will be the largest hydroelectric power plant in Kyrgyzstan, to provide electricity to Central Asian countries (TDT, “TDT Enerji”),

- The decision to establish an Energy Coordination Committee at the level of Deputy Ministers of Energy to coordinate energy cooperation (TDT, “TDT Enerji”),
- Improvement of the inter-regional energy linkage between member and observer states by connecting the east and west of the Caspian (TDT, “TDT Enerji”) and
- The decision to increase the current capacity of TANAP, which stands at 16 billion cubic meters per year, to potentially double its capacity in the near future (T.C. Enerji ve Tabii Kaynaklar Bakanlığı).

It is evident from the decisions mentioned above that the OTS, which is one of the organisations where energy cooperation is stipulated by agreements and other norms, has the creation of a energy regionalism as one of its foundational goals. This is because energy is stated as one of the fundamental objectives in the founding treaty of OTS, and energy and energy security are frequently addressed in other negotiations and agreements signed up until the year 2023. The OTS has particularly focused on the improvement, transit, production, and trade of energy resources, as well as environmental issues. In terms of enhancing energy resources, the OTS refers to the Caspian Basin and Central Asia, which are its energy regions. Regarding transit issues, it is stated that all OTS member countries need to act together. Thus, the aim is to develop infrastructure projects to increase export potential. In the trade of energy resources, steps are being taken towards creating a common market area by establishing a Free Trade Zone and Customs Union; simultaneously, concrete proposals are being developed for the use of new “green” technologies with regard to environmental concerns. From the decisions taken, it is understood that the Turkic States have adopted a policy of energy nationalism to more effectively utilise the natural resources in the region and aim to establish a “Turkic Corridor” for the transportation of produced energy resources. The detailed inclusion of energy issues in the organisation’s activities indicates that the organisation meets the functional criteria of energy regionalism analysis.

Consequently, it is of great importance that the Turkic States, which concur on the rational use of fossil energy resources within the organisation, proceed to integration through a shared identity and thereafter develop this integration to encompass energy. The Turkic States, acting with the



recognition that enhancing societal welfare is achieved through the efficient utilisation of energy resources, are taking significant steps by consistently focusing on energy resources and their security in declarations made at every available opportunity in meetings organised under the auspices of the organisation. The decisions taken and activities carried out with the consideration of the OTS countries' common interests are quite important, yet they require further development. While normative ties are significant in bringing member states together, each of the organisation's partners naturally desires that the energy strategies they adopt are also effectively met.

The organisation has not yet fully met the expectations of its members as stated in the second part of the study. However, the organisation, which was established based on multilateral cooperation among Turkic States, is considered an important structure by its members, especially for conducting studies on energy. As can be understood from the characteristics such as Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan's energy reserves, and Türkiye's regional power and geopolitical position, each member state has its strengths in different areas, which enables the creation of a coalition of power within the organisation. The organisation is grappling with a series of security issues involving producer, consumer, and transit countries; it is anticipated that the issues pertinent to the region could be resolved as a result of a fully-fledged coalition of power. Since the ultimate aim of regional energy initiatives is to ensure energy security, significant responsibilities fall upon all members of the organisation in solving the existing problems. These issues persist as a serious obstacle to the economic development of the organisation's partners; however, it is envisaged that should tangible solutions to energy issues be devised, the organisation could serve as an exemplary model of energy regionalism.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

The transboundary nature of energy makes cooperation between producer, consumer, and transit countries a necessity. Sometimes agreements can be made between countries in the same geographical region, and sometimes international regional organisations can be formed, or existing regional organisations can include energy in their aims and objectives. OTS is established over two significant energy regions in the world and includes energy among both its founding purposes and its activities. This aspect

allows for the analysis of the organisation's energy policies in the context of "energy regionalism."

The organisation encompasses not only producer countries but also transit and consumer countries; therefore, each state determines different strategies in line with its national interests. However, normative commitment allows for the establishment of a common interest equation that supersedes the individual interests of the member states. The expectations of exporter countries aiming to maximize benefits from their natural resources, transit countries aspiring to become energy hubs/corridors, and importer countries wishing to secure their energy supply are being addressed on the basis of equal partnership.

In the organisation, states with aligning national interests are developing various plans/projects in the hope of enhancing economic prosperity and ensuring energy security. Steps are being taken to pave the way for strong a stability and development. The activities related to energy within the organisation also allow for an analysis of its energy policies in the context of regional energy cooperation. It is anticipated that the OTS could become a significant model of regional energy collaboration if it develops its institutional structure, which is crucial for energy governance. This development would enable the organisation to satisfy all three criteria for energy regionalism, of which it currently meets two.

