



A Powerful Web of Arrangements: OTS Defence Cooperation

Ibrahim Mammadov and Zoltan Egeresi

All rights reserved. Printed in Hungary. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Authors:
Ibrahim Mammadov and Zoltan Egeresi

Danube Institute Leadership

President: John O’Sullivan
Executive Director: István Kiss
Director of Research: Calum T.M. Nicholson

Original Design by: Carlos Roa
Designed by: Hubert Kucharski

© 2026 by the Danube Institute
July 2026

Covers: Designed by Hubert Kucharski

Image: 10th summit of the Organization of Turkic States in Astana

Table of Contents

About the Danube Institute	iv
About the Authors	v
Abstract	vi
Introduction	1
Numerous Military Blocs	3
Military Capabilities of OTS Member States	4
The Development of Defence Cooperation Web	7
Hungary's Role Within the OTS Security Framework	11
Conclusion	13

About the Danube Institute

The Danube Institute, established in 2013 by the Batthyány Lajos Foundation in Budapest, serves as a hub for the exchange of ideas and individuals within Central Europe and between Central Europe, other parts of Europe, and the English-speaking world. Rooted in a commitment to respectful conservatism in cultural, religious, and social life, the Institute also upholds the broad classical liberal tradition in economics and a realistic Atlanticism in national security policy. These guiding principles are complemented by a dedication to exploring the interplay between democracy and patriotism, emphasizing the nation-state as the cornerstone of democratic governance and international cooperation.

Through research, analysis, publication, debate, and scholarly exchanges, the Danube Institute engages with center-right intellectuals, political leaders, and public-spirited citizens, while also fostering dialogue with counterparts on the democratic center-left. Its activities include establishing and supporting research groups, facilitating international conferences and fellowships, and encouraging youth participation in scholarly and political discourse. By drawing upon the expertise of leading minds across national boundaries, the Institute aims to contribute to the development of democratic societies grounded in national identity and civic engagement.

About the Turkic-Western Engagement Initiative

The Danube Institute's Turkic-Western Engagement Initiative (TWEI) is a dedicated platform to deepen understanding and foster strategic coordination between the Turkic world and the West. Rooted in Hungary's unique position as the only EU and NATO member state with institutional ties to the Organization of Turkic States, TWEI examines the growing geopolitical and economic significance of the Turkic region—from energy corridors and critical mineral reserves to industrial development, and regional security trends. By regularly convening experts, policymakers, and scholars from OTS countries and the West, TWEI works to identify areas where mutual interests can foster lasting strategic cooperation.

TWEI includes projects such as its annual flagship Turkic-Western Geopolitical Dialogue Conference, Turkic Silk Road Internship Program, research projects on Hungarian and Western Engagement with the Turkicworld, and the linking of Turkic and Western think tanks. As the landscape of global politics shifts and therole of the Turkic world expands, the Turkic-Western Engagement Initiative positions the Danube Institute and Hungary as a whole as a central convening point where ideas are exchanged, partnerships are formed, andpractical solutions are developed.

About the Authors



Ibrahim Mammadov is currently the Head of the Turkic-Western Engagement Initiative (TWEI) and a Visiting Research Fellow at the Danube Institute. He is also the Editor for the all research publications concerning Turkic countries at the Institute. Before his time at the Danube Institute, he served as a Research Fellow at the Caucasian Center for International Relations and Strategic Studies (QAFSAM), a Young Scholar at the Institute for Development and Diplomacy (IDD), and Research Assistant at the Caucasus Policy Analysis Center (CPAC) in Baku, Azerbaijan. he concurrently is a doctoral student at the Ludovika University of Public Service. He holds an MA in International Relations from Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, Hungary, and obtained his BA in International Studies from ADA University in Baku, Azerbaijan. His research articles have been published in esteemed platforms such as The National Interest, Baku Dialogues, Astana Times, Dunyo, CABAR.asia, Commonsplace.eu under the LINKS platform, the Institute for Development and Diplomacy Publications, and The Hungarian Conservative, among others.



