

SOSYAL BİLİMLER ARAŞTIRMALARI DERGİSİ

THE JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Role of Kazakhstan in Economic Integration within the Organization of Turkic States*

Sharifa GİRİTLİOĞLU¹

ABSTRACT

Kazakhstan is a key actor in promoting economic cooperation among the member states of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). With its vast territory, strategic position as the transit hub, and strong historical and cultural ties with other Turkic nations, Kazakhstan functions both as a bridge between East and West and as a facilitator of regional economic dialogue. This study aims to examine Kazakhstan's role in advancing economic cooperation within the OTS framework. Employing a qualitative case study approach, it analyses Kazakhstan's infrastructure investments, trade partnerships, and commitment to multilateral collaboration. Particular attention is given to Kazakhstan's role in developing the Trans-Caspian Middle Corridor and its efforts to align national policies with broader regional objectives. The analysis is based on current trade data, regional policy documents, and intergovernmental agreements. The findings indicate that Kazakhstan's pragmatic, infrastructure-focused strategy has laid a solid foundation for a more integrated and economically resilient Turkic World. At the same time, Kazakhstan faces the challenge of balancing its active role in the Turkic World with its long-standing relations with global powers such as China and Russia. However, this multi-dimensional network of relations is also seen as a potential asset for enhancing Kazakhstan's regional leadership capacity. The paper concludes by emphasizing that Kazakhstan's geographic advantages, resource potential, and forward-looking, inclusive approach to regional cooperation position it to further strengthen its leadership role in future integration processes.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, Organization of Turkic States, Economic integration, Turkic World, Middle corridor

* This study is the expanded and revised version of the paper titled "The Role of Kazakhstan in Economic Integration within the OTS", which was presented at the 2nd International Congress on Economic and Administrative Studies in Tokat on May 8-9, 2025.

¹ Dr., Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Turkistan/Kazakhstan, ORCID: 0000-0003-4135-4094, e-mail: sharifa.giritlioglu@ayu.edu.kz

SOSYAL BİLİMLER ARAŞTIRMALARI DERGİSİ

THE JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH

ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

**Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı Kapsamındaki Ekonomik
Entegrasyonda Kazakistan'ın Rolü***

Sharifa GİRİTLİOĞLU¹

Öz

Kazakistan, Türk Devletleri Teşkilatına (TDT) üye ülkeler arasında ekonomik işbirliğinin geliştirilmesinde kilit bir aktör konumundadır. Geniş coğrafi alanı, stratejik geçiş noktası olarak sahip olduğu konumu ve diğer Türk Devletleriyle paylaştığı güçlü tarihî ve kültürel bağlar sayesinde Kazakistan, hem Doğu ile Batı arasında bir köprü işlevi görmekte hem de bölgesel ekonomik diyalogun sağlanması etkin bir rol üstlenmektedir. Bu çalışma, Kazakistan'ın TDT çerçevesinde ekonomik işbirliğini geliştirmedeki rolünü incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, nitel vaka çalışması yöntemiyle yürütülmüş olup, Kazakistan'ın altyapı yatırımları, ticaret ortaklıklarını ve çok taraflı işbirliğine olan bağlılığını analiz edilmektedir. Özellikle Kazakistan'ın Trans-Hazar Orta Koridorun geliştirilmesindeki rolü ile ulusal politikalarını bölgesel hedeflerle uyumlu hale getirme çabalarına odaklanılmıştır. Analiz, güncel ticaret verileri, bölgesel politika belgeleri ve hükümetler arası antlaşmalar temelinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bulgular, Kazakistan'ın altyapı odaklı pragmatik stratejisinin daha bütünlük ve ekonomik olarak dirençli bir Türk dünyası için sağlam bir temel oluşturduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bununla birlikte Kazakistan, Türk Dünyasındaki etkin rolünü Çin ve Rusya gibi küresel güçlerle sürdürdüğü köklü ilişkilerle dengeleme sorumluluğuyla karşı karşıya olduğu, ancak bu çok boyutlu ilişkiler ağı, Kazakistan'ın bölgesel liderlik kapasitesini artırma potansiyeli taşıdığı değerlendirilmektedir. Makale, Kazakistan'ın coğrafi avantajları, doğal kaynak potansiyeli ve geleceğe dönük kapsayıcı bölgesel işbirliği anlayışı sayesinde, ilerleyen entegrasyon süreçlerinde liderlik pozisyonunu daha da güçlendirebileceği vurgulanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kazakistan, Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı, Ekonomik entegrasyon, Türk Dünyası, Orta Koridor

* Bu çalışma; 8-9 Mayıs 2025 tarihinde Tokat'ta düzenlenen 2. Uluslararası İktisadi ve İdari Çalışmalar Kongresi'nde sözlü olarak sunulan "Kazakistan'ın TDT Kapsamında Ekonomik Entegrasyondaki Rolü" başlıklı bildirinin genişletilmiş ve gözden geçirilmiş halidir.

¹ Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Hoca Ahmet Yesevi Uluslararası Türk-Kazak Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi, Türkistan/Kazakistan, ORCID: 0000-0003-4135-4094, e-posta: sharifa.giritlioglu@ayu.edu.kz

1. Introduction

In recent years, the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) has gained momentum as a regional platform for deepening economic, political, and cultural cooperation among Turkic-speaking nations. Originally launched as the Turkic Council in 2009, the OTS now includes Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan as full members, with Hungary, Turkmenistan, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) participating as observers (Organization of Turkic States, 2025b; Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025) (Map 1).



Source: Organization of Turkic States, 2025b (<https://www.turkicstates.org/tr>)

Map 1. Map of the Member States and Observer States of the Organization of Turkic States

While the organization has made considerable progress in fostering dialogue and cultural alignment, its economic integration mechanisms remain a developing frontier (Hanayı, 2023; Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025; Türkiye Economic, Political and Strategic Research Center, 2025). Among member states, Kazakhstan occupies a uniquely strategic position. With its vast geography straddling Europe and Asia, and endowed with substantial transit potential, Kazakhstan functions not only as a physical corridor linking East and West but also as a diplomatic bridge uniting Turkic states under shared economic and political goals (Tokayev, 2025). As the world's largest landlocked country, its proactive participation in regional infrastructure projects and its memberships in organizations such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) (Giritlioğlu, 2023: 463; Vinokurov, 2017: 57) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) (Yuan, 2010) enhance its credibility and leverage in shaping integrative frameworks within the OTS.

While Kazakhstan's geopolitical role within the broader Central Asian (Turkistan) context has received considerable academic attention, its concrete contributions to economic integration within the OTS remain relatively underexamined. This paper addresses a critical gap by examining Kazakhstan's role in advancing economic integration among OTS members. The guiding research question is: How has Kazakhstan contributed to economic integration within the OTS, and how effective have these efforts been in promoting regional economic alignment?

To explore this, the study sets out five objectives. First, to map Kazakhstan's economic priorities within the institutional framework of the OTS. Second, to examine its participation in regional agreements, joint initiatives, and integration mechanisms. Third, to compare Kazakhstan's influence with other key members such as Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan. Finally, to identify key challenges and opportunities shaping Kazakhstan's future leadership in the Turkic World economy.

This research makes an original contribution by moving beyond descriptive accounts of Kazakhstan's foreign policy to provide a focused, evidence-based analysis of its economic leadership within a Turkic multilateral context. Drawing on trade data, institutional developments, and policy frameworks, the study argues that Kazakhstan's pragmatic, infrastructure-driven, and multi-vector approach has laid critical foundations for a more resilient and interconnected Turkic economic space. The paper aims to contribute to the broader literature on regionalism, middle power in Eurasia, and the institutionalization of post-Soviet regional blocs. Kazakhstan is not merely a transit state or passive member, it is positioned as a strategic architect in designing the economic future of the Turkic World.

