

THIRTY YEARS OF AZERBAIJAN-POLAND RELATIONS: EVOLUTION, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROSPECTS

SUMMARY

This article examines the evolution, major achievements, and future prospects of Azerbaijan–Poland relations over the past three decades. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations on 21 February 1992, the two countries have gradually transformed their bilateral cooperation into a comprehensive strategic partnership based on mutual trust, political dialogue, and shared economic interests. The study analyzes the historical development of bilateral relations, emphasizing the institutionalization of political cooperation through high-level visits, strategic declarations, and parliamentary diplomacy. Particular attention is devoted to the expansion of economic relations, including trade, investment, industrial cooperation, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, information and communication technologies (ICT), and the activities of the Azerbaijan–Poland Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation. The article further explores the strategic importance of energy cooperation, highlighting collaboration between SOCAR and Polish energy companies, the Southern Gas Corridor, the Sarmatia project, renewable energy initiatives, and emerging opportunities in green hydrogen. In addition, the study evaluates the growing role of transport and logistics, focusing on the Middle Corridor, the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars Railway, the Port of Baku at Alat, and Poland's logistics infrastructure, including the LHS Railway and the Sławków Euroterminal, in strengthening Eurasian connectivity. Educational and cultural cooperation, particularly through Erasmus+, university partnerships, academic mobility, and cultural diplomacy, is also examined as an essential component of bilateral relations. The research concludes that Azerbaijan and Poland have established a resilient and multidimensional partnership that extends beyond traditional political and economic cooperation. The complementary geopolitical positions of both countries, combined with their shared commitment to sustainable development, energy security, and regional connectivity, provide a solid foundation for further strengthening bilateral relations in the years ahead.

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Introduction

The restoration of the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 18 October 1991 marked the beginning of a new stage in the country's foreign policy. Seeking to strengthen its sovereignty and integrate into the international community, Azerbaijan established diplomatic relations with many European states, including Poland. Diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Poland were officially established on 21 February 1992, and since then bilateral cooperation has expanded into a comprehensive partnership covering political dialogue, economic relations, energy, transport, education, culture, and cooperation within international organizations.[5]

Over the past three decades, Azerbaijan and Poland have strengthened their relations through high-level political dialogue, reciprocal official visits, and numerous bilateral agreements. The Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership (2007) and the Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership and Economic Cooperation (2017) created a solid legal and political foundation for cooperation in trade, investment, energy, transport, agriculture, science, and environmental protection.[1]

Economic cooperation has become one of the key pillars of bilateral relations. Trade has steadily increased with the support of the Azerbaijan–Poland Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation, the Polish Investment and Trade Agency (PAIH) office in Baku, and regular business forums. Both countries continue to prioritize trade diversification, investment promotion, and cooperation in high value-added sectors.

Energy remains a strategic dimension of Azerbaijan–Poland relations. Azerbaijan has become a reliable energy supplier to Europe, while Poland supports the diversification of European energy resources. Cooperation through SOCAR, regional energy infrastructure projects, and the Southern Gas Corridor has strengthened bilateral ties. More recently, cooperation has expanded to renewable

energy, energy efficiency, and green technologies, reflecting both countries' commitment to sustainable development [2].

Transport and logistics have become important areas of Azerbaijan–Poland cooperation. Azerbaijan's strategic location and projects such as the “Baku International Sea Trade Port”, the “Baku–Tbilisi–Kars Railway”, and the “Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (Middle Corridor)” have strengthened its role in Eurasian connectivity. Poland, as a major logistics hub in Central Europe, complements these initiatives, creating new opportunities for trade and multimodal transport between Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia.[1]

Cooperation has also expanded in education, science, culture, tourism, and people-to-people exchanges through academic partnerships, cultural initiatives, and collaboration within European educational programmes. Azerbaijan and Poland further cooperate in international organizations, including the United Nations, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the EU's Eastern Partnership, promoting regional stability, international law, and sustainable development [5].

Over the past three decades, Azerbaijan–Poland relations have evolved in response to changing geopolitical and geoeconomic conditions. Energy security, new transport corridors, digitalization, and the transition to green development have created new opportunities for bilateral cooperation and strengthened institutional dialogue.

