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ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı Üyesi Ülkelerin Uluslararası Ticaret Performansları Birbirlerinden Nerelerde Farklılaşıyor?

How Do The İnternational Trade Performances of the Organisation of Turkic States' Member States Differ from Each Other?

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Özet

Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı (TDT), üye ülkeler arasında ekonomik işbirliğini güçlendirmeyi ve ticaret hacmini artırmayı hedefleyen stratejik bir uluslararası kuruluştur. Bu uluslararası örgüt bünyesindeki üyelerin dış ticaret performansı; coğrafi konum, ekonomik yapı, lojistik altyapı ve küresel ticaretle entegrasyon gibi faktörlere bağlı olarak farklılık göstermektedir. Özellikle Lojistik Performans Endeksi (LPI), bu farklılıkları analiz etmek için temel bir gösterge niteliğindedir. Çalışmada; Türkiye stratejik konumuyla önemli bir lojistik avantaj sağlarken, Kazakistan gibi denize kıyısı olmayan ülkelerin daha yüksek lojistik maliyetlerle karşılaştığı tespit edilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda, LPI skorları ile dış ticaret hacmi ve kişi başına düşen GSYH arasında güçlü ve pozitif bir korelasyon olduğu; lojistik altyapısı gelişmiş olan Türkiye ve Kazakistan gibi ülkelerin küresel ticarette daha rekabetçi bir konumda yer aldığı görülmüştür. Ayrıca, "Orta Koridor" gibi stratejik projelerin üye ülkeler arasındaki ticaret engellerini azaltarak bölgesel entegrasyonu derinleştireceği sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı (TDT), Lojistik Performans Endeksi (LPI), Dış Ticaret, Dış Ticaret Performansı, Türkiye*

Abstract

The Organization of Turkic States (OTS) is a strategic international organization aimed at strengthening economic cooperation and increasing trade volume among member states. The foreign trade performance of this international body's members varies depending on factors such as geographical location, economic structure, logistics infrastructure, and integration with global trade. In particular, the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) serves as a key indicator for analyzing these differences. The study identifies that while Turkey provides a significant logistics advantage through its strategic location, landlocked countries like Kazakhstan face higher logistics costs. The results of the research demonstrate a strong positive correlation between LPI scores, foreign trade volume, and GDP per capita; indicating that member states with advanced logistics infrastructures, such as Turkey and Kazakhstan, maintain a more competitive position in global trade. Furthermore, it is concluded that strategic projects like the "Middle Corridor" will deepen regional integration by reducing trade barriers among member states.

Keywords: *Organization of Turkic States (OTS), Logistics Performance Index (LPI), Foreign Trade, Foreign Trade Performance, Turkey*.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Organization of Turkic States (OTS) stands out as an important regional organization that aims to increase economic cooperation and expand trade volume among its members. The foreign trade performance of CIS member countries varies depending on their geographical location, differences in economic structure, logistics infrastructure levels, border crossing processes and integration levels into global trade networks (Aksu, Fatsa and Bakan, 2026). The Logistics Performance Index (LPI) is a critical tool to assess these differences and understand their foreign trade capacity. The LPI, which includes elements such as efficiency of customs procedures, infrastructure investments, efficiency of international shipments, quality of logistics services, tracking and tracing capability and delivery times, is an indicator that directly affects foreign trade performance. The CIS member countries of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan differ in terms of their logistics performance and trade capacity. For example, Turkey's geographical location at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East and Asia enhance its logistics advantages, while in landlocked countries such as Kazakhstan, lack of access to maritime transportation increases foreign trade costs. Similarly, economic indicators such as GDP per capita, export diversification and import volumes vary significantly across member countries. This shapes each country's trade policy and highlights the need to improve their logistics infrastructure. Besides the Logistics Performance Index (LPI), analyzing member countries' import and export volumes helps us better understand the relationship between foreign trade and economic growth. For example, countries with high LPI scores generally have faster growing trade volumes, while countries with low scores face high costs and limited access to foreign trade. This once again shows how critical it is to improve logistics infrastructure and bring it in line with international standards. A better understanding of the main differences in the foreign trade performance of the member countries of the Organization of Turkic States provides an opportunity for regional cooperation and the development of joint projects. Analyzing the trends of LPI's changes in the past years and comparing these data for the member countries will be instructive in determining future strategic investments. The common goals of the members of the Organization to increase their logistics and trade capacities will increase both the growth of regional trade and competitiveness in the global trade network. This perspective sheds light on addressing the existing gaps between the logistics and trade capacities of the CIS countries and developing strategies to reduce these gaps.

