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THE EUROPEAN UNION'S INTERESTS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS IN THE CONTEXT OF ENERGY SECURITY

SUMMARY

This article investigates the energy security policy of the European Union (EU) with a specific emphasis on its strategic cooperation with the Republic of Azerbaijan within the South Caucasus region. The EU's limited internal energy production—accounting for merely 2% of global gas reserves and 4% of oil reserves—has made it increasingly reliant on external sources, which in turn heightens its geopolitical vulnerabilities. In response to this structural dependency, the EU has prioritized the diversification of its energy supply through engagement with alternative producing and transit countries. The South Caucasus, particularly Azerbaijan and Georgia, has emerged as a central component in this strategy. Azerbaijan's substantial hydrocarbon reserves and advantageous geographical position have allowed it to become both a producer and a transit hub for delivering Caspian energy resources to European markets.

The study traces the evolution of EU-Azerbaijan energy relations since the early 2000s, particularly through mechanisms such as the Energy Charter Treaty, the European Neighborhood Policy, the Baku Initiative, and the Black Sea Synergy. A key milestone in this cooperation is the development of the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC), a 3,500 km network of integrated pipelines—comprising the South Caucasus Pipeline, TANAP, and TAP—that ensures the safe and direct delivery of ShahDeniz gas to the European market. These projects, backed by both political and financial support from the EU, have significantly contributed to the Union's broader energy diversification strategy and enhanced its ability to bypass dependency on Russian-controlled routes.

The research concludes that sustained EU-Azerbaijan energy collaboration is mutually beneficial and essential for long-term stability, regional connectivity, and strategic balance across the Eurasian energy corridor.

Key words: *South Caucasus, cooperation, energy, European Union, Caspian sea.*

1. Introduction

In the contemporary global order, energy security has emerged as a critical dimension of national security, closely interlinked with economic, political, environmental, and military considerations. Defined broadly, energy security involves the uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price and the capacity of states to withstand disruptions in energy supply due to internal or external factors. As energy demand increases worldwide, securing stable and diversified energy supplies has become a cornerstone for sustainable development and geopolitical stability. The European Union (EU), as one of the world's largest consumers of energy, faces significant challenges in meeting its demand for oil and natural gas, given its limited domestic reserves. With only 2% of global gas reserves and 4% of oil reserves, the EU is highly dependent on energy imports, particularly from politically unstable regions. This dependency has compelled the EU to actively seek alternative energy partnerships and develop infrastructure projects aimed at diversifying its energy sources and transit routes.

A key region in this diversification strategy is the South Caucasus, especially the Republic of Azerbaijan, which possesses considerable hydrocarbon reserves and occupies a strategically vital geographic position linking the Caspian region with Europe. Since the 1990s, a series of multilateral agreements, including the Energy Charter Treaty and initiatives such as the Baku Initiative and the Black Sea Synergy, have laid the foundation for robust energy cooperation between the EU and South Caucasus states. Azerbaijan's active participation in major transnational projects like the Southern Gas Corridor and TANAP has further cemented its role as a reliable energy partner. This study explores the geopolitical and economic implications of EU-Azerbaijan energy cooperation within the broader framework of the EU's energy security policy. It aims to assess how Azerbaijan contributes to the EU's strategy of reducing dependence on Russian gas and fostering stable energy markets in the Eastern Partnership region. Through an analysis of policy initiatives, infrastruc-

ture development, and regional dynamics, the paper seeks to evaluate the mutual interests that drive this strategic partnership.

2. Materials and Methodology

This research is based on a qualitative methodology that combines content analysis of official documents, policy papers, academic literature, and energy cooperation agreements between the European Union (EU) and South Caucasus states, particularly Azerbaijan. The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach that encompasses political science, international relations, and energy economics to evaluate the strategic role of Azerbaijan in the EU's energy security framework.

The primary materials used for this study include:

- Official documents and treaties such as the Energy Charter Treaty, the Baku Initiative, and the Joint Declaration on the Southern Gas Corridor;
- Reports and statistical data from international organizations, including the International Energy Agency (IEA) and European Commission energy reports;
- National energy strategies and programs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including the State Program on the Development of the Fuel and Energy Complex (2005–2015) and the State Program on the Use of Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources;
- Secondary sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles, policy briefs, and expert commentaries (e.g., Masimov, Mardanov, Mehdiyev, Shaban, and others cited in the article).

