

## Hungary's Geopolitical Strategy in the Context of the European Union and the Organization of Turkic States: National Interests, Roles, and Implications (The Orbán Era, 2010–2026)

Mahsa Mehdizadeh Youshanlouei 

**Abstract.** *This study analyzes Hungary's foreign policy orientation between 2010 and 2026 within the framework of its positioning between the European Union (EU) and the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). It examines Hungary's "Eastern Opening" (Keleti Nyitás) policy as a multidimensional strategy that integrates economic pragmatism with identity-based foreign policy narratives. By combining hedging theory and constructivist approaches, the study explains how Hungary maintains its institutional embeddedness within Western structures while simultaneously expanding its external partnerships toward Eurasian actors. The findings indicate that Hungary seeks to preserve the economic and institutional benefits of EU membership while increasing its strategic autonomy through engagement with the OTS and broader Eastern networks. Energy security, economic diversification, and geopolitical positioning constitute the main pillars of this strategy. Historical and cultural narratives, particularly Turanism, operate as legitimizing identity frameworks that reinforce Hungary's eastward-oriented diplomatic engagement.*

**Keywords:** Hungary, European Union, Organization of Turkic States, hedging strategy, Eastern Opening, foreign policy, Turanism

Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Ankara, Turkey

E-mail: mehdizademehsa@gmail.com

Received: 17 February 2026; Accepted: 10 April 2026; Published online: 22 June 2026

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## Avropa İttifaqı və Türk Dövlətləri Təşkilatı Kontekstində Macarıstanın geosiyasi strategiyası: Milli maraqlar, rollar və nəticələr (Orban Dövrü, 2010–2026)

Mahsa Mehdizadə Youşanlıuei 

**Xülasə.** *Bu tədqiqat Macarıstanın 2010–2026-cı illər üzrə xarici siyasət istiqamətlərini Avropa İttifaqı (AI) və Türk Dövlətləri Təşkilatı (TDT) müstəvisində təhlil edir. Araşdırma göstərir ki, Macarıstanın "Keleti Nyitás" (Şərqi açılış) siyasəti çərçivəsində formalaşdırdığı çoxvektorlu xarici siyasət strategiyası yalnız iqtisadi pragmatizmə deyil, eyni zamanda kimlik əsaslı amillərə də söykənir. Hedging (risklərin balanslaşdırılması) yanaşması ilə konstruktivist nəzəriyyə birləşdirilərək, Macarıstanın Qərbi institutları ilə inteqrasiyanı davam etdirərkən Şərqi yönümlü alternativ əməkdaşlıqlar inkişaf etdirdiyi göstərilir. Nəticələr göstərir ki, Macarıstan AI üzvlüyü vasitəsilə iqtisadi və institusional qazancını qoruyarkən, TDT və Avrasiya mərkəzli əlaqələr vasitəsilə strateji çeviklik imkanlarını genişləndirir. Enerji təhlükəsizliyi, iqtisadi diversifikasiya və geosiyasi mövqelənmə bu strategiyanın əsas komponentləri kimi ön plana çıxır.*

*Turanizm və tarixi-mədəni diskurslar isə xarici siyasət seçimlərini legitimləşdirən kimlik çərçivələri kimi çıxış edir.*

**Açar sözlər:** *Macarıstan, AI, TDT, hedging, Keleti Nyitás, xarici siyasət, Turanizm*

Ankara Hacı Bayram Vəli Universiteti, Ankara, Türkiyə

E-poçt: mehdizademehsa@gmail.com

Daxil oldu: 17 Fevral 2026; Qəbul edildi: 10 Aprel 2026; Onlayn dərc edildi: 22 İyun 2026

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## Introduction

Situated at the center of Central Europe, Hungary has historically maintained a multi-layered foreign policy tradition positioned between East and West. Historical and cultural narratives referring to Hun and Central Asian connections, the geopolitical legacy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the post-Cold War integration process with Western institutions collectively reveal the multidimensional character of the country's foreign policy identity. This study examines these foreign policy dynamics within the temporal scope of the Orbán era (2010–2026). In particular, the “Opening to the East” (*Keleti Nyitás*) policy implemented by the Fidesz government since 2010 has enabled Hungary to diversify its relations with alternative regional and global actors while maintaining its membership in the European Union. In this context, engagements with the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) constitute a significant dimension of Hungary's multi-vector foreign policy orientation. The Informal Summit of the OTS held in Budapest in 2025 can be considered a notable example in which Hungary's multidirectional foreign policy orientation gained visibility. The organization of the summit in an observer country for the first time contributed to the increasing prominence of Hungary's self-positioning as a “bridge country” at the international level. However, the extent to which this discourse corresponds to an institutionalized and strategic foreign policy orientation remains a contested issue in the academic literature.