It is essential that the OTS be endowed with a robust institutional framework to maintain stable relations among its partners and to resolve regional issues centred on energy. Institutional structuring in the field of energy, one of the primary motivational resources for the organisation, will not only enable the OTS to become a complete energy region but will also significantly contribute to meeting the expectations of member countries by focusing more on energy matters. This is because, alongside their different riches, the partners in the organisation also have various essential needs and expectations that need to be addressed. As each partner within the organisation possesses unique resources, they also have distinct needs and expectations that are crucial to satisfy. For instance, Kazakhstan exports natural gas to Russia while importing the gas it uses domestically from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This situation also applies to transit:

oil produced in the Tengiz region is transported via pipelines to Russia, and from there, it is dispatched to the global markets.

Similar situations to Kazakhstan's are experienced in other countries, where the continued dependency on Russia is a cause for concern among the post-Soviet Turkic States. In this context, it is of utmost importance for the organisation, which holds significant potential for the region's development, to continue its energy-intensive efforts. The development and deepening of integration will not only contribute to the resolution of regional issues but also generate significant momentum in the economies of the member countries. For the Turkic States, viewing the OTS as an opportunity to resolve certain existing and potential problems, which is heightened by the interest of external powers, is a necessity. This perspective should be adopted not merely as a political choice or an ideological stance but from the viewpoint of social, economic, and environmental stability, political stability, and security issues, including energy.

OTS, although still a young formation as an international entity, demonstrates the potential for significant energy projects and shows signs of evolving into an increasingly effective strategic union. Currently hampered by issues such as technological and economic inadequacies in energy efforts, the OTS is expected to become more successful through closer collaboration among the leaders of Turkestan and by strengthening the organisation's institutional structure while preserving the existing integrated setup. The Russia-Ukraine War and the ensuing energy crisis, along with the inflationary pressure it has created on economies worldwide, are shaping an international conjuncture that supports the development of the organisation within the context of energy regionalism. As EU countries seek to reduce their dependency on Russia, they are turning towards the Turkic States. This shift could contribute to the organisation's continued path as a respected regional entity in the medium term.

### **Contribution Rate Statement**

The authors' contribution rates in this study are equal.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

There is no conflict of interest with any institution or person within the scope of this study. There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

## Notes

- 1 The paper is limited to the post-Cold War period, and since the initiatives before this period were unsuccessful, they have not been included in this study.
- 2 Before this date, regional summit meetings predominantly took the form of consultative gatherings, serving the function of enhancing mutual acquaintance. In the 2000s, however, an effective cultural diplomacy was conducted among the Turkic republics, establishing significant platforms (Purtaş 12).
- 3 Examples of open governance arrangements include the EU, ASEAN, or Regional Trade Agreements.
- 4 Examples of actor-centered regional structures include newly emerged and significant energy regions such as the South China Sea and the Arctic.
- 5 Examples of analytical tools include river basins like the Nile or ocean basins like the Mediterranean.
- 6 All full members and observer members.
- 7 This table has been created based on the latest published data regarding proven reserves. In the table, “s” indicates that there is not enough data to be statistically significant, while “-“ indicates that there is no data/resources.
- 8 For detailed information, see: Mirzayev 87; [https://www.azerbaijans.com/content\\_530\\_tr.html](https://www.azerbaijans.com/content_530_tr.html); Cornell ve Starr 5; Cohen; Nazarbayev 1-2; Larrabee 49; Ministry of Energy of The Republic of Uzbekistan; Gazel 39.
- 9 Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.
- 10 For detailed information, see: IEA; Karagiannis 3; [https://www.azerbaijans.com/content\\_530\\_tr.html](https://www.azerbaijans.com/content_530_tr.html); Cornell and Starr 5; Cohen; Nazarbayev 1-2; Alammadov 43; Larrabee 49; European Committee of the Regions; USA Department of Energy; KKTC Enerji ve Ekonomi Bakanlığı; TEPAV 79-83.
- 11 Türkiye, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Hungary.
- 12 For detailed information, see: Manos Karagiannis; IEA; KKTC Enerji ve Ekonomi Bakanlığı; TEPAV 79-83; European Committee of the Regions; USA Department of Energy.
- 13 Türkiye, Kyrgyzstan, TRNC, Hungary, and, to a lesser extent, other countries.
- 14 For detailed information, please refer to the second section titled “Organization of Turkic States and the Energy” in the study.
- 15 For detailed information, please refer to the Nakhchivan Agreement (TDT, “Türk Dili Konuşan Ülkeler”: madde 5-6).
- 16 For detailed information, please refer to the Türk Konseyi 1. Zirve Bildirisi (TDT, “Türk Konseyi 1. Zirve”).
- 17 For detailed information, please refer to the Türk Dünyası 2040 Vizyonu (TDT, “Türk Dünyası”).

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