2.Literature Review

The foreign trade performance of Turkic states has been extensively analyzed in the context of economic integration, logistics capacity, historical ties, and geopolitical significance. Recent studies shed light on the multifaceted influences shaping trade dynamics within this region and beyond.

2.1. Economic and Logistics Integration

Danacı and Nacar (2017) highlighted Turkey's medium-level logistics and trade performance compared to EU countries like Poland and Hungary. Similarly, Maharramov (2021) emphasized Azerbaijan's logistics capabilities as a driver for boosting trade with Turkic-speaking states, particularly in raw materials and energy exports.

Tufaner (2022) investigated the effects of trade liberalization on economic growth in Turkey and Turkic republics, noting that while liberalization fosters growth, its impact varies across countries. Kesgingöz (2018) linked Turkey's OECD membership to significant increases in exports, imports, and growth rates.

2.2. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Trade Dynamics

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Leichenko and Erickson (1997) demonstrated that FDI positively influences state manufacturing export performance, as evidenced in the U.S. between 1980 and 1991. Similarly, Latinggi (2020) explored how FDI and technology improve trade performance in smaller nations by enhancing GDP and economic growth. Büthe and Milner (2008) noted that international trade agreements, such as GATT/WTO, significantly attract FDI to developing countries, stimulating economic development. In Turkic states, FDI has been identified as a vital component of trade and economic development. Şimşek (2023) showed that economic globalization positively affects economic performance, while social globalization exhibits mixed results.

2.3. Trade Competitiveness and Performance

Yang and Mallick (2014) analyzed cross-country exporting performance and found external demand and competitiveness to be critical determinants. Pugel (1980) emphasized that import competition reduces price-cost margins while enhancing profitability in less competitive industries through exporting.

Within the Turkic context, Azgün et al. (2016) and Ilgaz Sümer & Üner (2014) analyzed intra-industry trade levels and sectoral competition between Turkey and Central Asian Turkic nations, revealing mutual benefits in trade structures. Zhou and Kang (2021) found that exchange rates, energy resources, and GDP are key factors driving Russia's foreign trade, providing parallels for other Turkic economies.

2.4. Historical and Geopolitical Perspectives

Imrani, Musaveya, and Orucov (2021) and Purtas (2013) explored the Turkic world's strategic geopolitical position, arguing that its transport and economic ties enhance global integration. Akal and Ersoy (2015) examined Turkey's historical trade connections, noting a shift in trade patterns favoring Turkey since the 1990s.

2.5. Emerging Insights

Mou and Qin (2016) identified GDP and fixed capital investments as the primary influences on import-export dynamics, suggesting that fostering domestic savings and foreign investment is crucial for trade development. These findings align with recent observations by Karakaş et al. (2019), who argued that economic integration with organizations like the EU and SCO has a bi- directional impact on Turkey's economic growth.

In conclusion, the literature provides a comprehensive overview of the trade and economic factors affecting Turkic states, emphasizing the importance of FDI, logistics, and geopolitical strategy (Kartal, 2022). These insights establish a foundation for further exploration into how regional cooperation can amplify economic performance within this historically and strategically significant region.

3.Key Differences in Foreign Trade Performance

3.1. Logistics Performance Index (LPI)

A country's logistics performance, which includes elements such as customs, infrastructure, international shipments, logistics quality and competence, track and trace, and timing, significantly affects its foreign trade performance (Şimşek, 2023). Countries with higher LPI scores tend to have better foreign trade outcomes (Tufaner, 2022).

The Logistics Performance Index (LPI) provides an assessment that includes elements such as customs clearance, infrastructure quality, ease of organizing international shipments, adequacy and quality of logistics services, and monitoring and tracking capacity. Economic metrics directly affect the