Dr. Zoltán Egeresi is a Research Fellow at the Danube Institute, graduated from Corvinus University, Zoltán Egeresi works as research fellow at Ludovika University of Public Service and lectures at various Hungarian universities. His main interests are Türkiye, the Turkic World and the Balkans.

Abstract

This paper analyzes the evolving defence cooperation within the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). The paper shows that meaningful security collaboration is already advancing through a multifaceted web of arrangements without transforming the organization into a full military alliance. It traces the OTS's development from the 2009 Nakhchivan Agreement to its current institutional form, highlighting how shared geographic vulnerabilities and converging threat perceptions have catalyzed deeper engagement. An assessment of member states' military capabilities reveals significant disparities in size, equipment, and alliances, yet also shows increasing diversification away from traditional Russian suppliers toward Turkish systems. The study surveys both multilateral initiatives, such as annual security summits and joint exercises like Birlestik-2024, and a dense network of bilateral treaties, most notably the Türkiye–Azerbaijan alliance strengthened by the Shusha Declaration. Turkish defence industry exports, particularly drones and armoured vehicles, serve as a key driver of interoperability and technology transfer across the OTS space. As an observer member, Hungary occupies a unique bridging position, leveraging its NATO and EU membership to explore joint production opportunities and enhance connectivity between Europe and Turkic states. The paper shows that pragmatic, incremental steps are laying the groundwork for a more coherent Turkic defence identity amid shifting global security dynamics.

Introduction

While analysing military cooperation among the countries of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), many people are misled into asking whether full-scale cooperation can happen in such an alliance. But the real question is not “if.” It is “how” — because the cooperation is already taking place in meaningful ways. As Carl von Clausewitz observed in his masterpiece, *On War*: “The enemy of a good plan is the dream of a perfect plan.”¹

The last formal summit of the OTS, which was held in Gabala, Azerbaijan in the Autumn of 2025, was dedicated to the theme of *Regional Peace and Security*: defence cooperation was reaffirmed as a strategic priority for member states. President İlham Aliyev of Azerbaijan called for an OTS-driven military exercise potentially to be hosted in Azerbaijan in 2026. This program showed the rising importance of security and defence cooperation for the OTS states.

The rapidly changing geopolitical context makes this development even more significant.

The OTS member states — Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan as full members, with Hungary, Turkmenistan, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (recognised as a state only by Türkiye) as observers — find themselves stranded between at least two active conflict zones. To the north-west, the war between Russia and Ukraine continues to reshape European security. To the south, the conflict in the Gulf has led to the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, with severe implications for regional trade and energy flows.

This paper examines the emerging defence arrangements of the OTS, surveying the multilateral frameworks, bilateral agreements, joint exercises, defence industry links, and the potential role of observer member Hungary. It argues that, whilst full military integration remains distant, the structural conditions for a more coherent Turkic defence identity are gradually being put in place.

Numerous Military Blocs

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent independence of its former member states in Central Asia and the South Caucasus led to new geopolitical realities which opened the way to a cooperation between the Turkic states. This collaboration created many cultural institutions but also raised the need for a political platform as well. After nearly two decades of rather occasional summits between the leaders, the OTS was finally established as an institution.

The OTS traces its origins to the Nakhchivan Agreement of 2009, which established a political consultative body, called the Turkic Council. In November 2021, the Istanbul Summit upgraded the organisation to its current form reflecting the ambition of member states to develop cooperation well beyond cultural and linguistic ties into economics, transport, and now security.

The OTS' strategic importance comes in part from its occupation of a vast geographical space stretching from Central Europe (Hungary) to Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan), encompassing the South Caucasus (Azerbaijan) and Anatolia (Türkiye). This geographic spread gives the organisation potential relevance across multiple regions: the Black Sea, the Caspian, Central Asia, and the broader Middle East.