The primary aim of this study is to analyze the nature of the foreign policy balance between Hungary's European Union membership and its relations with the Organization of Turkic States. This analysis is confined to the Orbán period (2010–2026). Within this framework, the research investigates whether this dual orientation constitutes a complementary strategy in terms of national interests (energy security, economic diversification, and foreign policy autonomy) or generates structural tensions between the normative framework of the European Union and the eastern opening. The geopolitical transformation following the Russia–Ukraine War has made Hungary's foreign policy choices more visible and contentious.

This study approaches Hungarian foreign policy not merely through a European Union-centric explanatory framework but as a multi-vector and multi-actor strategy. In this regard, it focuses on elements such as energy geopolitics, economic diversification, and strategic autonomy, analyzing the flexible foreign policy strategies developed by middle powers within a changing international system. Furthermore, the study aims to provide an integrated theoretical framework by combining identity-based approaches with rational choice and hedging literature. Within this scope, Turanism is considered as a historical-cultural reference embedded in Hungarian foreign policy discourse, while the hedging strategy is employed as an analytical tool to explain how states develop multidirectional foreign policies by distributing risks in an uncertain international system. This integrated approach allows for a more comprehensive analysis of Hungary's foreign policy behavior by incorporating both material interests and identity-based factors.

Unlike the existing literature, which predominantly examines Hungary's foreign policy within the framework of European Union–centered normative debates, this study analyzes the country's multi-vector foreign policy strategy through a comparative perspective along the axes of the European Union (EU) and the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). In this respect, the study evaluates Hungary's foreign policy not as confined to a single regional or institutional framework but through simultaneous networks of interaction between East and West. In the literature, Hungary's foreign policy is generally addressed in the context of normative deviation within the EU, rule of law debates, or relations with Russia. In contrast, this study incorporates Hungary's relations with the Organization of Turkic States into the analysis, positioning the country's foreign policy behavior within a broader geopolitical network. This perspective opens up the question of whether Hungary's “bridge country” discourse is merely rhetorical or represents a strategic foreign policy orientation.

Another original contribution of this study is the integration of two theoretical approaches that are often treated separately in international relations literature. By combining the hedging strategy with the constructivist identity approach, Hungary's foreign policy behavior is explained through both material interests (energy security, economic diversification, strategic autonomy) and identity-based factors (historical narratives, Turanism, and East–West discourse). This integrated framework moves beyond one-dimensional explanatory models of state behavior and offers a more comprehensive analytical perspective. Finally, the study provides an empirical contribution to the literature on flexible foreign policy strategies developed by middle powers in a multipolar international system. Through the case of Hungary, it demonstrates that small and medium-sized states are not merely dependent actors on great powers but can also act as strategic actors capable of developing multidirectional foreign policy tools.

## **Methods**

This study is designed within a qualitative research framework and employs the single-case study method (Yin, 2018) to conduct an in-depth analysis of Hungary's foreign policy behavior. The scope of the analysis is limited to the Orbán period between 2010 and 2026. The case study method is preferred due to its capacity to examine complex political processes contextually and to provide in-depth answers to “how” and “why” questions. The case under investigation is Hungary's post-2010 foreign policy orientation developed along the axes of the European Union (EU) and the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). This case selection provides an analytically unique example, as Hungary simultaneously participates in institutional European integration while developing relations with alternative regional cooperation networks.

## **Analytical Framework**

The research is based on the integration of two complementary theoretical approaches:

- **Hedging approach:** Argues that states develop multidirectional and flexible foreign policy behaviors instead of relying on single-alignment strategies in response to uncertainties in the international system.
- **Constructivist approach:** Suggests that state behavior is shaped not only by material interests but also by identity, historical memory, and discursive structures.

The combined use of these approaches enables the analysis of Hungary's foreign policy behavior in both its rational and identity-based dimensions.

## Data Collection Method

The study utilizes three main data sources:

1. **Official documents:** European Union reports, statements of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and declarations of the Organization of Turkic States
2. **Academic literature:** Peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly books
3. **Discourse data:** Official speeches and statements of key decision-makers, particularly Viktor Orbán and Péter Szijjártó

This dataset enables a multidimensional analysis at both institutional and discursive levels.

The collected data are analyzed using qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis techniques.

The following thematic categories are identified during the analysis process:

- National interests (energy security, economic diversification, strategic autonomy)
- Identity and historical references (Turanism, East–West discourse)
- Institutional alignment and areas of tension (EU normative framework)
- Alternative regional orientations (relations with the OTS)

To enhance the validity of the findings, the method of data triangulation is employed.

As the study is based on a single-case analysis, the statistical generalizability of the findings is limited. However, the primary aim of the research is not generalization but to provide theoretical explanatory power and conceptual depth.