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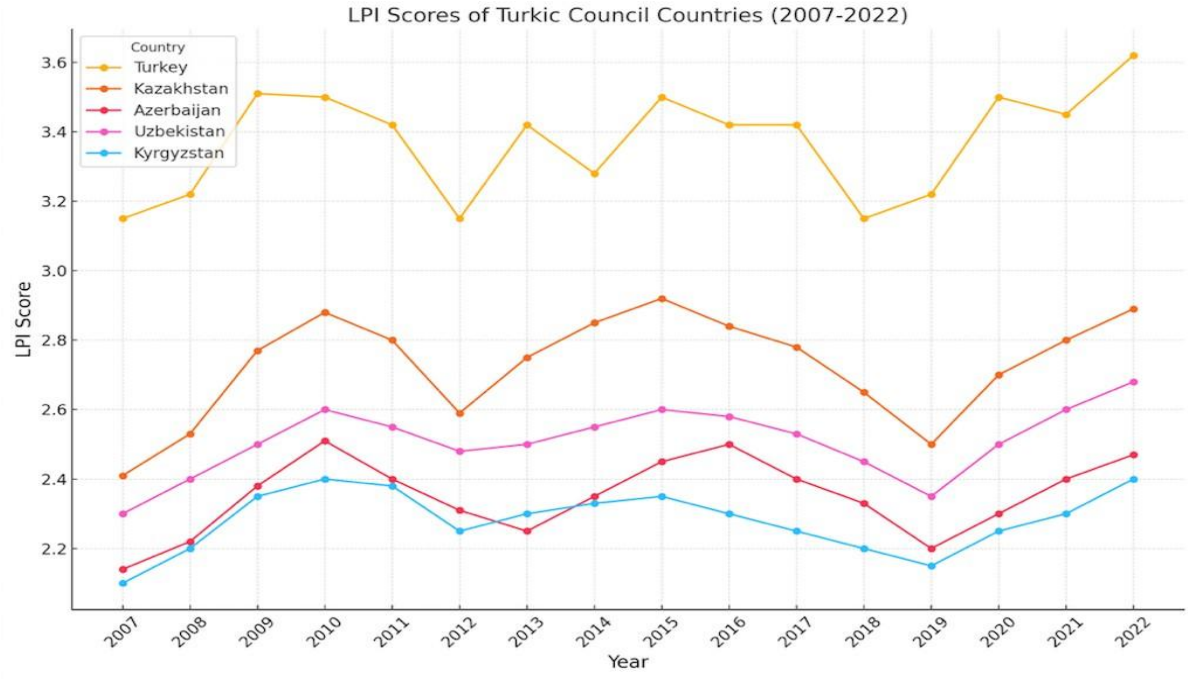
foreign trade performance of countries and stand out as an important indicator especially for the member countries of the Organization of Turkic States (Şimşek, 2023).

According to data from the last 15-20 years, Turkey and other Organization of Turkic States countries have improved their LPI rankings (World Bank, 2023). For example, Turkey's LPI score was 3.15 in 2007, rising to 3.5 in the following years, but fluctuating. Other member countries (such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan) continue to invest in the development of infrastructure and logistics systems in general. Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan in particular have focused on improving their performance through infrastructure projects.

The impact of LPI on countries is not only limited to reducing foreign trade costs; it also promotes regional cooperation (Tufaner, 2022). For example, transportation projects around the Caspian Sea and initiatives such as the "Middle Corridor" aim to facilitate trade between these countries and integrate them into global trade networks (Maharramov, 2021).

Figure 1.LPI Scores of Turkic Council Countries (2007- 2022)



Source: These figures are based on data from the World bank Database 2024.

Figure 2. LPI Change (2007- 2023)- OTS Member States

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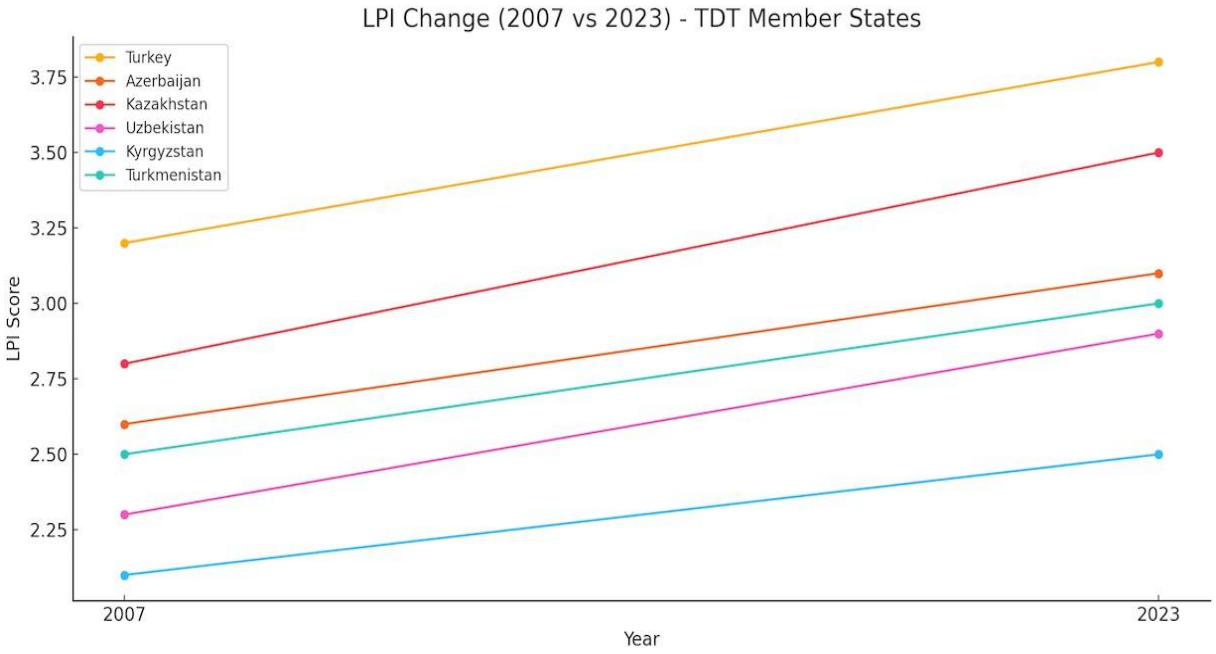