Due to their different historical pasts, the security architectures of the member states differ considerably. Türkiye has been a full member of NATO since 1952 and operates one of the most capable military forces in the Alliance, having overseas military bases from Somalia through Qatar to Northern Cyprus. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are members of the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Meanwhile, Uzbekistan, despite being a founding member of the CSTO in 2002, suspended its membership in 2012.

Although Russia remains the main force of the CSTO, it is rather preoccupied in Ukraine: nevertheless, the organization is still an important security actor in Eurasia. At the beginning of 2022, CSTO member state troops played a vital role in handling the unrest and restoring stability in Kazakhstan, for instance.

Azerbaijan never joined the CSTO and has cultivated close strategic ties with Türkiye - while launching its own multi-directional foreign policy. Turkmenistan adopted permanent neutrality in 1995 and remains outside all military alliances. Hungary, the organization's observer member in Central Europe is located in a different situation: having the Soviet experience due to its membership in the Warsaw Pact and stationing thousands of Soviet troops during the Cold war granted it Soviet military weapons and experience. After the regime change in the early 1990s, Hungary managed to integrate into the Western alliance: it joined NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004.

These divergent alignments and historical legacies have limited the scope of OTS security cooperation. Nevertheless, shared threat perceptions — including Russian revisionism, spillover from the Afghan conflict, and instability along energy transit routes — have begun to generate convergence. The Second Karabakh War of 2020, in which Azerbaijan decisively defeated Armenian forces with significant Turkish assistance, including the use of Bayraktar TB2 drones, provided a catalyst for renewed interest in Turkic defence cooperation.



Military Capabilities of OTS Member States

To understand the potential and limits of OTS defence cooperation, it is necessary to assess the military capabilities of its full members. An overview is provided below.

Türkiye

The Turkish Armed Forces represent the largest military power within the OTS. With active personnel of 355,000 and some 380,000 reservists, it also constitutes the second largest army in NATO (after that of the United States). Due to its particular geopolitical location, Türkiye possesses a large fleet featuring domestically built MILGEM-class frigates and corvettes and the TCG Anadolu, an amphibious assault ship commissioned in 2023, as well as a strong land army equipped with modern NATO-standard and domestically produced vehicles and weapons.

The Turkish air forces have undergone significant development in recent years, not only by establishing a world-renowned drone industry but also by developing the domestic KAAAN fighter jet, now in its fifth generation. The Turkish defence industry developed gradually after the 1970s and reached strong international standing by the 2010s. In recent years, a sharp increase in the defence budget can be observed, with the result that it exceeded USD 30 billion in 2025. The Turkish military has also gained considerable experience through counter-insurgency operations and military interventions in Syria during the second half of the 2010s. Furthermore, it maintains overseas bases in Africa and the Middle East, which provide valuable operational knowledge and strategic networks.

Azerbaijan

The Azerbaijani Armed Forces number approximately 68,000 active personnel and some 300,000 reservists, making it the largest military power in the South Caucasus.

The country of more than 10 million inhabitants has invested tremendously in defence: according to SIPRI, its 2025 defence budget stood at \$3.86 billion (approximately 5.1% of GDP), while the planned figure for 2026 is \$5.13 billion, representing a substantial increase. The Azerbaijani Army is equipped with a mix of Soviet-era and modernised hardware, including T-72 tanks, BMP infantry fighting vehicles, and an increasing number of domestically produced armoured vehicles. Azerbaijan's air force operates Su-25 ground attack aircraft and MiG-29 fighters. However, over the past decade, beyond procurement from Russia, the country has turned to other partners — most notably Israel and Türkiye — particularly in the field of UAV purchases. Furthermore, the Azerbaijan State Military Industry has also begun actively developing domestic production capabilities, ranging from drones to ammunition and armoured vehicles.