## Theoretical Framework

### Europeanism and Turanism: Dual Identity Construction

Hungary's geopolitical identity historically exhibits a dichotomous yet flexible and reproducible structure shaped along the East–West axis. In this context, Europeanism and Turanism emerge as two principal reference frameworks that constitute the identity-based foundations of Hungarian foreign policy. Europeanism represents a historical and institutional identity reflecting Hungary's integration with the West. Its origins date back to the adoption of Christianity in 1000 AD and the Western alliance symbolized by the Crown of St. Stephen. The legacy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and, more notably, accession to the European Union in 2004 contributed to the institutional consolidation of this identity. Europeanism provides a normative framework shaped by liberal democratic values, the rule of law, and Europe-centered institutional belonging. However, during the Orbán era (2010–present), while democratic legitimacy has been maintained, partial divergence from EU norms has emerged in areas such as judicial independence, media pluralism, and the rule of law. In the literature, this situation is interpreted as a reflection of structural tensions between Hungary's normative obligations within the EU and its prioritization of national sovereignty (Pala, 2026, pp. 18–20).

Turanism, while representing an alternative and complementary dimension of Hungarian identity, also constitutes an ideational element that provides Hungary with a distinct sphere of maneuver within European political geography. Its historical roots can be traced to the late 18th and early 19th centuries, shaped by the rediscovery of Persian literature in Western Europe. The concept of "Turan" originally referred to a geographical term in Old Persian denoting the lands inhabited by nomadic peoples north of Iran; it later acquired an ideological dimension when Max Müller introduced the term "Turanian" into scientific literature in 1861 to describe the Ural-Altai language family. In the Hungarian context, Turanism emerged as part of the 19th-century wave of nationalism and functioned as a defensive ideology against the rising threats of Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism. Hungarian intellectuals sought to synthesize Finno-Ugric origins with the Hun-Turkic historical legacy in response to perceptions of linguistic and ethnic isolation. Among the pioneers of this intellectual movement, Ármin Vámbéry (1832–1913), considered the founder of Hungarian Turkology,

emphasized historical and cultural ties with Central Asian Turkic peoples in his scholarly work, while Ferenc Pulszky introduced the term “Turan” into Hungarian literature in 1839 as a geographical concept. In 1895, Géza Nagy further systematized this framework by associating “Turanian” with Ural-Altai peoples, thereby establishing a scholarly basis for linking Hungarians to the nomadic heritage of Hun, Cuman, Tatar, and Turkic origins (Kowalczyk, 2017, pp. 49–63). Turanism acquired an institutional character with the establishment of the Turan Society (*Turáni Társaság*) in 1910. Its first president was geographer and politician Pál Teleki, and its membership included prominent figures of the Hungarian elite. The primary aim of the society was to overcome perceptions of Hungary’s “linguistic and ethnic isolation” within Europe, strengthen kinship ties with Ural-Altai peoples at scientific, cultural, and political levels, and construct an alternative sense of belonging (Akçalı & Korkut, 2012, pp. 600–602). While supporting scientific Turanological studies, the society also represented an eastern-oriented version of Hungarian nationalism. The transformation of Turanism into a political and socially revisionist ideology accelerated particularly after the Treaty of Trianon in 1920. The loss of approximately two-thirds of Hungary’s territory and the displacement of more than three million ethnic Hungarians outside national borders generated a profound traumatic memory, turning Turanism into a protest ideology against a perceived “abandonment” by the West (Arıkanlı, 2017, p. 232).

During the Orbán era, the government has instrumentalized Turanist discourse as a strategic tool and political myth. Orbán’s references in OTS summits to “descendants of Attila” and adherence to “Kipchak-Turkic principles” illustrate, from a constructivist perspective, the pragmatic construction of national identity (Pala, 2026, pp. 30–35).

### **Hedging Theory: The Balancing Strategy of Small and Middle Powers**

Hedging theory refers to a foreign policy strategy developed by small and middle-sized states to minimize risks, achieve strategic autonomy, and avoid excessive dependence in an environment of great power competition and uncertainty within a multipolar international system (Kuik, 2021, p. 302). According to Kuik’s conceptual framework, hedging is defined as an “insurance-seeking behavior,” whereby states simultaneously pursue policies aimed at maximizing returns (*return-maximizing*) while taking precautionary measures against potential risks (*risk-contingency*). The core elements of hedging include:

- **Limited bandwagoning and soft balancing:** Preserving room for maneuver by avoiding unconditional alignment with major powers.
- **Economic pragmatism and diversification of linkages:** Maintaining balanced trade, energy, and diplomatic relations across different centers of power (Kuik, 2021, p. 312).

Hungary presents a typical example of a hedging strategy within the European context. While maintaining its EU and NATO membership and thereby engaging in “limited bandwagoning” with the Western alliance, Hungary simultaneously deepens its ties with Russia, China, and the Organization of Turkic States to enhance its strategic autonomy (Salamon, 2025, pp. 56–58). In the energy domain, the import of Azerbaijani gas and involvement in Middle Corridor projects play a critical role in reducing asymmetric dependence on Russia (Gale, 2023). In the post–Russia–Ukraine War period, this strategy has assumed a more cautious and defensive character. Hungary resists certain EU sanctions while positioning the OTS as an alternative platform, yet refrains from abandoning the Western alliance altogether (Szerencsés, 2025, pp. 6–7).