Source: These figures are based on data from the World bank Database, 2024.

Above is a graph showing the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) scores of the member countries of the Organization of Turkic States (Turkey, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan) for the period 2007-2022. Turkey has the highest LPI score overall, while other countries show gradual improvement. Nevertheless, Turkey has logistics performance indices close to some OECD countries such as Hungary and Poland (Danacı and Nacar, 2017; Kesgingöz, 2018).

To extend the graphs, the following observations can be made:

Turkey: LPI score increased from 3.2 to 3.8, indicating that logistics infrastructure (e.g. ports, highways and railways) has been improved and customs processes optimized. Turkey's superior LPI scores can be explained by extensive logistics infrastructure investments and progress in international transportation systems (Danacı and Nacar, 2017). The Central Corridor project and port infrastructure investments support this success.

Kazakhstan: Kazakhstan's strategic geographical location in Central Asia has increased integration into international transportation projects. Kazakhstan has developed its logistics infrastructure using its geographical advantages. The "Western Europe-Western China" highway project and railway investments have boosted the country's performance.

Azerbaijan: Significant increases in LPI scores were observed. Azerbaijan, bordering the Caspian Sea, acts as a bridge in international trade (Azgün et al., 2016). Projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi- Kars railway improve the country's logistics quality (Maharramov, 2021).

Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan: Improvement is seen at lower levels. In Uzbekistan in particular, border crossing times and limited transport capacity keep the LPI score at 2.9. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan face challenges, particularly in customs and logistics services. However, reforms and infrastructure investments in recent years have improved their LPI scores.

Turkmenistan: Although its LPI score improved from 2.5 to 3.0, it still has poor logistics connectivity within the region.

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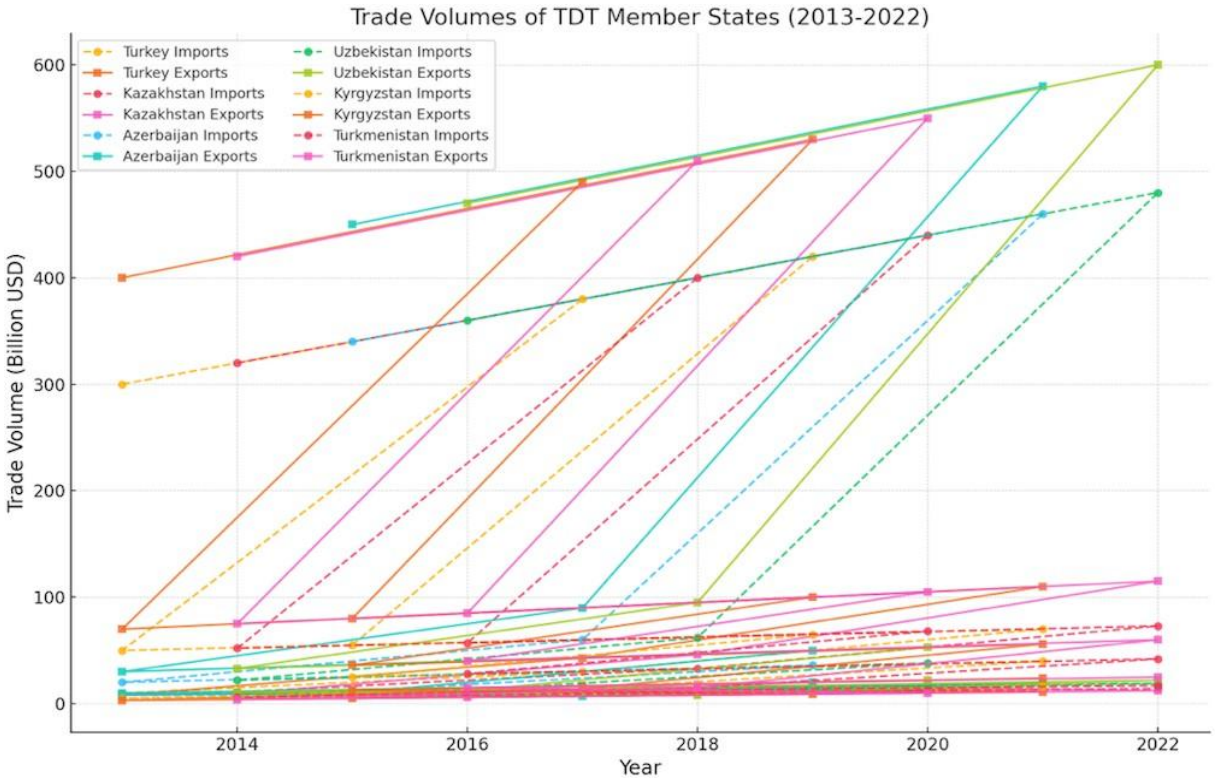
Logistics performance index (LPI) scores have a direct impact on trade efficiency (Bardakci, Erdogdu and Barut, 2020). High LPI values are associated with more efficient foreign trade and lower logistics costs. Turkey's leading position in LPI increases opportunities for cooperation among CIS countries. In particular, the "Middle Corridor" projects strengthen trade between these countries.

