

HUNGARY'S OPENING TOWARD TURKEY: FROM ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION TO POLITICAL PARTNERSHIP

LÁSZLÓ SZERENCSÉS

IPC | ISTANBUL POLICY CENTER
SABANCI UNIVERSITY
STIFTUNG MERCATOR INITIATIVE

About Istanbul Policy Center

Istanbul Policy Center (IPC) is a global policy research institution that specializes in key social and political issues ranging from democratization to climate change, transatlantic relations to conflict resolution and mediation. IPC organizes and conducts its research under six main clusters: the Istanbul Policy Center-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative, Climate Change, Democratization and Institutional Reform, SHURA Energy Transition Center, Urbanization and Local Governance, and Conflict Resolution, Mediation and Living Together. Since 2001, IPC has provided decision makers, opinion leaders, and other major stakeholders with objective analyses and innovative policy recommendations. Since 2001, IPC has provided decision makers, opinion leaders, and other major stakeholders with objective analyses and innovative policy recommendations.

About the Istanbul Policy Center-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative

The Istanbul Policy Center–Sabancı University–Stiftung Mercator Initiative aims to strengthen the academic, political, and social ties between Turkey and Germany as well as Turkey and Europe. The Initiative is based on the premise that the acquisition of knowledge and the exchange of people and ideas are preconditions for meeting the challenges of an increasingly globalized world in the 21st century. The Initiative focuses on two areas of cooperation, EU/German-Turkish relations and climate change, which are of essential importance for the future of Turkey and Germany within a larger European and global context.

About the Author

László Szerencsés is a 2023/24 Mercator-IPC Fellow and a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute for Turkish Studies at Stockholm University.

February 2025

Cover photo: © Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, Directorate of Communications

*The interpretations and conclusions in this report belong solely to the author and do not reflect IPC's official position.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

INTRODUCTION 5

SOURCES AND IDEATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF HUNGARY'S INTEREST IN THE TURKIC WORLD 7

FROM GLOBAL TO EASTERN OPENING IN HUNGARY'S FOREIGN POLICY 11

TURKEY IN HUNGARY'S FOREIGN POLICY: FROM A POTENTIAL ECONOMIC PARTNER TO A POLITICAL PRIORITY 14

OFFSETTING ISOLATION? HUNGARY'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE ORGANIZATION OF TURKIC STATES 18

TURKEY'S GOALS TO FURTHER ITS ENERGY HUB AMBITIONS VIA HUNGARY'S OTS MEMBERSHIP 20

BEYOND VALUES: PRAGMATIC COOPERATION IN THE EU AND NATO 25

CONCLUSIONS 30

REFERENCES 32

APPENDIX: LIST OF INTERVIEWS 39

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hungary's Viktor Orbán and Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan met at least 20 times between 2013 and 2024. During this period, Turkey has become one of the main pillars in the foreign policy planning of Prime Minister Orbán. This report, based on interviews and policy documents, investigates why Hungary's foreign policy opened toward Turkey over the last decade. It argues that shared anti-Western sentiments, mutual political isolation, and domestic political interests have driven the partnership.

KEY FINDINGS

1. A Shift from Economic to Political Cooperation

Hungary's initial opening toward Turkey in 2013 was framed as an economic diversification strategy. However, after Turkey's failed 2016 coup attempt and the 2015 migration crisis, both leaders became isolated in the West over rule of law concerns. Thus, Hungary's economic opening evolved into a politically symbolic alignment with Turkey and other Turkic nations. Trade between Hungary and Turkey intensified, but the results fell short of expectations. Instead, cooperation on migration, energy, NATO enlargement, and Turkey's EU integration overshadowed economic ambitions.

2. The Instrumentalization of Hungary's Eastern Identity for Domestic Political Gains

In the 2010s, the ruling FIDESZ party in Hungary revived myths and truths about Hungary's Turkic origins to provide an ideational base for its Eastern Opening. Hungary's inclusion as an observer in the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) since 2018 has institutionalized these ties. While Hungary's affiliation with the OTS carries long-term economic potential, Orbán has used it to justify Hungary's identity as non-European, justifying his non-alignment with EU norms and foreign policy.

3. Hungary Sustains Dependence on Russia by Promoting Turkey's Gas Hub Ambitions

For Turkey, Hungary is a crucial partner in promoting its ambition to become an energy hub, supplying Russian, Azeri, and Turkish gas to Europe. Turkey is highly reliant on Russia for gas imports, and Russia is also using the country for transit to EU member states, including Hungary. While the EU supports diversification away from Russian energy, Turkey's gas hub role risks prolonging Russia's presence in the European market—a move Hungary sees less critically than other EU member states as Budapest was the first non-neighboring country to purchase gas from the Turkish energy company BOTAŞ.

4. Anti-Western Cooperation in the EU and NATO

Within the EU, Hungary has acted as Turkey's key advocate in the fields of visa liberalization and keeping Turkey on the bloc's agenda as a candidate country. Within NATO, Budapest delayed Sweden's membership together with Turkey. These moves align with Turkey's efforts to extract concessions from Western allies and share the blame with likeminded actors for disrupting unity. Yet, Hungary's actions, even if they resemble some of the EU's transactional policies, such as the 2016 migration statement, undermine the possibility of a rules-based return to accession negotiations.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the partnership illustrates how small states like Hungary can amplify their influence in international relations, the sustainability of this strategy depends on leadership continuity. Despite efforts to develop cooperation in energy, trade, and investment, the partnership struggles to deliver tangible economic results due to the lack of capable Hungarian companies to fully utilize the framework created. Therefore, this report suggests implementing the following recommendations to build a more sustainable partnership:

1 | To ensure the durability of the Turkey-Hungary relationship, both sides must move beyond anti-Western rhetoric and achieve concrete economic outcomes. Hungary's observer status in the OTS is a good start in this regard because it provides an institutional framework for enhancing trade along the Middle Corridor.

2 | The EU, Hungary, and Turkey should join efforts to facilitate the integration of Central Asian countries.

3 | The EU should support energy exploration and production measures in Central Asia to incentivize energy diversification away from Russia in Hungary and Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, I was sitting in a café near the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the Buda bank of the Danube River, looking at the Hungarian Parliament on the Pest side. I was meeting a high-ranking diplomat working on Hungary's foreign policy in the Middle East and North Africa since the mid-1970s. When I inquired about Hungary's "Eastern Opening" (*Keleti Nyitás*, in Hungarian), a foreign policy strategy initiated by the FIDESZ government in 2012 arguing for closer relations with countries to the east of Hungary, the diplomat interrupted me. He raised his hand, pointed toward the parliament building on the other side of the Danube, and said, "It is called Eastern Opening on that side of the river, but here in the ministry, we call it Global Opening." His comment was a thinly concealed criticism of the emphasis the FIDESZ government puts on the East at the expense of the West in its foreign policy. This diplomat, and most other people who think this way, no longer work in the ministry.

Over the last ten years, Hungary's relations with countries in the Turkic world, among other regions, have intensified considerably. This report asks why Hungary has developed an unprecedentedly close relationship with Turkey specifically between 2013 and 2024. Certainly, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have elevated this relationship to new levels, demonstrated by at least 20 meetings between the two leaders in this period (Table 1). Hungary's participation as an observer member in the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) since 2018, an international organization predominantly influenced by Turkey, along with collaborative efforts to contest the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) on key issues like enlargement and migration, indicates a broad spectrum of cooperation. While these examples provide adequate answers to the above question, this report puts Hungary's foreign policy-making in focus. It seeks an explanation for why Hungary, a Central European EU member state, has made Ankara one of the cornerstones of its foreign policy thinking since 2013.[1]

I argue that Hungary's Prime Minister Orbán is interested in forging close relations with Turkey's Erdoğan because their shared anti-Western outlook provides an opportunity to amplify Hungary's influence in multilateral organizations, which helps justify Orbán's domestic political authoritarian turn. Although Orbán has emphasized the economic importance of opening toward the Turkic world, this part of the relationship has not been as successful as officially desired. Instead, since the two leaders' relationships deteriorated with the European Union and the United States in the 2010s, they have been using each other to increase their weight in Western international organizations. For Orbán, Hungary's close relations with Turkey and its inclusion in the OTS as an observer member provide an opportunity to emphasize Hungary's Asian origins, which in his view implies a predetermined tendency to do politics in an illiberal, centralized, transactional way.

Although this relationship has transactional elements, the issue is more nuanced than it appears. Hungary's recent embrace of Turkic myths, i.e., referring to the Hungarian language as a language of Turkic origin[2] or joining the OTS as an observer

1 Miniszterelnökség, "Orbán Viktor Beszéde a Misszióvezetői Munkaértekezleten," 2015, https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/orban-viktor-beszede-a-misszio-vezetoi-munkaertekezleten.

2 Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda, "Orbán Viktor Beszéde a Türk Nyelvű Államok Együttműködési Tanácsának VI. Csúcstalálkozóján," 2018, https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-beszede-a-turk-nyelvu-allamok-egyuttmukodesi-tanacsanak-vi-csucstalalkozojan/.

and employing rhetoric that glorifies the "East,"[3] permeates the collaboration with a depth beyond mere transactions, manifesting in anti-Western cooperation. For instance, Hungary and Turkey have shared the will to halt migration, postponed Sweden's NATO accession, collaborated in the EU, and are in favor of further relying on Russia as an energy provider to Europe. This is not to argue that all elements of the bilateral partnership, such as energy, culture, and economic cooperation, are geared toward anti-Westernism. Nevertheless, the cooperation on themes sensitive to the West better explains the high level of relations than economic cooperation, which has been blown out of proportion in both parties' rhetoric.

Furthermore, when looking at the relationship from the perspective of international relations theory, it is rather surprising that a small state in the EU, Hungary, exhibits a confrontational foreign policy. Hungary's behavior in the Budapest-Ankara axis can be explained by the concept of a non-traditional small state.[4] Small states usually form strong alliances, join international organizations, are geographically and politically limited, and are characterized by strengthening international norms.[5] However, constructivist accounts open avenues to move beyond these predetermined categories and consider how Hungary exerts disproportionate ideational influence despite its small economic and geographical size.[6] As a non-traditional small state, Hungary employs ideational resources, its own self-constructed Turkic past, and anti-Westernism to amplify its influence in the international arena. This is evidenced by Orbán's alignment with leaders of middle and great powers, such as U.S. President Donald Trump and Erdoğan, who are also critical of the established liberal world order. Hungary's membership in the OTS, beyond its potential practical relevance in the field of energy and trade, is an ideational resource through which Orbán can justify often distorted theories about why Hungarians are alien to Europe and to the democratic, rules-based way politics is done in the EU.

The report is organized into six sections. The first critically engages with Hungary's interest in the East in its foreign policy thinking. Based on official documents, the second section discusses how Hungary turned from being a rule-abiding member of the West to drifting away from this orientation. The third section explores how Orbán embraced theories on Hungary's Turkic origins in the second half of the 2010s to justify Hungary's turn toward the East in its foreign policy. The fourth section explores this political engagement through Hungary's observer status in the OTS. The fifth section discusses Turkey's interest in promoting the OTS and the Middle Corridor via Hungarian support in the EU. The Middle Corridor is a cross-continental trade route starting in China, spanning Turkey and Central Asia, and ending in the EU. Finally, the last section investigates how Orbán's ambitions to magnify Hungary's small state status result in giving favors to Erdoğan, such as cooperation in NATO and the EU.

3 In 2018, Orbán said at an OTS summit that although in the past Hungary's eastern origins were mentioned as an offense in the West, due to the political and economic development in OTS countries, this is today a praise.

4 Máté Szalai, "The Identity of Smallness and Its Implications for Foreign Policy – the Case of Hungary and Slovakia," *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, September 2, 2017, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25739638.2017.1406182.

5 Robert O. Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics," *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (April 1969): 291–310, https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081830003160X; Maurice A. East, "Size and Foreign Policy Behavior: A Test of Two Models," *World Politics* 25, no. 4 (1973): 556–76, https://doi.org/10.2307/2009952.

6 Victor Gigleux, "Explaining the Diversity of Small States' Foreign Policies through Role Theory," *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, January 2, 2016, 27, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23802014.2016.1184585.

SOURCES AND IDEATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF HUNGARY'S INTEREST IN THE TURKIC WORLD

In 2018, at a summit of the Turkic Council in Kyrgyzstan, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech caused outrage among the pro-Western segments of the Hungarian public[7]:

> As you know, we live in Hungary, are Hungarians, and speak Hungarian. It is a unique and special language related to the Turkic languages... In Europe, Hungary is often referred to as the most Western of the Eastern nations. This used to be seen as an insult, a kind of contempt and condescension. However, because of and thanks to the fantastic successes of your countries and the economic and political development of your countries, it should now be taken as praise when we are called an Eastern people.[8]

Although Orbán's words may sound surprising, they have resonated with a significant portion of the Hungarian electorate on the right due to long-disputed theories on the origins of Hungarians.[9] Hungary's sources of "Easterness" as a political ideology can be traced back to the end of the 19th century. The increased interest in the Turkic world is a result of the 19th-century quest for the ancestral homeland of Hungarians, the trickling down of Western orientalism in Hungarian academia, and sympathy for the Ottoman Empire's struggle against the Russian Empire, which was also considered a threat to Hungary at the time.[10] More importantly, intense debates about the origins of the Hungarian language spurred interest in the Turkic world. On the one side, a group led by Hungarian Turkologist Ármin Vámbéry posited that Hungarian is related to the Turkic languages and that there is an ethnic kinship between Hungarian and Turkish tribes.[11] On the other, a group represented by linguists like József Budenz and Pál Hunfalvy set out to prove the Finno-Ugric origins of Hungarian in the 19th century.[12] Vámbéry later distanced himself from drawing far-fetched conclusions from his alternative findings, and the Finno-Ugric camp won the scientific battle. However, Vámbéry's and his followers' ideas remained influential in academia and the public because the Turanic Society (*Turáni Társaság*), established in 1910 and well embedded in elite circles, continued its search for kin languages in the East.[13]

Turanism[14] is a broad ideology that generally can be explained as a "search" for an "ancestral homeland," though it often encompasses opposing

7 "Orbán Viktor Eldöntötte: A Türköktől Származunk," Népszava, September 3, 2018, https://nepszava.hu/3007166_orban-viktor-eldontotte-a-turkoktol-szarmazunk.