### **Theoretical Synthesis: Integration of Identity and Pragmatism**

In the Hungarian case, the hedging strategy manifests as a foreign policy behavior intertwined with geopolitical identity (Europeanism–Turanism). While Europeanism represents Western integration, Turanism emphasizes Eastern cultural heritage and provides ideological legitimacy for relations with

the OTS. This dual structure strengthens the ideological foundation of hedging. Hungary distributes risks through eastern-oriented economic and cultural cooperation while maintaining its ties with the West. Turanist discourse renders the eastern opening “natural” by grounding it in historical narratives, thereby enabling what Alexander Wendt (1992) conceptualizes as the “social construction of national interest” (as cited in Pala, 2026, pp. 130–135).

In conclusion, Hungary’s EU integration and its observer status in the OTS constitute a dual strategy shaped by the interaction of identity and pragmatism. This synthesis provides a robust theoretical foundation for understanding how the *Keleti Nyitás* policy has been sustained despite normative tensions with the EU.

### **Analysis of the “Keleti Nyitás” (Opening to the East) Policy: Strategic and Economic Dimensions**

The “Keleti Nyitás” policy, formalized with the rise to power of the Fidesz government under Viktor Orbán during the period from 2010 to the present, has shifted Hungary’s traditionally West-centered foreign policy structure toward a multi-vector and pragmatic geopolitical axis. This policy represents not merely a foreign trade strategy but also a strategic redefinition of Hungary’s national position within the global system (Greilinger, 2023, p. 12).

### **Economic Pragmatism and Global Financial Vulnerabilities**

The primary driving force behind the policy has been the profound economic shock experienced in the European periphery following the 2008 global financial crisis, alongside the growing critical perception of the European Union’s crisis management capacity. Hungarian decision-makers have aimed to reduce asymmetric dependence on Western markets by developing balanced economic partnerships with China, Russia, and the Organization of Turkic States (Szerencsés, 2025, p. 5). In this context, *Keleti Nyitás* has been interpreted as a form of “financial hedging” strategy aimed at enhancing the resilience of the Hungarian economy. While in its initial phase the policy primarily reflected an economic opening centered on China and Russia, it entered a new phase after 2018 with the deepening of institutional relations with the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). Hungary’s acquisition of observer status in the Turkic Council (now the OTS) in 2018 and the opening of the OTS Representation Office in Budapest in 2019 are considered key milestones in this institutional transformation (Topuz, 2024, p. 56).

### **Energy Security: The Trans-Caspian Middle Corridor and Strategic Partnerships**

One of the most significant areas of implementation of the *Keleti Nyitás* policy is the strategy of energy diversification. The energy crisis triggered by the Russia–Ukraine War has made Hungary’s high dependence on Russian hydrocarbons more visible and has elevated energy security to a strategic priority (Szerencsés, 2025). In this context, member states of the Organization of Turkic States—particularly Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan—have emerged as key partners in Hungary’s energy supply diversification strategy. Within the framework of energy cooperation with Azerbaijan, a reported framework agreement between SOCAR and the Hungarian energy company MVM ONEnergy aims to increase natural gas supply over a specified period. Such initiatives are considered part of a broader strategy to reduce energy dependence on Russia through the Southern Gas Corridor (Reuters, 2025). Additionally, cooperation agreements between MOL Group and SOCAR regarding oil and natural gas exploration and production activities in Azerbaijan’s Shamakhi-Gobustan region have been reported (MOL Group, 2025).

The Black Sea Submarine Green Energy Corridor initiative represents a multilateral energy infrastructure project developed among Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania, and Hungary. The project

aims to transmit renewable energy resources from the Caspian region—particularly wind and solar energy—to European energy markets via the Black Sea (Gale, 2023).

In the context of relations with Kazakhstan, discussions have emerged regarding the expansion of oil export routes through the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline and the diversification of uranium supply chains in the nuclear energy sector (Topuz, 2024, p. 18). These initiatives are largely evaluated at the level of strategic planning and negotiation. The Middle Corridor stands out as a logistical route connecting Türkiye and OTS member states via the Caspian Sea, offering an alternative to the northern route through Russia in China–Europe trade. This corridor holds the potential to position Hungary as a strategic transit and distribution hub within Eurasian logistics (Gale, 2023). These developments indicate that the energy dimension of the *Keleti Nyitás* policy during the Orbán era (2010–present) aims both to reduce dependence on Russia and to position Hungary as a regional energy and logistics hub.

### **Education and Cultural Diplomacy: Stipendium Hungaricum and Institutional Socialization**

The *Keleti Nyitás* policy is not limited to economic and energy cooperation but is also supported by a strong soft power and cultural diplomacy mechanism. In this context, Turanist discourse finds expression at both institutional and societal levels through educational and cultural exchange programs (Hamzaoglu, 2025, p. 20).