1.1. Theoretical Framework: Explaining Kazakhstan's Role in Regional Economic Integration

Regional economic integration remains a fundamental theme in international political economy, especially following the Cold War, which brought renewed focus on regionalism and global governance structures. Key theoretical models, particularly those by Balassa (1961, 1976) and Viner (1950), offer important insights into this area. Balassa viewed integration as a gradual process with successive stages—from free trade areas to full economic unions—each involving deeper institutional convergence and policy alignment. Viner, adopting a more evaluative perspective, introduced the concepts of “trade creation” and “trade diversion” to analyze the economic efficiency and redistributive impacts of customs unions. This framework highlights the progressive institutionalization and policy convergence required for deeper cooperation. In the context of the OTS, this model helps assess the bloc's current stages of integration and the trajectory Kazakhstan supports through its initiatives.

Building upon these classical frameworks, Haas (1958) introduced the theory of neofunctionalism, which posits that economic collaboration in one area often generates political spillovers that catalyze further integration across other sectors. This theory, originally developed in the context of European integration, suggests that technical cooperation in narrowly defined fields may foster a self-reinforcing

momentum toward broader supranational governance. Mattli (1999) later expanded on this perspective, underscoring the significance of political commitment and institutional incentives as critical factors sustaining regional cooperation. Institutionalism, as developed by scholars such as Stone Sweet et al. (2001), adds further nuance by highlighting the importance of harmonized legal frameworks, shared norms, and durable governance institutions—features particularly relevant for nascent organizations like the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), where institutional capacity is still maturing.

In today's geopolitical context, infrastructure development has become a pivotal dimension of regional influence. Projects such as the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR) exemplify how transport corridors have evolved beyond their functional role to serve as instruments of geopolitical alignment and economic connectivity (Bekenov, 2023). Kazakhstan's strategic investments in multimodal transportation—spanning railways, ports, and logistics hubs—reflect its ambition to emerge as a vital node linking Europe and Asia. These infrastructural efforts not only enhance physical connectivity but also symbolize Kazakhstan's broader intent to reinforce economic cohesion across the Turkic World (Tukumov, 2023: 25).

The framework of New Regionalism (Hettne, 2009; Söderbaum, 2016) offers a valuable lens for interpreting such developments. Unlike earlier models that centered primarily on state actors and formal agreements, New Regionalism views integration as a dynamic, multi-level process involving a diverse array of stakeholders, including private sector actors and transnational networks. Within this paradigm, infrastructure is not merely a physical asset but also a strategic and symbolic resource that shapes regional identity, enhances policy alignment, and promotes regional autonomy. Kazakhstan's promotion of infrastructure connectivity projects such as the TITR exemplifies how physical infrastructure is developed as both an economic tool and a geopolitical statement, reinforcing shared Turkic identity while enhancing functional interdependence.

To effectively capture the complexity of Kazakhstan's evolving position within the OTS, this study adopts a multi-theoretical lens. Drawing from neofunctionalism, strategic pragmatism, and regional connectivity theory, it develops an integrated analytical perspective. Neofunctionalism illuminates Kazakhstan's leadership in specific sectors—most notably in logistics, energy, and transport—as mechanisms triggering broader regional cooperation. These efforts have produced spillover effects visible in initiatives on digital integration, educational partnerships, and customs policy alignment. The principle of strategic pragmatism contextualizes Kazakhstan's balanced diplomacy, reflecting its dual engagement with pan-Turkic solidarity and powerful geopolitical actors such as Russia and China. By positioning itself simultaneously within the Eurasian Economic Union (EEAU) and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Kazakhstan has sustained strategic flexibility while advancing regional leadership (Nurgaliyeva, 2016: 94). Finally, regional connectivity theory foregrounds the spatial and institutional linkages that drive integration. Kazakhstan's promotion of

transnational infrastructure and shared regulatory frameworks, through mechanisms such as the Turkic Investment Fund and TITR, illustrates this integrative vision in action.

By embedding Kazakhstan's role within these overlapping theoretical lenses, the study builds a comprehensive analytical model that links empirical developments, such as logistics corridors, investment instruments, and intergovernmental agreements, to broader dynamics of regional integration in Central Asia and the Turkic World.

1.2. Literature Review: Kazakhstan in Scholarly Discourse on the OTS

The OTS has recently garnered scholarly attention as a promising platform for regional cooperation among Turkic-speaking nations. Within this emerging field, a growing body of literature acknowledges Kazakhstan's strategic role, yet a comprehensive understanding of its economic leadership remains underdeveloped. This section synthesizes key theoretical insights and empirical findings to position this study within existing academic debates. One notable contribution comes from Çınar and Uzun (2023), who trace the institutional development of the OTS and highlight Kazakhstan's strategic foresight in guiding its long-term trajectory. Their analysis, grounded in a SWOT framework, suggests that effective utilization of cultural and economic complementarities could position the OTS as a powerful regional alliance.

Complementing this perspective, Demir (2022) situates Kazakhstan within the broader landscape of Eurasian geopolitics, focusing on its involvement in energy diplomacy, regional security mechanisms, and multilateral cooperation. Aydilek (2022) explores Kazakhstan's economic engagements within the OTS and argues that while trade and investment flows have increased, there remains considerable room for improvement in intra-bloc economic exchange. Her research identifies Kazakhstan as a potential driver of more institutionalized economic relations, contingent on strategic alignment and political will.

Several empirical studies also reinforce the view that Kazakhstan acts as a key enabler of regional cooperation. Sandalçilar and Cihan (2023), for instance, apply a revealed comparative advantage (RCA) methodology to evaluate trade complementarity among OTS members. Their findings underscore Kazakhstan's logistical centrality and comparative advantages in trade. Similarly, Akçapa (2023) frames Kazakhstan's growing regional role within the broader evolution of Eurasian regionalism, identifying the country as a stabilizing actor capable of coordinating effective responses during systemic shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further expanding on the OTS's transformation during the pandemic, Purtas (2023) examines how Kazakhstan assumed a leadership role in areas such as health diplomacy, food security, and emergency preparedness. His study suggests that these contributions have helped redefine the OTS as a more dynamic and responsive multilateral organization.

In a more recent study, Tukumov (2023) emphasizes Kazakhstan's success in institutionalizing functional cooperation within the Turkic World. He draws attention to the country's emphasis on collaborative mechanisms in sectors such as transportation, technology, and resource management—areas that are critical for ensuring long-term regional sustainability. Tukumov contends that such strategic institutionalization supports Kazakhstan's broader goal of maintaining geopolitical balance in its external engagements.

Guliyev (2024) takes this analysis further by assessing Kazakhstan's expanded engagement in the OTS in light of recent geopolitical shifts, particularly the fallout from the Russia–Ukraine conflict. According to his research, this changing environment has prompted Kazakhstan to increase its involvement in the OTS, using the platform to deepen economic ties, promote ethnocultural unity, and assert a more active regional role. Guliyev argues that this shift reflects a broader transition within the OTS—from symbolic cooperation to more substantive, functionally driven integration—in which Kazakhstan plays a leading role.

Despite these contributions, existing scholarship tends to remain fragmented, often focused on political symbolism, cultural diplomacy, or trade figures in isolation. What is still largely missing is a theoretically grounded, integrative analysis of Kazakhstan's economic leadership within the OTS. This study seeks to fill that gap by applying regional integration theories, both classical models such as neofunctionalism and newer frameworks like complex interdependence, to Kazakhstan's role in shaping the OTS economic agenda. Unlike prior studies that emphasize individual sectors or events, this research connects institutional behaviour, infrastructure investment, and economic diplomacy within a coherent theoretical framework.

This research advances the field in three distinct ways: first, it offers a synthesized account of Kazakhstan's multifaced economic initiatives within the OTS; second, it contextualizes these efforts within broader integration theories, allowing for generalizable insights beyond the OTS; and last, it positions Kazakhstan not only as a participant, but as a regional economic architect that contributes to both the form and function of Turkic cooperation. By bringing the empirical with the theoretical, and connecting Kazakhstan's domestic economic strategies with its regional ambitions, this study provides a comprehensive and original analysis of how one state can shape a regional economic order in a rapidly shifting Turkic World.