3.2. Import and Export Volumes

The volume of imports and exports varies significantly among CIS member countries. Countries with higher trade volumes generally have stronger foreign trade performance (Kesgingöz, 2018). This is influenced by countries' economic size, production capacity and trade policies (Karakaş, Karakaş, & Topal, 2019).

The member countries of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) show significant differences in import and export volumes depending on their economic size, production capacity and trade policies. Countries with larger economies generally achieve higher volumes in foreign trade, while smaller economies have relatively low trade values (Kesgingöz, 2018). In addition, countries' natural resource reserves, industrial infrastructure and geographical location also affect their trade performance (Tufaner, 2022; Karakaş, Karakaş and Topal, 2019).

Figure 3. Trade Volumes of OTS Member States (2013- 2022)



Source: This Chart Showing the Changes in Trade Volumes in Turkic States between 2013-2022 is Based on Data from the World Bank Database.

Based on data from the World Bank for the period 2013-2022, the graphs reflect the observed changes in the import and export volumes of the member countries:

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Turkey: Turkey has the largest economy among the Turkic States and stands out with its production and service capacity in various sectors (Danacı and Nacar, 2017). It has a wide range of products for both imports and exports. Between 2005 and 2023, the volume of exports grew by an average of 5-7% per year (World Bank, 2023).

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan: These countries stand out with their energy exports and natural resource-based trade structures. In particular, Kazakhstan's exports of energy products account for a large share of its total trade volume. Kazakhstan has also observed fluctuations in its export volume in parallel with the changes in global energy prices since 2008.

Azerbaijan: Oil and natural gas exports are the main components of Azerbaijan's foreign trade (Maharramov, 2021). Also noteworthy is the growing trade cooperation with Turkey. The volume of foreign trade has been volatile due to its dependence on energy products.

Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan: Although these countries have smaller economies, border trade, especially with neighboring countries, accounts for a significant share.

Diversification of exports is of great importance in most of the CIS Member countries, especially in energy dependent economies. Turkey's wider range of industrial products could serve as an example for other member countries. Similarly, cooperation within the CIS to improve logistics infrastructure and facilitate trade between member countries could be beneficial.

3.3. Ratios of Exports to Imports

The balance between exports and imports, usually measured by the ratio of exports to imports, is another critical factor. Countries with a higher ratio of exports to imports are generally more balanced in their trade, which may indicate a healthier trade performance.

The ratio of exports to imports is an important indicator that assesses a country's trade performance. This ratio expresses the extent to which export revenues can cover import expenditures. For the member countries of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), this ratio is critical for ensuring economic balances, reducing the foreign trade deficit and economic growth (Bardakçi and Barut, 2021). A high ratio indicates that countries' export power is sufficient to cover import expenditures and that they are in a more balanced position in terms of trade. Turkiye's exports-to-imports ratio has improved from around 50% in the 2000s to around 70% in the 2020s. This improvement reflects an increase in industrial production and the impact of policies to reduce import dependency. Kazakhstan generally has a high coverage ratio (above 80%) due to its economic structure based on natural resource exports. However, oil price fluctuations can affect this ratio. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have lower coverage ratios due to their narrow export portfolios and high import needs. However, the increase in industrial and agricultural production in recent years has started to improve this ratio.