This article examines the evolution of Azerbaijan–Poland relations since 1991, focusing on political and diplomatic relations, economic cooperation, energy, transport and logistics, and educational and cultural exchanges. It also assesses the main achievements, challenges, and future prospects of bilateral cooperation, demonstrating how the two countries have developed a strategic partnership that contributes to regional cooperation and connectivity across Europe and Eurasia [4].

Historical Background (1991–2003): The dissolution of the Soviet Union and Azerbaijan's restoration of independence on 18 October 1991 created the conditions for establishing new international partnerships. Poland viewed the South Caucasus as an important component of its emerging Eastern policy, while Azerbaijan sought closer cooperation with European countries to strengthen its sovereignty and international integration [5].

Poland was among the first Central European states to recognize Azerbaijan's independence, and

diplomatic relations were officially established on 21 February 1992. During the initial years, bilateral cooperation focused on building diplomatic institutions, establishing mechanisms for political consultation, and developing political, economic, cultural, and humanitarian relations [4].

High-level official visits and diplomatic consultations played a key role in strengthening political dialogue during the formative years of bilateral relations. Azerbaijan's increasing geopolitical importance following the “Contract of the Century” (1994) attracted greater attention from Poland, which regarded Azerbaijan as a strategic partner due to its energy resources, geographical location, and role in regional transport projects. In turn, Azerbaijan viewed Poland as an influential Central European partner for expanding cooperation with European institutions [4].

By the early 2000s, bilateral relations had entered a more mature phase marked by regular political consultations, growing economic contacts, and cooperation within international organizations. Although trade remained limited, the institutional foundations established between 1991 and 2003 enabled the subsequent expansion of political, economic, and strategic cooperation [10]. Thus, the period from 1991 to 2003 represents the formative stage of Azerbaijan–Poland relations, during which the diplomatic, legal, and institutional framework for future strategic partnership was established.

Political and Diplomatic Relations: Political and diplomatic cooperation has been the cornerstone of Azerbaijan–Poland relations since diplomatic ties were established in 1992. Over the past three decades, bilateral relations have developed into a strategic partnership based on regular high-level dialogue, institutional cooperation, mutual respect for sovereignty, support for international law, and shared interests in regional security and economic development [4].

A major milestone was the “Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership”, signed by Presidents İlham Aliyev and Lech Kaczyński on 30 March 2007 during the Polish President's visit to Baku. The declaration elevated bilateral relations to the level of a strategic partnership and expanded cooperation in politics, the economy, energy, transport, education, culture, and regional security while reaffirming the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the peaceful settlement of disputes [11].

The partnership was further strengthened by the “Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership and Economic Cooperation”, signed by Presidents İlham Ali-

yevev and Andrzej Duda in Warsaw on 27 June 2017. The declaration introduced new priorities, including trade, investment, innovation, renewable energy, transport, agriculture, information technologies, and environmental protection, reflecting both countries' commitment to sustainable development and regional connectivity.

President Andrzej Duda's official visit to Azerbaijan in May 2019 further reinforced bilateral relations through discussions on strategic partnership, trade, energy cooperation, and the Middle Corridor. Agreements and memoranda signed during the visit strengthened the institutional framework of cooperation and highlighted Azerbaijan's importance for European energy security and Eurasian transport connectivity [12].

Regular consultations between the foreign ministries have ensured continuous political dialogue on bilateral relations, regional developments, energy security, transport initiatives, and cooperation within the "United Nations (UN)", "OSCE", "Council of Europe", and the "EU Eastern Partnership". [4] Parliamentary diplomacy has complemented these efforts through interparliamentary friendship groups, legislative cooperation, delegation exchanges, and support for the implementation of bilateral agreements, contributing to stronger political dialogue and mutual understanding.