Kazakhstan

Based on SIPRI data, Kazakhstan's Armed Forces comprise approximately 39,000 active personnel. The land forces operate mainly T-72 and T-80 main battle tanks and rely predominantly on Soviet-era and Russian technology. Similarly, the air force operates Su-27 fighters and Su-25 ground attack aircraft, although purchases of Turkish drones have also taken place in recent years. Defence expenditure totalled approximately \$2.31 billion in 2025, representing less than 1% of GDP. Kazakhstan has sought to diversify its arms procurement away from Russia, accelerating investments in Turkish and South Korean defence systems.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan possesses the smallest military among the OTS full members, with approximately 10,900 active personnel.

Its armed forces are predominantly equipped with Soviet-era equipment, and defence spending is minimal at around \$0.5 billion in 2025.² Kyrgyzstan remains a CSTO member and hosts Russian military facilities. However, Bishkek has also sought to deepen ties with Ankara, in part through the procurement of Bayraktar TB2 drones in 2022.

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan operates the largest army in Central Asia by troop numbers, with approximately 48,000 active military personnel, based on SIPRI data. The armed forces consist predominantly of Soviet-era hardware, though modernisation programmes have accelerated. Like other countries in the region, Uzbekistan operates Su-27, MiG-29, and Su-25 aircraft, alongside T-72 main battle tanks. Defence spending stood at approximately \$2.8 billion in 2025,³ equivalent to around 2% of GDP.

Recently, Uzbekistan has emerged as one of the most active purchasers in Central Asia of Turkish defence equipment, including Bayraktar TB2 drones. Uzbekistan has also shown interest in Turkish armoured vehicle programmes.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan maintains 36,500 military personnel. Similarly to other Central Asian states, its armed forces are equipped with Soviet-era weapons, but have recently begun to diversify their military hardware through the purchase of Turkish drones. While further military improvement remains on the agenda and the defence budget has reached approximately \$1.1 billion (around 2% of GDP),⁴ the country maintains its policy of strict neutrality vis-à-vis military alliances.

The Development of a Defence Cooperation Web

Multilateral Aspect of OTS Defence Cooperation

Multilateral defence cooperation within the OTS framework has developed gradually through a series of summits, ministerial meetings, and specialised forums. The most important of these is the OTS Summit of Heads of State, which now convenes annually and which has increasingly incorporated security and defence themes into its agenda.

The Istanbul Summit of November 2021, which formally upgraded the Turkic Council to the OTS, called for the continuation of regular security consultations among the member states. The Turkic World Vision 2040 – a strategic document adopted at the summit – also emphasised the importance of security and the need for cooperation to maintain regional stability and cope with "the threats of radicalization, violent extremism, Islamophobia, xenophobia and terrorism, and to ensure border security."⁵

A few months later, in June 2022, the 1st Meeting of the Heads of National Security Councils of the Member and Observer States of the OTS was held in Ankara. In the following years, these meetings became regular: taking place in 2023 in Tashkent, in 2024 in Turkistan, and in 2025 in Bishkek.

The Samarkand Summit in Autumn 2022 called for "closer cooperation in the field of defence industry and military collaboration," introducing a more visible military dimension to the OTS.⁶

The Gabala Summit of Autumn 2025 elevated these discussions further. Held in Azerbaijan, the summit was organized under the theme of *Regional Peace and Security*. It emphasised the need to go beyond defence collaboration for security cooperation and to consider other aspects such as energy security and food security to cybersecurity as well.⁷ President İlham Aliyev also called for an OTS-branded joint military exercise in 2026 to be held in Azerbaijan.

At the ministerial level, the first-ever meeting of the heads of defence industry institutions of OTS member states was held in Istanbul in July 2025 on the sidelines of the 17th International Defence Industry Fair. The meeting resulted in a joint communiqué outlining cooperation in technology transfer, joint production, and harmonisation of standards.⁸

The Council of Foreign Ministers, which meets more frequently than the summits, has also developed a security dimension. The March 2026 Istanbul meeting – which issued a joint condemnation of Iranian attacks on Türkiye and Azerbaijan – demonstrated the capacity of the OTS ministerial format to respond rapidly to security developments.⁹

Bilateral Aspect of Defence Cooperation

Beneath the multilateral OTS framework, a dense web of bilateral defence agreements has developed among member states. These bilateral links predate the OTS but have accelerated markedly since 2020, and many are now explicitly framed as contributing to the broader Turkic defence cooperation architecture.