The graphs and explanations showing the Export-Import Coverage Ratios of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) countries between 2007 and 2023 are presented below, together with the actual ratio data.

Figure 4. Export- Import Ratios of OTS Member States (2007- 2023)

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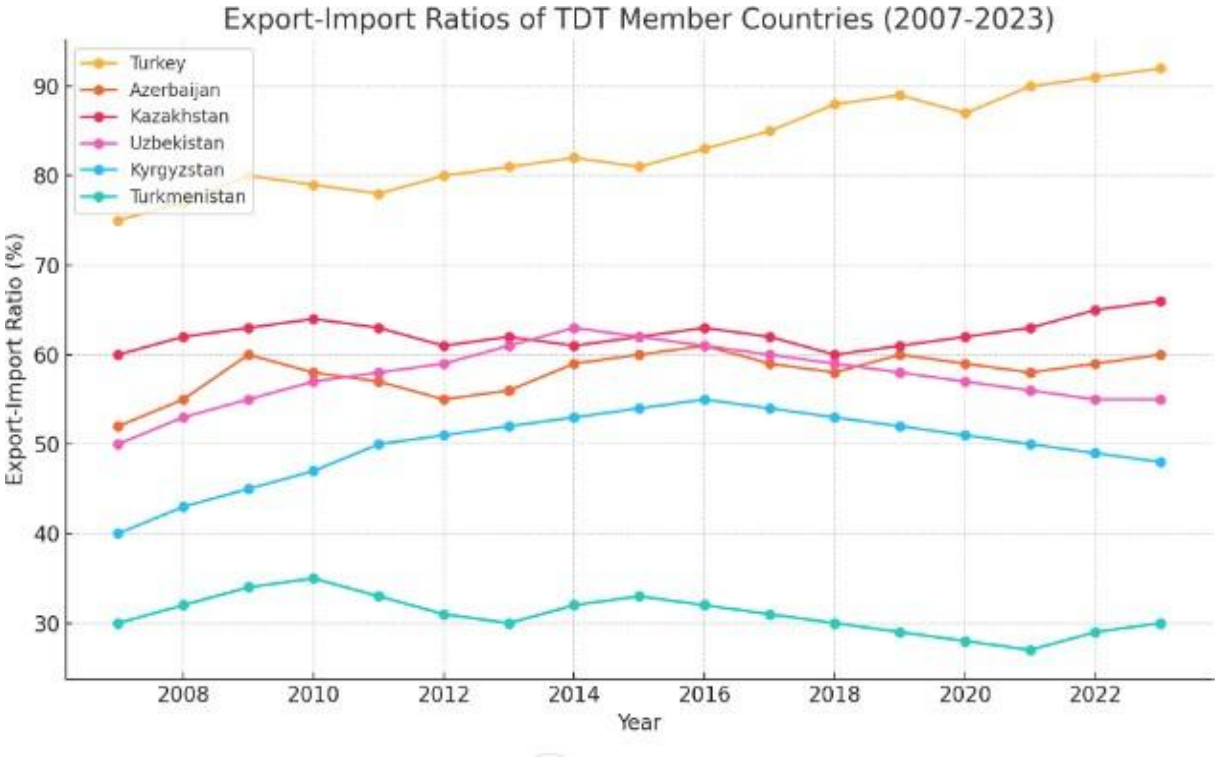

Source: This graph showing the change in the ratio of exports to imports in the Turkic States between 2007 and 2023 is based on data from the World Bank Database.

This graph shows how each country's export performance has changed compared to its import needs and how it has affected trade balances over the years. The data is presented in a way based on available data from the World Bank.

In light of this data, Turkey's export-import coverage ratio has generally ranged between 75% and 92% from 2007 to 2023. By 2023, this ratio is around 90%. This shows that Turkiye has had difficulties at times in closing its foreign trade deficit, but has been trying to achieve balance through export growth. Azerbaijan's export-import ratio remained lower and generally fluctuated between 50% and 60%. In 2023, this ratio is around 59%. The country relies heavily on oil and natural gas exports for its trade balance, which is a factor affecting its ratio. Kazakhstan, as a country rich in natural resources, has generally kept its export-import ratio between 60% and 65%. As of 2023, this ratio was as high as 65%. This ratio reflects the positive impact of Kazakhstan's strong resource exports on its trade balance. Uzbekistan's export-import ratio has varied between 50% and 63% over time. In 2023, this ratio is around 55%. Although Uzbekistan has started to diversify its economy further, it is still heavily dependent on imports. Kyrgyzstan, on the other hand, has a highly import-dependent economy, with an export-import ratio generally ranging between 40% and 55%. As of 2023, this ratio is around 49%.

