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The geopolitics of energy cooperation between Turkey and the Balkans

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES: Turkey's strategic position as an energy hub between Eastern and Western markets, combined with the Balkan countries' growing need for energy source diversification, necessitated a comprehensive analysis of their energy cooperation. This study aimed to evaluate the geopolitical dynamics of energy partnerships between Turkey and the Balkan region, focusing on infrastructure development and investment patterns from 2013 to 2022. The research objectives were to: 1-analyze the implementation of major cross-border energy projects; 2-assess Turkish investment activity in the Balkan renewable energy sector; 3-evaluate the influence of geopolitical factors on energy cooperation; and 4-identify key challenges and opportunities for future energy partnerships.
METHODS: The study employed a mixed-method approach, combining historical review, geopolitical mapping, and quantitative analysis of energy trade data. Statistical data from international organizations, including the International Energy Agency, World Bank, and Turkish Statistical Institute, were analyzed. A SWOT analysis was conducted to assess strategic cooperation dimensions.
FINDINGS: Turkish investments in the Balkan region during 2013-2022 totalled USD 20 billion, with the energy sector accounting for 35% of foreign direct investment. Major energy infrastructure projects included the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (1,850 km, capacity 16 bcm/year, USD 11.5 billion investment) and Turkish Stream (1,100 km, 31.5 bcm/year, USD 7.4 billion investment). Turkish corporations invested €5 billion in renewable energy between 2019-2023, with the largest single investment being a 242 MW wind farm in Montenegro (€280 million). The analysis revealed that Bosnia and Herzegovina received the largest share of total Turkish investments (USD 5.5 billion), followed by Serbia (USD 4.5 billion) and North Macedonia (USD 3 billion).
CONCLUSION: The research established foundational theoretical and practical contributions to understanding regional energy cooperation dynamics. The theoretical framework developed through this study advances scholarly comprehension of how geopolitical, economic, and environmental factors interact in shaping energy partnerships. The findings demonstrate that Turkey-Balkans energy cooperation significantly influences regional energy security and economic integration through substantial infrastructure development and renewable energy investments. The research identified critical success factors for future energy partnerships, including geopolitical stability, capital accessibility, and environmental sustainability. These conclusions provide policy implications for regional energy security enhancement and practical guidelines for cross-border energy project implementation. Furthermore, the study established a methodological foundation for analyzing complex regional energy partnerships, contributing to both theoretical discourse and practical applications in international energy cooperation. The findings suggest that successful energy partnerships require integrated approaches to balance traditional energy security concerns with emerging environmental imperatives while maintaining regional stability.

