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**CONFERENCE ARTICLE**

**PROSPECTS FOR STRENGTHENING UZBEKISTAN'S NATIONAL INTERESTS WITHIN THE  
ORGANIZATION OF TURKIC STATES**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article analyzes the prospects for advancing and strengthening Uzbekistan's national interests within the framework of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). The study examines the theoretical foundations of the concept of national interest, the role of the OTS in regional integration, and the opportunities it provides for Uzbekistan in the fields of economic cooperation, political engagement, and transport-logistics development. The findings demonstrate that the OTS serves not only as a platform for cooperation based on cultural and historical affinity but also as an important institutional mechanism for promoting Uzbekistan's national interests.

**KEYWORDS**

Organization of Turkic States, national interest, regional integration, economic cooperation, transport corridors, security, Middle Corridor.

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**INTRODUCTION**

National interest is the primary objective and driving force of every state's foreign policy. States utilize the opportunities provided by various international and regional institutions to pursue and realize their interests. In this regard, the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) is emerging as an important institution for Uzbekistan, providing opportunities to enhance economic cooperation, expand transport and communication links, and actively participate in regional political processes.

The concept of national interest is one of the central categories in the theory of international relations and encompasses objectives aimed at ensuring a state's security, economic development, sovereignty, and international prestige. In particular, Hans Morgenthau interprets national interest as the core category of international politics, emphasizing that the anarchic nature of the international system compels states to prioritize the protection and advancement of their own interests [1]. Morgenthau's perspective suggests that national interest serves as the principal criterion guiding foreign policy decision-making.

Robert Keohane, one of the leading scholars and founders of the neoliberal institutionalist approach in international relations theory, places special emphasis on the role of international organizations and institutions in facilitating cooperation among states. According to Keohane, despite the anarchic character of the international system, states can establish effective cooperation based on mutual interests. The success of such cooperation largely depends on the existence and effectiveness of international institutions. Keohane argues that in contemporary international relations, a state's success is determined not only by its military or political power but also by its ability to foster mutually beneficial cooperation through international institutions [2]. Therefore, international organizations serve as important instruments for the realization of national interests.

The establishment of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS)

represents a significant milestone in institutionalizing cooperation among Turkic countries. While initiatives aimed at Turkic integration existed during the 1990s, they lacked effective institutional mechanisms. The adoption of the Nakhchivan Agreement in 2009 elevated this cooperation to a new level. Through the promotion of political dialogue, economic cooperation, and diplomatic coordination, the Organization has contributed to strengthening the regional and international standing of its member states [3]. As a result of this agreement, a structured mechanism of cooperation among Turkic states was established, bringing together countries that share common historical roots, language, religion, culture, and traditions. Today, this framework is known as the Organization of Turkic States (OTS).

Regional developments in recent years, together with the geopolitical consequences of the Russia-Ukraine war, have significantly influenced the dynamics of relations among Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and the Turkic states of Central Asia-Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. This evolving geopolitical environment has accelerated processes of cooperation and integration among Turkic states, bringing them closer within the framework of the OTS. Supported by the continuous political commitment of its member states, this robust institutional framework has enabled them to achieve significant progress in various areas of cooperation within a relatively short period. The key to this success lies in the Organization's principles and institutional structure, as well as its results-oriented approach in political, economic, cultural, educational, and humanitarian fields.

Furthermore, the Organization's role as an umbrella institution for other Turkic cooperation bodies-including the Turkic Parliamentary Assembly (TURKPA), the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), the Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, and the Turkic Academy-has contributed to the development of Turkic cooperation at parliamentary, cultural, academic, and scientific levels [4].

Currently, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan are full member states of the Organization. Hungary, Turkmenistan, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus hold observer status.

Following the accession of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to power in 2016, Uzbekistan began pursuing a more open and pragmatic foreign policy oriented toward constructive international cooperation. Uzbekistan's membership in the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) significantly influenced the Organization's structure and balance of power. The admission of Uzbekistan as a full member in 2019, together with Turkmenistan's participation as an observer at the Istanbul Summit, marked the completion of the institutionalization process of cooperation among Turkic states. Consequently, the Council, which had previously served primarily as a platform for dialogue, was officially transformed and renamed as a fully-fledged international organization.