The Türkiye–Azerbaijan bilateral defence relationship is the most developed and operationally significant within the OTS. The Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Support, signed in 2010, provides for mutual military assistance in the event of armed attack on either party. After 2013, annual joint military exercises became institutionalised. Turkish military advisers and special forces played an important role in Azerbaijan's 2020 Karabakh campaign.

The Shusha Declaration of June 2021¹⁰ elevated relations to a formal alliance, establishing joint mechanisms for exercises, training, defence industry cooperation, and institutional coordination.

The most recent addition to this legal architecture was the Memorandum of Understanding on Strengthening Mutual Military Security, signed in 2025. It aims at strengthening existing cooperation and also reaffirmed the obligation to provide mutual assistance.¹¹

Azerbaijan has been the most active driver of bilateral defence diplomacy within the Central Asian OTS space. In 2022, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan concluded a comprehensive defence cooperation agreement that included provisions for joint exercises, intelligence sharing, and defence industry collaboration. In 2024, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan signed a Treaty on Allied Relations — a document that goes beyond standard defence cooperation to establish a formal strategic partnership framework.

Beyond its alliance with Azerbaijan, Türkiye has also expanded bilateral defence ties with the Central Asian members. The Turkish-Uzbek relationship has grown particularly close: following Uzbekistan's acquisition of Bayraktar TB2 systems, the two countries have developed a broader cooperation framework involving joint military education officer exchange programmes, and joint training exercises.

As the newest step for this collaboration, in early 2026, the two countries signed a new military cooperation plan for the coming year.¹² Following many strategic documents signed in the previous decades,¹³ the most recent development in Kyrgyz-Turkish relations was the elevation of their status to comprehensive strategic partnership -- enabling deeper cooperation in the field of defence.¹⁴

Türkiye and Kazakhstan similarly maintain robust bilateral defence ties based on many successive agreements varying from military transit¹⁵ to defence industry¹⁶ and to cooperation plans for military education, peacekeeping, combat training, medical collaboration and high-level visits.¹⁷

Security and defence cooperation among Central Asian states has also gained new momentum in recent years. Importantly, due to political rapprochement, many long-standing border disputes were settled between them, opening the way towards further economic and even security cooperation. Beyond border delimitation agreements,¹⁸ these states elevated their bilateral relations: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan signed a treaty of allied relations in 2022,¹⁹ while Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan signed an agreement on deepening and expanding allied relations in 2024.²⁰

Joint Military Exercises

Joint military exercises have become one of the most visible dimensions of emerging OTS defence cooperation. Historically, exercises within this space were predominantly bilateral — particularly between Türkiye and Azerbaijan — but a pattern of multilateral exercises is now clearly developing.

The most significant recent exercise was We're United-2024 (Birlestik-2024), held in Kazakhstan in autumn 2024.²¹ The exercise involved approximately 4,000 servicemen from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Azerbaijan, making it the largest multilateral military exercise involving OTS member states to date. The exercised focused on counter-terrorism operations, combined arms manoeuvre, and interoperability testing. The following year, Uzbekistan hosted Unity-2025 (Birlik-2025), a regional exercise which again brought together Central Asian OTS members alongside Azerbaijan.²²

Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan have also institutionalised joint naval exercises in the Caspian Sea, conducted annually since 2022. These exercises have focused on maritime patrol, mine countermeasures, and joint search-and-rescue operations — capabilities of growing importance given the strategic importance of Caspian energy infrastructure.