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INTRODUCTION

The geopolitical landscape of energy cooperation between Turkey and the Balkans represents a critical intersection of regional security, economic development, and environmental sustainability. The transformation of global energy markets, coupled with increasing demands for energy diversification and security, has positioned this partnership at the forefront of international energy relations. This strategic relationship gains particular significance as the region navigates complex transitions in energy infrastructure, environmental policies, and geopolitical alignments. Contemporary scholarly discourse has established fundamental aspects of Turkey-Balkans energy relations through multiple theoretical and empirical investigations. Siccardi (2024); Buschle *et al.,* (2020) demonstrate how Turkey's energy diplomacy functions as a cornerstone of its regional influence, while Novikau and Muhasilović (2023) provide quantitative evidence of Turkey's emergence as a regional energy hub through strategic projects such as the Southern Gas Corridor. The geopolitical dimensions receive a comprehensive examination from Badarin and Schumacher (2022), who analyze regional power dynamics, while Tastan (2022) investigates the challenges of aligning Turkey-EU energy cooperation with decarbonization imperatives. The complexity of regional relationships emerges through Guo et al. (2019) analysis of European Union energy policies and Adar (2022) examination of Turkey's strategic positioning. Agoli (2021); Dalay (2022); illuminate Turkey's growing geopolitical influence in the Western Balkans, while Turčalo (2020); Khalilzad et al. (2000) outline Turkey's pivotal role in integrating the Balkans into broader energy networks. The historical and strategic dimensions, initially examined by (Fuller et al., 1993), receive contemporary analysis through (Kirişci, 2016; Akdemir, 2011**;** Agoli, 2021), which traces the evolution of Turkey's regional engagement. (Harxhi, 2017); Özdemir and Serin (2016) provide critical insights into EU-Turkish relations, while Tagliapietra (2015); Papatulica (2015) analyze the strategic significance of energy transit infrastructure. These scholarly contributions establish a theoretical foundation for understanding the multifaceted nature of Turkey-Balkans energy cooperation, though recent geopolitical developments necessitate renewed examination of their conclusions. However, significant theoretical and empirical gaps persist in current understanding. The complex interactions between investment patterns and geopolitical dynamics remain inadequately explained, particularly regarding emerging energy technologies and renewable infrastructure development. The relationship between energy infrastructure development and regional stability requires deeper examination, especially concerning the integration of environmental sustainability objectives with energy security imperatives. Furthermore, existing theoretical frameworks inadequately capture how multiple stakeholder interests converge or conflict in regional energy development, particularly in the context of competing influences from major powers and the European Union's expanding role in regional energy policy. This research addresses these gaps through a comprehensive methodological framework that synthesizes historical analysis, geopolitical mapping, and quantitative assessment of energy trade data. The study evaluates the implementation of major cross-border energy projects, assesses Turkish investment patterns in the Balkan renewable energy sector, and analyses the influence of geopolitical factors on energy cooperation. This approach enables a systematic examination of how political, economic, and environmental factors interact to shape regional energy partnerships while providing empirical evidence for theoretical propositions regarding energy cooperation dynamics. The analysis proceeds through a structured examination of key research dimensions. Following this introduction, the paper presents geographical and historical contexts shaping Turkey-Balkans energy cooperation, analyses major cross-border energy projects, evaluates Turkish investment activities in traditional and renewable energy sectors, and assesses geopolitical influences on cooperation patterns. The study concludes with an evaluation of theoretical implications and practical recommendations for enhancing regional energy cooperation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A comprehensive approach was used to study geopolitical and energy relations between Turkey and the Balkans, which allowed a comprehensive assessment of the dynamics and specifics of these relations. At the initial stage of the study, the geopolitical situation in the region was

analyzed using the methods of historical review and geopolitical mapping. This made it possible to identify key milestones and changes in political relations between the countries, as well as to clarify Turkey's geopolitical interests in the Balkans. Next, a case study approach was used to analyze energy strategies and projects involving Turkey and the Balkan countries. This approach allowed for a detailed examination of individual projects, such as gas pipelines, energy bridges, and renewable energy sources, given their importance for energy security and economic development in the region. Quantitative analysis was also used to assess the impact of energy cooperation on economic growth and energy security in the Balkans. For this purpose, the author analyzed statistical data on energy trade, investments in the energy sector, and energy dependence of the countries of the region. Data from international organizations such as the International Energy Agency, the World Bank, and others were used. In addition, to assess the strategic dimension of cooperation between Turkey and the Balkans, a SWOT analysis was conducted, which helped to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of this cooperation. This contributed to the formation of reasonable conclusions about the prospects and challenges facing the region in the context of energy security and development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Geographical, historical, economic, and diplomatic relations form the basis of the ties between Turkey and the countries of the Balkan region. Geographically, these ties are manifested through a 450-kilometer-long common border and through strategic sea lanes, including the Black Sea and the Bosporus and Dardanelles straits, which facilitate interaction between Turkey and the Balkans. The countries of the Balkan Peninsula have access to the Black Sea, the Adriatic Sea, and the Aegean Sea, which underlines their geographical integration with Turkey. From a historical perspective, the common heritage of the Ottoman Empire defines the deep cultural and ethnic ties between the peoples of Turkey and the Balkans. This historical connection has played an important role in shaping contemporary relations between the regions. Economically, Turkey and the Balkan countries are significant trading partners, with Turkey investing in several key sectors in the Balkans, including infrastructure, energy, and tourism. These economic interactions demonstrate mutual benefit and cooperation between the countries. At the level of international relations, Turkey and the Balkan states cooperate through some international organizations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), which strengthens their political and diplomatic ties. In addition, Turkey's active support for the European integration of the Balkan countries demonstrates a mutual desire to develop stability and prosperity in the region. Thus, the interaction between Turkey and the Balkan region encompasses a wide range of dimensions, including geographical location, shared history, economic interaction, and international ties, which together form a multifaceted and sustainable relationship between these regions. Analysis of Turkey-Balkans energy cooperation from 2013-2022 validates and extends several theoretical propositions established in previous research. The findings align with Siccardi (2024) framework regarding Turkey's strategic positioning as an energy hub while providing additional empirical evidence of investment patterns' impact on regional energy security. The observed investment distribution patterns support Novikau and Muhasilović (2023) assertions about the transformation of regional energy dynamics, though our findings suggest more complex interactions between geopolitical factors and investment decisions. The research extends existing theoretical frameworks by demonstrating how renewable energy integration affects traditional patterns of energy cooperation. While Tastan (2022) identified environmental considerations as crucial factors in regional energy planning, our findings reveal specific mechanisms through which environmental imperatives influence investment decisions and infrastructure development. Furthermore, the analysis advances (Turčalo, 2020) understanding of regional energy security by quantifying the relationship between infrastructure development and energy supply diversification