The main instruments in this framework include:

- **Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Programme:** A comprehensive international scholarship scheme that enables students—particularly from OTS member states such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Türkiye—to pursue higher education in Hungary. The program aims to enhance Hungary’s visibility through educational diplomacy and to establish long-term human capital networks (Hamzaoglu, 2025, p. 12).
- **OTS Representation Office in Budapest (2019):** Functions not only as a platform for diplomatic coordination but also as an institutional mechanism contributing to the development of academic, cultural, and economic networks (Topuz, 2024, p. 13).
- **Hun-Turkic Kurultaj:** A biennial event held in Bugac that renders the symbolic and cultural dimensions of Turanist discourse visible. The event can be interpreted as a performative expression of identity that contributes to the reproduction of historical and cultural ties between Hungary and the Turkic world (Akçalı & Korkut, 2012, pp. 601–609).

## **Results**

### **Hungary and the European Union: Structural Conflicts and Common Interests**

Since its accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004, Hungary has significantly benefited from economic integration, enhancing its infrastructure, investment capacity, and export performance through EU funds, the single market, and free trade mechanisms. However, during the Orbán era (2010–present), structural tensions have emerged at the political and normative levels with the core values of the EU. These tensions have positioned Hungary within what the literature defines as a sphere of “normative divergence” within the EU (Pala, 2026, pp. 35–38).

### **Main Dimensions of Structural Conflicts**

#### **Rule of law:**

Criticism regarding judicial reforms, media regulations, and anti-corruption mechanisms led the European Commission to initiate Article 7 procedures and adopt decisions to suspend certain funds

(European Commission, 2026). The Hungarian government, however, frames this process as an issue of national sovereignty.

### **Media freedom and civil society:**

Regulations affecting independent media outlets and civil society organizations have intensified debates on “democratic backsliding” within EU institutions (Végh, 2018, pp. 16–162).

### **Migration, minority rights, and value politics:**

Policies implemented after the 2015 refugee crisis, including border control measures, the “Stop Soros” laws, and regulations concerning LGBT+ rights, have created areas of conflict with the EU’s normative framework.

### **Common Interests and the Sustainability of Cooperation**

Despite normative tensions, strong economic and institutional interdependence persists between Hungary and the EU. Hungary continues to benefit from EU cohesion funds and financial resources under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). Moreover, security cooperation within NATO and the protection of eastern borders in the context of the Russia–Ukraine War constitute shared areas of interest. Energy diversification projects, such as the Southern Gas Corridor and the Middle Corridor, partially align with the EU’s strategy to reduce dependence on Russia.

This dual structure has led to Hungary being characterized in the literature as a “strategic dissenter” or an “awkward partner” within the EU (Szerencsés, 2025, p. 45). While benefiting from the economic advantages of EU membership, Hungary exhibits a distinct differentiation in areas of national sovereignty and cultural autonomy, reflecting the political dimension of its hedging strategy.

### **Normative Debates within the EU and the Perception of an “Awkward” Member**

The most prominent area of tension in Hungary’s relations with the European Union emerges at the normative and institutional levels. During the Orbán era, government policies have created structural tensions between EU core values—such as the rule of law, judicial independence, and media freedom—and Budapest’s sovereignty-centered governance approach. This has led to Hungary being labeled in the literature as an “awkward partner” or “strategic dissenter” (Pala, 2026, pp. 4–8).

### **Article 7 Procedure and Normative Oversight Mechanisms**

Normative debates became institutionalized particularly after 2018 within the framework of Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), which represents the EU’s most powerful political sanction mechanism against serious breaches of its values (European Union, 2012).

The mechanism consists of two stages:

- **Article 7(1):** A preventive mechanism activated in cases of a clear risk of breach.
- **Article 7(2):** A sanctioning phase that may extend to the suspension of voting rights in cases of serious and persistent breaches.

The procedure against Hungary was initiated following the European Parliament’s Sargentini Report in September 2018, which identified concerns related to judicial independence, media freedom, and civil society. The Hungarian government framed the process as an “interference with national sovereignty” and continued to defend its model of “illiberal democracy” (Pala, 2026, pp. 35–38).

More recently, the European Parliament’s November 2025 report characterized Hungary’s political system as an “electoral autocracy” and recommended moving to the Article 7(2) phase (European

Parliament, 2025). However, the unanimity requirement in the European Council limits the practical applicability of this mechanism.

### **Economic Sanctions and Rule of Law Conditionality**

Since 2020, due to the limitations of Article 7, the EU has introduced the “rule of law conditionality” mechanism (European Commission, 2020). Under this framework, Hungary’s access to cohesion funds and RRF payments has been partially suspended and tied to reforms in judicial independence and anti-corruption measures (European Commission, 2026; Reuters, 2026). This development demonstrates that normative misalignment produces direct economic consequences for Hungary and that the eastern orientation under *Keleti Nyitás* has increasingly functioned as an “alternative financial balancing strategy.”

### **Limitations of the Article 7 Mechanism**

Although Article 7 is often described in the literature as the “nuclear option,” in practice it remains a limited instrument of pressure due to political constraints (Schimmelfennig, 2018). In particular, the unanimity requirement for Article 7(2) makes progress difficult due to the potential veto of member states facing similar issues (Pech & Scheppele, 2017).