Uzbekistan's accession as a full member represented an important milestone in the country's foreign policy, reflecting its commitment to expanding regional cooperation, strengthening economic ties, and developing strategic partnerships with fellow Turkic states. Uzbekistan's active participation within the Organization is creating new opportunities for advancing national interests, including the development of trade and economic relations, the expansion of transport and communication corridors, the attraction of foreign investment, and the enhancement of regional security.

### Literature Review

The formation, institutional development, and role of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) in regional integration have been extensively examined by both international and regional scholars. In particular, H. Hamzaoglu, H. Çora, and E. H. Mikail have analyzed the stages of the Organization's institutional development and highlighted its significance in strengthening political, economic, and cultural cooperation among Turkic states. Their studies demonstrate that the OTS has evolved into an important regional platform for promoting collaboration and integration among its member countries.

Regarding the theory of national interest, Hans Morgenthau argues that the primary objective of a state's foreign policy is the protection and advancement of its national interests. According to Morgenthau, national interest serves as the fundamental principle guiding state behavior in international relations. Similarly, Robert Keohane emphasizes the role of international institutions in facilitating cooperation among states and argues that regional organizations constitute important instruments for achieving national interests through collective action and institutionalized cooperation.

In addition, this article draws upon information obtained from the official websites of the Organization of Turkic States and the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Based on these sources, the study examines Uzbekistan's national interests within the OTS framework and explores the prospects for further advancing those interests through the Organization's political, economic, and institutional mechanisms.

### Analysis And Results

Enhancing cooperation within the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) creates new opportunities for Uzbekistan to develop multifaceted relations with neighboring countries as well as with key regional partners such as Türkiye and Azerbaijan. Active participation in the Organization as a permanent member provides Tashkent with additional political and diplomatic resources to promote its initiatives on the international stage. At the same time, it contributes to strengthening the country's international reputation and consolidating its position as one of the important centers of regional cooperation.

In recent years, the OTS has evolved into an influential organization demonstrating steady growth and development. In

2025, the combined economic potential of the member states exceeded USD 2.4 trillion, while their economic growth rate was reported to be nearly twice the global average. During the same period, Uzbekistan's trade turnover with OTS member countries increased by 14 percent. Furthermore, the Turkic Investment Fund commenced its operational activities, and new institutional mechanisms, including the Council of Central Banks and the Turkic Green Finance Council, were launched to strengthen economic cooperation and sustainable development among member states [5].

One of the priority objectives outlined in Uzbekistan's Development Strategy 2030 is the significant expansion of the country's transit and logistics capacity. In this regard, the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, commonly referred to as the Middle Corridor, represents a strategically important infrastructure initiative for the countries of Central Asia. The corridor plays a crucial role in enhancing Uzbekistan's transit and logistics potential and supports the country's ambition to become a major transportation hub connecting East and West. Today, the route is emerging as one of the principal transport links connecting China, the Middle East, and Central Asia with European markets. By 2030, the annual cargo volume transported through the Middle Corridor is expected to reach approximately 10–11 million tons [6].

Uzbekistan is one of the few double-landlocked countries in the world. This geographical condition means that any Uzbek product must cross the borders of at least two sovereign states before reaching international maritime trade routes. Consequently, transportation and logistics costs have traditionally accounted for a disproportionately large share of the final cost of exported goods. In response, Uzbekistan has been actively pursuing a strategy aimed at transforming its landlocked status into a strategic advantage. By positioning itself as a central link within the Middle Corridor (Trans-Caspian International Transport Route), the country has the potential to transition from being merely "landlocked" to becoming "land-linked." Evidence of this strategic vision can be observed in the initiatives and proposals consistently promoted by Uzbekistan during OTS summits and related regional cooperation forums.

Uzbekistan is reducing transit times between China's manufacturing centers and European consumer markets to approximately 10–15 days by integrating its railway and road transport networks with the ports of Baku and Aktau. As a result, this segment of the historic Silk Road is evolving beyond its historical significance into a modern, multimodal transportation engine that supports Uzbekistan's strategic objective of achieving upper-middle-income country status.

It should also be emphasized that following Uzbekistan's accession to the Organization of Turkic States, the OTS has become a more influential platform for dialogue and cooperation, gaining new momentum and dynamism in its development. A clear example of this contribution can be seen in Uzbekistan's successful chairmanship of the Organization. During its chairmanship in 2022–2023, Uzbekistan organized more than 100 events aimed at strengthening cooperation among Turkic states. In addition, several important initiatives were proposed, new institutions and organizational mechanisms were established, and closer partnerships were developed with prominent global and regional organizations. These achievements contributed significantly to enhancing the international standing and visibility of the OTS on the global stage [7].