8 Emphasis added by author. Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda, "Orbán Viktor Beszéde a Türk Nyelvű Államok Együttműködési Tanácsának VI. Csúcstalálkozóján"; *Саммит ССТГ в Чолпон-Ате. Виктор Орбан* (AKIpress news, 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ph-UNpB4e-8w&t=3s&ab_channel=AKIpressnews.

9 Bálint Ablónczy and Barna Borbás, "Sámántánc Az Országházban. Magyar Eredetpolitika 2006-2024," *Válasz Offline*, 2024.

10 Sárközy Miklós, "A Turán fogalom megjelenése és korai perzsabarát turanisták a 19. század első felében Magyarországon," *Ephemeris Hungarologica* 1, no. 1 (2021): 169–92, https://doi.org/10.53644/EH.2021.1.169.

11 Klára Sándor, "Vámbéry Ármin És a Török–Magyar Nyelvcsere - SZTE Repository of Publications," *Iskolakultúra* 24, no. 2 (2014): 77–86.

12 Klára Sándor, "A Török-Magyar Nyelvi Kapcsolatok Újraértelmezésének Lehetőségei," vol. 23 (Párhuzamos Történetek - Interdiszciplináris Őstörténeti Konferencia, Budapest: Archaeological Studies of PPCU Institute of Archaeology, 2020), 92.

13 Balázs Ablonczy, "A Turáni Társaságban," *Rubicon*, no. 5–6 (2016), https://old.rubicon.hu/magyar/nyomtathato_verzio/a_turani_tarsasagban/.

14 Turanism started as a language theory coined by the linguist Max Müller in 1854, when he grouped most languages that did not fit the existing language groups into the Turanian language group.

Picture 1: Viktor Orbán at the 3rd World Nomad Games in Kyrgyzstan in 2018



Source: Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister, 2018

positions.[15] Hungarian Turanism, an intellectual current propagating the exploitation of linguistic and cultural ties between Hungarian and Asian nations spanning a broad geography from Turkey to Japan, became influential before the First World War.[16] It enjoyed widespread popularity leading up to the war, when Hungary aspired for leadership in the Balkans and even the Middle East. Hungarian Turanists, representatives of an isolated language and ethnic group, looked at other Turanic nations as a wider group to belong to, similar to the pan-Slavism and pan-Germanism of their neighboring nations. Turanists believed that Budapest could become a cultural and economic centrum for countries being formed in Southeastern Europe.[17] Turanism was contested for its vagueness; some considered it purely geographical and lacking linguistic, historical, or political relevance.[18]

15 Chris Moreh, "The Asianization of National Fantasies in Hungary: A Critical Analysis of Political Discourse," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 19, no. 3 (May 2016): 343, https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877915573781.

16 Norbert Nagy, "A Konstantinápolyi Magyar Tudományos Intézet története (1916-1918)," *Balkán Füzetek* 8, no. 7 (2010): 11; Balázs Ablonczy, *Go East!: A History of Hungarian Turanism* (Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2021).

17 Balázs Ablonczy, "Hungarian Turanism: Eurasianism à La Hongroise," in *The Return of Eurasia: Continuity and Change* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2021), 230.

18 Umut Korkut, "Resentment and Reorganization: Anti-Western Discourse and the Making of Eurasianism in Hungary," *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 38 (2017): 76.

As Hungary lost around two-thirds of its territory in the First World War, irredentism became part of everyday discussions, which fed into the manifestation of Turanism in the context of alliance-building with Eastern nations while being frustrated with the West.[19] By the 1930s, Turanism, with its admiration for Mussolini's fascism, became part of the Hungarian far-right's rhetoric. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Turanist discourse lost its influence and became marginalized during the Cold War.[20] The proponents of Finno-Ugric kinship separated from Eastern thought, and during the Cold War and its immediate aftermath, it became incompatible to support Hungarian's Finno-Ugric language origins and kinship with Central Asian people simultaneously.[21] This is, still today, a complex debate in which the ethnic origins of Hungarians are subject to discussion, despite the language's Finno-Ugric roots being scientifically proven. While few proponents of the extreme Finno-Ugric stream have argued that linguistic roots imply ethnic belonging,[22] others have put forward that while Hungarian is a Finno-Ugric language, the people can be of Turkic ethnic origin.[23] In short, Orbán's statement that Hungarian is a relative of Turkic languages simplifies and distorts an already concluded linguistic debate.

Coming to power in 2010, FIDESZ recognized a political opportunity to support Neo-Turanism,[24] "a radical form of imagining the Hungarian past."[25] This group was mainly associated with Jobbik (Movement for a Better Hungary), a far-right party that played on the sentiment of Hungarians' "loneliness" in Europe.[26] This group rose during the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, which made a segment of Hungary's population more prone to mythologizing the past and led to the effective reconstruction of identities due to economic transformation. They have supported the Turkic ethnic and even linguistic origins of Hungarians and aspired to terminate Hungary's alliance with the Euro-Atlantic system and instead form an alliance with, among others, Turkic nations.[27] Neo-Turanists have denied the Finno-Ugric language theory and organized the Kurultáj since 2008; a nomad gathering held every second year in Hungary where tens of thousands of people from Turkic nations meet to strengthen the unity of "Eastern nations." When the organizer of Kurultáj was questioned in 2024 as to whether he viewed the Muslim origins of most participants as problematic, he responded that when Hungarians left the Turkic world around the 6th century, the nations living there were not Muslim, and the Turkic states today are all secular. Thus, he sees no contradiction here.[28]

19 Ibid., 76.

20 Ibid., 80.

21 Ablonczy, "Hungarian Turanism: Eurasianism à La Hongroise," 241.

22 Sándor Szeverényi, "A Finnugor „mítosz"," in *Már a Múlt Sem a Régi... - Az Új Magyar Mitológia Multidiszciplináris Elemzése* (Makat, 2015), 119–42.

23 Balázs Sudár, "Szittyák vagyunk, és finnugorok," Index, 2019, https://index.hu/techtud/tortenelem/2019/02/06/magyar_ostortenet_finnugor_vagy_hun_tudat_szittya_sztyeppe_sudar_balazs_mta_akademia/.

24 Ablónczy and Borbás, "Sámántánc Az Országházban."

25 Emel Akçalı and Umut Korkut, "Geographical Metanarratives in East-Central Europe: Neo-Turanism in Hungary," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 53, no. 5 (September 2012): 608, https://doi.org/10.2747/1539-7216.53.5.596.

26 Hungarians arrived in the Carpathian Basin in 895 and have existed among Slavic and Germanic ethnic groups since then. The nation's survival has given way to the concepts of uniqueness and loneliness, phrases far-right rhetoric has capitalized on.

27 Akçalı and Korkut, "Geographical Metanarratives in East-Central Europe."

28 Barna Borbás, "Kapcsolat Kell a Keleti Testvérnépekkel," *Válasz Offline*, 2024, 77.

This immunity and pragmatism when judging the question of Islam became relevant as FIDESZ shifted toward the far-right in the mid-2010s. It took the wind out of Jobbik's sails, because FIDESZ used topics such as migration and critiques of the West to occupy the whole right-wing spectrum of politics. Jobbik's rhetoric had propagated that Hungarians are the "most westerly of the Eastern people,"[29] which, in the late 2010s, became a common phrase in Orbán's rhetoric justifying Hungary's OTS membership.[30] Although Orbán has often uttered Islamophobic statements, the Hungarian government took over Kurultáj, too. Until 2016, it was co-financed by the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), two Hungarian ministries, and Jobbik's party foundation. However, since 2018, the Hungarian state has completely taken over the financing of the event.[31]

The assumptions of Turanists have never been confirmed, but their interest in the East established reflexes in Hungarian foreign policy thinking that can be evoked when the incumbent feels dissatisfaction with the West. As it will be explained later, the political reorientation toward the East gained traction in the second part of the 2010s, when relations became frosty between Hungary's ruling regime headed by Prime Minister Orbán and the EU due to rule of law deficiencies and Hungary's stance on migration. Not only has Orbán propagated Hungarian's Asian origins, but he also led the establishment of the Institute for Hungarian Studies (*Magyarságkutató Intézet*) in 2019, which was designed to resurrect the debate on the Turkic and Finno-Ugric origins of Hungarians.[32]

Hungary's efforts in the quest to root the language's origins in the Turkic world have made it a bastion of Turkology, creating human capital that can be employed when cultivating relations with the Turkic world.[33] Due to this, many Hungarian academics and diplomats have expertise in Turkey and speak Turkish on an advanced level. This is not to argue that most of these individuals would buy into Turanistic or anti-Western ideas. Yet, the former prominence of Turanism and the ensuing research interest in the East have created human capital that can be employed if certain elements of this ideational influence emerge again.

29 Akçalı and Korkut, "Geographical Metanarratives in East-Central Europe," 600.

30 Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda, "Orbán Viktor Elfogadó Beszéde a 'Türk Világ Legfelsőbb Rendje' Díj Átadásakor," November 6, 2024, https://miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-elfogado-beszede-a-turk-vilag-legfelsobb-rendje-dij-atadasakor/.

31 András Bódis, "Keleti Nyitás Kurultájjal," *Válasz Offline*, 2024.

32 Ádám Kolozsi, "Miért Akar Kásler Megvívni Egy Száz Éve Véget Ért Háborút?" Index, 2018, https://index.hu/techtud/2018/10/12/magyarsagkutato_intezet_kasler_miklos_mi_az_a_magyarsagtudomany/.

33 In Budapest, the BA in Oriental Languages and Cultures at ELTE with a specialization in Turkish studies is considered one of the longest-established centers of Turkic studies in Europe, as its predecessor was founded by Ármin Vámbéry in 1870. There is an MA program in Turkology under the auspices of the ELTE Institute of Oriental Studies. In addition, in Szeged, there is an MA program in Altajistics, which puts a great emphasis on teaching Turkish. In Turkey, there is a Department of Hungarology, which was opened in Ankara in 1936 as part of the Faculty of Language, History and Geography, under the name of the "Institute of Hungarology." To facilitate the relations further, a Liszt Institute (Hungary's cultural institute) has been active in Istanbul since 2013, and a Yunus Emre Institute (Turkey's cultural institute) opened in Budapest the same year.

FROM GLOBAL TO EASTERN OPENING IN HUNGARY'S FOREIGN POLICY

During an interview, a diplomat in the Western Balkans and Turkey Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary highlighted that, in 2024, talking about the Eastern Opening in Hungarian foreign policy is no longer a novelty: "There is no Eastern Opening today. That was a slogan in the 2010s when the Euro-Atlantic-centered foreign policy was corrected towards the East. Today, we are doing this without slogans. We are not opening; we have already opened."[34]

Hungary's Eastern Opening policy was first mentioned by FIDESZ during its campaign for the 2010 elections.[35] Later, already as Prime Minister in 2010, Orbán referred to the global incentives behind this shift when he announced that "...we sail under a Western flag, but in the global economy, the wind blows from the East."[36] He forecasted the decreasing weight of the European Union and the United States in global GDP and the rise of East Asia in the upcoming decades. This rhetoric is a stark shift from the period of the 1990s and the 2000s. In the 1990s, after the transition to democracy and capitalism, most of Hungary's political parties prioritized the country's NATO (1999) and EU accession (2004) and promised to swiftly catch up to the living standards of Western European countries. Hungary's integration into the Euro-Atlantic institutions succeeded; in other words, Hungarians found their place in Europe as fully-fledged citizens.[37]

Yet, the search for an alternative ancestral homeland in the East quickly gained traction as Hungary's economic situation lagged behind, and by 2010, it had not reached the governments' (perhaps too ambitious) goal to reach the living standards of Hungary's Western neighbors. The dissatisfaction with the West, coupled with a domestic political crisis in 2006[38] and the financial crisis of 2008/9, behind which FIDESZ saw the crisis of Western values, activated the reflexes on the right spectrum of the electorate that would find an Eastern-looking foreign policy appealing. In addition to FIDESZ, the far-right Jobbik campaigned to reorient Hungary's foreign policy orientation to the East. Their electoral success in the 2009 European Parliamentary and the 2010 Parliamentary elections prompted the inclusion of Turkey and Central Asia into the FIDESZ government's Eastern Opening.[39]

The 2011[40] foreign policy strategy published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary mentions "Global Opening" [41] and not Eastern Opening. This reflects the parallel concepts used at that time in Hungary's state administration when proposing closer engagement with the non-Western part of

34 Hungarian diplomat in discussion with the author, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Budapest, March 19, 2024.

35 Zsolt Nyitrai, ed., "Nemzeti Ügyek Politikája," (Fidesz – Magyar Polgári Szövetség Központi Hivatal, KDNP, 2010), 46. https://www.langzsolt.hu/upl/files/nemzeti_ugyek_politikaja_8481.pdf.

36 Miniszterelnökség, "Orbán Viktor Beszéde a Magyar Állandó Értekezlet IX. Ülésén (2010. November 5.)," 2010, https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/orban-viktor-beszede-a-magyar-allando-ertekezlet-ix-ulesen-2010-november-5.

37 Korkut, "Resentment and Reorganization," 83.

38 After a speech of then Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány held behind closed doors at a party meeting in which he admitted lying to the nation got leaked, FIDESZ gained in popularity.