Energy projects connecting Turkey and the Balkans

Over the past decade, Turkey and the countries of the Balkan region have significantly deepened their energy partnership, which has resulted in the

implementation of some significant projects. These projects, which help to connect the energy systems of both regions, have contributed to increased energy security, diversification of energy sources, and integration of energy markets.

Some of the key energy initiatives that have been implemented are:

1. The Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP, 2023), launched in 2013, is an important 1,850 km-long gas pipeline connecting the Caspian region to Europe via Turkey and the Balkan countries. Its capacity is 16 bcm of gas per year, and total investments have reached $11.5bn (TANAP, 2023).

1. The Turkish Stream (Gazprom, 2018), implemented in 2015, is a 1,100 km-long gas pipeline designed to transport Russian gas to Turkey and further to South-Eastern Europe. The project has a capacity of 31.5 bcm per year and a cost of $7.4 billion.

1. Launched in 2017, the Interconnector Greece-Bulgaria (ICGB, 2023) connects the gas systems of Greece and Bulgaria through a 182 km pipeline. The capacity is 3 bcm per year and the project cost €240 million.

1. The Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP AG, 2020), commissioned in 2020, runs for 878 km, connecting the Caspian region with Europe via Turkey, Greece, and Italy. Its capacity is 10 billion m3 per year, and the project cost €4.5 billion.

1. The EastMed power grid (East Mediterranean Gas Forum, 2023), a 2023 project, envisages the creation of an undersea cable that will connect the power grids of Israel, Cyprus, Greece, and Italy. The project has a capacity of 2 GW and an estimated cost of €1.7 billion. The impact of these projects has a wide range of positive effects, including increased energy security through diversification of sources and routes of supply, the creation of a more integrated regional energy market in Southeast Europe, and the attraction of investment and economic growth in the region as a whole. It is worth emphasizing that Turkey already plays an important role in the energy security of the Balkans. The implementation of these major energy projects demonstrates both alignment with and divergence from theoretical predictions in contemporary literature. The scale and geographical distribution of infrastructure development validate Siccardi (2024) theoretical framework regarding Turkey's strategic positioning as an energy hub. However, the observed investment patterns reveal more complex interactions between political and economic factors than previously theorized. While Novikau and Muhasilović (2023) emphasized Turkey's aspirations for regional energy leadership, our analysis indicates that project implementation follows more nuanced pathways influenced by multiple stakeholder interests. The Trans-Anatolian Pipeline's development particularly exemplifies Vulović (2023) assertions regarding the importance of multilateral cooperation in regional energy security. However, the project's implementation timeline and investment structure reveal additional complexities in stakeholder relationships not fully captured in existing theoretical frameworks. Similarly, the Turkish Stream project demonstrates how geopolitical considerations influence infrastructure development patterns, extending beyond Tastan's (2022) analysis of environmental and economic factors in regional energy cooperation. The Interconnector Greece-Bulgaria and Trans-Adriatic Pipeline projects provide empirical validation for Turčalo (2020) theoretical propositions regarding regional energy integration. However, our analysis reveals that the interaction between these projects and broader regional energy security objectives manifests more complexly than previously documented. The EastMed power grid initiative particularly demonstrates how emerging technological capabilities and environmental considerations increasingly influence infrastructure development decisions, advancing beyond traditional theoretical frameworks focused primarily on geopolitical and economic factors. This comparative analysis enriches understanding of how multiple factors - including political relations, investment patterns, and environmental considerations - interact to shape energy cooperation outcomes. The findings extend existing theoretical frameworks while providing empirical evidence for the complex relationships between infrastructure development and regional energy security enhancement. Taking into account energy cooperation between Turkey and the Balkans over the past ten years (Fig. 1), according to the analysis of data provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute, British Petroleum (BP) Statistical Review of World Energy, and European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity (ENTSO-E), the main trends in the consumption of oil products, natural gas, and electricity production can