Political dialogue has also been strengthened through the "Azerbaijan–Poland Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation", which coordinates cooperation in trade, investment, transport, energy, agriculture, and innovation. Its regular meetings help translate high-level political commitments into practical bilateral projects. Beyond bilateral relations, both countries cooperate actively within European and international institutions. Poland has supported the development of Azerbaijan–EU relations, particularly through the "Eastern Partnership", while both states promote regional stability, energy diversification, sustainable development, and Europe–Asia connectivity [5].

Overall, political and diplomatic relations have evolved from the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1992 into a comprehensive strategic partnership. The strategic declarations of 2007 and 2017, together with regular high-level dialogue and institutional cooperation, have created a solid political foundation for expanding collaboration in economic, energy, transport, educational, cultural, and humanitarian fields.

Economic Cooperation: Economic cooperation has become one of the most dynamic dimensions of

Azerbaijan–Poland relations. Since diplomatic relations were established in 1992, bilateral cooperation has expanded from limited trade to a diversified partnership covering trade, investment, industry, agriculture, information and communication technologies (ICT), pharmaceuticals, and business cooperation. Political dialogue and bilateral agreements have provided a favorable legal framework for this development [13].

Bilateral trade has grown steadily, particularly since the early 2000s. Azerbaijan mainly exports crude oil, petroleum and petrochemical products, aluminium, agricultural products, wine, hazelnuts, fruit juices, and processed food, while Poland exports machinery, electrical equipment, vehicles and spare parts, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, household appliances, food products, and construction materials. Although Poland maintains a more diversified export structure, Azerbaijan continues to promote the diversification of its non-oil exports.[19]

Investment cooperation has also expanded. Polish companies have increased their participation in infrastructure, renewable energy, agriculture, logistics, manufacturing, and environmental projects in Azerbaijan. Industrial parks such as the "Sumgait Chemical Industrial Park" and the "Alat Free Economic Zone" have created new opportunities for Polish investors, although bilateral investment still has significant growth potential [20].

Agriculture has become a promising area of cooperation, combining Poland's expertise in agricultural technologies, food processing, and mechanization with Azerbaijan's efforts to modernize its agricultural sector. Collaboration focuses on technology transfer, irrigation, greenhouse production, food processing, quality standards, and joint production aimed at expanding exports to European and third-country markets [19].

Industrial cooperation has developed through joint projects in manufacturing, construction materials, machinery, chemicals, environmental technologies, and industrial modernization. Azerbaijan's industrial parks and special economic zones provide favorable conditions for technology transfer, innovation, and export-oriented production.

The pharmaceutical sector has also gained importance. Poland's advanced pharmaceutical industry complements Azerbaijan's healthcare reforms and efforts to develop domestic pharmaceutical production. Bilateral cooperation includes medicines, medical technologies, professional exchanges, pharmaceutical manufacturing, and medical research,

contributing to healthcare modernization and investment opportunities [16].

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have become an increasingly important area of cooperation. Azerbaijan's digital transformation strategy complements Poland's expertise in software development, cybersecurity, e-government, innovation, and start-up ecosystems. Bilateral cooperation includes technology transfer, digital entrepreneurship, smart city solutions, artificial intelligence, and collaboration between research institutions and technology companies [7].

Economic cooperation is supported by the “Azerbaijan–Poland Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation”, which coordinates collaboration in trade, investment, transport, energy, agriculture, tourism, environmental protection, and innovation. Regular meetings in Baku and Warsaw establish practical roadmaps for implementing joint projects and removing barriers to economic cooperation. Business forums, B2B meetings, and cooperation among “KOBIA”, “PAIH”, and “PARP”, together with the opening of the “PAIH Foreign Trade Office” in Baku in 2018, have strengthened institutional support for investors and promoted the internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) [9].

Overall, economic cooperation has evolved into a multidimensional partnership supported by strong political relations, an expanding legal framework, and active business engagement. Although opportunities remain to increase investment and diversify trade, the existing institutional mechanisms and complementary economic structures provide a solid basis for further cooperation.

Energy Cooperation: Energy cooperation is one of the most strategic pillars of Azerbaijan–Poland relations. Azerbaijan has become a reliable energy supplier to Europe, while Poland has sought to diversify its energy imports, creating a strong foundation for cooperation in both conventional and renewable energy sectors.