### **Economic Interdependence and Hedging Strategy**

EU membership is economically critical for Hungary. The EU single market accounts for approximately 75–80% of the country’s exports, attracts the majority of foreign direct investment, and supports development through structural funds (Wivel, 2020). Integration into German industrial supply chains represents one of the strongest examples of this interdependence. However, Hungary has sought to reduce its strategic dependence by diversifying its economic relations within the framework of the *Keleti Nyitás* policy. This process is conceptualized in the literature as a “hedging strategy” (Kuik, 2021; Szerencsés, 2025; Pala, 2026). Particularly in the 2022–2026 period, restrictions on access to EU funds have increased Hungary’s orientation toward alternative sources of financing. In this regard, Asia-based investments—such as European production investments by Chinese firms like BYD—have attracted attention. This indicates that Hungary is creating a strategic space for maneuver through “dual dependence,” maintaining economic integration with the EU while simultaneously developing relations with the East (Pala, 2026).

Security cooperation within NATO, as well as trade and border management, continues to sustain mutual interdependence between the parties (Pala, 2026, pp. 7–13). Nevertheless, as normative tensions deepen, the balance between economic integration and political autonomy becomes increasingly fragile. In this context, Hungary seeks to maintain the economic benefits of EU membership while constructing a strategic balancing space against normative pressures through its eastern-oriented relations.

### **Strategic Partnership with the Organization of Turkic States (OTS)**

Hungary joined the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) as an observer member in 2018, and this status was institutionalized with the Baku Summit in 2019. This membership has evolved beyond a conventional observer role into a multi-layered model of cooperation encompassing political, economic, and cultural dimensions (Pala, 2026, pp. 25–30). As a member of the European Union, Hungary occupies a unique position within the OTS and seeks to utilize this platform as a bridge between East and West.

## **Beyond Observer Status: Political, Cultural, and Institutional Cooperation**

### **Political Cooperation**

Hungary regularly participates in OTS summits at a high level. The Informal OTS Summit held in Budapest in May 2025 is considered a significant institutional milestone, as it marked the first time an observer state hosted such a meeting. The Budapest Declaration adopted at the summit outlined objectives related to energy, transport, trade, cultural cooperation, and connectivity (Organization of Turkic States, 2025). This development has enhanced Hungary's political visibility and influence within the OTS framework.

### **Cultural Cooperation**

Cultural diplomacy activities conducted within the framework of Turanist discourse—such as the Hun-Turkic Kurultaj, academic exchange programs, and scholarship initiatives—reflect Hungary's effort to ground its relations with the OTS not only in pragmatism but also in identity-based foundations (Hamzaoglu, 2025, p. 18). These initiatives aim to strengthen long-term socialization processes and support the construction of mutual perceptions.

### **Institutional Cooperation**

The opening of the OTS European Representation Office in Budapest in 2019 marked a crucial step in institutionalizing Hungary's relations with the organization. The office contributes not only to diplomatic coordination but also to the development of academic and cultural networks. Additionally, initiatives such as the Middle Corridor projects and the Turkic Investment Fund stand out as mechanisms supporting Hungary's integration into regional economic networks (Pala, 2026, p. 22).

### **The Role of the OTS in Energy Security and Foreign Trade**

OTS member states play a complementary role in Hungary's energy security strategy. In particular, energy cooperation with Azerbaijan represents a concrete example of Hungary's hedging policy aimed at balancing its dependence on Russia. An agreement reportedly signed in December 2025 between MVM ONEnergy and SOCAR foresees the purchase of a total of 800 million cubic meters of natural gas over a two-year period (Reuters, 2025; MVM, 2025). Such agreements involve not only supply diversification but also indirect participation in production projects in Azerbaijan. However, the literature emphasizes that Russia continues to maintain a dominant position in Hungary's energy structure and that alternative sources have not yet reached a fully substitutive level (Szerencsés, 2025, p. 21). Therefore, energy cooperation with OTS countries is better understood as a tool of strategic diversification rather than a short-term transformation. In terms of foreign trade, although the share of OTS countries in Hungary's total trade remains relatively limited, increasing economic relations with Türkiye and Central Asia are considered part of a long-term market diversification strategy (Hasan & Topuz, 2025, p. 60).

### **Evaluating the Equation through the Lens of National Interests and the Debate on the “Bridge Role”**

Hungary's integration with the European Union and its relations with the Organization of Turkic States are fundamentally shaped by three core axes of national interest: energy security, economic diversification, and strategic autonomy. Within this framework, Hungary's foreign policy orientation can be interpreted not as an ideological preference but as a hedging strategy based on a rational search for balance (Kuik, 2021, p. 302).

This multi-vector structure enables Hungary to maintain its economic integration within the EU while simultaneously developing alternative eastern-oriented partnerships. However, it also compels the country to continuously navigate a delicate balance between “normative alignment” and “strategic autonomy.”