1.3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to investigate Kazakhstan's contributions to economic integration within the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). Given the exploratory nature of the topic and the limited availability of harmonized economic datasets across member states, a qualitative design allows for a nuanced, context-sensitive examination of institutional practices and strategic behavior.

The study is structured around a focused case analysis of Kazakhstan, with comparative references to other key OTS members—such as Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan—to situate Kazakhstan’s role within a broader regional framework. The research relies on a multi-source data triangulation strategy comprising. Primary documents include national development plans and official state strategies (e.g., Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, National Development Plan 2025), Policy documents, ministerial communiques, bilateral, and multilateral agreements from Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Trade and Integration, and Ministry of National Economy, Official OTS declarations, summits outcome documents (2009-2024), and institutional charters. Quantitative and statistical data as GDP, trade flows, and population metrics, sourced from the Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, World Bank Open Data, and National statistics agencies of OTS members (e.g., TÜİK, Goskomstat, Uzbekstat), OTS Secretariat technical reports, and yearbooks. Secondary sources include peer-reviewed academic articles from journals focusing on regionalism, Eurasian integration, and international political economy.

To complement these primary materials, the research integrates secondary data from peer-reviewed academic publications, policy reports, think tank analyses, and expert interviews that provide interpretive insights into Kazakhstan’s regional positioning. Trade and macroeconomic data were also referenced, drawing from publicly available datasets provided by the World Bank, Kazakhstan’s Bureau of National Statistics, and the OTS Secretariat.

Several methodological limitations are acknowledged. Firstly, the absence of fully disaggregated or publicly accessible data across OTS countries constrains the scope for quantitative comparison. Secondly, as the OTS is a relatively recent formation, many of its initiatives are still in development, limiting the ability to assess long-term outcomes. Thirdly, language accessibility presents a minor challenge, as some critical documents are only available in Kazakh, Turkish, or Russian and may require translation to ensure accurate interpretation.

2. The Organization of Turkic States: A Framework for Economic Cooperation

Economic cooperation among Turkic States is shaped by a complex interplay of historical legacy, shared cultural heritage, regional power dynamics, and differing stages of economic development. These foundational elements not only influence bilateral ties but also shape the collective trajectory of integration within OTS. Among the OTS member states, Türkiye stands out as the most developed and diversified economy, exerting significant influence across the region. Kazakhstan, by contrast, leads Central Asia in terms of economic size and continues to pursue reforms to attract foreign capital and enhance its investment climate. Azerbaijan’s oil wealth has fuelled steady growth, while Uzbekistan has embarked on ambitious market liberalization initiatives in recent years. In contrast, Kyrgyzstan maintains a smaller, agriculture-centered economy, facing unique challenges in integrating with the broader regional economic framework (Gasimli, 2023: 13). As summarized in Table 1, Türkiye stands

as the economic heavyweight, accounting for over 70% of the bloc's total GDP, while Kazakhstan leads Central Asia in economic size and geographic reach. Kazakhstan's role is uniquely defined by its vast territory, rich resource base, and growing transit infrastructure, which positions it as the primary economic bridge between East and West within the OTS.

Table 1. OTS Member States Economic and Demographic Data

Country	Population (2024)	Area (Km2)	GDP (2023) (Thousands USD)
1 Azerbaijan	10 180 800	86 900	72 356 176
2 Kazakhstan	20 200 000	2 724 900	262 641 892
3 Kyrgyz Republic	7 360 000	199 900	13 987 627
4 Uzbekistan	36 799 000	447 400	101 591 769
5 Türkiye	85 664 000	783 562	1 118 252 920
Total	160 203 800	4 242 662	1 568 830 384

Source: (Bureau of National Statistics Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024; Kyrgyz Republic National Statistical Committee, 2024; Statistical Agency under the Presidency of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2025; The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2025; Turkish Statistical Institute, 2025; World Bank, 2025)

Kazakhstan, despite having one-fourth of Türkiye's population, contributes over 16% of OTS GDP, underscoring its strategic relevance. Uzbekistan follows with growing weight, driven by its recent liberalization. Kyrgyzstan, by contrast, has limited economic leverage, highlighting structural challenges to uniform integration. As shown in Table 1, the Organization of Turkic States holds significant potential for global influence, considering its members' combined area and demographic strength, which rank seventh and ninth globally, respectively (Bekenov, 2023). The OTS serves as an essential platform for its member states to collaborate on various aspects of economic development, including trade facilitation, investment promotion, infrastructure development, and energy cooperation (Kushkumbayev & Mussabekova, 2022: 75). The revitalization of the OTS has emerged as an intriguing development in the broader Eurasian region, fostering multilateral partnerships aimed at achieving economic integration among the involved actors (Guliyev, 2024). By establishing a unified platform, the OTS enables member states to address shared challenges and pursue common interests in an increasingly unstable international environment (Guliyev, 2024).

The evolution of OTS summits (see Table 2) reflects a gradual deepening of economic integration, from symbolic alignment to functional cooperation. The earlier focus on cultural solidarity has been replaced by initiatives promoting trade, digital governance, and institutional development.

Table 2. Chronology of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) Summits Since 2009: Institutional Development and Economic Cooperation Agendas

Date	location	theme	details
3 October 2009	Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan	Establishment of the Turkic Council to Institutionalize Cooperation Among Turkic-Speaking Countries	It was decided to expand cooperation in areas such as trade, investment, industry, agriculture, transportation, communication, energy, and tourism, and to establish the Business Council of Turkic-Speaking Countries. The emphasis was placed on developing economic relations based on equality and mutual benefit.
15 September 2010	İstanbul, Türkiye	Official Establishment of the Turkic Council (Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States)	The official announcement of the Turkic Council's foundation and the strengthening of its institutional structure. Member states adopted the UN Charter and universal principles of international law. Norms related to peace, security, and good neighborly relations were highlighted as the foundation for cooperation. Concrete steps were taken to enhance economic and trade cooperation, while collaboration in culture, science, education, health, tourism, and media was expanded. A roadmap was created to align with the organization's common objectives.
I. 20-21 October 2011	Almaty, Kazakhstan	Economic and Trade Cooperation	The Almaty Declaration stated that the Turkic Council had been fully established as an international organization in 2009, with the Nakhchivan Agreement recognized as its founding charter. As the first official summit of the OTS, it placed economic cooperation at the center of its agenda and laid the foundation for economic integration.
II. 22-23 August 2012	Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	Cooperation in Education, Science, and Culture	This summit marked a turning point for institutionalizing cooperation in education, science, and culture across the Turkic World. The flag of the Turkic Council was adopted, the Turkic Universities Union was established, and several joint projects were launched. The summit stood out for advancing solidarity and shared vision among the Turkic states.
III. 15-16 August 2013	Gabala, Azerbaijan	Development of Transportation and Connectivity Infrastructure	Focusing on transportation and connectivity, the summit aimed to enhance economic, logistical, and cultural integration among Turkic states. Concrete decisions were made to integrate transport infrastructure, facilitate transit procedures, and deepen multilateral cooperation. Security, stability, and institutionalization processes were also emphasized.
IV. 5 June 2014	Bodrum, Türkiye	Cooperation in Tourism	The summit centered on strengthening cooperation in tourism and developing joint projects among Turkic states. Concrete steps were taken to preserve and promote cultural heritage, support sustainable tourism, and foster economic development. Solidarity and political cooperation among member states were reaffirmed.