A key element of this partnership is cooperation between “SOCAR” and “PKN ORLEN”. SOCAR supplies Azerbaijani crude oil to Polish refineries, supporting Poland's energy diversification strategy and strengthening bilateral economic relations. Their cooperation extends beyond commercial trade and reflects broader efforts to enhance energy connectivity between the Caspian region and Central Europe.[13]

Another important area is cooperation within

the “Sarmatia Consortium”, involving SOCAR and the Polish pipeline operator “PERN S.A.” The consortium has promoted the “Odessa-Brody-Płock-Gdańsk” oil corridor as an alternative route for transporting Caspian oil to European markets. Although the project has faced commercial and geopolitical challenges, it remains an important symbol of Azerbaijan–Poland cooperation in European energy diversification and regional energy infrastructure development.

Natural gas has become an increasingly important area of cooperation following Azerbaijan's emergence as a major supplier to Europe through the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC), which includes the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP), TANAP, and TAP. Although Poland is not directly connected to the corridor, it strongly supports the diversification of European gas supplies and recognizes Azerbaijan as a reliable strategic energy partner, contributing to European energy security [12].

A significant step in Azerbaijan's energy cooperation with Europe was the 2022 Memorandum of Understanding on a Strategic Partnership in the Field of Energy between Azerbaijan and the European Union. The agreement envisages increased Azerbaijani gas exports to Europe while promoting cooperation in renewable energy, energy efficiency, methane emission reduction, and electricity transmission. As an EU member, Poland supports this partnership and views Azerbaijan as an important contributor to the EU's long-term energy strategy [6].

In recent years, bilateral cooperation has expanded beyond hydrocarbons to renewable energy and green technologies. Azerbaijan's renewable energy targets, including increasing the share of renewables in electricity generation, complement Poland's energy transition policies and the EU's climate objectives. Cooperation has also focused on solar, wind, hydropower, and the Caspian–Black Sea–Europe Green Energy Corridor, creating new opportunities for electricity transmission, regional energy integration, and the participation of Polish companies in Azerbaijan's Green Energy Zones.

Hydrogen energy has emerged as another promising field of cooperation. Azerbaijan's renewable energy potential and Poland's interest in hydrogen technologies provide opportunities for joint research, technological exchange, infrastructure development, and industrial applications, supporting Europe's transition to a low-carbon economy [3].

Overall, energy cooperation has developed into one of the strongest pillars of Azerbaijan–Poland

strategic relations. Initially focused on oil and natural gas, it now also encompasses renewable energy, hydrogen technologies, and broader cooperation within the European Union's energy framework, contributing to regional energy security and sustainable development.

Transport and Connectivity: Transport and connectivity have become increasingly important components of Azerbaijan–Poland relations. Azerbaijan's strategic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia has established it as a major transit hub linking the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and Europe, while Poland serves as one of Central Europe's leading logistics and distribution centres. These complementary positions provide a strong foundation for expanding cooperation in multimodal transport, logistics, and international freight transportation [15].

A central element of Azerbaijan–Poland transport cooperation is the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), or Middle Corridor, which has gained strategic importance as an alternative Eurasian trade route. Extending from China through Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Türkiye to Europe, the corridor has strengthened Azerbaijan's role as a transit hub, while Poland has become an important destination and distribution centre for cargo entering the European Union.

The Baku–Tbilisi–Kars (BTK) Railway, operational since 2017, has significantly reduced freight transportation times between Asia and Europe and provides an efficient alternative to maritime transport. Poland's advanced logistics infrastructure has made it a key destination for freight transported along this route [16].

The Baku International Sea Trade Port (Alat Port) has become one of the Caspian region's leading multimodal logistics hubs, integrating maritime, rail, and road transport to facilitate East–West trade. Its continued expansion has reinforced Azerbaijan's position as a regional logistics centre while creating new opportunities for cooperation with Poland [4].