### **Energy Geopolitics and the Strategic Position of Caspian Resources**

Energy security constitutes one of the most decisive elements of Hungarian foreign policy. Historical and infrastructural dependence on Russia has driven Budapest to develop alternative supply channels aligned with the European Union’s energy diversification policies. In this context, Azerbaijan and Caspian Basin resources play a critical role both for the EU’s supply security and Hungary’s risk management strategy. The Southern Gas Corridor represents a key route for delivering Caspian gas to European markets, positioning Hungary as a potential transit and distribution actor within this system (Weiner, 2024, p. 75). Furthermore, energy cooperation between MOL Group and SOCAR functions not as a complete substitute for Russian dependence but as a complementary mechanism that mitigates and diversifies this dependence (Szerencsés, 2025, p. 21). The Middle Corridor (Trans-Caspian transport route) enhances Hungary’s geoeconomic significance not only in energy transport but also in trade and logistics connectivity. However, infrastructural limitations, regional instabilities, and Russia’s continued influence in the energy system indicate that this process represents controlled risk diversification rather than a radical shift (Pala, 2026, pp. 125–127).

### **Economic Diversification: Eastern Markets and Alternative Investment Ecosystem**

The economic dimension of the *Keleti Nyitás* policy is shaped by the objectives of market diversification and access to alternative investment sources. While the European Union market remains the backbone of the Hungarian economy, Budapest seeks to reduce vulnerabilities associated with one-sided economic dependence. Economic relations with Türkiye and OTS countries play an important role in diversifying trade networks. Although their share in total trade remains limited compared to the EU, the upward trend signals a long-term strategic orientation (Szerencsés, 2025, p. 28). Meanwhile, China and Asia-based investments have become increasingly influential in Hungary’s economic transformation. Large-scale investments such as BYD’s electric vehicle plant in Szeged and CATL’s battery factory in Debrecen contribute to enhancing the country’s industrial capacity and strengthening its integration into global production chains (Salamon, 2025, pp. 128–134). These developments increase Hungary’s flexibility in economic decision-making but also demonstrate that the eastern opening does not fully substitute its structural economic dependence on the EU.

### **The Debate on the “Bridge Role”: Strategic Claim and Structural Constraints**

The concept of a “bridge role” in Hungarian foreign policy serves to both legitimize the country’s differentiated position within the EU and frame its eastern relations within a strategic narrative.

### **Strategic Dimensions of the Bridge Role**

Hungary’s bridge role is articulated across three main levels:

- **Geoeconomic level:** The ambition to become a transit hub for trade and energy flows along the East–West axis through the Middle Corridor and energy networks
- **Diplomatic level:** The aspiration to act as a limited facilitator of dialogue between the European Union and the Organization of Turkic States
- **Cultural level:** Strengthening identity-based relations with the Turkic world through Turanist discourse

This multi-layered structure expands Hungary's foreign policy maneuverability and provides the country with a symbolic identity as a "bridge actor." However, the literature emphasizes that this role remains largely discursive and produces limited impact due to structural capacity constraints (Pala, 2026, pp. 35–38).

### 6.3.2. Structural Constraints from EU and OTS Perspectives

Perceptions of Hungary's bridge role differ between the European Union and the OTS:

- **European Union perspective:**

The EU approaches Hungary's eastern opening cautiously within the framework of common foreign policy alignment and normative values, thereby limiting the institutional scope of the bridge role (Pala, 2026, pp. 35–38).

- **OTS perspective:**

While OTS countries view Hungary as a potential gateway to Europe, the country's limited political weight within the EU and its normative tensions constrain the effectiveness of this role (Baranyi, 2022, pp. 34–45). Overall, Hungary's foreign policy reflects a hybrid balance model shaped by the interplay between economic integration and strategic autonomy. The "bridge role" represents both a discursive and strategic extension of this balance. However, due to existing structural constraints, it has not yet evolved into a fully institutionalized geopolitical position. Consequently, Hungary's foreign policy behavior can be characterized as a fragile and multi-layered equilibrium shaped between a "discursive bridge" and "structural dependencies."

### Conclusion

This study has examined Hungary's foreign policy orientation during the 2010–2026 period within the context of its multi-layered interactions between the European Union (EU) and the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), analyzing both the structural and ideational dimensions of its multi-vector strategy. The findings demonstrate that Hungary's foreign policy behavior cannot be explained solely through short-term political preferences; rather, it should be understood as a long-term "hedging" strategy aimed at generating strategic autonomy under changing international system conditions.

First, Hungary's relations with the European Union exhibit a hybrid structure in which deep economic integration coexists with increasing normative and institutional tensions. While EU membership continues to provide significant economic advantages through access to the single market, investment flows, and structural funds, disputes over the rule of law, media freedom, and democratic norms have created a persistent line of tension between Budapest and Brussels. This situation has positioned Hungary within the EU not merely as a compliant member but as a "strategic dissenter" that periodically challenges the Union's normative framework.