V. 11 September 2015	Astana, Kazakhstan	Cooperation in Media and Information	The Charter of the Turkic World, encompassing principles of common values, cooperation, and solidarity, was adopted. A vision was set for promoting sustainable development and eco-friendly technologies. Bishkek was declared the Digital Capital for 2025. A partnership agreement was signed to enhance cooperation in digital economy among member states. A joint coordination mechanism was established for disaster and emergency response.
VI. 2 September 2018	Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan	Youth and Sports	Various agreements were signed to promote cooperation in youth and sports among the member states. Goals were set to expand student exchange programs and support youth education. Encouragement and support were emphasized for youth involvement in entrepreneurship, innovation, and technology.
VII. 15 October 2019	Baku, Azerbaijan	Support for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)	Uzbekistan joined as a full member, marking a significant expansion of cooperation in the Turkic World. Member states decided to develop joint policies to support SMEs and improve the business environment. Cooperation was strengthened in areas such as trade, investment, transportation, and regional connectivity. Joint efforts in technology ventures, artificial intelligence, renewable energy, space research, and information technologies were promoted. Collaboration was also encouraged in railway and air transportation, as well as customs facilitation.
VIII. 12 November 2021	İstanbul, Türkiye	Restructuring of the Turkic Council as the Organization of Turkic States (OTS)	The organization was officially renamed from "Turkic Council" to "Organization of Turkic States" (OTS), enhancing its role in international affairs. The 2040 Turkic World Vision was adopted, outlining strategic goals for cooperation and integration over the next 20 years. A joint investment fund was established to boost trade and investment and support SMEs. The elimination of non-tariff barriers, harmonization of customs regulations, and simplification of transit procedures were set as key objectives. The summit emphasized joint efforts against terrorist organizations such as the PKK, YPG, ISIS, and FETÖ, and pledged to increase security cooperation. Solidarity during the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccine assistance were also highlighted.
IX. 11 November 2022	Samarkand, Uzbekistan	A New Era for Turkic Civilization: Toward Shared Development and Prosperity	A comprehensive declaration reaffirmed shared development and prosperity goals among member states. A strategic plan to eliminate trade barriers and increase intra-regional trade was adopted. Agreements were signed to accelerate and facilitate customs procedures and to develop logistics and transportation among members. A program to integrate regional transport infrastructure was approved. A common flag was adopted, and the Charter of the Turkic World was ratified. Major cooperation agreements were signed on topics such as the Digital Economy Partnership,

			Civil Protection Mechanism, Council of Central Banks, Space Activities Memorandum, Great Turkic Language Model, and the Turkic Green Finance Council.
X. 3 November 2023	Astana, Kazakhstan	"Turkic Era" and Economic Integration	The summit emphasized the promotion of trade, transportation, investment, and regional connectivity. Key initiatives included the establishment of the Trade Facilitation Committee, the Turkic Investment Fund, and the TURANSEZ Special Economic Zone. Astana was designated the "Financial Center of the Turkic World" for 2024, and Istanbul for 2025.
XI. 6 November 2024	Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	Deepening Economic Cooperation	Discussions focused on the establishment of the Turkic Green Finance Council, cooperation among central banks, a competition authorities council, and the formation of common markets in areas such as digital and e-commerce, agriculture, industry, science, and technology.

Source: (Akçapa, 2023; Aydilek, 2022; Çınar & Uzun, 2023; Keşikçi & Karaman, 2023; Organization of Turkic States, 2025c)

As illustrated in Table 2, the economic integration process of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) is a progressively deepening and multidimensional trajectory shaped by the establishment of cooperation institutions, the signing of international agreements, and the implementation of concrete action plans. While the early years emphasized cultural and symbolic representation, subsequent summits have introduced more tangible policy frameworks in areas such as economic integration, digital infrastructure, logistical collaboration, and institutional mechanisms. These developments signify the transition of the OTS from a normative structure to a more operational phase of integration (Çınar & Uzun, 2023).

The Turkic Investment Fund (TIF), established in 2023, has become a central instrument in advancing OTS economic integration. Designed to support economic development across the Turkic World and to finance joint initiatives, the Fund prioritizes the support of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and infrastructure investments. Equally owned by member states, the TIF is administered from Istanbul and aims to finance collective investment projects. With an initial capital of approximately USD 600 million, the Fund is intended to accelerate regional development (Organization of Turkic States, 2025d).

Another important institutional development is the Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI), which plays a pivotal role in facilitating trade and fostering sustainable economic partnerships among business actors across member states (Organization of Turkic States, 2025d). Furthermore, various economic cooperation committees and working groups composed of senior officials from ministries of economy, transport, customs, and related sectors elaborate integration strategies and ensure intergovernmental coordination (Sandalçilar & Cihan, 2023). For instance, the Trade Facilitation Committee (TFC) is tasked with the implementation of the OTS Trade Facilitation Strategy, adopted in 2022. Its activities focus on simplifying customs procedures and reducing non-tariff barriers (Organization of Turkic States, 2023). In parallel, cultural and scientific institutions such as

TÜRKSOY, TÜRKPA, and the Turkic Academy contribute to strengthening the social and cultural foundations of economic integration (Özer, 2023: 158).

Institutional mechanisms and strategic documents developed particularly throughout the 2020s aim to consolidate the OTS's economic integration agenda. Among the key initiatives is the establishment of joint customs systems to streamline trade flows. The expansion of digital customs practices and the development of strategic transport corridors—such as the Trans-Caspian East-West Middle Corridor (Map 2) and the Zangezur Corridor—represent critical infrastructure projects advancing regional trade and connectivity (Akçapa, 2023: 483).



Source: Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, 2025 (<https://middlecorridor.com/ru/>)

Map 2. Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR): Logistics Route and Transit Points

Kazakhstan has emerged as a leading proponent of infrastructure-oriented regionalism. Its investments in projects like the TITR and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway exemplify a strategic shift toward deepening logistical and economic interdependence among Turkic states. Port collaboration involving Mersin, Tashkent, Andijan, Termez, and Surkhandarya aims to further facilitate trade and logistics networks across the region. The Turkic World Vision 2040, adopted at the 2021 Istanbul Summit, outlines the long-term integration objectives of the OTS in economic, cultural, and institutional domains (Organization of Turkic States, 2021). Meanwhile, the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA), signed in November 2024, seeks to align the OTS's digital infrastructure with regional and global trends by supporting digital trade, e-governance, and cross-border data flows (Organization of Turkic States, 2025c).

These institutional developments suggest a shift in the OTS's strategic direction. What began primarily as a culturally focused initiative is now evolving into a platform for substantive economic

collaboration. By deepening its governance structures and aligning its goals with tangible economic outcomes, the OTS is gradually positioning itself as a credible regional economic actor. These developments indicate that the organization aims not only to enhance trade volumes but also to deepen economic interdependence through digitalization and financial alignment. By strengthening its economic governance capacity, the OTS is enhancing both its internal resilience and its effectiveness as a regional actor in the global system.

3. Kazakhstan's Economic Strength and Strategic Role in the Turkic Region

Kazakhstan holds a distinguished position within the Turkic World, owing to its vast geographical expanse and substantial economic potential (refer to Table 1). Since attaining sovereignty on December 16, 1991, the country has engaged in a comprehensive state-building process anchored in legal restructuring and the adoption of market-oriented reforms (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1995). Over the last thirty years, successive governments have pursued modernization through structural reforms, aiming to enhance governance efficiency and economic competitiveness. In response to evolving global and regional dynamics, Kazakhstan adopted strategic frameworks such as the 2012 national objective to join the world's 30 most competitive economies—an aspiration reflecting both internal developmental goals and the pressures of an increasingly complex international environment (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2012). This vision was further articulated in the 2018 Strategic Development Plan for 2025, which prioritized inclusive growth through diversification and institutional resilience. Updated in 2021 as the National Development Plan 2025, the framework integrated lessons from the COVID-19 crisis and emphasized revitalizing key economic drivers (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2018). These national visions signal a deliberate transition from resource dependency toward a resilient, innovation-oriented economy, prepared to lead regional initiatives beyond its borders.

On the foreign policy front, Kazakhstan has consistently adhered to a “multi-vector” strategy—first introduced by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in the early 1990s (Nazarbayev, 2017: 88). This principle promotes balanced engagement with a diverse array of international partners. Kazakhstan is an active member of several key multilateral bodies, including the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Eurasian Economic Union (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025). Through these affiliations, Kazakhstan has pursued diplomatic versatility and strengthened its international standing.