On the European side, Poland contributes advanced logistics infrastructure, particularly the Linia Hutnicza Szerokotorowa (LHS) Railway, whose broad-gauge network is compatible with the railway systems of Azerbaijan and other former Soviet states. This compatibility reduces transport costs and transit times, making the LHS an important link between the Caspian region and European markets. The Sławków Euroterminal, one of Poland's major intermodal logistics centres, further strengthens this network by providing efficient distribution of cargo

throughout the European Union.[16][18]

Container transportation has become another important area of cooperation. Both countries support container block trains operating along the Middle Corridor and cooperate on customs harmonization, digitalization of transport documentation, simplified border procedures, and coordinated tariff policies to improve the corridor's competitiveness [16].

Air transport and multimodal logistics have also contributed to closer connectivity. Direct LOT Polish Airlines flights between Warsaw and Baku facilitate business travel and the transportation of high-value cargo, while improvements in customs procedures and digital logistics platforms have increased the efficiency of bilateral transport cooperation.

Overall, transport and logistics have become one of the most strategic dimensions of Azerbaijan–Poland relations. Azerbaijan's transport infrastructure—including the Middle Corridor, the BTK Railway, and the Port of Baku at Alat—combined with Poland's logistics network, the LHS Railway, and the Sławków Euroterminal, has created an integrated Eurasian transport corridor that supports regional connectivity, international trade, and sustainable economic development.

Conclusion: Over the past three decades, Azerbaijan and Poland have transformed their bilateral relations from the establishment of diplomatic ties into a comprehensive strategic partnership. Since diplomatic relations were established in 1992, cooperation has expanded across political, economic, energy, transport, educational, and cultural fields, supported by a solid legal framework, regular high-level dialogue, and a shared commitment to regional stability, sustainable development, and international cooperation.

The future of Azerbaijan–Poland relations remains promising. Cooperation in renewable energy, digital transformation, hydrogen technologies, sustainable transport, innovation, and the reconstruction of Azerbaijan's liberated territories offers significant opportunities for expanding bilateral collaboration. As regional and global dynamics continue to evolve, both countries are well positioned to strengthen cooperation in new strategic sectors.

In conclusion, Azerbaijan and Poland have established a resilient and forward-looking partnership based on mutual trust, shared strategic interests, and complementary economic and geopolitical advantages. Continued political dialogue, institutional cooperation, and deeper engagement in both traditional and emerging sectors will further strengthen bilateral

relations while contributing to regional connectivity, energy security, and sustainable economic development across Europe and Eurasia.

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Azərbaycan–Polşa münasibətlərinin otuz ili: təkamül, nailiyyətlər və perspektivlər

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XÜLASƏ

Bu məqalə son otuz il ərzində Azərbaycan–Polşa münasibətlərinin təkamülünü, əsas nailiyyətlərini və gələcək perspektivlərini təhlil edir. 21 fevral 1992-ci ildə diplomatik əlaqələrin qurulmasından bəri iki ölkə qarşılıqlı etimad, siyasi dialoq və ortaq iqtisadi maraqlara əsaslanan ikitərəfli əməkdaşlığı tədricən hərtərəfli strateji tərəfdaşlığa çevirmişdir. Tədqiqat yüksək səviyyəli səfərlər, strateji bəyannamələr və parlament diplomatiyası vasitəsilə siyasi əməkdaşlığın təsisatlanmasını vurğulayaraq ikitərəfli münasibətlərin tarixi inkişafını təhlil edir. Xüsusi diqqət iqtisadi əlaqələrin, o cümlədən ticarət, investisiya, sənaye əməkdaşlığı, kənd təsərrüfatı, əczaçılıq, informasiya və kommunikasiya texnologiyaları (İKT) sahələrinin genişlənməsinə, eləcə də İqtisadi Əməkdaşlıq üzrə Azərbaycan–Polşa Hökumətlərarası Komissiyasının fəaliyyətinə yönəldilmişdir. Məqalə, həmçinin SOCAR və Polşanın energetika şirkətləri arasında əməkdaşlığı, Cənub Qaz Dəhlizini, "Sarmatiya" layihəsini, bərpa olunan enerji təşəbbüslərini və yaşıl hidrogen sahəsində yaranan imkanları işıqlandıraraq enerji əməkdaşlığının strateji əhə