The research employs a descriptive-analytical method to examine the dynamics of EU-Azerbaijan energy relations. Key thematic areas include:

- The geopolitical significance of Azerbaijan in the context of European energy diversification;
- The evolution of EU energy policy toward the South Caucasus;
- The implementation and strategic relevance of regional infrastructure projects such as the Southern Gas Corridor, TANAP, TAP, and the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway;
- Azerbaijan's positioning as a reliable energy supplier in contrast to other regional actors.

Comparative analysis is also used to highlight the EU's strategic preferences between competing energy projects such as Nabucco, South Stream, and TANAP, as well as the role of geopolitical competition involving Russia, Turkey, and Iran. The study relies on historical tracing to assess the development of key projects and initiatives from the early 1990s

to 2020, providing a longitudinal perspective on EU–South Caucasus energy cooperation.

3. Results

The findings of this study underscore the critical role Azerbaijan plays in the European Union's pursuit of energy diversification and geopolitical balance. Unlike many of its regional neighbors, Azerbaijan has adopted a proactive approach to integrating into Western energy frameworks, as demonstrated by its participation in initiatives such as the Energy Charter Treaty, the Southern Gas Corridor, and the Baku Initiative. These efforts reflect the country's strategic vision of leveraging its energy resources not only for economic development but also for political positioning on the international stage.

One of the central themes revealed in this analysis is the EU's multi-dimensional energy policy in the South Caucasus, which extends beyond mere resource acquisition to encompass infrastructural development, legal harmonization, market integration, and political influence. This approach is particularly visible in programs like INOGATE and Black Sea Synergy, which aim to establish long-term energy and transport corridors while also promoting governance standards and regulatory alignment. Azerbaijan's cooperation in such initiatives highlights its adaptability and strategic alignment with EU interests, despite ongoing regional tensions and complex geopolitical realities.

Moreover, the geopolitical competition between major actors—Russia, the United States, Turkey, and Iran—has influenced the trajectory of energy cooperation in the region. The EU's attempts to bypass Russian-controlled routes and reduce vulnerability to energy coercion have made the Caspian Basin, and Azerbaijan in particular, a priority region. In this context, projects like TANAP and TAP have not only technical and economic implications but also serve as instruments of geopolitical signaling. Azerbaijan's role as a stable partner enhances the EU's energy resilience and contributes to regional connectivity.

Azerbaijan's bilateral collaboration with Turkey further strengthens its influence, allowing for the realization of large-scale projects that bypass competing routes like Nabucco and South Stream. This partnership showcases the significance of regional alliances and the ability of smaller states to exert strategic leverage through energy diplomacy. However, the long-term sustainability of these projects depends on Azerbaijan's continued political stability, investment climate, and ability to maintain balanced

relations with all major geopolitical actors.

At the same time, the EU's increasing involvement in the region also carries risks. While energy cooperation provides a strong foundation for engagement, it must be accompanied by attention to democratic governance, rule of law, and conflict resolution—particularly in a region marked by unresolved territorial disputes and power competition. The success of EU energy policy in the South Caucasus will thus require a careful blend of economic pragmatism and political foresight.

In sum, the EU–Azerbaijan energy partnership illustrates the interplay between energy policy and geopolitics. It demonstrates how shared economic interests can drive strategic alignment, foster regional connectivity, and potentially contribute to political stability—provided both sides remain committed to sustained cooperation and mutual respect.

4. Discussion

The national security of each state is closely related to economic, military, ecological, political fields as well as energy security. According to experts, energy security refers to the shortage of energy and energy resources of states and citizens, which is caused by the influence of natural, technical, social, economic, internal and external factors. Energy security is an important condition for the prosperity and sustainable development of the country. Ensuring a stable energy balance is one of the main factors of global security. The world's primary energy carriers, coal, oil, natural gas, hydropower, and atomic energy, are constantly increasing in demand. According to the information of the International Energy Agency, the energy demand in the world will constantly increase.

As a result of uneven distribution of world oil and gas resources, some countries act as exporters and others as importers. Unlike the countries of the Middle East, some countries of Latin America, the countries of the Caspian region and Russia, the countries of the European Union do not have abundant energy resources. Two percent of the world's gas reserves and four percent of the oil reserves fall to the European Union countries with a population of 505.7 million, making it an importer of energy carriers. For the European Union, political dialogue and cooperation with export countries and transit countries becomes a key factor in ensuring energy stability.