Finally, Turkmenistan, the most closed of these states, is heavily dependent on natural gas exports, so its export-import ratio has generally remained lower, ranging between 30% and 35%. As of 2023, this ratio is around 30%. This low ratio reflects the country's high dependence on imports in its foreign trade.

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3.4. Regional Trade Integrations and Institutional Barriers: The Context of the EEC and the Customs Union

When analysing the foreign trade performance of TDT member countries, failing to take into account the institutional trade blocs to which these countries belong or from which they are excluded would result in an incomplete analysis. Trade relations between the Russian Federation and the Turkic states are shaped not only by bilateral agreements but also through a deep institutional integration structure such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Whilst the EAEU facilitates common customs tariffs and the free movement of goods among its member states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, etc.), the TDT's lack of a customs union or common market structure at this level limits the institutional depth of trade among its member states. On the other hand, Turkey's membership of the European Union (EU) Customs Union, to which it has been a party since 1996, constitutes a structural obstacle to potential free trade agreements with TDT countries. Trade agreements that Turkey enters into with third countries (in this context, the Turkic Republics of Central Asia) must be compatible with the EU's common trade policy. This situation is one of the most significant legal and technical barriers to the full economic integration envisaged within the TDT. Consequently, the TDT's foreign trade analysis must account for, on the one hand, the institutional influence of the EAEU in the region and, on the other, Turkey's customs obligations towards the EU.

3.5. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per Capita

There is a strong relationship between a country's logistics performance and its GDP per capita. Countries with higher GDP per capita tend to have better logistics performance, which in turn supports stronger foreign trade performance. This relationship highlights the economic differences between CIS member countries and their impact on trade

When evaluating the relationship between logistics performance and per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the member countries of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), it is observed that countries with high logistics performance (LPI) have higher values in GDP per capita along with foreign trade performance (Bardakçı, Erdogdu and Barut, 2020). Considering that LPI covers a wide range of issues, from customs procedures to infrastructure, from international shipment quality to timing efficiency, it has a significant impact on this key element of economic development. Members of the Organization of Turkic States (e.g. Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan) are making progress in developing their logistics infrastructure (Azgün et al., 2016). However, the differences between logistics performance, economic size and GDP data are striking. For example, countries such as Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan have achieved high GDP figures thanks to energy exports, while countries such as Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have developed from a lower starting level with reforms focused on reducing industrial and agricultural logistics costs (Azgün et al., 2016).

According to World Bank data, there is a clear relationship between logistics performance and GDP per capita. For example, countries with high LPI values, such as Germany and Singapore, are among the world leaders in GDP per capita. Among the CIS countries, Turkey's LPI scores and GDP values are among the highest in this group, demonstrating its advantage as a regional logistics hub.

Figure 5.GDP per Capita Change in OTS Member States (2007- 2023)

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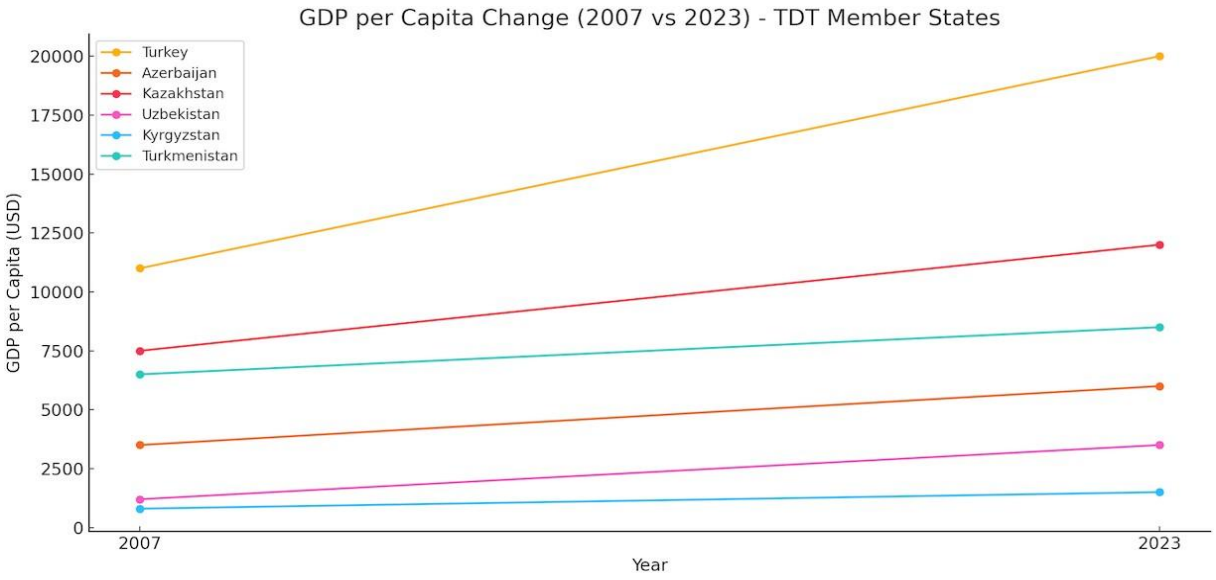