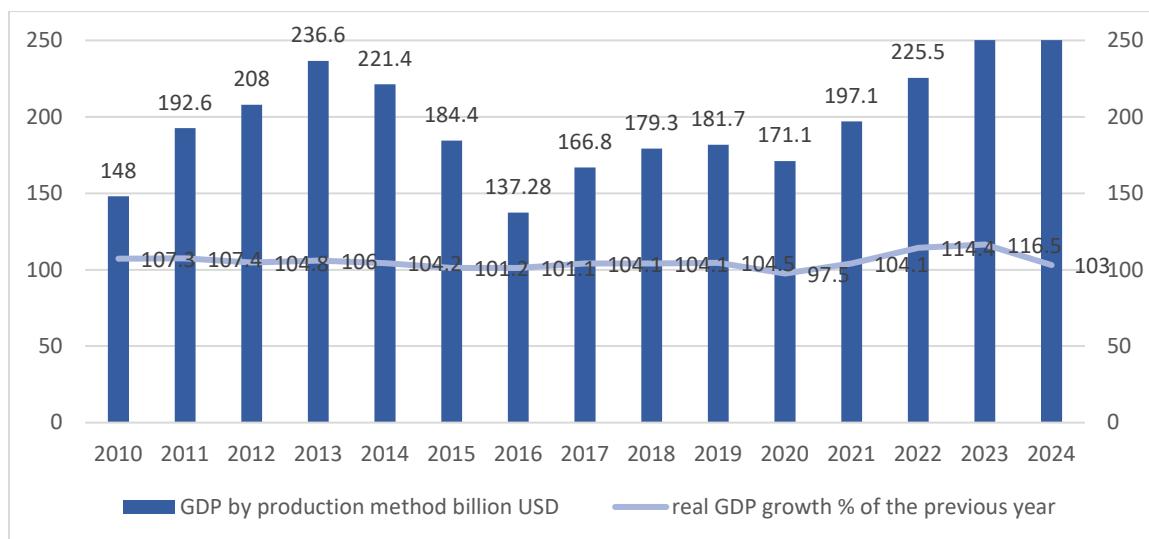
Concurrently, Kazakhstan regards engagement with the Turkic World as a strategic priority—not only for cultural and historical reasons, but also for advancing shared geoeconomic objectives. Active involvement in the OTS, TURKSOY, and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) reflects the country's efforts to promote solidarity and deepen regional integration (Kushkumbayev & Mussabekova, 2022; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025). These

partnerships are founded on a common linguistic and historical heritage and a shared vision for security and sustainable development (Duman, 2019; Giritlioglu, 2024).

Economically, Kazakhstan is the dominant force in Central Asia, endowed with abundant natural resources, including oil, gas, and various minerals (International Energy Agency, 2022). Its sustained investment in infrastructure, especially in transport and logistics, has strengthened its position as a strategic corridor linking Asia and Europe. Participation in global initiatives such as China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has further elevated Kazakhstan's relevance in Eurasian connectivity networks (Zhao, Liu, Wang, & Ge, 2019).

The preceding sections of this study have demonstrated that Kazakhstan's leadership within the OTS is underpinned by more than rhetoric. Its institutional commitments, infrastructure investments, and proactive policy coordination underscore a clear strategy of promoting economic cohesion in the Turkic region (Aydilek, 2022; Çınar & Uzun, 2023).

Economic indicators over the past decade reinforce this perspective. In the aftermath of the 2007–2009 global financial crisis, Kazakhstan's economy has undergone a steady process of recovery and stabilization. As illustrated in Figure 1, the country's nominal GDP and Index of Physical Volume (IFO) between 2010 and 2024 reveal an upward trajectory, signifying robust macroeconomic management and growing output.



Source: (Bureau of National Statistics Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025)

Figure 1. Kazakhstan's GDP at Current Prices and IFO, 2010–2024

As illustrated in Figure 1, in the Post-2009 period, Kazakhstan displayed consistent economic recovery, with notable acceleration after 2017. While the pandemic caused a temporary dip in output, recent years show a robust rebound, driven by services, logistics, and the digital sector. Services now

contribute approximately 70% of GDP growth, indicating a move toward knowledge-based and non-resource industries (Bureau of National Statistics Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025).

A notable feature of Kazakhstan's recent economic transformation is the growing contribution of the services sector, which now accounts for approximately 70% of GDP growth (Gasimli, 2023: 103). This trend reflects a significant structural transition away from resource dependency toward a more diversified and resilient economy. Although short-term fluctuations—particularly during the pandemic years—are visible in the IFO, the broader pattern confirms Kazakhstan's recovery and its proactive development planning (Purtaş, 2023).

Kazakhstan's macroeconomic resilience has not only reinforced its domestic development but also amplified its credibility within regional frameworks like the OTS. By leading initiatives on infrastructure, investment, and institutional development, Kazakhstan plays a pivotal role in shaping the architecture of economic cooperation in the Turkic World. Its dual commitment—to national modernization and regional integration—continues to define its evolving leadership role in Eurasia.

3.1. Kazakhstan's Role in Strengthening OTS Economic Cooperation

Kazakhstan occupies a strategic and influential position in fostering economic collaboration among the members of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). Its approach blends diplomatic outreach, infrastructural investment, and economic policy coordination to promote deeper regional integration. Central to this vision is the "TURKTIME" initiative, which outlines Kazakhstan's ambition to cultivate stronger economic and logistical ties among Turkic nations by advancing trade facilitation, investment flows, and regional connectivity projects (Tukumov, 2023: 26). One of the most prominent manifestations of this commitment is Kazakhstan's leadership in the development of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (2025). This corridor not only enhances regional trade links but also serves as a vital segment within broader international frameworks, such as the European Union's economic network, China's Belt and Road Initiative, and the Eurasian Economic Union (Binghan, Juman, Khamzayeva, & Xuan, 2024; Tashtemkhanova, Zhanbulatova, & Zhiyenbayev, 2019: 19). Under the "Eurasian Heartland" strategy, the TTIR is envisioned as a linchpin in intercontinental trade, reinforcing Kazakhstan's logistical centrality (Tukumov, 2023).

Kazakhstan's trilateral collaboration with Türkiye and Azerbaijan further reflects its integrative agenda. This partnership aims to synchronize economic policies and facilitate shared regional development goals within the OTS framework (Guliyev, 2024). These efforts have yielded concrete progress, particularly in liberalizing intra-regional trade. Trade volumes between Kazakhstan and its Turkic partners have expanded steadily over the past decade. In 2024, Türkiye's exports to Kazakhstan totaled approximately USD 3.3 billion. These exports primarily comprised components for automotive manufacturing, centrifugal and filtration machinery, and a variety of textile products such as knitted shirts, undergarments, sweaters, and vests. Additionally, Türkiye supplied petroleum-based oils among

its major exports. Conversely, imports from Kazakhstan amounted to around USD 3.4 billion, with key products including refined copper, mineral oils, unwrought aluminum, coal, and petroleum gases (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025). This relatively balanced trade relationship underscores a growing industrial and energy interdependence. Kazakhstan has also expanded its export portfolio by increasing agricultural shipments to OTS partners such as Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan (Gasimli, 2023).

This economic integration is underpinned by domestic regulatory reforms. Kazakhstan has upgraded digital customs procedures, streamlined border logistics, and introduced harmonized transit systems—all designed to reduce trade frictions and align with OTS-wide goals. Looking forward, Kazakhstan aims to deepen trade relations further. Governmental targets include raising bilateral trade with Türkiye and Uzbekistan from USD 4 billion to USD 10 billion and doubling trade with Kyrgyzstan from USD 1 billion to USD 2 billion (Official information resource & Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025). If realized, these targets would significantly increase the share of OTS countries in Kazakhstan's total foreign trade, signaling a broader reorientation toward Turkic regionalism.

3.2. Kazakhstan's Strategic Initiatives for Economic Integration within the OTS

Kazakhstan's vision for deeper economic integration within the OTS is anchored in a deliberate, multidimensional strategy that combines infrastructure development, trade expansion, regulatory convergence, and institutional innovation. This strategic orientation reflects the country's broader goal of consolidating its position as a central driver of regional cooperation.