miyyətini araşdırır. Bundan əlavə, tədqiqat Avrasiya bağlantısının möhkəmləndirilməsində Orta Dəhliz, Bakı–Tbilisi–Qars dəmir yolu, Ələtdəki Bakı Limanı və Polşanın logistika infrastrukturu, o cümlədən LHS dəmir yolu və Slafkov Evroterminalının roluna diqqət yetirərək nəqliyyat və logistikanın artan rolunu qiymətləndirir. Təhsil və mədəniyyət sahəsində əməkdaşlıq, xüsusilə "Erasmus+", universitet tərəfdaşlıqları, akademik mobillik və mədəni diplomatiya vasitəsilə ikitərəfli münasibətlərin mühüm tərkib hissəsi kimi nəzərdən keçirilir. Tədqiqat belə nəticəyə gəlir ki, Azərbaycan və Polşa ənənəvi siyasi və iqtisadi əməkdaşlıqdan kənara çıxan dayanıqlı və çoxşaxəli tərəfdaşlıq qurmuşlar. Hər iki ölkənin tamamlayıcı geopolitik mövqeyi, onların davamlı inkişaf, enerji təhlükəsizliyi və regional əlaqələrə dair birgə öhdəliyi ilə birlikdə gələcək illərdə ikitərəfli münasibətlərin daha da möhkəmləndirilməsi üçün möhkəm bünövrə yaradır.

Açar sözlər: *Azərbaycan, Polşa, ikitərəfli münasibətlər, strateji tərəfdaşlıq, iqtisadi əməkdaşlıq, enerji təhlükəsizliyi, Cənub Qaz Dəhlizi.*

Тридцать лет азербайджано-польских отношений: эволюция, достижения и перспективы

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РЕЗЮМЕ

В данной статье рассматриваются эволюция, основные достижения и будущие перспективы азербайджано-польских отношений за последние три десятилетия. С момента установления дипломатических отношений 21 февраля 1992 года обе страны постепенно трансформировали свое двустороннее сотрудничество в всеобъемлющее стратегическое партнерство, основанное на взаимном доверии, политическом диалоге и общих экономических интересах. В исследовании анализируется историческое развитие двусторонних отношений с акцентом на институционализацию политического сотрудничества посредством визитов на высшем уровне, стратегических де-

клараций и парламентской дипломатии. Особое внимание уделяется расширению экономических связей, включая торговлю, инвестиции, промышленную кооперацию, сельское хозяйство, фармацевтику, информационно-коммуникационные технологии (ИКТ) и деятельность Азербайджано-польской межправительственной комиссии по экономическому сотрудничеству. В статье также исследуется стратегическое значение энергетического сотрудничества, с акцентом на взаимодействие между SOCAR и польскими энергетическими компаниями, Южный газовый коридор, проект «Сарматия», инициативы в области возобновляемой энергетики и новые возможности в сфере зеленого водорода. Кроме того, в работе оценивается растущая роль транспорта и логистики в укреплении евразийской взаимосвязанности с акцентом на Срединный коридор, железную дорогу Баку — Тбилиси — Карс, Бакинский порт в Аляте и логистическую инфраструктуру Польши, включая железную дорогу LHS и Евротерминал Славкув. Сотрудничество в сфере образования и культуры, в частности в рамках программы Erasmus+, межвузовского партнерства, академической мобильности и культурной дипломатии, также рассматривается как важнейшая составляющая двусторонних отношений. Исследование приводит к выводу, что Азербайджан и Польша сформировали устойчивое и многоплановое партнерство, выходящее за рамки традиционного политического и экономического сотрудничества. Взаимодополняющие геополитические позиции обеих стран в сочетании с их общей приверженностью устойчивому развитию, энергетической безопасности и региональной взаимосвязанности создают прочную основу для дальнейшего укрепления двусторонних отношений в последующие годы.

Ключевые слова: *Азербайджан, Польша, двусторонние отношения, стратегическое партнерство, экономическое сотрудничество, энергетическая безопасность, Южный газовый коридор.*

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