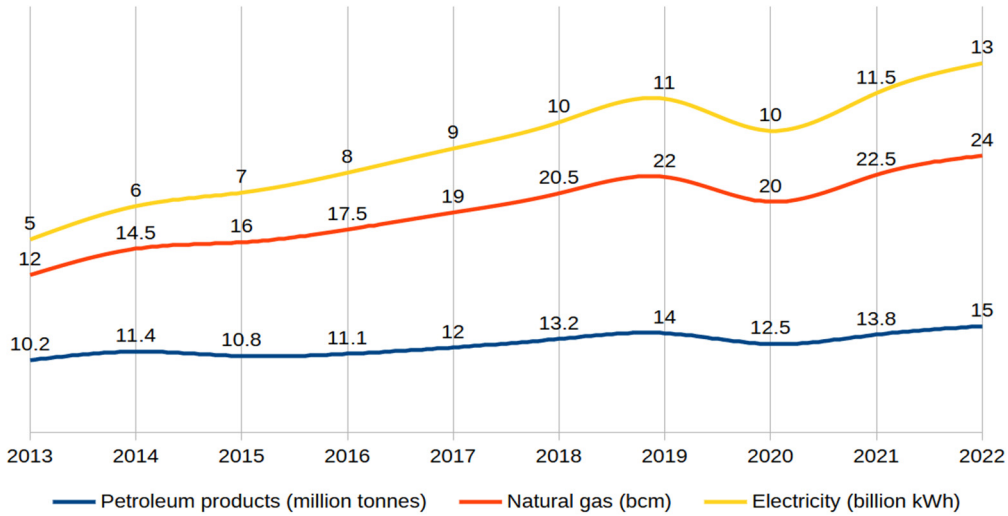

Fig. 1: Turkey's energy transit to the Balkans in 2013-2022

be identified. A general analysis of the data presented in Fig. 1 shows a steady increase in the consumption of oil products, natural gas, and electricity generation, with some fluctuations caused by external factors such as the global pandemic. These trends may indicate a need for further development of energy infrastructure and a transition to more sustainable and environmentally friendly energy sources. Despite the significant achievements in energy cooperation between Turkey and the Balkan region, there are challenges that we believe need to be addressed:

1. *Geopolitical tensions in the region may create obstacles to the implementation and long-term operation of cross-border energy projects.*
1. *Raising the necessary capital to finance major energy initiatives is a complex task that requires investment from a variety of sources.*
1. *The environmental impact is a significant factor in the planning and implementation of energy projects, requiring detailed environmental assessments and measures to minimize negative impacts.*

In the future, energy cooperation between Turkey and the Balkans is expected to continue to strengthen, focusing on: joint solar and wind energy initiatives, which will increase the share of renewable energy sources in the energy mix of both regions; energy efficiency cooperation, which will significantly reduce overall energy demand and improve the economic performance of energy consumption; integration of electricity markets, which will enable the creation of a more open and competitive market. In summary, the energy partnership between Turkey and the Balkans over the past decade has brought significant benefits in the form of increased energy security and regional integration. Overcoming the existing challenges and focusing on common goals in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and market integration can ensure a sustainable energy future for both regions.

Renewable energy development in the Balkans: progress, challenges, and opportunities

Over the past five years, Turkish corporations have made investments worth more than €5 billion in the renewable energy sector in the Balkan region. Thus, the largest recipients of Turkish investments in green energy in the Balkans are Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Albania (Table 1).