39 Akçalı and Korkut, "Geographical Metanarratives in East-Central Europe."

40 Since 2011, Hungary has not published a new foreign policy strategy document.

41 Külügyminisztérium, "Magyar Külpolitika Az Uniós Elnökség Után," 2011, https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/download/a/cb/60000/kulpolitikai_strategia_20111219.pdf.

the world.[42] At that time, the pro-EU and NATO foreign policy bureaucracy of the pre-2010 times was still in place, and Hungary's foreign policy was more in line with that of the EU and its member states.

The document shows an increased focus on the post-Soviet region, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel region, and Latin America. Turkey is mostly mentioned in the context of its interest in the Balkans[43] and Hungary's aim of supporting Ankara's EU integration.[44] Interestingly, Central Asia is not only referred to as a potential energy source for the future, but the document suggests capitalizing on Hungary's fortunate situation that it "can be linked to the Central Asian, Caucasian, Finno-Ugric and Slavic peoples by kinship, linguistic and historical ties."[45] However, there are no traces of searching for an alternative to the West. In contrast to Hungary's transactional foreign policy since the late 2010s, the strategy was focused on utilizing multilateral organizations (e.g., the UN) as venues of cooperation with countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America to balance Hungary's EU-centered foreign economic relations.

Although Prime Minister Orbán has referred to this opening as "Eastern" since 2011,[46] officially the Eastern Opening was initiated only in 2012. The Széll Kálmán Plan 2.0, a national economy strategy, suggested the diversification of Hungary's foreign economic relations toward Asia.[47] This was a primarily economically oriented strategy using bilateral engagement to intensify relations, which was a step back in contrast to the Global Opening that propagated cultural, security, humanitarian, and international development.[48] The East was never officially defined[49] in strategic documents, but based on the government's activity, its three main pillars are Russia, China, and the Turkic world.[50] The plan set out the development of Hungary's foreign economic attaché network worldwide, which was institutionalized by renaming Hungary's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2014. It is important to emphasize that neither the strategy nor Orbán's rhetoric suggested a turn away from Western allies, only adding new Eastern countries to Hungary's partners. However, this changed gradually as Hungary's relations with the EU deteriorated because of issues with the rule of law and Hungary's critical stance on migration after 2015. By 2018, Turkey and Russia became cornerstones of Hungary's foreign policy based on Orbán's speeches. At the yearly ambassadors conference in Budapest in 2015, Orbán instructed his head of missions to pursue the following playbook:

> When you think about the judgment of an event in the country you are stationed, and I think about it in my office, so when there is something happening in the world, when

42 András Rácz, "A Magyar Globális/Keleti Nyitás – Elméleti Áttekintés Elsődleges Források Alapján," in *Magyarország Európában, Európa a Világban. Tanulmánykötet Gazdag Ferenc 70. Születésnapjára*, ed. Boglárka Koller and Viktor Marsai (Budapest: Dialóg Campus Kiadó, 2016), 201–10.

43 Külügyminisztérium, "Magyar Külpolitika Az Uniós Elnökség Után," 25.

44 Ibid., 32.

45 Ibid. 39.

46 Rácz, "A Magyar Globális/Keleti Nyitás," 206.

47 Miniszterelnökség, "A Következő Lépés - Széll Kálmán Terv 2.0," 2012, 190, https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/download/3/e8/80000/1-A_k%C3%B6vetkez%C5%91_l%C3%A9p%C3%A9s%20%28SzKT%2020%29.pdf.

48 Erzsébet Nagyné Rózsa, "Magyarország És Az Arab Közel-Kelet," in *Magyarország Európában, Európa a Világban. Tanulmánykötet Gazdag Ferenc 70. Születésnapjára*, ed. Boglárka Koller and Viktor Marsai (Budapest: Dialóg Campus Kiadó, 2016), 195.

49 Hungary's foreign policy thinking has never precisely defined the East. Foreign policy memos written inside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have also, unofficially, referred to it as "everything that is not the West." See more at: Nagyné Rózsa, 195.

50 Zoltán Egeresi in discussion with the author, National University of Public Service, Budapest, March 19, 2024.

> there is movement, I always look at three relations because I think that historically Hungary's fate has been decided by its relations with three countries. I look at what is happening and its impact on the German-Hungarian, the Russian-Hungarian, and the Turkish-Hungarian relationship. These three strong powers that determine what happens to us here have been doing so for a thousand years.[51]

Due to Hungary's accommodating behavior, Turkish policy circles regard the Ankara-Budapest relationship as prominent, too. A non-career Turkish diplomat in Ankara put Hungary in the top three capitals when it comes to postings abroad: Lefkosia is the most prestigious place to be appointed, Baku is the second, and Budapest is the third.[52] This may be a personal opinion, but it suggests there are much deeper sentiments behind the relationship between Turkey and Hungary than the intensification of economic relations.

51 Miniszterelnökség, "Orbán Viktor Beszéde a Misszióvezetői Munkaértekezleten."

52 Turkish diplomat in discussion with the author, MFA Türkiye, Ankara, March 13, 2024.

TURKEY IN HUNGARY'S FOREIGN POLICY: FROM A POTENTIAL ECONOMIC PARTNER TO A POLITICAL PRIORITY

Looking at Turkey-Hungary relations from 2024, the rhetorical importance given to Turkey has not been expressed in economic terms. Turkey's foreign direct investments (FDI) in Hungary gradually rose from EUR 16 million in 2015 to EUR 106 million in 2022; however, this only constitutes 1–2.5% of all FDI in Hungary.[53] The trade volume between Turkey and Hungary increased from EUR 2.1 billion in 2014 to EUR 3.9 billion in 2023.[54] In Turkey's 2022 exports, Hungary held a 0.63% share of all exports (39th).[55] In Hungary's exports, Turkey had a 1.3% share (19th).[56] Between 2014 and 2023, Hungary's exports to the EU grew by 77%, to the world by 76%, and to Turkey only by 50%, from EUR 1.59 billion to EUR 2.39 billion.[57] In the meantime, Turkey's exports to Hungary rose by 190% from EUR 521 million to EUR 1.51 billion. This indicates that while trade relations have intensified and Hungary operates with a trade surplus, they have not reached the goal of USD 5 billion set by Orbán and Erdoğan in 2013.[58] Furthermore, compared to the rest of the world, exports to Turkey increased more slowly.

At a meeting with President Erdoğan in 2018,[59] Orbán repeatedly stated that Ankara is one of the three capitals that Budapest should pay attention to. It became clear that Turkey's prominence had increased despite its relative economic underperformance. Actors involved in shaping Hungary-Turkey economic relations evaluated the growing political interest in Turkey differently. A representative of the Organization of Turkic States office in Budapest argued that Hungary's interest in the Turkic world is not controversial at all because, for instance, the Czech Republic and Austria are also economically present in the region.[60] However, a Hungarian diplomat in Turkey highlights several differences between the approaches of Western European countries and Hungary:

> There is a significant difference between the West and Hungary in dealing with the East: the difference between emotion and pragmatism. In the West, they are pragmatic. They are present because their companies are ready, they have the money, and they do trade and invest. In contrast, Hungary, under FIDESZ, has created the foreign economic attaché network, the people are there, and they are trying to facilitate trade and investments, but there are no Hungarian companies that they can help enter the market. The

53 "Mérlegen a 2022-Es Év Külföldi Befektetései Itthon – Hogyan Alakult Az FDI Áramlás Tavaly?" Oeconomus Gazdaságkutató Alapítvány, 2023, https://www.oeconomus.hu/oecofocus/merlegen-a-2022-es-ev-kulfoldi-befektetesei-itthon-hogyan-alakult-az-fdi-aramlas-tavaly/; "100 Évesek a Török-Magyar Modernkori Külkapcsolatok – Külgazdaság, Bilaterális Megállapodások," Oeconomus Gazdaságkutató Alapítvány, 2023, https://www.oeconomus.hu/oecofocus/100-evesek-a-torok-magyar-modernkori-kulkapcsolatok-kulgazdasag-bilateralis-megallapodasok/.

54 "A Külkereskedelmi Termékforgalom Értéke Euróban És Értékindexei a Fontosabb Országok Szerint [Folyó Áron]," KSH, 2024, https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/kkr/hu/kkr0008.html.

55 "Turkey Exports By Country," Trading Economics, 2024, https://tradingeconomics.com/turkey/exports-by-country.

56 Ibid.

57 KSH, "A Külkereskedelmi Termékforgalom Értéke."

58 Miniszterelnökség, "Törökország Sikere Biztatás Magyarországnak," 2013, https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/torokorszag-sikere-biztatas-magyarorszagnak.

59 "Orbán: Sztambul-Moszkva-Berlin Vonzáskörében Élünk," Index, October 8, 2018, https://index.hu/belfold/2018/10/08/erdogan_orban_viktor_sajtotajekoztato/.

60 Representative of the Organization of Turkic States Budapest Office in discussion with the author, Budapest, March 18, 2024.

> problem here is the order: we created the infrastructure for foreign economic activity, but there are not enough Hungarian investments to fill that up. To compensate for this, the Hungarian side emphasizes cultural diplomacy and makes gestures to Turkey, i.e., suggesting that we are not Western.[61]

The relationship between Turkey and Hungary turned more intimate in 2017, demonstrated by the 17 meetings between Orbán and Erdoğan between that year and 2024 (Table 1). Confirming this shift from short-term economic to political goals, in 2017, Orbán stated publicly in front of Turkish businesspeople that although money matters, it is more important to have friends, and he promised that whatever anti-Turkey statements other European countries will issue, Hungary will never join them.[62] As another talking point directed at the Hungarian electorate, Orbán argued in a radio interview in 2018 that since Turkey held migrants back from Europe, it was a vital interest of Hungary that Turkey had a strong leader and a strong political system.[63] In addition, Orbán gave a speech in Kyrgyzstan at the Summit of the Turkic Council, concluding that the old world order based on Western capital and knowledge had failed, and the newly emerging Eastern countries determined the new order.[64] In the same year, Hungary joined the Cooperation Council of Turkic-speaking States (Turkic Council)—which changed its name to the Organization of Turkic States in 2021—as an observer.

Hungary's interest in non-Western partners coincided with Turkey's isolation in the Western alliance system. This was the period when Erdoğan became isolated in the West after the human rights violations following the July 15, 2016 failed coup attempt, and the EU froze enlargement negotiations with Turkey in 2018.[65] Meanwhile, Hungary became subject to critique in the EU due to its illiberal stances on migration, and its continuingly friendly relations with Russia after the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014. This constellation of affairs constituted a mutual enemy, the West, against which Turkey and Hungary have since engaged in rhetorical and practical cooperation. Underpinning his domestic political interests behind this alliance, since 2016, Orbán has emphasized Turkey's role in preventing migration toward the EU,[66] and since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, energy has become the most important field of cooperation. Table 1 demonstrates that after Turkey's failed coup attempt in 2016 and Hungary's growing isolation within the EU simultaneously, the cooperation evolved beyond economic relations, taking on a more pronounced political dimension.

61 Hungarian diplomat in discussion with the author, Ankara, February 7, 2024.

62 Tamás Botos, "Orbán: Magyarország Kitart a Barátai Mellett, És Törökország Oldalán Áll," 444, June 30, 2017, https://444.hu/2017/06/30/orban-magyarorszag-kitart-a-baratai-mellett-es-torokorszag-oldalan-all.

63 Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda, "Orbán Viktor Interjúja a Kossuth Rádió „Jó Reggelt, Magyarország!" Című Műsorában."

64 Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda, "Orbán Viktor Beszéde a Türk Nyelvű Államok Együttműködési Tanácsának VI. Csúcstalálkozóján."

65 Council of the EU, "Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process - Council Conclusions," 2018, 13, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35863/st10555-en18.pdf.

66 Thanking Turkey for its efforts to uphold migrants is generally stressed in the public communications of the Hungarian government. However, since Turkey and Hungary do not share a border, there is no significant bilateral cooperation between the countries on this issue. Hungarian diplomat in discussion with the author, Ankara, March 19, 2024.

Table 1. Meetings between Prime Minister Orbán and President Erdoğan between 2013 and 2024[67]

Date	Place	Occasion	Most important conclusions, themes emphasized
February 2013	Budapest	Bilateral	Decision on the establishment of the Strategic Cooperation Council; goal of reaching USD 5 billion trade volume; Turkey indicates its aim to restore Ottoman cultural heritage in Hungary; initiated the process on allowing Turkey to renovate Ottoman cultural heritage in Hungary
December 2013	Ankara	Bilateral	Turkey introduced visa liberalization for Hungary; the first meeting of the High-Level Cooperation Council
July 2016	Warsaw	Multilateral: NATO	-
May 2017	Beijing	Multilateral: Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation	Erdoğan thanked Orbán for his support in the EU; increasing trade volume as a shared goal
June 30, 2017	Ankara	Bilateral, Hungarian-Turkish Business Forum	Orbán admitted that the breakthrough in economic relations has not happened yet; emphasized that Hungary will not be part of anti-Turkey statements in the EU; thanked Ankara for holding up migrants at the EU's border; mentioned Ankara alongside Berlin and Moscow as the most important capitals for Hungary abroad
July 9, 2018	Ankara	Multilateral: Inauguration of President Erdoğan	-
September 3, 2018	Cholpon Ata	Multilateral: 6th Summit of the Turkic Council	Hungary received observer status at the Turkic Council
October 8–9, 2018	Budapest	Bilateral: Hungarian-Turkish Business Forum	Orbán emphasized Turkey's role in keeping migrants outside the EU; criticized the EU for not accelerating enlargement negotiations with Turkey; Erdoğan thanked Hungary for its support in the EU; opening the Gül Baba Tomb in Budapest, the geographically westernmost tomb from the Ottoman period; potential gas imports to Hungary through the Turk Stream
October 14, 2019	Baku	Multilateral: 7th Summit of the Turkic Council	Erdoğan expressed his gratitude for the opening of the Budapest office of the Turkic Council and for Hungary's help in the EU to block a statement condemning Turkey's Operation Peace Spring in Syria; Orbán offered assistance to Turkic Council member states in case Hungary receives the Enlargement and Neighborhood portfolio in the EU
November 7, 2019	Budapest	Bilateral	Orbán emphasized Turkey's role in controlling migration and as a gas transit country; Erdoğan thanked Orbán for his support of Operation Peace Spring and Turkey's EU membership
June 13, 2021	Brussels	Multilateral: NATO	-

Table 1. (cont'd.)