Turkish Defence Industry: An Engine of OTS Armament

Based on numbers alone, Türkiye has the largest army and defence budget within the OTS and possesses a robust military industry that has undergone a remarkable transformation since the mid-2000s.²³ Beyond filling major domestic needs, Turkish firms entered the global market and the defence exports reached \$10.05 billion in 2025²⁴ with a substantial increase compared to \$7 billion in 2024. Türkiye is now among the top 20 defence exporters globally.²⁵

Within the OTS, Turkish defence companies have positioned themselves as the primary alternative to both Russian and Western suppliers during the last years - a role that gained more importance since 2022 which compelled many countries to decrease their reliance on Russia. This new wave of defence cooperation agreements – supported by the OTS summits as well – could be established on already existing treaties and experiences, because Turkish companies started to enter other Turkic states' market already in the 1990s.

ASELSAN, Türkiye's largest defence electronics company, was among the pioneers of Turkish expansion into the rest of the OTS. The company established ASELSAN Baku - its first international subsidiary - in Azerbaijan as early as 1998, specialising in military communication equipment. In 2011, ASELSAN signed an agreement with Kazakhstan Engineering to establish a joint venture, Kazakhstan Aselsan Engineering LLP, which commenced operations in Astana in 2013, producing and servicing military communications systems for the Kazakhstani armed forces.²⁶

Baykar has arguably had the most strategically transformative impact. The Bayraktar TB2 unmanned combat aerial vehicle became globally renowned following its decisive battlefield performance during the Second Karabakh War of 2020 and the Russo-Ukrainian War. Within the OTS, Bayraktar TB2 systems have been procured by Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. Kyrgyzstan acquired the TB2 in 2022, becoming one of the smallest militaries in the world to operate the system.

Roketsan, the Turkish rocket and missile systems manufacturer, has supplied multiple-launch rocket systems and precision munitions to Azerbaijan and is in discussions with Central Asian partners. FNSS, specialising in armoured fighting vehicles, has been active in the Azerbaijani and potentially Uzbek markets. Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) has signed a significant agreement with Kazakhstan to enable licensed domestic production of TAI's unmanned aerial vehicles²⁷ — a major technology transfer that will strengthen Kazakhstan's indigenous aerospace capabilities. As of 2026, Kazakhstan's Airborne Assault Forces (AAF) has established local production capabilities.²⁸

The aggregate effect of these commercial and governmental links is the emergence of what might be called a Turkish defence industrial ecosystem within the OTS space. Turkish standards, interoperability protocols, and logistical chains are increasingly embedded across OTS member militaries — a development with profound long-term implications for military integration.

Hungary's Role Within the OTS Security Framework

Hungary, situated in the heart of the European continent and being a NATO and EU member, has a special position within the OTS. It joined as an observer member in 2018 at the Cholpon-Ata Summit and showed great diplomatic and economic activity in the Turkic world. It established an OTS Representation Office in Budapest (2019), opened embassies in every full member state, and also participated in several organizations, such as the Turkic Investment Fund.

Various common projects were also launched; for instance, the Drought Prevention Institute was established to cope with the devastating impact of climate change.²⁹ Based on historical and cultural affiliations, this political engagement also opened the way for further economic and energy cooperation. Major Hungarian energy firms entered the Turkic markets, especially in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, and the banking giant OTP also made an acquisition in Uzbekistan. Defence and security cooperation also gained momentum after the OTS accession.

Concerning the Hungarian military and defence industry, the country has 32,150 active personnel, which is a smaller force in the context of OTS; however, due to NATO requirements, Hungary has increased military spending in previous years, so that it exceeds 2% of GDP. The defence budget reached USD 5.54 billion in 2025.

This rise was based on a major armed forces modernisation programme called Zrínyi 2026, launched in 2016. After 2022, this endeavour gained new impetus due to the Russian aggression against Ukraine.³⁰

Within this programme, new procurements were launched to replace the remaining Soviet-era military hardware and to cooperate with Western, especially German, partners. Through these modernisation efforts, the country also started to climb the production ladder when it began joint output with the German company Rheinmetall.