At the heart of this agenda is Kazakhstan's investment in cross-border connectivity, particularly through its pivotal role in the development of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TCITR)—also known as the Middle Corridor. Linking China to Europe via Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, and Türkiye, this corridor enhances Eurasian trade logistics by reducing transport time and diversifying routes (Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, 2025; Tukumov, 2023). Major investments in railway upgrades, dry ports like Khorgos, and customs infrastructure have transformed Kazakhstan into a key transit hub for East-West commerce (Gelvig, 2020: 50).

Kazakhstan has also demonstrated leadership in shaping the institutional framework of the OTS. It has consistently championed long-term integration mechanisms and supported the creation of dedicated bodies to promote collective economic advancement (Özer, 2023; Tokayev, 2025). A noteworthy example is Kazakhstan's central role in the establishment of the Turkic Investment Fund in 2022. The fund aims to finance strategic regional development projects, with particular emphasis on infrastructure and support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Organization of Turkic States, 2025c).

In addition to institutional leadership, Kazakhstan has sought to strengthen private-sector participation in the regional economy. By initiating and hosting platforms such as the Turkic Business Forums, it has encouraged collaboration among entrepreneurs and investors across member states. The country has also embraced digital transformation as a pillar of integration, advancing joint projects in digital finance, fintech ecosystems, and technology-driven innovation, particularly in partnership with Türkiye (Official information resource & Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022; Organization of Turkic States, 2025a). These initiatives aim to build robust innovation networks and enhance regional competitiveness in the digital economy. Energy cooperation remains another cornerstone of Kazakhstan's regional engagement. Through trilateral partnerships with Türkiye and Azerbaijan, the country has advanced infrastructure and transit agreements in the energy sector. These initiatives not only diversify Kazakhstan's export channels but also reinforce the mutual dependence of OTS members in energy supply and security (Gasimli, 2023; Giritlioglu, 2025).

Despite ongoing challenges—including variations in infrastructure quality and the need for better logistical harmonization—Kazakhstan's pragmatic and future-oriented approach continues to shape the contours of Turkic economic integration. Its combination of strategic foresight, institutional initiative, and public-private cooperation offers a compelling model of regionalism grounded in both geopolitical vision and operational capacity.

3.3. Challenges and Prospects for Enhancing Economic Cooperations in the Turkic World

The OTS has achieved notable progress in fostering economic ties, but several entrenched challenges continue to constrain the region's integration efforts. Chief among these are the persistence of trade barriers, discrepancies in regulatory systems, and infrastructural gaps that collectively hinder seamless connectivity. To overcome these obstacles, member states must adopt a more coordinated layered strategy—prioritizing policy harmonization, removing non-tariff restrictions, and accelerating strategic infrastructure investments (Guliyev, 2024; Kushkumbayev & Mussabekova, 2022).

Despite a measurable increase in intra-OTS trade, such exchanges still comprise a modest portion of the overall foreign trade of each member (Bekenov, 2023). For this economic engagement to become transformative, procedural inefficiencies must be addressed. This includes streamlining customs protocols, standardizing trade regulations, and encouraging greater diversity in traded goods and services. While significant resources have been devoted to regional transport infrastructure, lingering inefficiencies in logistics and customs administration continue to impede the efficient movement of goods.

Several critical factors currently limit the impact of Kazakhstan's integration agenda within the OTS:

- Regulatory Divergence: Divergent commercial and legal frameworks across OTS members complicate efforts to establish common markets and synchronized trade rules (Çınar & Uzun, 2023).
- Competing Commitments: Kazakhstan's involvement in parallel regional organizations—particularly the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)—can lead to strategic contradictions and dilute its focus on Turkic cooperation (Yeliseyev, 2019).
- Institutional Softness: The non-binding character of OTS decisions often weakens enforcement capacity, limiting the implementation of collective strategies (Hanayi, 2023).

Nevertheless, Kazakhstan has emerged as a steady force in shaping the economic trajectory of the OTS. Through leadership in trade facilitation, investment mechanisms, and regional diplomacy, it has positioned itself as both a practical and strategic actor. Compared to its OTS counterparts, Kazakhstan's diversified economy and well-established governance structures give it a unique capacity to drive integration forward.

While Türkiye typically leads on ideological and geopolitical fronts—emphasizing shared history and diplomatic coordination—Kazakhstan's contributions are defined by technical and policy-oriented initiatives. Its investments in logistics, financing instruments, and trade infrastructure complement Türkiye's leadership, helping to ground regional cooperation in concrete outcomes. (Sandalcilar & Cihan, 2023). Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan are increasingly proactive but remain institutionally less entrenched in shaping OTS policy frameworks (Gasimli, 2023).

Kazakhstan's influence is further shaped by its multi-vector foreign policy—a deliberate balancing act that avoids exclusive alignment with any single bloc. While this enhances diplomatic flexibility, it can sometimes temper Kazakhstan's assertiveness within the OTS, particularly in pushing for deeper political or institutional commitments. To reinforce economic collaboration and sustain long-term momentum, several institutional innovations could be prioritized:

- Transforming the Turkic Investment Fund into a fully operational regional development bank capable of financing long-term infrastructure and innovation projects;
- Creating a Turkic customs harmonization roadmap to align tariff systems and border protocols;
- Launching collaborative digitalization programs that integrate trade, public governance, and educational platforms across the member states.

If Kazakhstan maintains its current trajectory—investing in strategic connectivity and institutional depth—it is poised to expand its leadership not only economically but diplomatically. As a mediator, infrastructure hub, and policy innovator, Kazakhstan could become the cornerstone of a more unified and resilient Turkic economic community. In summary, while integration remains a work in progress, Kazakhstan's proactive engagement offers both stability and vision. The sustainability of this role, however, will depend on the continued institutional maturation of the OTS and Kazakhstan's ability to navigate a complex and shifting geopolitical landscape.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has examined Kazakhstan's growing influence in facilitating economic integration within the OTS. By analyzing its strategic diplomacy, infrastructure investments, and regional initiatives, the research reveals Kazakhstan's evolution into a key player shaping the economic trajectory of the Turkic World. The country's geostrategic location, combined with its multivector foreign policy and institutional initiatives, positions it as a central engine of regional cooperation.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the literature by applying an integrated framework of neofunctionalism, strategic pragmatism, and new regionalism to assess Kazakhstan's positioning. Unlike earlier analyses that focused mainly on symbolic leadership or cultural commonality, this research foregrounds Kazakhstan's functional leadership, particularly in logistics, finance, and institutional capacity building. By doing so, it advances the understanding of how regional integration evolves beyond treaties, through technical cooperation and institutional spillovers across sectors.

Practically, the findings confirm that Kazakhstan acts as a structural enabler of OTS integration due to its geoeconomic centrality between East and West; investment in connectivity infrastructure (as the Middle Corridor, Baku-Tbilisi-Kars); leadership in institutional innovation (as Turkic Investment Fund, customs harmonization); sectoral diversification beyond hydrocarbons; and commitment to inclusive development strategies, even amid geopolitical constraints. The country's comparative advantage in logistics, services, and regulatory modernization positions it as the technocratic pillar of the Turkic World's economic integration architecture, complementing Türkiye's ideational leadership.

Kazakhstan has actively contributed to advancing regional integration through initiatives such as trade liberalization, logistics modernization, and regulatory cooperation. Its leadership in projects like the Middle Corridor and the establishment of the Turkic Investment Fund exemplifies a long-term commitment to fostering economic interdependence. Moreover, the country's diplomatic outreach—evidenced by hosting summits and proposing institutional frameworks—underscores its dual role as both a policy innovator and an implementer within the OTS.

However, these ambitions continue to face structural and geopolitical headwinds. The consultative nature of the OTS, coupled with diverse economic and governance models among member states, complicates coordinated action. Additionally, Kazakhstan's participation in other regional alliances, such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), sometimes leads to overlapping policy obligations and regulatory inconsistencies, which may dilute its effectiveness within the OTS.