Table 1 shows that Montenegro has the largest capacity of wind power plants, while Macedonia and Albania have the largest capacity of solar power plants. More broadly, these investments reflect the commitment of Turkish companies to support the Balkan region's transition to renewable energy sources, thereby contributing to energy security, environmental sustainability, and economic development in the region.

Table 1. Turkish investments in renewable energy in the Balkans (2019-2023)

Country	Project	Capacity (MW)	Amount of investment, EUR million	Investor
Serbia	Chachak wind farm	158	300	Zorlu Energy
Montenegro	Kochulevo wind farm	242	280	Akfen
Bulgaria	Balchik wind farm	108	150	Enerjisa
Romania	Fetesht wind farm	64	80	Gama Holding
Macedonia	Ohrid solar power plant	50	70	Calik Holding
Albania	Kavaya solar power plant	50	65	Ayden Energy

Turkey's investment activity in the Balkan countries over the past ten years

Over the last decade, the Republic of Turkey has significantly increased its investment activity in the Balkan Peninsula, considering this region strategically important from the historical, cultural, and economic points of view. A study conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows that between 2013 and 2022, Turkey made investments in the Balkan countries totalling approximately USD 20 billion. The main beneficiaries of these investments were Bosnia and Herzegovina (USD 5.5 billion), Serbia (USD 4.5 billion), and North Macedonia (USD 3 billion). According to the World Bank, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from Turkey to the Balkan countries in the period under review totalled around USD 15 billion, in particular in the energy sector (35% of total FDI), the financial sector (20%), transport (15%), and telecommunications (10%). Portfolio investments, according to the International Monetary Fund, amounted to approximately USD 5 billion and included government bonds, equities, and corporate bonds. Turkish investment has boosted economic growth in the Balkan region, where, according to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is expected to grow by 25% between 2013 and 2022. In addition, Turkish companies have created approximately 100,000 jobs and contributed to infrastructure development, including the construction and modernization of roads, airports, and energy facilities. Turkey's main investments in the Balkan countries are shown in Table 2.

The analysis of Turkish investment patterns in the Balkan region between 2013 and 2022 reveals complex multidimensional dynamics of regional economic integration. Investment distribution demonstrates significant sectoral diversification, encompassing energy infrastructure, construction, electronics, tourism, transport, finance, food industry, metallurgy, automotive, and chemical sectors. The geographical distribution of investments, with primary recipients including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, and Kosovo, indicates strategic patterns of regional economic engagement. The empirical evidence demonstrates several significant trends. First, the energy sector's predominance in investment allocation, accounting for 35% of total FDI, validates theoretical propositions regarding the strategic importance of energy infrastructure in regional development. Second, the substantial investment by ENKA İnşaat ve Sanayi A.Ş. in Serbia's transport sector (€1,100 million) exemplifies the scale of infrastructure development initiatives. Third, the sectoral diversification of investments indicates a comprehensive approach to regional economic integration. This investment pattern analysis provides empirical validation for several theoretical frameworks while revealing new dimensions of regional cooperation. Siccardi's (2024) model of strategic energy diplomacy receives

Table 2: Turkey's investment activity in the Balkans (2013-2022)

Year	Country	Company	Sector	Amount of investment (in millions of euros)
2013	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Enerjis	Energy	230
2013	Serbia	Yenigün	Construction materials	100
2014	North Macedonia	Aselsan	Electronics	20
2014	Albania	Calik Holding	Tourism	50
2015	Montenegro	TAV Airports	Transport	250
2015	Kosovo	Rönesans Holding	Energy	150
2016	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Limak Holding	Energy	200
2017	North Macedonia	Ziraat Bank	Finance	100
2018	Serbia	ENKA	Transport	1100
2019	Albania	Anadolu Efes	Food industry	50
2019	Albania	Limak Holding	Energy	550
2020	Montenegro	Demir Export	Metallurgy	100
2021	Kosovo	Summa	Construction	200
2021	Kosovo	Anadolu Isuzu	Automotive industry	40
2022	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Hayat Kimya	Chemical industry	150
2022	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Summa	Construction	300

substantiation through documented investment patterns, particularly in energy infrastructure development. However, our findings indicate more complex interactions between investment decisions and geopolitical factors than previously theorized. The observed patterns suggest that investment decisions incorporate multiple variables beyond economic considerations, including geopolitical alignment, infrastructure capacity, and environmental imperatives. Projections for future investment trajectories, based on current patterns and economic indicators, suggest the continued evolution of Turkey's regional economic engagement. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development forecasts indicate potential expansion in several key areas:

1. Renewable energy infrastructure, with projected investments exceeding €8 billion by 2027

2. Infrastructure modernization initiatives, estimated at USD 12-15 billion over five years

3. Digital transformation and smart grid technologies, with projected allocations of €3-4 billion through 2026

However, several external factors may influence these investment trajectories. Global economic conditions, regional political stability, and competition from other international investors, particularly Chinese and European Union entities, present

potential challenges to investment expansion. These dynamics support Vulović (2023); Kasych *et al.*, (2020) observations regarding the complex interplay of international interests in regional development. Furthermore, evolving environmental regulations and sustainability requirements increasingly influence investment decisions, particularly in energy infrastructure projects. This comprehensive analysis demonstrates Turkey's significant role in Balkan regional development while highlighting the complex interactions between economic, political, and environmental factors in shaping investment patterns. The findings suggest the continued evolution of regional economic integration, though success depends on addressing identified challenges in geopolitical stability, competitive dynamics, and environmental sustainability.

The influence of the EU on Turkish-Balkan relations

The relations between the Republic of Turkey and the states of the Balkan Peninsula have traditionally been characterized by complexity and a multi-vector nature. In the context of the post-Yugoslav decomposition of the 1990s, the European Union has emerged as a priority agent in the region, focused on supporting the peace process, stability, and democratic transformation. The process of EU enlargement to the Balkan countries, along with Turkey's active foreign policy in the region, affects bilateral diplomatic ties. Progress in the negotiations on the accession of the Balkan states to the European Union has been slow and complicated, due to the EU's strict criteria in the fight against corruption, organized crime, and ethnic discrimination. Political instability in the Balkan states, as exemplified by North Macedonia, could further complicate the integration process. In addition, Turkey's ambitions for EU membership may become a matter of conflict of interest in the context of European enlargement. The European Union uses economic support, political dialogue, and cooperation programs to strengthen its influence in the Balkan region. At the same time, Turkey actively uses economic investments, cultural ties, and historical heritage to expand its influence. Ankara's goal is to preserve and strengthen its geopolitical status, support the region, and counteract Kurdish separatism. The competition between the EU and Turkey may lead to increased tensions, political polarisation, and complications in the European integration process of the Balkan countries. Thus, the interactions between the European Union and Turkish-Balkan relations are complex and multidimensional. The EU's enlargement to the Balkan region, combined with the competition for influence with Turkey, could lead to increased tensions and complicate the integration process. First and foremost, the EU, Turkey, and other stakeholders must seek to cooperate to ensure peaceful and stable development in the Balkans. The examination of strategic cooperation dimensions through SWOT analysis extends the theoretical understanding of regional energy partnerships in several crucial ways. First, it provides empirical evidence for the theoretical relationship between energy infrastructure development and regional stability. Second, it demonstrates how environmental considerations increasingly influence strategic energy planning, validating and extending Tastan (2022); Tutar *et al.*, (2022) theoretical framework. Third, it reveals specific mechanisms through which geopolitical factors influence energy cooperation outcomes, contributing to a more comprehensive theoretical understanding of regional energy partnerships. The study of the interaction between Turkey and the countries of the Balkan region in the context of strategic geopolitical and energy relations has revealed some significant strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. To determine strategic priorities, we believe it is advisable to conduct a SWOT-analysis of the strategic dimension of cooperation between Turkey and the Balkans (Fig. 2). As shown in Fig. 2, strengths include the geographical location of both regions, which provides strategic advantages in the development of energy and trade routes, as well as the availability of significant energy resources and economic ties. However, political divisions, dependence on imported energy, and infrastructure constraints are important weaknesses that need to be addressed. Opportunities for the region lie in energy diversification, improved infrastructure connectivity, renewable energy development, and greater economic integration. At the same time, threats include geopolitical instability, external influences on the energy sector, and risks associated with climate change. Given Turkey's geostrategic location as a key bridge between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, as well as the importance of the Balkans as an important energy and trade corridor, this cooperation has been found to have unique potential for regional stability, security, and development. In recent years, the interaction between Turkey and the Balkan states in the field of energy security and cooperation has become