The growing dynamism of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) represents one of the most notable developments in the broader Eurasian region, bringing together countries that share strong cultural, historical, and linguistic ties. The emergence of a common regional identity has been one of the key factors influencing both the establishment and the development of the Organization. At the same time, the relations among OTS member states should be examined within a broader geopolitical

context to fully understand their strategic significance and future trajectory.

Today, the five member states of the Organization-Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan-have a combined population of more than 170 million people and a total gross domestic product estimated at approximately USD 1.2 trillion. Through the promotion of multilateral partnerships, the Organization seeks to deepen economic integration while also providing flexible and strategic responses to geopolitical transformations through institutionalized cooperation mechanisms.

Baku and Ankara continue to encourage their partners, particularly the member states of the OTS, to play a more active role in strengthening regional and interregional connectivity. In addition to cooperation at the institutional level, newly emerging trilateral platforms-such as the Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan and Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Uzbekistan formats-provide Turkic states with effective mechanisms for coordinating their activities in a timely manner at both regional and international levels [8]. These frameworks contribute to enhancing political dialogue, economic cooperation, and strategic coordination among participating countries.

Furthermore, the Turkic Investment Fund was established and is entering the process of commencing full operational activities from 2026 onward. With an authorized capital of USD 600 million, the Fund represents the first major joint financial institution created by the Turkic states. Its primary objective is to mobilize the economic potential of OTS member countries, strengthen trade and economic cooperation, and facilitate the implementation of joint investment projects [9]. The establishment of this Fund has further enhanced the significance of the OTS by providing a practical financial mechanism to support economic integration and regional development initiatives.

Uzbekistan's membership in the Organization of Turkic States, as well as the proposals and initiatives it actively promotes during both formal and informal meetings within the framework of the Organization, are of considerable importance not only for the development of the OTS but also for Uzbekistan's own long-term progress and strategic objectives. In recent years, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has advanced a number of significant initiatives within the Organization that reflect Uzbekistan's commitment to strengthening regional cooperation and enhancing the effectiveness of the OTS.

Among these initiatives are the establishment of joint meetings of the foreign ministers and heads of security agencies of OTS member states; the adoption of the Treaty on Strategic Partnership, Eternal Friendship, and Brotherhood of the Organization of Turkic States; the creation of a Permanent Council for Economic Cooperation with a project office based in Tashkent; and the establishment of the Turkic Industrial Alliance. Uzbekistan has also proposed linking the Middle Corridor with the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway and the Trans-Afghan Corridor, thereby expanding regional connectivity and trade opportunities.

Additional initiatives include strengthening the activities of the Turkic Investment Fund and establishing an International University of Turkic States in Uzbekistan. These proposals demonstrate Uzbekistan's active role in shaping the future agenda of the Organization and highlight the extent to which the country seeks to align regional cooperation mechanisms with its national interests and foreign policy priorities. Collectively, these initiatives contribute to enhancing Uzbekistan's economic, political, educational, and strategic position within the Turkic world and the broader international community [10].

## Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) is emerging as an important regional

platform for advancing and strengthening Uzbekistan's national interests. Cooperation within the framework of the Organization creates additional opportunities for promoting the country's political, economic, and geostrategic objectives. In particular, the expansion of trade and economic relations, the attraction of foreign investment, the development of transport and communication infrastructure, and the enhancement of Uzbekistan's political standing in the international arena have become key priorities in the realization of the country's national interests.

From a geoeconomic perspective, the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (Middle Corridor) is of strategic importance for Uzbekistan, as it expands the country's access to European and global markets. The further development of this corridor will contribute to increasing Uzbekistan's transit potential, diversifying its export destinations, and strengthening its external economic relations. Moreover, enhanced connectivity through regional transport networks can help transform Uzbekistan's geographic constraints into economic opportunities, reinforcing its role as a vital link between Asia and Europe.

Overall, the Organization of Turkic States is increasingly becoming an important institutional mechanism for the implementation of Uzbekistan's national interests. In the future, strengthening transport and logistics connectivity, deepening economic integration, expanding investment cooperation, and actively participating in digital transformation initiatives will further consolidate Uzbekistan's strategic interests within the OTS framework. Through these efforts, Uzbekistan can enhance its regional influence, promote sustainable economic growth, and secure a stronger position in the evolving geopolitical and economic landscape of Eurasia.

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