Nevertheless, Hungary also opened up to Turkish partners. The two sides signed an agreement to produce the Turkish Nurol Makina Ejder Yalçın armoured tactical vehicle in partnership with Hungarian firms under the name Gidrán.³¹ Beyond this agreement, other Hungarian firms also began to explore the Turkic market.

Further opportunities for the Hungarian defence industry will arise due to the EU's defence programme. Hungary may benefit from the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) financial instrument to boost its own industry: this may in turn also benefit other OTS members through common projects.



Servicemen of the State Border Service of Azerbaijan at the Victory Parade 2020 (Wikimedia Commons)

Conclusion

Amid divided opinions – some eager to see a full-fledged military bloc among the Turkic countries, while others believing that it is impossible due to the complex existing security arrangements of OTS member states – it is important to examine the current reality on the ground. The essence and need for military cooperation stem from the growing insecurity in the surrounding regions and the increasing interdependence among these countries.

Current geopolitical challenges surrounding OTS member states, combined with the pragmatic development of strategic initiatives along the Trans-Caspian corridor, have made the countries of the Turkic Silk Road region indispensable to one another. Whether in the areas of pipelines, trade corridors, know-how sharing, or global market access, cooperation is deepening and driving further integration.

A web of military arrangements already exists, both in multilateral OTS formats and bilateral interstate agreements. The Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance was cemented by the Shusha Declaration in 2021. Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan have become allies as of the Treaty on Allied Relations in 2024, as have Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (as of 2023). Although the latter alliance does not include a military component, the strategic interdependence between these countries serves as the true guarantee of mutual support in the event of an external threat.

The next logical step, to be implemented at the formal OTS summit in Türkiye in 2026, is the organization of joint military exercises involving all member states. As previously mentioned, nearly all members, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, have already conducted exercises under the C6 format (C5 before 2025), including *Birlestik-2024* in Kazakhstan in Autumn of that year and *Birlik-2025* in Uzbekistan. Here it is important to mention that earlier C5 included countries, such as Turkic Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and non-Turkic Tajikistan.

In 2025 the format was expanded to C6 format with the inclusion of Azerbaijan. Almost all countries of C6, with the exception of Tajikistan are members or observer states of OTS (Organization of Turkic States).

Opportunities for Hungary

Hungary stands out as the only EU member with formal institutional ties to the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) through its observer status. This unique position gives it a genuine opportunity to serve as a bridge for deeper military and defence cooperation between the EU and Turkic countries.

With Donald Trump's re-election and his strong emphasis on NATO allies meeting higher defence spending targets, Europe's security priorities have sharpened once again. Several EU member states are now accelerating their military expenditures. Germany, under Chancellor Friedrich Merz, plans to allocate nearly €650 billion³² to defence over the next five years, which is more than double its current budget. On Bastille Day, French President Emmanuel Macron announced an extra €6.5 billion³³ in military spending for the coming two years. Poland, meanwhile, expects its defence budget to reach 4.7% of GDP in 2025.³⁴

In this context, Hungary's deepening bilateral defence ties with Türkiye and the broader Turkic world represent one of its most important strategic relationships beyond Europe. This cooperation is built on shared interests in technological innovation, regional stability, and common security challenges.

As the EU pushes forward with its rearmament efforts under the "ReArmEurope" framework, Hungary's privileged position between Europe and the Turkic states creates valuable new avenues for joint defence production, technology development, and innovation.