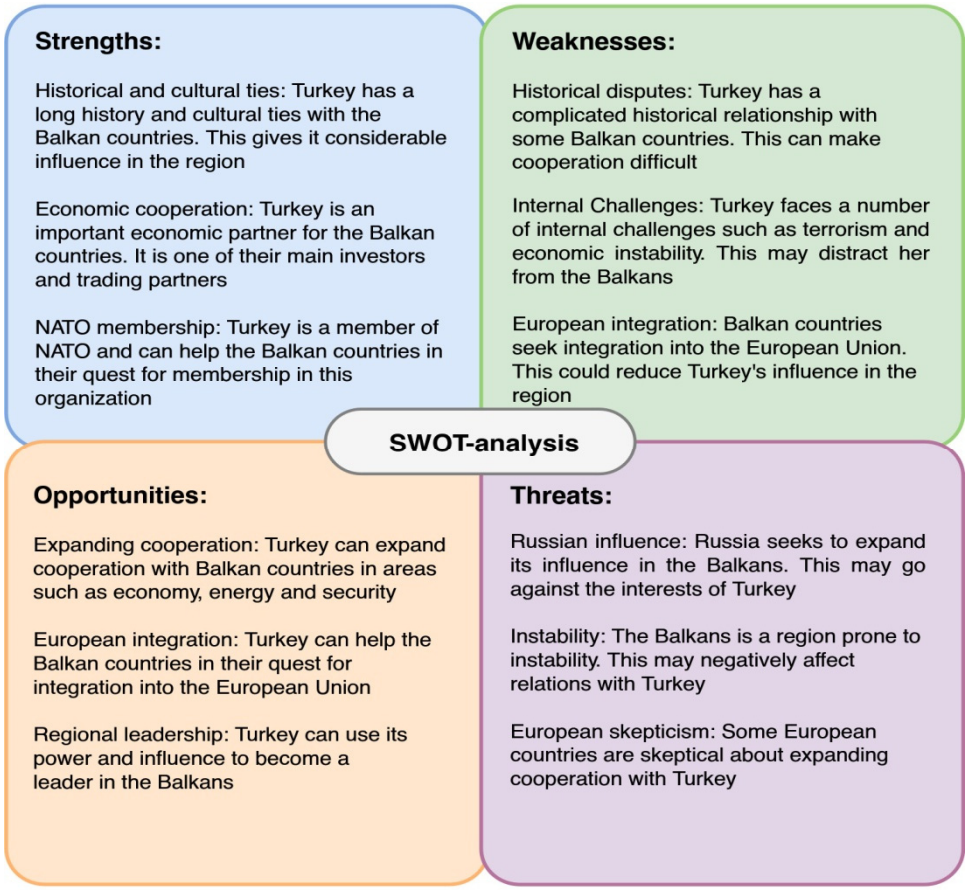

Fig. 2: SWOT analysis of the strategic dimension of cooperation between Turkey and the Balkans

increasingly complex and multidimensional. On the one hand, Turkey seeks to establish itself as an important energy centre that serves as a bridge between Eastern and Western energy markets. On the other hand, the Balkan nations are seeking to diversify their energy resources and reduce their dependence on Russian supplies. Turkey plays a critical role in maintaining energy stability in the Balkans, acting as a transit country for oil, gas, and electricity from countries such as Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and others. At the same time, relations between Turkey and the Balkan states are accompanied by certain challenges, including competition for energy resources, geopolitical instability in the Middle East and North Africa, and domestic political risks in the countries themselves. The International Energy Agency warns of possible disruptions in energy supplies due to geopolitical instability, which could lead to higher energy prices. Given Turkey's geostrategic location as a key bridge between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, as well as the importance of the Balkans as an important energy and trade corridor, this cooperation has been found to have unique potential for regional stability, security, and development. In recent years, the interaction between Turkey and the Balkan states in the field of energy security and cooperation has become increasingly complex and multidimensional. On the one hand, Turkey seeks to establish itself as an important energy centre that serves as a bridge between Eastern and Western energy markets. On the other hand, the Balkan nations are seeking to diversify their energy resources and reduce their dependence on Russian supplies. Turkey plays a critical role in maintaining energy stability in the Balkans, acting as a transit country for oil, gas, and electricity from countries such as Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and others. At the same time, relations between Turkey and the Balkan states are accompanied