Date	Place	Occasion	Most important conclusions, themes emphasized
November 11–12, 2021	Ankara and Istanbul	Bilateral (ANK) and multilateral (IST): 8th Summit of the Turkic Council	Orbán suggested that the EU should support the Turkish government directly in the fight against migration and stressed Turkey's role as an energy transit country; ensured Turkic Council member states that he will not agree to any EU-level decision violating their interests; Erdoğan thanked Hungary for its support in the EU
November 11, 2022	Samarkand	Multilateral: 9th Summit of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS)	Orbán emphasized the OTS's role as a peace forum in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war and Turkey's role in mediation; thanked Turkey for being an energy transit and Azerbaijan an energy source country
March 16, 2023	Ankara	Multilateral: OTS Extraordinary Summit	Orbán thanked the OTS member states for propagating peace; Erdoğan emphasized the role of the Middle Corridor as a trade route
June 3, 2023	Ankara	Multilateral: Inauguration of President Erdoğan	-
August 20, 2023	Budapest	Bilateral	Turkey's BOTAŞ and Hungary's MVM CEEnergy agreed on natural gas shipments from Turkey to Hungary
November 2, 2023	Astana	Multilateral: 10th Summit of the OTS	Orbán emphasized Turkey's and the Turkic world's role in a possible future European security architecture
December 18, 2023	Budapest	Bilateral	The parties concluded an "Enhanced Strategic Cooperation Agreement"; Orbán ensured Erdoğan that during Hungary's EU presidency, he will propagate the modernization of Turkey's Customs Union with the EU and visa liberalization; the Turkish-Hungarian Cultural year (2024) began
March 1, 2024	Antalya	Multilateral: Antalya Diplomacy Forum	-
July 9, 2024	Washington, DC	NATO Summit	Orbán emphasized that Hungary asked for Turkey's support of Hungary's peace mission in the Russia-Ukraine war. Erdoğan stated that Turkey continues its efforts to achieve peace both in the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Hamas war, and it expects Hungary to support reviving Ankara's EU integration process during its EU presidency.

67 This is not a comprehensive list. All bilateral visits are listed, but multilateral meetings are included only when there is a public record of a bilateral meeting between the two leaders beyond the official plenary session, or when the significance of the meeting requires it (i.e., the 2018 inauguration of President Erdoğan). The sources of the meetings are the Turkish Presidency's and the Hungarian Prime Minister's websites. See more: Miniszterelnökség, "Miniszterelnök Beszédei 2010-2014," 2014, https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk; Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda, "Miniszterelnök Beszédei 2015-2022," 2022, https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/#beszedek_container; Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda, "Miniszterelnök Beszédei 2023 Óta," 2024, https://miniszterelnok.hu/beszedek/; T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, "Konuşmalar, Yurt Dışı Ziyaretler," 2024, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/.

OFFSETTING ISOLATION? HUNGARY'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE ORGANIZATION OF TURKIC STATES

One of the most visible manifestations of the political importance Orbán and Erdoğan have attributed to each other is the inclusion of Hungary in the Turkic Council, later renamed to OTS. The organization was established in 2009, and its members are Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. It includes Hungary, Northern Cyprus, and Turkmenistan as observers. In the early 2010s, the organization's work was mostly limited to culture, education, connectivity, and youth affairs.[68] Yet, domestic political changes in Central Asian states, Turkey's defense industry development, a weakening Russia, and Ankara's growing need for energy diversification spurred the intensification of Turkey's relations with OTS countries in the late 2010s.[69] By this time, economic and energy-related cooperation was put on the organization's agenda, and it expanded beyond its original geography toward the West, with Hungary being admitted as an observer state in 2018.[70]

OTS members invited Hungary to be an observer member in 2018 at the Cholpon-Ata Summit, where Orbán participated as a guest. In the late 2010s, the cooling of relations with the EU over migration, Hungary's rule of law issues, and the government-boosted revival of Hungary's Turkic origins prepared the domestic political conditions for Hungary's observer membership in the OTS. By 2018, Orbán's meetings with partners from the EU were few, apart from within the multilateral setting of the European Council.[71] In contrast, Orbán had been treated with respect by his partners in Turkey and Central Asia, where authoritarian power structures often align with Hungary's approach. Orbán emphasized Hungary's loneliness in Europe by saying that being a member of the EU as an "Eastern nation" is a unique experience. A high-level diplomat at Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs working on Central Europe suggested that Hungary's Eastern Opening and its connections to Turkic identity have laid the ground for a more systematic engagement with Turkey and Central Asia.[72] Yet, when I inquired about Hungary's motivations in the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, a diplomat working on Central Asian Affairs added nuance to this assumption:

> I will not think anything about this because of my position, but our reception is certainly positive in Central Asia. You can go there as often as you want, they come as often as you call them, and they do not ask provocative questions we do not like answering. That is understandable. This definitely helps facilitate the relationship, but there is more to it. Hungary wants to be present in all

68 Assel Tutumlu, "Turkey - Central Astia Relations: A Strategic Overview," NEI Reports (Near East Institute, 2020), 8, https://yde.neu.edu.tr/wp-content/uploads/sites/170/2020/09/YDE-Orta-Asya-29.09.2020.pdf.

69 Meliha Benli Altunışık, "Turkey's 'Return' to Central Asia in a Shifting Global and Regional Context: New Opportunities and Limitations," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* (2024): 6–9, https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2024.2308971.

70 Zoltán Egeresi, "Hungary's Opening to the Turkic World," *Avrasya Dünyasi*, no. 6 (January 1, 2020): 48–54; Tamás Péter Baranyi, "Hungary's Role in the Organization of Turkic States as an Observer State: Limitations and Opportunities," *PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs* 27, no. 1 (July 26, 2022): 121–36; János Hóvári, "CORRECT Hungary and the Turkic World: A Twenty-First Century Challenge," Hungarian Conservative, December 26, 2022, https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/current/hungary-and-the-turkic-world-a-twenty-first-century-challenge/.

71 Hungarian diplomat in discussion with the author, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Budapest, March 19, 2024.

72 Turkish diplomat in discussion with the author, MFA Türkiye, Ankara, March 13, 2024.

> organizations where we can promote our political and economic interests. The importance of the OTS is that we are present at all political and economic ministerial levels and see what it is about. [73]

Hungary's ties to the Turkic world created the ideational background on which establishing institutionalized relations with Turkic nations became possible and even desired in some electoral circles of FIDESZ.[74] This helped as a discursive base, but the pragmatic consequence was to seem less isolated in the eyes of Orbán's electorate. It may seem tangential to Budapest's conventional foreign policy considerations, but the affirmation that Orbán receives from partners within the OTS can assuage potential insecurities stemming from Hungary's criticism in Brussels. In addition, Orbán underpins Hungary's illiberal political behavior with the country's Asian origins. Already in 2012, he said publicly that "half-Asian descendants, like us" can only do politics from the position of power—unlike Scandinavians or other European nations.[75] Thus, in the short run, for Orbán and his supporters, the regular meetings with politicians from Central Asia and Turkey serve as tangible evidence of Hungary's continued relevance, attempting to counter the criticism that the country is isolated in international politics.[76] However, Orbán's ambitions to elevate Hungary's profile and to limit his own isolation via the OTS do not suffice as reasons why Turkey became interested in opening the organization to Hungary.

73 Hungarian diplomat in discussion with the author, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Budapest, March 19, 2024.

74 For this, see the first section on the sources and ideational perspectives.

75 Márton Neményi, "Orbán: Veszekedős Félázsiai Nép a Magyar," 24.hu, July 26, 2012, https://24.hu/belfold/2012/07/26/orban-veszekedos-felazsiai-nep-a-magyar/.

76 "'Budapest Is Teaching Finland and Sweden a Lesson': Hungary Becomes Increasingly Isolated in NATO," Euronews, March 13, 2023, https://www.euronews.com/2023/03/13/budapest-is-teaching-finland-and-sweden-a-lesson-hungary-becomes-increasingly-isolated-in-.

TURKEY'S GOALS TO FURTHER ITS ENERGY HUB AMBITIONS VIA HUNGARY'S OTS MEMBERSHIP

Understanding Turkey's interest in Central Asia helps explain why Ankara supported Hungary's invitation to the OTS. Since the late 2010s, the increasing relevance of the OTS in Turkey's foreign policy[77] fits into the broader picture of Ankara using non-Western multilateral organizations to increase its leverage against the West. Although Turkey is institutionally tied to the West through its NATO and Council of Europe membership and its Customs Union with the EU, the Erdoğan regime aspires to more autonomy in foreign policy-making.[78] As part of this ambition, Turkey has shown interest in joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRICS group to amplify Turkey's influence on the world stage by building alternatives to the current system.[79] This is all the more straightforward in Central Asia because of the region's geographical and cultural proximity to Turkey. Hakan Fidan, Turkey's foreign minister since 2023, emphasized in his speech to Turkish ambassadors that the OTS is one of the tools with which Turkey can institutionalize the gains it has achieved in foreign policy.[80]

Turkey became active in Central Asia in the early 1990s, when the disintegration of the Soviet Union opened a new geography, and Ankara became the first country to recognize the independence of the five Central Asian countries. This interest faded in the 2000s when Turkey focused on its EU membership and extending its influence in the Middle East. However, since the early 2020s, Moscow's weakening role, the appearance of China as a competitor in infrastructural projects, the withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan, the search for alternative energy sources, and the presence of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which takes an active interest in Central Asia, as a ruling coalition partner spurred Turkey to increase its presence in the region.[81]

Turkey's main motivation for its interest in the region is increasing transportation and energy connectivity between Europe and Asia through the Middle Corridor.[82] The Middle Corridor is an existing but currently underutilized trade route between Western China and Europe, spanning Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. It is designed to be an alternative to the Northern Corridor, running through Russia, and the Southern Corridor, via the Suez Canal. Although Russia's political and economic influence is still relatively strong in the region, the sanctions imposed on Moscow since 2014 have bolstered OTS countries to diversify their foreign policy, giving room for Turkey's Middle Corridor plans. Already in the 2022 phase of the Russia-Ukraine war, trade along the route of the Middle Corridor

77 Hakan Fidan, "Turkish Foreign Policy at the Turn of the 'Century of Türkiye': Challenges, Vision, Objectives, and Transformation," *Insight Turkey* 25, no. Summer 2023 (September 30, 2023): 21, https://doi.org/10.25253/99.2023253.1.

78 Senem Aydın-Düzgit, "Authoritarian Middle Powers and the Liberal Order: Turkey's Contestation of the EU," *International Affairs* 99, no. 6 (November 6, 2023): 2319–37, https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiad225.

79 Christopher S. Chivvis, Alper Coşkun, and Beatrix Geaghan-Breiner, "Türkiye in the Emerging World Order," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2023, https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/10/31/t-rkiye-in-emerging-world-order-pub-90868.

80 Hadan Fidan, "Dışişleri Bakanı Sayın Hakan Fidan'ın 14. Büyükelçiler Konferansı Açılışında Yaptığı Konuşma, 7 Ağustos 2023, Ankara," T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2023, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-say-in-hakan-fidan-in-14-buyukelciler-konferansi-acilisinda-yaptigi-konusma--7-agustos-2023.tr.mfa.

81 Altunışık, "Turkey's 'Return' to Central Asia."

82 Fidan, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 22.

had increased. This was further intensified by the additional sanctions imposed on Russia after 2022, resulting in accelerated integration among Central Asian countries, meaning aligned regulations, reduced tariffs, along with increased railway, road, and sea route connectivity.[83]

Beyond trading in goods, the Middle Corridor has an energy-related aspect. While EU countries are looking for alternatives to Russian gas imports, Turkey is trying to use its geographical position to access resources from its energy-rich neighbors and set up a gas hub to put Ankara at the center of the region's energy trade. Several variations of this possible energy hub are discussed.[84] Yet, a case in point for our discussion is that Turkey sees OTS member states Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan as credible alternatives in the middle term.[85] The OTS also expresses its aspiration for the realization of such projects. In the Turkic World Vision – 2040, a strategic document adopted by OTS member states in 2021, the word "energy" is mentioned 30 times on 17 pages. It promotes the region as the center of East-West trade through the Middle Corridor. However, the Middle Corridor has not yet lived up to its potential in either energy or transportation. In 2022, the Middle Corridor shipped only 8% of the cargo volume transported by the trans-Siberian railway from Asia to Europe in 2021,[86] and the energy resources transported along this route have been only taken into consideration seriously by EU countries since 2022.[87]

For Turkey, Hungary is a useful link that can connect its aspirations to other EU capitals. From Turkey's view, Budapest can advocate for increasing the import of energy and other goods from OTS member states.[88] Although this is a challenging task and Hungary alone cannot leverage it, the Turkic World Vision – 2040 document designates the OTS Budapest office as a hub for developing cooperation with European institutions, which may help increase demand for goods through the Middle Corridor.[89] The extent to which Hungary can contribute to these ambitions depends on the member states' willingness and ability to further integrate and create a conducive environment for the Middle Corridor to flourish.[90]

According to a Turkish diplomat closely following the OTS's work, Hungary is an observer, but it acts as a full member.[91] Notably, Hungary has assumed a significant role by diplomatically and financially supporting the opening of an OTS office in Budapest in 2019, which is the only such office in the EU.[92] A Hungarian diplomat heads the office, and it has representatives from all OTS member

83 Tuba Eldem, "Russia's War on Ukraine and the Rise of the Middle Corridor as a Third Vector of Eurasian Connectivity," SWP Comment (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2022), https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2022C64/.