Despite these challenges, Kazakhstan remains a key force in steering the economic direction of the OTS. Its comparatively advanced institutional framework, steady economic base, and strategic planning capacity offer the country a unique position to lead regional integration efforts with pragmatism and consistency. While Türkiye often shapes the ideological and cultural identity of the OTS, Kazakhstan's role has been more technocratic, grounded in logistics, finance, and functional cooperation. This distinction is especially visible in Kazakhstan's measured foreign policy approach.

Its multivector diplomacy allows it to maintain productive relations with both global powers and regional partners, ensuring flexibility in a shifting geopolitical landscape. However, this balancing act, while cautious, may also limit the scope for Kazakhstan to assert bolder leadership within the bloc. To amplify its regional influence and deepen the OTS's integration agenda, Kazakhstan should prioritize the following strategies:

- Promote institutional deepening through legal harmonization by enhancing the convergence of trade, investment, and customs legislation across member states. Also support standardized dispute resolution and arbitration frameworks to attract cross-border investors.
- Establishing a Free Trade Area: Spearheading the creation of a dedicated free trade area could dismantle remaining tariff and non-tariff barriers, enhance market access, and catalyze investment among member states.
- Advancing Transport and Connectivity Projects: Prioritizing the development of multimodal transport systems—rail, sea, and digital logistics—will improve trade infrastructure and consolidate Kazakhstan's function as a transcontinental bridge between Asia and Europe.
- Customs Harmonization and Regulatory Alignment: Coordinated efforts to harmonize customs processes and technical standards can reduce transaction costs and support smoother, faster trade across borders.
- Sectoral Diversification and Investment Promotion: Moving beyond energy and raw materials, Kazakhstan should lead in expanding collaborative ventures in agriculture, renewable energy, digital industries, tourism, and light manufacturing, ensuring broader economic resilience.
- Human Capital and Cultural Integration: Promoting educational exchange programs, dual-degree partnerships, cultural festivals, and common academic platforms will help build stronger people-to-people ties and reinforce a shared Turkic identity (Bekenov, 2023).
- Reducing Resource Dependence: Expanding support for green technologies, startups, and innovation-driven sectors can help Kazakhstan and the region become less vulnerable to global commodity fluctuations (Nurgaliyeva, 2016; Tukumov, 2023).

In parallel, Kazakhstan's emphasis on logistics, trade facilitation, and regional cooperation aligns with Türkiye's vision of serving as a regional energy and transport node. This convergence of interests can provide a strong foundation for further deepening bilateral and multilateral partnerships across the Turkic World (Tukumov, 2023). Kazakhstan's involvement in broader multilateral forums, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), also reinforces its commitment to a stable and cooperative Eurasian space. Urban centers along the historic Silk Road (Liao, 2006), such as Turkistan, Shymkent, and Almaty, are particularly well-positioned to become hubs of commerce, innovation, and logistics in this broader integration process (Shkurkin, Ryazantsev, Gusakov, Andronova, & Bolgova, 2016).

The development of agro-industrial clusters and transport corridors like the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR) further enhances Kazakhstan's standing as a key logistical and commercial anchor in Central Asia. As these projects mature, their long-term success will depend on governance coordination, inclusive policy design, and continued regional commitment (Kushkumbayev & Mussabekova, 2022).

In conclusion, Kazakhstan's blend of strategic vision, institutional maturity, and infrastructure leadership makes it indispensable to the future of economic integration in the Turkic World. As the region navigates complex global and internal dynamics, Kazakhstan's capacity to unify national objectives with collective regional interests will shape not only the trajectory of the OTS but the broader landscape of Eurasian cooperation in the coming decades.

References

Akçapa, M. (2023). Türk Devletleri Teşkilatının Tarihsel Gelişimi: Teşkilatın Dünü, Bugünü ve Yarını. *Avrasya Uluslararası Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 11(34), 473–491. <https://doi.org/10.33692/avrasyad.1223099>

Aydilek, E. (2022). Türk Devletleri Teşkilatının Siyasi ve Ekonomik Potansiyeli. *Uluslararası Yönetim Akademisi Dergisi*, 5(3), 716–728. <https://doi.org/10.33712/mana.1192419>

Bekenov, A. (2023). *Organization of Turkic States, Economic aspects* (Study Programme: Economics and Management). University of Finance and Administration, Prague. https://is.vsf.cz/th/tbcqt/Turkic_states.pdf

Binghan, D., Juman, J., Khamzayeva, A. V., & Xuan, Z. (2024). Energy cooperation between Kazakhstan and China under “One Belt and One Road”: Current state, challenges and perspectives. *Buketor Business Review. Bulletin of the Karaganda University Economy Series*, 11429(2), 7–18. <https://doi.org/10.31489/2024ec2/7-18>

Bureau of National Statistics Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2024). *Population of Republic of Kazakhstan (Chislennost' naselenija Respubliki Kazahstan)*. Bjuro nacional'noj statistiki Agentstva po strategicheskому planirovaniyu i reformam Respubliki Kazahstan. Retrieved from <https://stat.gov.kz/ru/industries/social-statistics/demography/spreadsheets/?year=2024&name=19652&period=&type=>

Bureau of National Statistics Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2025). *GDP by method of production*. Bureau of National statistics Agency for Strategic planning and reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Retrieved from <https://stat.gov.kz/en/industries/economy/national-accounts/publications/280280/>

Çınar, Y., & Uzun, Y. U. (2023). Köklü Geçmişten Güçlü Geleceğe Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı: Küresel Ekonomik-Siyasal Potansiyeli ve Teşkilatın Geleceğine Dair Öngörüler. *MANAS Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 12(Özel Sayı), 141–156. <https://doi.org/10.33206/mjss.1296831>

Demir, C. (2022). The Organization of Turkic States: Implications for the Regional Balance of Power. *Güvenlik Stratejileri Dergisi*, 39–71. <https://doi.org/10.17752/guvenlikstrtj.1104776>

Duman, L. (2019). Kazakistan'da Değişim ve Dönüşüm: Yeni Bir Uluslaştırma “Başarısı” Mi? *OPUS International Journal of Society Researches*, 10(17), 1993–2026. <https://doi.org/10.26466/opus.511891>

Gasimli, V. (Ed.). (2023). *Turkic States Economy*. Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık. ISBN: 978-625-397-513-5

Gelvig, S. (2020). China-Kazakhstan Economic Cooperation and "One Belt, One Road" Initiative. *European Journal of Economics and Management Sciences*, (2), 49–58. <https://doi.org/10.29013/EJEMS-20-2-49-58>

Giritlioğlu, S. (2023). Rusya'nın Orta Asya Türk Cumhuriyetleri ile İlişkileri: in M. E. Erendor (Ed.), *Türk Dünyasında Güncel Sorunlar ve Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı* (pp. 453–469). Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık.

Giritlioglu, S. (2024). Türk Devletler Teşkilatı'nın Ulus İnşa Politikaları: Kazakistan Örneği. *Abant Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 24(3), 1152–1171. <https://doi.org/10.11616/asbi.1516668>

Giritlioglu, S. (2025). A Comparative Analysis of the Energy Policies of China and Russia in Kazakhstan. *Bılıg*, (112), 33–61. <https://doi.org/10.12995/bilg.7772>

Guliyev, V. (2024). The Reinvigoration of the Organization of Turkic States amid Ongoing Geopolitical Unrest and Economic Uncertainty. *Kbazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 27(2), 37–54. <https://doi.org/10.5782/2223-2621.2024.27.2.37>

Haas, E. (1958). *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces 1950-1957*. Stanford University Press.

Hanayi, Ö. (2023). *Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı: Bölgesel İş birliği ve Büyüünleşme Yolundaki Yeni Ufuklar*. Akhmet Yassawi University Eurasian Research Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.eurasian-research.org/publication/turk-devletleri-teskilati-bolgesel-is-birligi-ve-butunlesme-yolundaki-yeni-ufuklar/?lang=tr>

Hettne, B. (2009). *Thinking about Development. Development Matters*. London and New York: Zed Books.