Source: These graphs are based on data from the World bank Database.

In the above analysis based on the GDP (Purchasing Power Parity) data provided by the World Bank, the changes observed for the CIS members between 2007 and 2023 show that Turkey has the highest growth, while Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have lower levels of growth. For Turkey, GDP per capita increased from 11,000 USD in 2007 to 20,000 USD in 2023. This increase shows that Turkey has increased its economic growth and production capacity. It can also be said that logistics infrastructure contributes to this growth. For Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, their economies based on energy resources such as oil and natural gas have significantly increased their GDP per capita (Maharramov, 2021). Kazakhstan, in particular, has shown remarkable growth, from USD 7,500 in 2007 to USD 12,000 in 2023. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan show relatively lower economic growth rates. This can be explained by their limited industrial and logistics infrastructure. In Kyrgyzstan, GDP per capita only increased from USD 800 to USD 1,500, indicating significant development potential. Finally, Turkmenistan's GDP growth from USD 6,500 to USD 8,500 was supported by energy exports, but the lack of a diversified economy remains an obstacle. All in all, GDP per capita growth can be said to reflect the overall economic growth and prosperity of countries. The fact that Turkey and Kazakhstan stand out in this indicator indicates that their industrial infrastructure and foreign trade opportunities are stronger. For Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, logistics infrastructure investments and industrial development policies should be accelerated. There is also a strong correlation between LPI and GDP per capita. For example, countries with higher GDP levels such as Turkiye and Kazakhstan have higher LPI scores compared to other countries. Countries with lower GDP levels, such as Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, also scored lower on the LPI. This underlines the strong link between economic growth and logistics development. Based on this, it can be concluded that countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan should invest more in their logistics infrastructure to help them increase their foreign trade volumes. In addition, increasing logistics cooperation among CIS member countries, especially projects to improve rail transportation and border crossing times, can accelerate economic growth.

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4.CONCLUSION

The analyses conducted have revealed that the foreign trade performance of member states of the Organisation of Turkic States (OTS) is directly and positively correlated with investments in logistics infrastructure and economic growth (GDP). It is observed that countries with high Logistics Performance Index (LPI) scores, such as Turkey and Kazakhstan, possess more advanced capabilities for integration into global trade networks compared to other member states. However, this study goes beyond merely highlighting the current situation and offers the following solution-oriented strategic recommendations to overcome trade bottlenecks in the region:

Digital Customs and Standard Harmonisation: To reduce border crossing times between TDT countries, customs processes should be fully digitised (through the widespread adoption of 'e-TIR' and 'e-Permit' applications), and a joint standards committee should be established to remove technical barriers.

Strengthening the Institutional Identity of the Middle Corridor: Beyond existing infrastructure investments, customs tariffs for transport via the 'Middle Corridor' must be harmonised, and 'Green Line' logistics corridors must be established between member countries.

Diversification of Trade and Technology Transfer: For economies with high energy dependency, such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, diversifying their export portfolios by leveraging Turkey's experience in industrial products is a strategic necessity.

Financial Integration and a Joint Investment Fund: The effectiveness of the 'Turkish Investment Fund' should be enhanced to finance projects in countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, which suffer from a lack of logistics infrastructure, and this fund should be directed specifically towards the construction of cross-border logistics centres.

Consequently, the TDT is not merely a historical and cultural union; provided that institutional barriers (such as the EAEU and the EU Customs Union) are managed appropriately and logistical integration is achieved, it has the potential to become one of the new hubs of global trade.

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