84 Francesco Siccardi, "Understanding the Energy Drivers of Turkey's Foreign Policy," Carnegie Europe, 2024, https://carnegieeurope.eu/2024/02/28/understanding-energy-drivers-of-turkey-s-foreign-policy-pub-91733; Einar Wigen, "Pipe Dreams or Dream Pipe? Turkey's Hopes of Becoming an Energy Hub," *Middle East Journal* 66, no. 4 (2012): 598–612.

85 "How the Turkic World Can Become a Global Alternative Energy Source," TRT, 2023, https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/how-the-turkic-world-can-become-a-global-alternative-energy-source-12780217; "Türkmenistan Gazının Türkiye ve Avrupa'ya Ulaştırılması 'Tarihi Öneme Sahip Bir Girişim,'" Anadolu Agency, 2022, https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/turkmenistan-gazinin-turkiye-ve-avrupaya-ulastirilmasi-tarihi-oneme-sahip-bir-girisim/2764289.

86 Ganyi Zhang, "Turkey's Place in the Asia-Europe Logistics Reconfiguration," Upply, 2022, https://market-insights.upply.com/en/turkeys-place-in-the-asia-europe-logistics-reconfiguration#_ftn3.

87 Eldem, "Russia's War on Ukraine," 7.

88 Baranyi, "Hungary's Role in the Organization of Turkic States," 134.

89 OTS, "Turkic World Vision - 2040," 2021, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/haberler/turkic-world-vision-2040-2396-97.pdf, 7.

90 Representative of the Organization of Turkic States Budapest Office in discussion with the author, Budapest, March 18, 2024

91 Turkish diplomat in discussion with the author, MFA Türkiye, Ankara, March 13, 2024.

92 "A Türk Tanács Megnyitja Budapesti Bemutatkozó Irodáját," TRT, September 19, 2019, https://www.trt.net.tr/magyar/kultura-eletmod-/2019/09/19/a-turk-tanacs-megnyitja-budapesti-bemutatkozo-irodajat-1272330.

states.[93] Demonstrating its commitment to the organization, the Hungarian government has generously provided a villa for its public events and an office, all rent-free, covering operational and staffing expenses for Hungarian and member states' employees.[94] The OTS office in Budapest is in the same building as some offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, indicating Hungary's readiness to assist the organization. Furthermore, Hungary underscored its dedication by investing EUR 100 million in the Turkic Investment Fund, the foremost financial institution established by the OTS.[95]

Picture 2. The logos of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the OTS at the office building they share in Budapest



Source: Author's own photograph

The Hungarian government provides every possible support to link the organization to the rest of Europe because neither its financial nor its political costs are high.[96] The economic costs are only the maintenance costs of the OTS office in Budapest. In the beginning, Orbán's critics lamented joining the organization for its emphasis on the East at the expense of the West.[97] However, the EU's energy diversification push following the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine elevated Central Asia's geopolitical significance to the EU due to its energy resources. This made it less difficult for the Orbán regime to argue for further engagement with the region. In other words, the Russia-Ukraine war has legitimized nourishing relations with authoritarian states from Central Asia, as this translates to diversification away from Russia.

Capitalizing on this momentum, the Orbán government uses the framework of the OTS meetings to stress Central Asia's important role in the EU's energy security, benefitting Turkey's energy hub aspirations.[98] A great example of Hungary's role in promoting Central Asian energy sources and Turkey as an energy hub was on August 20, 2023, a national holiday celebrating the establishment of the Hungarian state in Budapest. Viktor Orbán invited eleven politicians to the event, among whom no Western leaders in power could be found, but four OTS member states and Turkmenistan were

93 OTS, "Representation Office," 2024, https://www.turkkon.hu/EN/news/representative-office/.

94 Zoltán Ágoston, "Több Száz Millió Forintért Épít Történelmi Kertet a Szijjártó-Féle Külügy a Türk Államok Szervezetének," Népszava, 2022, https://nepszava.hu/3143364_tobb-szaz-millio-forintert-epit-tortenelmi-kertet-a-szijjarto-fele-kulugy-a-turk-allamok-szervezetenek.

95 Sándor Czinkóczi, "Százmillió Euróval Csatlakozik a Magyar Kormány a Türk IMF-Hez," 444, March 11, 2023, https://444.hu/2023/11/03/szazmillio-euroval-csatlakozik-a-magyar-kormany-a-turk-imf-hez.

96 Zoltán Egeresi in discussion with the author, National University of Public Service, Budapest, March 19, 2024.

97 Tamás Rónai, "Otthon, Keleten," Népszava, November 4, 2023, https://nepszava.hu/3214221_otthon-keleten.

98 Viktor Orbán, "Magyar-Kazah Csúcs. Fókuszban a Béke És Az Energia," Facebook, 2023, https://www.facebook.com/100044628210344/posts/magyar-kazah-cs%C3%BAcs-f%C3%B3kuszban-a-b%C3%A9ke-%C3%A9s-az-energia-/886961292801470/.

present.[99] After the meeting, Hungary signed a contract to buy 300 million cubic meters of natural gas from the Turkish energy company BOTAŞ.[100] Although the amount is symbolic given Hungary's 8.5 billion cubic meters natural gas consumption in 2023,[101] it was the first time a non-neighboring country to Turkey bought gas from it.[102] Since then, Hungary has announced the purchase of Azeri gas via Turkey,[103] signed an energy deal with Turkmenistan,[104] and is seeking to increase the volumes bought from BOTAŞ in 2025/26.[105]

Turkey's involvement with Hungary in facilitating its energy-hub aspirations is problematic from the EU's perspective. Turkey intends to become a more important transit country at the expense of maintaining the EU's reliance on Russia. Although the EU has not sanctioned Russian gas imports,[106] there is a widespread voluntary practice of energy diversification in the bloc. In 2023, 45% of Turkey's natural gas imports came from Russia. The country's gas production in 2023 was only 800 million cubic meters, with a consumption of approximately 50 billion cubic meters, which means that its export capacity for Turkish gas is very limited. However, Turkey's pipeline system has the capacity to receive 75–80 billion cubic meters per year, meaning that there are 25–30 billion cubic meters of extra capacity in the system, of which 10 billion is currently unutilized, that can be re-exported.[107] A Turkish diplomat in Ankara lamented that other EU countries did not want to buy gas from BOTAŞ because they feared that Russian gas would be mixed into the supplied amount.[108] Yet, this fear did not arise in Budapest. Whereas Russia's share of the EU's pipeline gas imports dropped from over 40% in 2021 to 8% in 2023,[109] Hungary's 95% dependency[110] on Russian gas in 2020 decreased to only 80–85% by 2023.[111] Since Hungary had been aware that Ukraine would stop

99 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan from Turkey, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani from Qatar, Sebastian Kurz from Austria, Andrej Babiš from Czechia, Aleksandar Vučić from Serbia, Milorad Dodik from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Janez Janša from Slovenia, Ilham Alijev from Azerbaijan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev from Uzbekistan, Sadyr Japarov from Kyrgyzstan, Serdar Berdimuhamedow from Turkmenistan, and Rustam Minnikhanov from Russia. See more: Flori and Kert, "Barátok Közt - Bukott Kormányfőtől a Börtönviselt Diktátorig: Ki Kicsoda Orbán Vendégei Között?" Euronews, August 23, 2023, https://hu.euronews.com/2023/08/23/orban-diktator-korrupcio-katar-erdogan.

100 "Hungary's MVM to Buy Gas from Turkey's BOTAS in 'groundbreaking' Deal," Reuters, August 21, 2023, https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/hungarys-mvm-buy-gas-turkeys-botas-groundbreaking-deal-2023-08-21.

101 Evelin Szőke, "Hungary's Gas and Electricity Consumption Continued to Fall in 2023," CEE Energy News, October 1, 2024, https://ceenergynews.com/oil-gas/hungarys-gas-and-electricity-consumption-continued-to-fall-in-2023/.

102 Siccardi, "Understanding the Energy Drivers," 16.

103 Duygu Alhan, "Azerbaijan Gas to Be Transported to Hungary via Türkiye," Anadolu Agency, February 16, 2024, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/azerbaijan-gas-to-be-transported-to-hungary-via-turkiye/3139799.

104 Haley Nelson, "Turkmenistan Signs Its First-Ever Energy Deal with the EU," Caspian Policy Center, August 24, 2023, https://www.caspianpolicy.org/research/energy-and-economy-program-eep/turkmenistan-signs-its-first-ever-energy-deal-with-the-eu.

105 Kazanci Handan, "Türkiye, Hungary to Renew Gas Deal for 2025-2026: Hungarian State Energy Firm CEO," Anadolu Agency, November 22, 2024, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/turkiye-hungary-to-renew-gas-deal-for-2025-2026-hungarian-state-energy-firm-ceo/3401456.

106 Council of the EU, "EU sanctions against Russia explained," 2025, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions-against-russia-explained/.

107 Adam Michalski, "Turkey: Opportunities and Challenges on the Domestic Gas Market in 2024," OSW (Centre for Eastern Studies), June 3, 2024, https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2024-06-03/turkey-opportunities-and-challenges-domestic-gas-market-2024; David O'Byrne, "Turkey Eyes Greater Role as Gas Re-Exporter to Europe: Bayraktar," S&P Global, September 23, 2024, https://www.spglobal.com/commodityinsights/en/market-insights/latest-news/natural-gas/092324-turkey-eyes-greater-role-as-gas-re-exporter-to-europe-bayraktar.

108 Turkish diplomat in discussion with the author, MFA Türkiye, Ankara, March 13, 2024.

109 Council of the EU, "Where Does the EU's Gas Come from?" 2024, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/eu-gas-supply/.

110 European Commission, "HUNGARY Energy Snapshot," 2022, https://energy.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/HU_2022_Energy_Snapshot.pdf.

111 "Hungary Agrees on Option for More Russian Gas Shipments, Oil Transit Fees," Reuters, November 4, 2023, https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/hungary-agrees-option-more-russian-gas-shipments-oil-transit-fees-2023-04-11/.

transiting Russian gas at the end of 2024, by 2023, Budapest had already imported most of its Russian gas through the Turk Stream pipeline spanning Turkey.[112] Hungary purchased record amounts of Turkish gas in the first half of 2024.[113] Therefore, the Turkish stream with Russian gas is the only remaining reliable pipeline after Ukraine's removal from the equation, and it is crucial for Hungary's energy security.[114]

In Orbán's rhetoric, advancing Turkey's energy hub ambitions is crucial to maintaining Hungary's access to Russian gas, which the ruling FIDESZ presents as a cheap energy resource.[115] The utility cost reduction program, including cheaper consumer prices until a capped amount, is an important element of Orbán's political strategy and popularity in Hungarian domestic politics.[116] However, this argument is shallow because, according to publicly available data regarding Hungary-Russia gas contracts, part of the purchased energy is tied to world market prices.[117] Therefore, if it is cheaper for Hungarian customers, it is up to the state budget to cover the reduction.[118] Despite government rhetoric that it is working on diversification, its policies, including bringing forward Turkey's energy hub role, only increase the country's dependence on Russia.

112 "Gazprom Ramps up Gas Flows to Hungary via TurkStream Pipeline," Euractiv, August 14, 2022, https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/gazprom-ramps-up-gas-flows-to-hungary-via-turkstream-pipeline/.

113 "Soha Ennyi Orosz Gáz Nem Jött Még a Magyarországot Ellátó Vezetéken," Portfolio, April 20, 2024, https://www.portfolio.hu/gazdasag/20240420/soha-ennyi-orosz-gaz-nem-jott-meg-a-magyarorszagot-ellato-vezeteken-681719.

114 Hungarian diplomat in discussion with the author, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Budapest, March 19, 2024.

115 Christian Lamour, "Orbán Placed in Europe: Ukraine, Russia and the Radical-Right Populist Heartland," *Geopolitics* 29, no. 4 (August 7, 2024): 1297–1323, https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2023.2241825.

116 Attila Weinhardt, "Marad a rezsivédett lakossági gázár októbertől," Portfolio, September 26, 2024, https://www.portfolio.hu/uzlet/20240926/marad-a-rezsivedett-lakossagi-gazar-oktobertol-712559.

117 Panyi and Szabó, "Inside Viktor Orbán's response to the war in Ukraine," Telex, October 26, 2022, https://telex.hu/direkt36/2022/10/26/inside-viktor-orbans-response-to-the-war-in-ukraine.

118 Zoltán Jandó, "Olcsóbb lett az orosz gáz, de ez még kevés a rezsicsökkentéshez | G7 - Gazdasági sztorik érthetően," G7, September 13, 2023, https://g7.hu/adat/20230913/olcsobb-lett-az-orosz-gaz-de-ez-meg-keves-a-rezsicsokkenteshez/.