International Energy Agency. (2022). *Kazakhstan 2022 Energy Sector Review*. IEA. Retrieved from <https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/fc84229e-6014-4400-a963-bcce29e0387/Kazakhstan2022.pdf>

Keşikçi, N. S., & Karaman, Ö. F. (2023). Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı ve Üyelerin Katılım Süreçleri: KKTC ve Türkmenistan Gözlemci Üyeleri. *Genç Akademisyenler Birliği Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 3(5), 11–27.

Kushkumbayev, S., & Mussabekova, A. (2022). New Kazakhstan and the Future of the Organization of Turkic States: Key Areas of Cooperation. *Perceptions*, XXVII(1), 74–90.

Kyrgyz Republic National Statistical Committee. (2024). *Population*. Netsiyonalniy Statisticheskij Komitet Kyrgyzskoj Republiki. Retrieved from <https://stat.gov.kg/ru/statistics/naselenie/>

Liao, Xuanli, J. (2006). *A Silk Road for Oil: Sino-Kazakh Energy Diplomacy*. Brown Journal of World Affairs, XII (2), 39-51. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24590615>

Mattli, W. (1999). Explaining regional Integration Outcomes. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 6(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/135017699343775>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2025). *Activities*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa/activities/directions?lang=kk>

Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (1995). *Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Constitution was adopted at the republican referendum on August 30, 1995*. Adilet.kz. Retrieved from https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/K950001000_

Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2012). *'On Further Measures for the Implementation of the Development Strategy of Kazakhstan Until 2030' Commentary by the Analytical Center of the Security Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the Presidential Decree of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated December 4, 2001, No. 735*. Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Retrieved from https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/T010000735_

Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2018). *On approval of the National Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025 and recognition of certain decrees of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan as invalid*. Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Retrieved from <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U1800000636>

Nazarbayev, N. (2017). *Era of Independence*. Astana. nazarbayev.kz/sites/default/files/pagefiles/2019-06/423d7253d66cad2c6f68758bcaf33782.pdf

Nurgaliyeva, L. (2016). Kazakhstan's economic soft balancing policy vis-à-vis Russia: From the Eurasian Union to the economic cooperation with Turkey. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 7(1), 92–105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euras.2015.10.008>

Official information resource & Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2022). *Kazakh-Turkish business forum held in Nur-Sultan*. Official information resource Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Retrieved from <https://primeminister.kz/ru/news/kazahstansko-tureckiy-biznes-forum-podpredsedatelstvom-premer-ministra-rk-proshel-v-g-nur-sultane-421933>

Official information resource & Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2025). *Concept for development of trade policy is being developed in Kazakhstan*. Official information resource Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Retrieved from <https://primeminister.kz/ru/news/reviews/kontseptsiyu-razvitiya-torgovoy-politiki-razrabatyvayut-v-kazakhstane-29782>

Organization of Turkic States. (2021). *Turkish World 2040 Vision*. Organization of Turkic States. Retrieved from <https://www.turkicstates.org/tr/haber/turk-dunyasi-2040-vizyonu>

Organization of Turkic States. (2023). *The Organization of Turkic States (TDT) held the second meeting of the Trade Facilitation Committee online*. Organization of Turkic States. Retrieved from <https://www.turkicstates.org/tr/haber/turk-devletleri-teskilati-tdt-ticaretin-kolaylastirilmasi-komitesinin-ikinci-toplantisini-cevrimici-gerceklestirdi>

Organization of Turkic States. (2025a). *Conferences and Forums*. Organization of Turkic States. Retrieved from <https://www.turkicstates.org/tr/haber-kategori/konferans-forum>

Organization of Turkic States. (2025b). *Organization of Turkic States History*. Organization of Turkic States. Retrieved from <https://www.turkicstates.org/tr/organizasyon-tarikhcesi>

Organization of Turkic States. (2025c). *Organization of Turkic States Summits*. Organization of Turkic States. Retrieved from <https://www.turkicstates.org/tr/zirveler>

Organization of Turkic States. (2025d). *Union of Turkish Chambers of Commerce and Industry*. Organization of Turkic States. Retrieved from <https://www.turkicstates.org/tr/partner-detay/tcci-tr>

Özer, Ç. (2023). The Organization Of Turkic States- From Past To Present. *Balkan and Near Eastern Journal of Social Sciences*, 09(Special Issue), 150–161.

Purtaş, F. (2023). The Organization of Turkic States in the Post-Pandemic World Order. In *World Politics in the Age of Uncertainty: The Covid-19 Pandemic*, Vol 1 (pp. 103–113). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-39607-6_9

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2025). *Organization of Turkic States: International Organization Profile*. Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Retrieved from <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turk-konseyi.tr.mfa>

Sandalcılar, A. R., & Cihan, K. A. (2023). Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı Üye Ülkeleri Arasında Türkiye'nin Rekabet Gücü. *Uluslararası Ekonomi İşletme ve Politika Dergisi*, 7 (1), 132-151. <https://doi.org/10.29216/ueip.1153508>

Shkurkin, D. V., Ryazantsev, S. V., Gusakov, N. P., Andronova, I. V., & Bolgova, V. V. (2016). *The Republic of Kazakhstan in the System of International Regional Integration Associations*. International Review of Management and Marketing, 6(6), 174-179. ISSN: 2146-4405

Söderbaum, F. (2016). *Rethinking Regionalism*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Statistical Agency under the Presidency of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2025). *Basic demographic indicators*. Agentstvo Statistiki Pri Prezidente Respublikи Uzbekistan. Retrieved from <https://stat.uz/ru/ofitsialnaya-statistika/demography>

Stone Sweet, A., Sandholtz, W., & Fligstein, N. (2001). *The Institutionalization of Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tashtemkhanova, R., Zhanbulatova, R., & Zhiyenbayev, M. (2019). *Kazakhstan in the world integration processes*. Romilly-sur-Seine: Éditions du JIPTO. ISBN 978-2-35175-064-3

The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. (2025). *Demographic Indicators of Azerbaijan*. Retrieved from <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/demoqraphy/?lang=en>

Tokayev, K.-J. K. (2025). *President of Kazakhstan Participates in the Informal Summit of the Organization of Turkic States*. Budapest/Hungary. Official Website of the President of the Republik of Kazakhstan. Retrieved from <https://www.akorda.kz/en/president-of-kazakhstan-participates-in-the-informal-summit-of-the-organization-of-turkic-states-2343420>

Trans-Caspian International Transport Route. (2025). *Middle Corridor*. Trans-Caspian International Transport Route Documents. Trans-Caspian International Transport Route. Retrieved from <https://middlecorridor.com/ru/dokumenty>

Tukumov, Y. (2023). Kazakhstan's Strategic Priorities in the Turkic World. *Insight Turkey*, 25(4), 25–37. <https://doi.org/10.25253/99.2023254.2>

Turkish Statistical Institute. (2025). *The Results of Address Based Population Registration System, 2024*. TUIK. Retrieved from <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulton/Index?p=The-Results-of-Address-Based-Population-Registration-System-2024-53783&dil=2>

Türkiye Economic, Political and Strategic Research Center. (2025). *What is the Organization of Turkish States? Its Institutional Structure and Objectives*. TESAM Online Academy Research Center. Retrieved from https://www.tesamakademi.com/index.php?route=extension/blog&blog_id=8

Vinokurov, E. (2017). Eurasian Economic Union: Current state and preliminary results. *Russian Journal of Economics*, 3(1), 54–70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ruje.2017.02.004>

World Bank. (2025). *World Bank Data*. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=AZ>

Yeliseyev, A. (2019). *The Eurasian Economic Union: Expectations, Challenges, and Achievements* (No. 10). Washington, D.C.: The German Marshall Fund of the United States. <https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/Eurasian%2520Economic%2520Union.pdf>

Yuan, J.-D. (2010). China's Role in Establishing and Building the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). *Journal of Contemporary China*, 19(67), 855–869. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2010.508587>

Zhao, Y., Liu, X., Wang, S., & Ge, Y. (2019). Energy relations between China and the countries along the Belt and Road: An analysis of the distribution of energy resources and interdependence relationships. *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, 107, 133–144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rser.2019.03.007>