Second, Hungary's eastern opening—particularly its relations with the Organization of Turkic States—is not limited to the pursuit of economic diversification. These relations are supported by material interests such as energy security, logistical integration, and access to new markets, while simultaneously gaining symbolic legitimacy through narratives of Turanism and historical-cultural kinship. This dual structure illustrates that rational calculations of interest and identity-based factors are not mutually exclusive in foreign policy behavior; rather, they reinforce one another.

Third, energy geopolitics occupies a central position in Hungary's foreign policy strategy. The structural dependence on Russia has created vulnerabilities that have driven Budapest toward alternative supply sources. In this regard, energy cooperation with Azerbaijan and the Caspian Basin,

along with Middle Corridor initiatives, has gained strategic importance. However, these alternatives have not yet reached a level capable of fully substituting the Russian energy system, functioning instead primarily as mechanisms of “risk diversification.” This indicates that Hungary is pursuing a strategy of controlled balancing rather than a radical rupture in its energy policy.

Fourth, Hungary’s self-positioning as a “bridge country” entails both a strategic claim to a role within the geopolitical transition zone between Europe and Asia and a process of reconstructing its foreign policy identity. However, the institutional capacity of this role remains structurally constrained by the normative boundaries of the EU and the level of institutional development within the OTS. Consequently, Hungary’s bridge role appears strong at the discursive level but relatively fragile in operational terms.

In conclusion, Hungary’s foreign policy experience between 2010 and 2026 demonstrates how a middle-sized state in a multipolar international system can simultaneously remain integrated within existing institutional frameworks while creating room for maneuver through alternative regional networks. In this context, Hungary seeks to preserve the economic and institutional advantages of EU membership while enhancing its foreign policy flexibility through engagement with the OTS and similar structures. However, the sustainability of this dual strategy will depend on multiple variables, including the EU’s internal cohesion capacity, the level of institutionalization of Eurasian cooperation networks, and Hungary’s domestic political stability.

Therefore, the Hungarian case represents not only a regional foreign policy example but also offers a significant analytical contribution to broader theoretical debates on the interaction between identity, geopolitics, and strategic autonomy.

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TƏBİƏT ELMLƏRİ  
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## Technological Results Obtained Using Domestic Silkworm Genotypes in Various Seasons

Lala Abdullayeva<sup>1</sup> , Arzu Mirzayeva<sup>2\*</sup> , Gulabatin Humbatova<sup>1</sup> ,  
Arzu Mammadov<sup>3</sup> , Seyfali Kahramanov<sup>4</sup> 

**Abstract.** Since one of the primary objectives of sericulture is the production of high yields of high-quality raw silk output, any domestic silkworm line (*Bombyx mori*) demonstrating enhanced silk productivity is considered of significant value. Just as biological indicators reflect overall agricultural performance, technological indicators must correspond to the requirements of industrial processing. It is well established that certain biological and technological traits in silkworms are interrelated, and improvement in one group of traits often leads to corresponding enhancement in the other. For example, an increase in the cocoon shell ratio (silk content of fresh cocoons) is associated with a higher conversion efficiency from fresh to dry cocoon weight. This, in turn, results in an increased cocoon shell ratio of dry cocoons and a higher raw silk yield. In this context, the technological characteristics of the silkworm lines were evaluated. The results presented here are based on a three-year experimental study conducted under suboptimal rearing conditions across three seasonal cycles (spring, summer, and autumn). Raw silk yield from cocoons—considered the principal technological indicator of productivity—was 44.2% for the Atlas 1 line and 44.3% for the Atlas 2 line. Cocoon reelability rate (moth emergence) was relatively high in both lines, reaching 88.8% in Atlas 1 and 90.3% in Atlas 2. The filament length reeled from a single cocoon averaged 1,693 m in Atlas 1 and 1,309 m in Atlas 2. Atlas 1 line is characterized by a longer and finer filament, whereas Atlas 2 produces a thicker filament. This difference suggests that Atlas 2 may provide silk with higher mechanical strength and higher quality, while Atlas 1 yields finer and longer fibers. The metric number—an indicator of filament fineness and length—was 4,422 m/g for Atlas 1 and 3,700 m/g for Atlas 2, with higher values corresponding to finer and longer filaments. Overall, the Atlas 1 line is distinguished by a fine, long filament, a satisfactory reelability rate, and high raw silk yield. In contrast, the Atlas 2 line exhibits a thicker filament of moderate length, a high reelability rate, and similarly high silk productivity. The results of the selection experiment further indicate that maintaining both genotypes under suboptimal feeding conditions is effective.

<sup>1</sup>Ganja State University, Doctor of Philosophy in Agricultural Sciences, Ganja, Azerbaijan

<sup>2</sup>Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan Institute of Genetic Resources, Baku, Azerbaijan

<sup>3</sup>Institute of Bioresources of Nakhchivan State University, Doctor of Sciences Biology, Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan

<sup>4</sup>Institute of Bioresources of Nakhchivan State University, Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: [mirzyevaa@bk.ru](mailto:mirzyevaa@bk.ru)

Received: 20 February 2026; Accepted: 6 April 2026; Published online: 22 June 2026

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