BEYOND VALUES: PRAGMATIC COOPERATION IN THE EU AND NATO

Turkey and Hungary cooperate in the EU and NATO despite different standpoints on specific foreign policy themes. First, while Hungary vocally opposes uncontrolled Muslim immigration to Europe, Orbán has established an unprecedentedly close relationship with Erdoğan, who aspires to be the leader of the Sunni-Muslim world.[119] Second, Hungary holds an uncompromisable pro-Israel view in the Israel-Hamas war, but Turkey has shown solidarity with Hamas. This seems to inflict conflicts, but it does not appear to disturb bilateral relations. Populist and authoritarian leaders prefer transactionalism to navigate foreign policy, which rejects values-based policymaking because it is considered harmful to national interests.[120] This approach to foreign policy-making is characteristic of the Orbán and the Erdoğan regimes. A high-level, non-career diplomat in Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained this as follows:

> I have been saying that we see Hungary as a distant relative, close neighbor, and an internal partner. But that does not mean that you always see eye to eye in international relations. Of course, we always explain the position of Turkey towards this conflict, and we always raise the perspective and position of Turkey in every meeting, but that does not affect the bilateral relationship.[121]

A mid-level diplomat in Hungary's Ministry of Foreign Affairs reflected on the question in a similar way:

> The Turkish side always questions us during meetings as to why we do not think the way they think about the Israel-Hamas war. This happens in closed meetings, too—as we know, it is President Erdoğan's specific request because he does not like that Hungary's opinion differs to this extent from Turkey's. Our current position is that we agree to disagree. We will not be able to agree. They are a Muslim country, a leading country in the Islamic world. However, in the Hungarian-Turkish relationship, it's easier to disagree than, let's say, between Germany and Turkey. In Hungary, there is no Muslim community that could form a political platform to echo Turkey's or other Muslim countries' opinion on this issue.[122]

The exchange in closed-door meetings indicates that values-based issues can disturb the relationship between Budapest and Ankara, but they do not poison it. Background discussions suggested that when the Israel-Hamas war broke out, there was confusion among Hungarian diplomats regarding how to handle the differences in opinion with the usually very smooth Turkey-Hungary relationship. Yet, at the end of the day, it did not lead to disruptions in the day-to-day business between

119 Ahmet Erdi Öztürk, "Islam and Foreign Policy: Turkey's Ambivalent Religious Soft Power in the Authoritarian Turn," *Religions* 12, no. 1 (January 1, 2021): 11, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12010038.

120 Galib Bashirov and Ihsan Yilmaz, "The Rise of Transactionalism in International Relations: Evidence from Turkey's Relations with the European Union," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 2 (March 3, 2020): 165–84; Sandra Destradi and Johannes Plagemann, "Populism and International Relations: (Un)Predictability, Personalisation, and the Reinforcement of Existing Trends in World Politics," *Review of International Studies* 45, no. 5 (January 1, 2019): 711–30, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210519000184.

121 Turkish diplomat in discussion with the author, MFA Türkiye, Ankara, March 13, 2024.

122 Hungarian diplomat in discussion with the author, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Budapest, March 19, 2024.

Picture 3. President Erdoğan inaugurates the Gül Baba Tomb in Budapest with Prime Minister Orbán in the background



Source: Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), 2018

the parties for two main reasons. First, in Hungary, there is no significant Muslim minority that would express dissatisfaction with the government's often Islamophobic and pro-Israel rhetoric. In fact, there is a shared concern with Turkey's government, which is the will to stop migration from Syria. Second, more importantly, although Hungary has sided with the United States and the European Union on the Israel-Hamas war, the Hungarian government is in general critical of NATO's and the EU's policies on a number of issues. Being critical of migration and of the West in general are themes that unite Hungarian and Turkish policymakers, making them ignore differences, and this manifests in cooperation in the EU and NATO.

In the EU, while Turkey's accession process has been stalled since 2018, Hungary has supported Turkey on a number of themes. Hungary's behavior toward Turkey fits into a larger trend in Budapest's foreign policy. Orbán's government has encouraged the EU to forge close relations with and tone down criticism of leaders who have an anti-Western outlook. Without being exhaustive, this list includes Aleksandar Vučić from Serbia, Milorad Dodik from Bosnia and Herzegovina,[123] and Erdoğan from Turkey. For instance, in 2019,

123 Berta López Domènech, "Orbán's Illiberal 'Tentacles' in the Western Balkans: What Implications for EU Enlargement?" European Policy Center, March 5, 2024, https://epc.eu/content/PDF/2024/Orbans_illiberalism_DP_v2.pdf.

when the EU wanted to warn the Turkish government about the consequences of Operation Peace Spring, a cross-border military operation in Syria, Hungary vetoed the text.[124] Erdoğan publicly expressed his gratitude for Hungary's solidarity at the Turkic Council Summit in Baku on October 14, 2019[125] and at his visit to Budapest on November 7 of the same year.[126]

According to the program of Hungary's EU Presidency, which took place between July and December 2024, Hungary expected to facilitate Turkey's EU integration during these six months.[127] One important field was the relaxation of the visa application system for Turkish citizens to the Schengen Area. Turkish diplomats have publicly lamented that EU member states reject the visa applications of students, businesspeople, and academics due to dubious reasons, even if their visit is associated with the EU-related Horizon2020, Erasmus, or College of Europe programs.[128] According to an interview with diplomats in Budapest, there is a political directive expressed by Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó that if a Turkish businessman or student wants to do business in Hungary, there can be no EU member state that issues a visa quicker than Hungary's representations in Turkey. Demonstrating the political significance of this directive, this request has led to conflicts among diplomats in Hungary's foreign affairs bureaucracy. While leading diplomats are interested in implementing the minister's request at almost any price, the consuls' task is to adhere to the laws and regulations, which very often make issuing visas slower than expected by the political leadership. A Hungarian diplomat proudly shared that issuing visas usually takes only a week, and Turkish partners express their gratitude for this at multilateral meetings, usually in front of other EU member state representatives.

On the diplomatic front, the Hungarian EU Presidency facilitated interactions between high-level Turkish and EU politicians through the European External Action Service (EEAS). Hungary promised to work on inviting Turkey's Foreign Minister to the Informal Foreign Affairs Council (Gymnich), which is convened by the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Ankara was not invited between 2019 and 2024. Surprisingly, however, the meeting that took place on August 29, 2024 was convened with the participation of Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan[129] but not due to Hungary's facilitation. Instead, Turkey's participation in mediating between the Russia-Ukraine war and the EU bureaucracy's long-standing push for the invitation materialized. It is also assumed that Budapest did not help facilitate Turkey's invitation because the Gymnich meeting occurred during a conflict between the EU and Hungary. Although the meeting should have been organized in Hungary, because it held the EU Presidency then, the High Representative decided to gather the Foreign Ministers in Brussels as a punishment

124 Markus Becker, "Ungarn Verhinderte EU-Warnung Vor Syrien-Einmarsch," *Spiegel*, September 10, 2019, https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/syrien-angriff-ungarn-verhinderte-eu-warnung-an-tuerkei-a-1290758.html.

125 "Világ: Erdogan Megköszönte Orbánnak a Nemzetközi Kiállást Mellettük," HVG, October 14, 2019, https://hvg.hu/vilag/20191014_Erdogan_megkoszonte_Orbannak_a_nemzetkozi_kiallast_mellettuk.

126 T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, "Ortak Tarihî ve Kültürel Mirasımızın Korunması Noktasında Macaristan Ile Örnek Bir Iş Birliğimiz Mevcut," November 7, 2019, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/112464/-ortak-tarih-ve-kultu-rel-mirasimizin-korunmasi-noktasinda-macaristan-ile-ornek-bir-is-birligi-miz-mevcut-.

127 Hungarian Presidency, "Program of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the Second Half of 2024," 2024, 13.

128 European Parliament, "EU-Türkiye Joint Parliamentary Committee, 27 November 2024," Multimedia Centre, November 27, 2024, https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/webstreaming/delegation-to-eu-turkiye-joint-parliamentary-committee_20241127-1500-DELEGATION-D-TR.

129 Dilara Aslan, "Türkiye and Gymnich: Too Hard to Ignore," *Daily Sabah*, August 30, 2024, https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/news-analysis/turkiye-and-gymnich-too-hard-to-ignore.

for Orbán's uncoordinated "Peace Tour" in Russia and China in July 2024.

The Erdoğan regime can benefit from Hungary's support because it helps keep Turkey on the EU's agenda without being pressured into focusing on conditionality. Yet, it is unclear why the Hungarian government speaks up for Turkey on all possible occasions. What seems clear from Orbán's speeches (Table 1) is that keeping Turkey close to the EU is in the interest of the Hungarian government because of migration and energy security. Turkey is the largest refugee-hosting country in the world, with 3.4 million people seeking protection there.[130] According to a 2016 deal between the EU and Turkey, Ankara receives financial assistance for not allowing refugees to travel further toward the EU. Since one of the main domestic political talking points of Orbán is halting migration, he argues that keeping Turkey close via favors will defend Europe from further flows of migrants.[131]

Nevertheless, very often, Orbán's gestures toward Turkey are voluntary and intended as an investment in the future.[132] Within NATO, two countries were late in ratifying Sweden's accession: Turkey ratified it in January 2024, and Hungary was the last country in February of the same year. Turkey first postponed Stockholm's ratification due to concerns about Sweden's harboring of groups that Ankara deems as terrorist organizations.[133] After most of these demands were satisfied, President Erdoğan introduced a new condition, Turkey's EU membership,[134] as a factor influencing the decision. Lastly, the delay has been attributed to the delivery of new and the modernization of old F-16s from the United States,[135] which the United States decided to approve after Ankara ratified Sweden's NATO accession.[136]

Hungary's stance was less transparent. Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó suggested[137] that Sweden's criticism of Hungary's rule of law situation is the reason for non-ratification; yet, in another instance, he indicated[138] Hungary would follow Turkey's lead on this matter. According to a Hungarian diplomat close to the events, Hungary first showed solidarity with Turkey for its security concerns, but when Ankara turned toward the United States with its requests for F-16s, Hungary raised its own concerns to Sweden.[139] The main concern Hungary raised was an educational movie on democracy screened to students in

130 "Refugee Data Finder," UNHCR, 2024, https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=84hQ5v.

131 "Törökország Célja a Béke Forrása Hadművelettel Egy Biztonságos Zóna Kialakítása, Jelentette Ki Orbán," TRT, October 26, 2019, https://www.trt.net.tr/magyar/nagyvilag/2019/10/26/torokorszag-celja-a-beke-forrasa-hadmuvelettel-egy-biztonsagos-zona-kialakitasa-jelentette-ki-orban-1295082.

132 Zoltán Egeresi in discussion with the author, National University of Public Service, Budapest, March 19, 2024.

133 "Sweden Will Not Get Turkey's Nod for NATO Bid Unless It Stops Sheltering 'terrorists,' Erdogan Says," Reuters, March 7, 2023, https://www.reuters.com/world/sweden-will-not-get-turkeys-nod-nato-bid-unless-it-stops-sheltering-terrorists-2023-07-03/.

134 "Turkey's Erdogan Demands EU Membership Talks in Exchange for Backing Swedish NATO Bid," France 24, October 7, 2023, https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20230710-sweden-s-pm-tries-to-break-turkish-resistance-in-nato-talks.

135 "Erdogan Expects Steps from US on F-16 Sale for Sweden NATO Accession," Al Jazeera, June 12, 2023, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/6/erdogan-expects-steps-from-us-on-f-16-sale-for-sweden-nato-accession.

136 "Turkey Receives U.S. Draft Letters Approving F-16 Jets Deal - Official," Reuters, February 29, 2024, https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/turkey-receives-us-draft-letters-approving-f-16-jets-deal-official-2024-02-29/.

137 "Dühös Levelet Küldött Szijjártó a Svédeknek – Borulhat a NATO-Csatlakozás?" Portfolio, September 14, 2023, https://www.portfolio.hu/global/20230914/duhos-levelet-kuldott-szijjarto-a-svedeknek-borulhat-a-nato-csatlakozas-639753.

138 "Szijjártó Péter Bejelentette, Hogy Egyeztet a Törökökkel a Svéd NATO-Csatlakozás Kapcsán," Portfolio, April 8, 2023, https://www.portfolio.hu/global/20230704/szijjarto-peter-bejelentette-hogy-egyeztet-a-torokokkel-a-sved-nato-csatlakozas-kapcsan-626017.

139 Hungarian diplomat in discussion with the author, Ankara, February 6, 2024.

Sweden, in which Hungary was criticized for rule of law deficiencies.[140]

Based on discussions with diplomats on both sides, it seems that there was no agreement between the parties, but Hungary tried to follow the Turkish position on Sweden's ratification. According to experts, the Embassy of Turkey in Budapest was informing the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade about the possible date of ratification in Ankara, but even the ambassador could only deliver hearsay on this matter. At the Hungarian Embassy in Ankara, at least at the levels below the ambassador, there was no information about the date of ratification. It is possible that Foreign Minister Szijjártó was only informed around two days before the ratification happened.[141] It is not clear whether Hungary's solidarity was useful for Turkey. While Ankara could have achieved its objectives without Hungary, Budapest made it look like there was a united front against NATO enlargement. Nevertheless, both for Orbán and Erdoğan, it was a good opportunity to magnify their power and demonstrate to their electorate that they are not only subject to the decisions of the West by which they are criticized, but they can be part of those decisions.

140 "Swedish Media Forced into Explanations after Campaign Designed to Discredit Hungary," Magyar Nemzet, September 15, 2023, https://magyarnemzet.hu/english/2023/09/swedish-media-tries-to-explain-in-wake-of-campaign-discrediting-hungary-video.

141 Hungarian diplomat in discussion with the author, Ankara, February 7, 2024.

CONCLUSIONS

This report has explored why Hungary's foreign policy intensified toward Turkey between 2013 and 2024. Hungary's observer status in the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) and frequent meetings between Orbán and Erdoğan demonstrate the political significance of this relationship. Based on interviews and the study of official documents and speeches, the report concludes that Hungary developed a close relationship with Turkey in this period because of their leaders' similar governing tactics, anti-Western outlook, and disapproval in the West as autocrats, which created a shared sentiment of being left behind. This has established an ideational base that Orbán has been utilizing for domestic political purposes since the second half of the 2010s through the reinterpretation of Hungary's historical and cultural identity as inherently not European.