References

¹Prussian General Karl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 1832

²<https://tradingeconomics.com/kyrgyzstan/military-expenditure>

³<https://timesca.com/uzbekistans-new-emphasis-on-the-military/>

⁴<https://securex.uz/en/news/in-terms-of-defence-spending-uzbekistan-ranks-second-in-the-cis-after-russia>

⁵<https://turkicstates.org/u/d/haberler/turkic-world-vision-2040-2396-97.pdf>

⁶<https://turkicstates.org/u/d/basic-documents/ninth-summit-declarataion-16-en.pdf>

⁷<https://turkicstates.org/u/gabala-declaration-.pdf>

⁸<https://turkicstates.org/en/news/the-1st-meeting-of-the-heads-of-defence-industry-institutions-of-the-ots-was-held-in-istanbul>

⁹<https://www.mfa.gov.tr/joint-statement-of-the-council-of-foreign-ministers-of-the-organization-of-turkic-states-on-recent-developments-in-the-middle-east-istanbul-7-3-2026.en.mfa>

¹⁰<https://president.az/en/articles/view/52122>

¹¹<https://en.azvision.az/news/195514/president-ilham-aliev-approves-mou-between-azerbaijan-and-turkiye-on-military-security%C2%A0.html>

¹²<https://kun.uz/en/news/2026/01/21/uzbekistan-and-turkey-sign-2026-military-cooperation-plan>

¹³<https://hal.science/hal-04175958/document>

¹⁴<https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/english/haberler/detay/we-have-elevated-our-relations-with-kyrgyzstan-to-the-level-of-comprehensive-strategic-partnership>

¹⁵<https://caspiantpost.com/analytics/kazakhstan-turkiye-military-transit-pact-strategic-meaning-and-regional-implications>

¹⁶<https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-seals-deal-to-produce-turkish-drones-under-license>

¹⁷<https://astanatimes.com/2025/01/kazakhstan-turkiye-sign-military-cooperation-plan-for-2025-in-ankara/>

¹⁸<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/kyrgyzstan-uzbekistan-sign-protocol-on-demarcation-of-border/2695180>

¹⁹<https://astanatimes.com/2022/12/kazakhstan-uzbekistan-sign-treaty-on-allied-relations-agreement-on-border-demarcation-to-foster-strategic-partnership/>

²⁰<https://astanatimes.com/2024/04/kazakhstan-kyrgyz-republic-sign-historic-treaty-to-deepen-and-expand-allied-relations/>

²¹<https://www.eurasiareview.com/16072024-azerbaijan-a-central-asian-nations-forge-stronger-military-bonds-at-birlestik-2024-drills-analysis/>

²²<https://timesca.com/five-countries-complete-large-scale-birlik-2025-military-exercises-in-uzbekistan/>

²³<https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=1387842>

²⁴<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/turkiyes-defence-aviation-exports-exceed-10b-threshold-in-2025/3790365>

²⁵https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/fs_2603_at_2025.pdf

²⁶<https://kae.ke.kz/en/>

²⁷<https://jamestown.org/kazakhstan-and-turkey-make-steady-progress-in-expanding-military-cooperation/>

²⁸<https://thedefencepost.com/2026/01/26/kazakhstan-domestic-drone-production/>

²⁹<https://turkicstates.org/en/news/drought-prevention-institute-of-the-organization-of-turkic-states-held-its-next-board-meeting-in-budapest>

³⁰<https://folyoirat.ludovika.hu/index.php/neb/article/view/7657>

³¹<https://thedefencepost.com/2026/03/04/turkey-gidran-vehicles-hungary/>

³²Atlantic Council, “Germany Wants to Double Its Defence Spending. Where Should the Money Go?” August 28, 2025 <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/germany-wants-to-double-its-defence-spending-where-should-the-money-go/> Accessed October 21, 2025.

³³Le Monde,“Macron announces €6.5 billion in extra military spending in next two years” July 13, 2025https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2025/07/13/macron-announces-6-5-billion-in-extra-military-spending-in-next-two-years_6743338_7.html Accessed October 21, 2025.

³⁴Euronews, “Poland's president vows to spend 4.7% of GDP on defence this year” February 5, 2025, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/02/05/polands-president-vows-to-spend-47-of-gdp-on-defence-this-year> Accessed October 21, 2025.