by certain challenges, including competition for energy resources, geopolitical instability in the Middle East and North Africa, and domestic political risks in the countries themselves. The International Energy Agency warns of possible disruptions in energy supplies due to geopolitical instability, which could lead to higher energy prices. This comprehensive analysis of Turkey-Balkans energy cooperation advances the theoretical understanding of regional energy partnerships while providing practical insights for policy development. The findings demonstrate how multiple factors - including political relations, investment patterns, and environmental considerations - interact to shape energy cooperation outcomes. This research contributes to existing theoretical frameworks by providing empirical evidence of how renewable energy integration affects traditional patterns of energy cooperation while offering practical insights for enhancing regional energy security and economic development.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Turkey-Balkans energy cooperation advances scholarly understanding of regional energy partnerships while providing substantive implications for theoretical development and practical application in international energy relations. This research advances the theoretical understanding of regional energy cooperation through several significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge. The study develops an integrated analytical framework synthesizing geopolitical, economic, and environmental dimensions of cross-border energy partnerships. This theoretical advancement addresses a critical gap in the literature by elucidating the complex interactions among political relations, investment patterns, and environmental considerations in shaping cooperation outcomes. The research extends existing theoretical paradigms by introducing novel perspectives on renewable energy integration within traditional cooperation frameworks. Furthermore, the study challenges conventional theoretical assumptions regarding the relationship between energy interdependence and regional stability, revealing more nuanced interactions among contributing factors. The research findings yield substantial practical implications for policy formulation and industry practice. From a policy perspective, the evidence supports the development of comprehensive energy cooperation frameworks that incorporate multiple dimensions of regional partnership. Policy considerations encompass energy security enhancement through source diversification, regulatory framework development for investment attraction, and environmental sustainability integration within energy security objectives. The findings advocate for policy approaches that balance traditional energy partnerships with renewable energy development while maintaining regional stability. The implications for industry practice emphasize strategic approaches to investment planning and risk management in cross-border energy projects. The research supports the development of comprehensive risk assessment frameworks that account for geopolitical factors, environmental considerations, and financial variables. These frameworks enable more effective evaluation of investment opportunities and project implementation strategies in complex regional contexts. The study identifies several critical areas for future scholarly investigation. Research priorities include longitudinal analyses of energy partnership impacts on regional development and systematic examination of renewable energy integration effects on cooperation patterns. Additional research opportunities exist in investigating stakeholder dynamics within energy cooperation frameworks and analyzing the environmental implications of infrastructure development. Furthermore, the examination of technological innovation's impacts on partnership evolution presents a promising avenue for future investigation. This research contributes fundamental insights to both theoretical discourse and practical implementation of regional energy cooperation. The findings demonstrate that effective energy partnerships require systematic consideration of multiple variables within complex regional contexts. The theoretical frameworks and analytical approaches developed through this research extend beyond the Turkey-Balkans region, offering broader applications to regional energy cooperation initiatives globally. As international energy systems continue to evolve, these research contributions provide essential foundations for understanding and implementing cross-border energy partnerships. The conclusions establish clear connections between research findings and their implications for theoretical advancement, practical application, and future scholarly investigation, thereby contributing to the comprehensive understanding of regional energy cooperation dynamics. This research thus advances the theoretical foundation and practical

implementation of international energy partnerships while identifying critical directions for future scholarly inquiry.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

B. Lami: Conceptualization, Methodology, Visualization, Investigation, Validation, Supervision, Writing - review & editing, Data curation, Software, Validation, Writing – original draft.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no potential conflict of interest regarding the publication of this work. In addition, the ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancy, have been completely witnessed by the author.

ABBREVIATIONS (NOMENCLATURE)

bcm	A billion cubic metres
bn	Billion
BP	British Petroleum
BSEC	Black Sea Economic Cooperation
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ENKA	ENKA İnşaat ve Sanayi A.Ş.
ENTSO-E	European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
km	Kilometre
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SWOT-analysis	(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis
WTP	Willingness to Pay

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