Hungary's observer status in the OTS provides the institutional framework for Orbán's attempts to open toward the Turkic world. Although the OTS has long-term economic potential, it is not currently utilized, and Orbán uses the organization to assert Hungary's Turkic heritage. In principle, observer status in the OTS does not imply anti-Westernism, because the EU and its member states also seek the friendship of Central Asian countries, mostly due to the EU's energy diversification quest since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Yet, for Orbán, emphasizing Hungary's Turkic origins helps justify his illiberal domestic agenda. This connection and the OTS partners' authoritarian conduct of politics offers him the opportunity to argue that Hungarians, unlike other European nations, are doing politics by power rather than compromise. In addition, Hungary's observer status in the OTS makes it possible for Hungary to promote Turkey's energy hub ambitions in the EU. This sustains Hungary's reliance on Russian gas, which is promoted as a cheap alternative to diversification among Orbán's voters.

Hungary has also engaged in cooperation with Turkey in both the EU and NATO. Supporting Turkey's EU integration against the will of other EU nations and postponing Sweden's NATO accession fit into the larger picture of Orbán's pivot toward making international organizations less rules-based. The EU's recent policy to suspend accession negotiations with Turkey completely and engage in transactional deals with Ankara, such as the 2016 migration statement, only supports Hungary's behavior. While Turkey indeed needs to be engaged, especially because of its increased geopolitical role in mediating the Russia-Ukraine war since 2022, it should be done within the rules-based framework of EU conditionality. Hungary completely ignoring this framework, even if the EU itself does so, too, does not fuel the potential of building a predictable, long-term partnership with Ankara with the possibility of returning to accession negotiations.

This relationship demonstrates how a small state like Hungary can amplify its visibility in international relations via pragmatic ideational investment into a relationship with a like-minded partner. Although the reconstruction of Hungary's memory policies cements this relationship beyond mere transactions, its durability beyond Orbán and Erdoğan is questionable. First, in Hungary, there is no consensus among political parties and scientific elites about the redefinition of Hungary's identity and its ensuing policy implications, such as weaker relations with Western partners. Second, despite the ideational benefits Hungary derives from the

OTS, tangible economic outcomes remain limited. Structural challenges, including the lack of capable Hungarian companies and limited integration among Central Asian states, have hindered the realization of trade, energy, and investment goals, leaving political cooperation to dominate the relationship. For the relationship to outlast current leadership, it must move beyond anti-Western rhetoric and deliver concrete economic benefits. The OTS offers an institutional framework that future governments can use to forge relations with Turkic countries, ensuring the partnership's relevance.

REFERENCES

Ablonczy, Balázs. "A Turáni Társaságban." *Rubicon,* no. 5–6 (2016). https://old.rubicon.hu/magyar/nyomtathato_verzio/a_turani_tarsasagban/.

Ablonczy, Balázs. *Go East!: A History of Hungarian Turanism*. Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2021.

Ablonczy, Balázs. "Hungarian Turanism: Eurasianism à La Hongroise." In *The Return of Eurasia: Continuity and Change*, 225–49. Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2021.

Ablónczy, Bálint, and Barna Borbás. *"Sámántánc Az Országházban*. Magyar Eredetpolitika 2006-2024." Válasz Offline, 2024.

Ágoston, Zoltán. "Több Száz Millió Forintért Épít Történelmi Kertet a Szijjártó-Féle Külügy a Türk Államok Szervezetének." Népszava, 2022. https://nepszava.hu/3143364_tobb-szaz-millio-forintert-epit-tortenelmi-kertet-a-szijjarto-fele-kulugy-a-turk-allamok-szervezetenek.

Akçalı, Emel, and Umut Korkut. "Geographical Metanarratives in East-Central Europe: Neo-Turanism in Hungary." *Eurasian Geography and Economics 53*, no. 5 (September 2012): 596–614. https://doi.org/10.2747/1539-7216.53.5.596.

AlJazeera. "Erdogan Expects Steps from US on F-16 Sale for Sweden NATO Accession." June 12, 2023. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/6/erdogan-expects-steps-from-us-on-f-16-sale-for-sweden-nato-accession.

Altunışık, Meliha Benli. "Turkey's 'Return' to Central Asia in a Shifting Global and Regional Context: New Opportunities and Limitations." *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* (2024): 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2024.2308971.

Alhan, Duygu. "Azerbaijan Gas to Be Transported to Hungary via Türkiye." Anadolu Agency, February 16, 2024. https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/azerbaijan-gas-to-be-transported-to-hungary-via-turkiye/3139799.

Aslan, Dilara. "Türkiye and Gymnich: Too Hard to Ignore." *Daily Sabah*, August 30, 2024. https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/news-analysis/turkiye-and-gymnich-too-hard-to-ignore.

Aydın-Düzgit, Senem. "Authoritarian Middle Powers and the Liberal Order: Turkey's Contestation of the EU." *International Affairs* 99, no. 6 (November 6, 2023): 2319–37. https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiad225.

Baranyi, Tamás Péter. "Hungary's Role in the Organization of Turkic States as an Observer State: Limitations and Opportunities." *PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs* 27, no. 1 (July 26, 2022): 121–36.

Bashirov, Galib, and Ihsan Yilmaz. "The Rise of Transactionalism in International Relations: Evidence from Turkey's Relations with the European Union." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 2 (March 3, 2020): 165–84. https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2019.1693495.

Bódis, András. "Keleti Nyitás Kurultájjal." *Válasz Offline*, 2024.

Borbás, Barna. "Kapcsolat Kell a Keleti Testvérnépekkel." *Válasz Offline*, 2024.

Botos, Tamás. "Orbán: Magyarország Kitart a Barátai Mellett, És Törökország Oldalán Áll." 444, June 30, 2017. https://444.hu/2017/06/30/orban-magyarorszag-kitart-a-baratai-mellett-es-torokorszag-oldalan-all.

Caspian Policy Center. "Turkmenistan Signs Its First-Ever Energy Deal with the EU." August 24, 2023. https://www.caspianpolicy.org/research/energy-and-economy-program-eep/turkmenistan-signs-its-first-ever-energy-deal-with-the-eu.

Chivvis, Christopher S., Alper Coşkun, and Beatrix Geaghan-Breiner. "Türkiye in the Emerging World Order." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2023. https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/10/31/t-rkiye-in-emerging-world-order-pub-90868.

Council of the EU. "Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process - Council Conclusions." 2018. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35863/st10555-en18.pdf.

Council of the EU. "EU sanctions against Russia explained." 2025. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions-against-russia-explained/.

Council of the EU. "Where Does the EU's Gas Come from?" 2024. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/eu-gas-supply/.

Czinkóczi, Sándor. "Százmillió Euróval Csatlakozik a Magyar Kormány a Türk IMF-Hez." 444, March 11, 2023. https://444.hu/2023/11/03/szazmillio-eurovel-csatlakozik-a-magyar-kormany-a-turk-imf-hez.

Destradi, Sandra, and Johannes Plagemann. "Populism and International Relations: (Un)Predictability, Personalisation, and the Reinforcement of Existing Trends in World Politics." *Review of International Studies* 45, no. 5 (January 1, 2019): 711–30. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210519000184.

Domènech, Berta López. "Orbán's Illiberal 'Tentacles' in the Western Balkans: What Implications for EU Enlargement?" European Policy Center, March 5, 2024. https://epc.eu/content/PDF/2024/Orbans_illiberalism_DP_v2.pdf.

East, Maurice A. "Size and Foreign Policy Behavior: A Test of Two Models." *World Politics* 25, no. 4 (1973): 556–76. https://doi.org/10.2307/2009952.

Egeresi, Zoltán. "Hungary's Opening to the Turkic World." *Avrasya Dünyasi*, no. 6 (January 1, 2020): 48–54.

Eldem, Tuba. "Russia's War on Ukraine and the Rise of the Middle Corridor as a Third Vector of Eurasian Connectivity." SWP Comment. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2022. https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2022C64/.

Euractiv. "Gazprom Ramps up Gas Flows to Hungary via TurkStream Pipeline." August 14, 2022. https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/gazprom-ramps-up-gas-flows-to-hungary-via-turkstream-pipeline/.

Euractiv. "'Budapest Is Teaching Finland and Sweden a Lesson': Hungary Becomes Increasingly Isolated in NATO." March 13, 2023. https://www.euronews.com/2023/03/13/budapest-is-teaching-finland-and-sweden-a-lesson-hungary-becomes-increasingly-isolated-in-.

European Commission. "HUNGARY Energy Snapshot." 2022. https://energy.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/HU_2022_Energy_Snapshot.pdf.

European Parliament. "EU-Türkiye Joint Parliamentary Committee, 27 November 2024." Multimedia Centre, November 27, 2024. https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/webstreaming/delegation-to-eu-turkiye-joint-parliamentary-committee_20241127-1500-DELEGATION-D-TR.

Fidan, Hadan. "Dışişleri Bakanı Sayın Hakan Fidan'ın 14. Büyükelçiler Konferansı Açılışında Yaptığı Konuşma, 7 Ağustos 2023, Ankara." T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2023. https://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-hakan-fidan-in-14-buyukelciler-konferansi-acilisinda-yaptigi-konusma--7-agustos-2023.tr.mfa.

Fidan, Hakan. "Turkish Foreign Policy at the Turn of the 'Century of Türkiye': Challenges, Vision, Objectives, and Transformation." *Insight Turkey* 25, Summer 2023 (September 30, 2023): 11–25. https://doi.org/10.25253/99.2023253.1.

Flori, Anna, and Kert Attila. "Barátok Közt - Bukott Kormányfőtől a Börtönviselt Diktátorig: Ki Kicsoda Orbán Vendégei Között?" Euronews, August 23, 2023. https://hu.euronews.com/2023/08/23/orban-diktator-korrupcio-katar-erdogan.

France 24. "Turkey's Erdogan Demands EU Membership Talks in Exchange for Backing Swedish NATO Bid." October 7, 2023. https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20230710-sweden-s-pm-tries-to-break-turkish-resistance-in-nato-talks.

Gigleux, Victor. "Explaining the Diversity of Small States' Foreign Policies through Role Theory." *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, January 2, 2016. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23802014.2016.1184585.

Hóvári, János. "CORRECT Hungary and the Turkic World: A Twenty-First Century Challenge | Hungarian Conservative." December 26, 2022. https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/current/hungary-and-the-turkic-world-a-twenty-first-century-challenge/.

Hungarian Presidency. "Program of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the Second Half of 2024." 2024.

HVG. "Világ: Erdogan Megköszönte Orbánnak a Nemzetközi Kiállást Mellettük." October 14, 2019. https://hvg.hu/vilag/20191014_Erdogan_megkoszonte_Orbannak_a_nemzetkozi_kiallast_mellettuk.

Index. "Orbán: Sztambul-Moszkva-Berlin Vonzáskörében Élünk." 2018. https://index.hu/belfold/2018/10/08/erdogan_orban_viktor_sajto-tajekoztato/.

Jandó, Zoltán. "Olcsóbb lett az orosz gáz, de ez még kevés a rezsicsökkentéshez." G7, September 13, 2023. https://g7.hu/adat/20230913/olcsobb-lett-az-orosz-gaz-de-ez-meg-keves-a-rezsicsokkenteshez/.

Kabakcı, Fuat. "Türkmenistan Gazının Türkiye ve Avrupa'ya Ulaştırılması 'Tarihi Öneme Sahip Bir Girişim.'" Anadolu Ajansı, December 15, 2022. https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/turkmenistan-gazinin-turkiye-ve-avrupaya-ulastirilmasi-tarihi-oneme-sahip-bir-girisim/2764289.

Kazanci, Handan. "Türkiye, Hungary to Renew Gas Deal for 2025-2026: Hungarian State Energy Firm CEO." Anadolu Agency, November 22, 2024. https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/turkiye-hungary-to-renew-gas-deal-for-2025-2026-hungarian-state-energy-firm-ceo/3401456.

Keohane, Robert O. "Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in Internatinal Politics." *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (April 1969): 291–310. https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081830003160X.

Kolozsi, Ádám. "Miért Akar Kásler Megvívni Egy Száz Éve Véget Ért Háborút?" Index, 2018.

Korkut, Umut. "Resentment and Reorganization: Anti-Western Discourse and the Making of Eurasianism in Hungary." Acta Slavica Iaponica 38 (2017): 71–90.

KSH. "A Külkereskedelmi Termékforgalom Értéke Euróban És Értékindexei a Fontosabb Országok Szerint [Folyó Áron]." 2024. https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/kkr/hu/kkr0008.html.

Külügyminisztérium. "Magyar Külpolitika Az Uniós Elnökség Után." Külügyminisztérium, 2011. https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/download/a/cb/60000/kulpolitikai_strategia_20111219.pdf.

Kutlay, Mustafa, and Ziya Öniş. "Understanding Oscillations in Turkish Foreign Policy: Pathways

to Unusual Middle Power Activism." *Third World Quarterly* 42, no. 12 (December 2, 2021): 3051–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2021.1985449.

Lamour, Christian. "Orbán Placed in Europe: Ukraine, Russia and the Radical-Right Populist Heartland." *Geopolitics* 29, no. 4 (August 7, 2024): 1297–1323. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2023.2241825.

Magyar Nemzet. "Swedish Media Forced into Explanations after Campaign Designed to Discredit Hungary." September 15, 2023. https://magyarnemzet.hu/english/2023/09/swedish-media-tries-to-explain-in-wake-of-campaign-discrediting-hungary-video.

Michalski, Adam. "Turkey: Opportunities and Challenges on the Domestic Gas Market in 2024." OSW (Centre for Eastern Studies), June 3, 2024. https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2024-06-03/turkey-opportunities-and-challenges-domestic-gas-market-2024.

Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda. "Miniszterelnök Beszédei 2015-2022." 2022. https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/#beszedek_container.

Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda. "Miniszterelnök Beszédei 2023 Óta." 2024. https://miniszterelnok.hu/beszedek/.

Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda. "Orbán Viktor Beszéde a Türk Nyelvű Államok Együttműködési Tanácsának VI. Csúcstalálkozóján." 2018. https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-beszede-a-turk-nyelvu-allamok-egyuttmukodesi-tanacsanak-vi-csucstalalkozojan/.

Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda. "Orbán Viktor Elfogadó Beszéde a 'Türk Világ Legfelsőbb Rendje' Díj Átadásakor." Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda, November 6, 2024.

Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda. "Orbán Viktor Interjúja a Kossuth Rádió „Jó Reggelt, Magyarország!" Című Műsorában." December 10, 2018. https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-interjuja-a-kossuth-radio-jo-reggelt-magyarorszag-cimu-musoraban-2/.

Miniszterelnökség. "A Következő Lépés - Széll Kálmán Terv 2.0." 2012. https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/download/3/e8/80000/1-A_k%C3%B6vetkez%C5%91_l%C3%A9p%C3%A9s%20%28SzKT%2020%29.pdf.

Miniszterelnökség. "Miniszterelnök Beszédei 2010-2014." 2014. https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk.

Miniszterelnökség. "Orbán Viktor Beszéde a Magyar Állandó Értekezlet IX. Ülésén (2010. November 5.)." 2010. https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/orban-viktor-beszede-a-magyar-allando-ertekezlet-ix-ulesen-2010-november-5.

Miniszterelnökség. "Orbán Viktor Beszéde a Misszióvezetői Munkaértekezleten." 2015. https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/orban-viktor-beszede-a-missziovezetoi-munkaertekezleten.

Miniszterelnökség. "Törökország Sikere Biztatás Magyarországnak." 2013. https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/torokorszag-sikere-biztatas-magyarorszagnak.

Moreh, Chris. "The Asianization of National Fantasies in Hungary: A Critical Analysis of Political Discourse." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 19, no. 3 (May 2016): 341–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877915573781.

Nagy, Norbert. "A Konstantinápolyi Magyar Tudományos Intézet története (1916-1918)." *Balkán Füzetek* 8, no. 7 (2010).

Nagyné Rózsa, Erzsébet. "Magyarország És Az Arab Közel-Kelet." In *Magyarország Európában, Európa a Világban. Tanulmánykötet Gazdag Ferenc* 70. Születésnapjára, edited by Boglárka Koller and Viktor Marsai, 189–99. Budapest: Dialóg Campus Kiadó, 2016.

Neményi, Márton. "Orbán: Veszekedős Félázsiai Nép a Magyar." 24.hu, 2012. https://24.hu/belfold/2012/07/26/orban-veszekedos-felazsiai-nep-a-magyar/.

Népszava. "Orbán Viktor Eldöntötte: A Türköktől Származunk." September 3, 2018. https://nepszava.hu/3007166_orban-viktor-eldontotte-a-turkoktol-szarmazunk.

Nyitrai, Zsolt, ed. "Nemzeti Ügyek Politikája." Fidesz – Magyar Polgári Szövetség Központi Hivatal, KDNP, 2010.

O'Byrne, David. "Turkey Eyes Greater Role as Gas Re-Exporter to Europe: Bayraktar." S&P Global, September 23, 2024. https://www.spglobal.com/commodityinsights/en/market-insights/latest-news/natural-gas/092324-turkey-eyes-greater-role-as-gas-re-exporter-to-europe-bayraktar.

Oeconomus. "100 Évesek a Török-Magyar Modernkori Külkapcsolatok – Külgazdaság, Bilaterális Megállapodások." Oeconomus Gazdaságkutató Alapítvány, 2023. https://www.oeconomus.hu/oecofocus/100-evesek-a-torok-magyar-modernkori-kulkapcsolatok-kulgazdasag-bilateralis-megallapodasok/.

Oeconomus. "Mérlegen a 2022-Es Év Külföldi Befektetései Itthon – Hogyan Alakult Az FDI Áramlás Tavaly?" Oeconomus Gazdaságkutató Alapítvány, 2023. https://www.oeconomus.hu/oecofocus/merlegen-a-2022-es-ev-kulfoldi-befektetesei-itthon-hogyan-alakult-az-fdi-aramlas-tavaly/.

Orbán, Viktor. "Magyar-Kazah Csúcs. Fókuszban a Béke És Az Energia." Facebook, 2023. https://www.facebook.com/100044628210344/posts/magyar-kazah-cs%C3%BAcs-f%C3%B3kuszban-a-b%C3%A9ke-%C3%A9s-az-energia-/886961292801470/.

OTS. "Representation Office," 2024. https://www.turkkon.hu/EN/news/representative-office/.

OTS. "Turkic World Vision - 2040," 2021. https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/haberler/turkic-world-vision-2040-2396-97.pdf.

Öztürk, Ahmet Erdi. "Islam and Foreign Policy: Turkey's Ambivalent Religious Soft Power in the Authoritarian Turn." *Religions* 12, no. 1 (January 1, 2021). https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12010038.

Portfolio. "Dühös Levelet Küldött Szijjártó a Svédeknek – Borulhat a NATO-Csatlakozás?" September 14, 2023. https://www.portfolio.hu/global/20230914/duhos-levelet-kuldott-szijjarto-a-svedeknek-borulhat-a-nato-csatlakozas-639753.

Portfolio. "Soha Ennyi Orosz Gáz Nem Jött Még a Magyarországot Ellátó Vezetéken." April 20, 2024. https://www.portfolio.hu/gazdasag/20240420/soha-ennyi-orosz-gaz-nem-jott-meg-a-magyarorszagot-ellato-vezeteken-681719.

Portfolio. "Szijjártó Péter Bejelentette, Hogy Egyeztet a Törökökkel a Svéd NATO-Csatlakozás Kapcsán." April 8, 2023. https://www.portfolio.hu/global/20230704/szijjarto-peter-bejelentette-hogy-egyeztet-a-torokokkel-a-sved-nato-csatlakozas-kapcsan-626017.

Rácz, András. "A Magyar Globális/Keleti Nyitás – Elméleti Áttekintés Elsődleges Források Alapján." In *Magyarország Európában, Európa a Világban. Tanulmánykötet Gazdag Ferenc* 70. Születésnapjára, edited by Boglárka Koller and Viktor Marsai, 201–10. Budapest: Dialóg Campus Kiadó, 2016.

Reuters. "Hungary Agrees on Option for More Russian Gas Shipments, Oil Transit Fees." November 4, 2023. https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/hungary-agrees-option-more-russian-gas-shipments-oil-transit-fees-2023-04-11/.

Reuters. "Hungary's MVM to Buy Gas from Turkey's BOTAS in 'groundbreaking' Deal." August 21, 2023. https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/hungarys-mvm-buy-gas-turkeys-botas-groundbreaking-deal-2023-08-21/.

Reuters. "Sweden Will Not Get Turkey's Nod for NATO Bid Unless It Stops Sheltering 'terrorists,' Erdogan Says." March 7, 2023. https://www.reuters.com/world/sweden-will-not-get-turkeys-nod-nato-bid-unless-it-stops-sheltering-terrorists-2023-07-03/.

Reuters. "Turkey Receives U.S. Draft Letters Approving F-16 Jets Deal -Official." 2024. https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/turkey-receives-us-draft-letters-approving-f-16-jets-deal-official-2024-02-29/.

Rónai, Tamás. "Otthon, Keleten." Népszava, 2023. https://nepszava.hu/3214221_otthon-keleten.

Sándor, Klára. "A Török-Magyar Nyelvi Kapcsolatok Újraértelmezésének Lehetőségei." 23:77–102. Budapest: Archaeological Studies of PPCU Institute of Archaeology, 2020.

Sándor, Klára. "Vámbéry Ármin És a Török–Magyar Nyelvcsere - SZTE Repository of Publications." *Iskolakultúra* 24, no. 2 (2014): 77–86.

Sárközy, Miklós. "A Turán fogalom megjelenése és korai perzsabarát turanisták a 19. század első felében Magyarországon." *Ephemeris Hungarologica* 1, no. 1 (2021): 169–92. https://doi.org/10.53644/EH.2021.1.169.

Siccardi, Francesco. "Understanding the Energy Drivers of Turkey's Foreign Policy." Carnegie Europe, 2024. https://carnegieeurope.eu/2024/02/28/understanding-energy-drivers-of-turkey-s-foreign-policy-pub-91733.

Spiegel. "Ungarn Verhinderte EU-Warnung Vor Syrien-Einmarsch." September 10, 2019. https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/syrien-angriff-ungarn-verhinderte-eu-warnung-an-tuerkei-a-1290758.html.

Sudár, Balázs. "Szittyák vagyunk, és finnugorok." Index, 2019. https://index.hu/techtud/tortenelem/2019/02/06/magyar_ostortenet_finnugor_vagy_hun_tudat_szittya_sztyeppe_sudar_balazs_mta_akademia/.

Szabolcs, Panyi, and Szabó András. "Inside Viktor Orbán's response to the war in Ukraine." Telex, October 26, 2022. https://telex.hu/direkt36/2022/10/26/inside-viktor-orbans-response-to-the-war-in-ukraine.

Szalai, Máté. "The Identity of Smallness and Its Implications for Foreign Policy – the Case of Hungary and Slovakia." *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, September 2, 2017. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25739638.2017.1406182.

Szeverényi, Sándor. "A Finnugor „mítosz"." In *Már a Múlt Sem a Régi... - Az Új Magyar Mitológia Multidiszciplináris Elemzése*, 119–42. Makat, 2015.

Szőke, Evelin. "Hungary's Gas and Electricity Consumption Continued to Fall in 2023." CEE Energy News, October 1, 2024. https://ceener-

gynews.com/oil-gas/hungarys-gas-and-electricity-consumption-continued-to-fall-in-2023/.

T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı. "Konuşmalar, Yurt Dışı Ziyaretler." 2024. https://www.tccb.gov.tr/.

T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı. "Ortak Tarihî ve Kültürel Mirasımızın Korunması Noktasında Macaristan Ile Örnek Bir Iş Birliğimiz Mevcut." November 7, 2019. https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/112464/-ortak-tarih-ve-kulturel-mirasimizin-korunmasi-noktasinda-macaristan-ile-ornek-bir-is-birligimiz-mevcut-.

Trading Economics. "Hungary Exports By Country." 2024. https://tradingeconomics.com/hungary/exports-by-country.

Trading Economics. "Turkey Exports By Country." 2024. https://tradingeconomics.com/turkey/exports-by-country.

TRT. "A Türk Tanács Megnyitja Budapesti Bemutatkozó Irodáját." September 19, 2019. https://www.trt.net.tr/magyar/kultura-eletmod-/2019/09/19/a-turk-tanacs-megnyitja-budapesti-bemutatkozo-irodajat-1272330.

TRT. "How the Turkic World Can Become a Global Alternative Energy Source." TRT, 2023. https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/how-the-turkic-world-can-become-a-global-alternative-energy-source-12780217.

TRT. "Törökország Célja a Béke Forrása Hadművelettel Egy Biztonságos Zóna Kialakítása, Jelentette Ki Orbán." October 26, 2019. https://www.trt.net.tr/magyar/nagyvilag/2019/10/26/torokorszag-celja-a-beke-forrasa-hadmuvelettel-egy-biztonsagos-zona-kialakitasa-jelentette-ki-orban-1295082.

Tutumlu, Assel. "Turkey - Central Astia Relations: A Strategic Overview." NEI Reports. Near East Institute, 2020. https://yde.neu.edu.tr/wp-content/uploads/sites/170/2020/09/YDE-Orta-Asya-29.09.2020.pdf.

UNHCR. "Refugee Data Finder." 2024. https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=84hQ5v.

Weinhardt, Attila. "Marad a rezsivédett lakossági gázár októbertől." Portfolio.hu, September 26, 2024. https://www.portfolio.hu/uzlet/20240926/marad-a-rezsivedett-lakossagi-gazar-oktobertol-712559.

Wigen, Einar. "Pipe Dreams or Dream Pipe? Turkey's Hopes of Becoming an Energy Hub." *Middle East Journal* 66, no. 4 (2012): 598–612.

Zhang, Ganyi. "Turkey's Place in the Asia-Europe Logistics Reconfiguration." Upply, 2022. https://market-insights.upply.com/en/turkeys-place-in-the-asia-europe-logistics-reconfiguration#_ftn3.

Саммит ССТГ в Чолпон-Ате. Виктор Орбан. AKIpress news, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ph-UNpB4e8w&t=3s&ab_channel=AKIpressnews.

APPENDIX: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Interviewee, place of interview	Date
Hungarian diplomat, Istanbul	January 31, 2024
Professor, Middle East Technical University, Ankara	February 6, 2024
Hungarian diplomat, Ankara	February 6, 2024
Hungarian diplomat, Ankara	February 7, 2024
Turkish diplomat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ankara	February 8, 2024
Turkish diplomat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ankara	March 13, 2024
Nikolett Pénzváltó, Migration Research Institute, Budapest	March 14, 2024
Project officer, Organization of Turkic States, Budapest	March 18, 2024
Zoltán Egeresi, National University of Public Service, Budapest	March 19, 2024
Hungarian diplomat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Budapest	March 19, 2024
Hungarian diplomat, Istanbul	April 23, 2024



ISTANBUL POLICY CENTER
SABANCI UNIVERSITY
STIFTUNG MERCATOR INITIATIVE

İstanbul Politikalar Merkezi
Bankalar Caddesi No: 2 Minerva Han 34420
Karaköy, İstanbul Türkiye
+90 212 292 49 39
+90 212 292 49 57
@ ipc@sabanciuniv.edu
w ipc.sabanciuniv.edu

ISBN