In February 1991, the European Union put forward a proposal to sign the European energy charter due to the need to establish a dialogue with producing countries, consuming countries and countries from

the territory of which energy resources are transported. The goal here was to create uniform rules for the international energy market. The Charter did not impose any legal obligations on countries.

According to the document, cooperation between energy partners was based on the following goals and principles:

- Development of open and quality energy bases;
- Creating conditions that attract the flow of private investments and the participation of private enterprises;
- Non-discrimination among the participants;
- To respect state sovereignty over natural resources;
- Acknowledging the importance of environmentally sound and quality policies. (Jiltsov, 2005, p.11)

Based on these principles, the Energy Charter Treaty, a legally binding multilateral agreement, was signed in Lisbon on December 17, 1994. This agreement covers investment, trade, transit and quality aspects of energy cooperation covered. To date, 52 countries of Europe and Asia have signed and joined the treaty. Among these states, there are also South Caucasus states. On December two, 1997, the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan ratified the Energy Charter agreement and the Energy Charter Protocol (1998). The acceptance of the conditions of the energy charter demonstrated the attempt of the Azerbaijani leadership to strengthen the energy dialogue with the European Union.

The energy policy of the European Union to the South Caucasus states was formed on the basis of three factors:

- A sharp increase in the dependence of the majority of the EU member states on the import of energy carriers;
- Eastward expansion of the European Union and access to the Black Sea as a result of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU;
- By establishing energy cooperation with and from the post-Soviet states of the EU being interested in weakening dependence on hydrocarbon imports from Russia by importing energy. Back in the early 1990s, Brussels prepared technical cooperation programs with the post-Soviet states. In these programs, a special place was devoted to energy problems. For the continuous flow of oil and gas from the Caspian region to the markets of Western Europe, the European Union presented the "Management of Interstate Oil and Gas Pipelines" project. The goal of the project was the integration and reorganization of the existing pipeline systems in the newly inde-

pendent states. The project implemented within the TACIS program became the basis for the INOGATE program of the EU. This program plays an important role in the development of the energy policy of the South Caucasus.

Since 2004, the EU post-Soviet, along with the policy aimed at continuously supplying European consumers with oil and gas from the newly independent states in the field of energy implements a policy of connecting the energy markets of its states with its own domestic energy markets. The European Union, which envisages this policy, wanted to create an activity based on its interest within the EU, as well as to strengthen its influence in the countries that were part of Russia. Starting from the 2000s, the European Union began to establish closer energy relations with the South Caucasus. This was due to the fact that in 2004, all three South Caucasian states joined the "European neighborhood policy" program, whose documents clearly reflect the EU's energy interests in the Caspian region (Marabyan, 2019).

A few months after the South Caucasian states joined this program, on November 13, 2004, the countries of the Caspian region and the European Union with its neighboring states held an international conference on energy cooperation in Baku. At the end of the conference, the document called "Baku initiative" was signed.

The document was about mutual relations between the energy market of the European Union and the countries of the Black Sea and Caspian regions. Such a partnership involved implementing joint policies in the field of energy, trade, transit and environmental protection.

The 11 participating states of the Baku conference and the European Commission acknowledged their mutual interest in cooperation in the following important positions:

- Support for the gradual development of the regional energy markets of the Caspian and neighboring countries;
- Gradual integration of the energy market of the participating countries into the energy market of the EU;
- Harmonization of legal and technical standards in order to create an energy market operating in accordance with integrated European and international legal norms;
- Strengthening the reliability and security of energy resources through the modernization and expansion of the existing infrastructure;
- Replacement of obsolete and dangerous opera-

tion of the infrastructure, introduction of a modern system for monitoring its operation;

- Regulating the management of the need and supply of energy resources through the integration of quality and sustainable energy systems;
- To influence the financing of private and environmentally significant energy projects that take into account common interests; (Ishkin, 2007)

Unlike Russia and Armenia, another South Caucasus country, Azerbaijan started to actively support the EU's new energy project. So, within the framework of the "Baku initiative", the leadership of Azerbaijan prepared a number of programs. One of them was the "State program of the development of the fuel energy complex of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2005-2015". The other one is called "State program of use of alternative and renewable energy sources". Both programs were aimed at the long-term development of the energy policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Following the "Baku initiative", the European Commission proposed a new regional cooperation initiative between the European Union and the countries of the Black Sea and Caspian regions. After Bulgaria and Romania joined the European Union in 2007, the EU leadership had to review its activities in the neighboring Black Sea region. So, these countries are the energy resources of the Caspian Sea for the EU they were an important transit zone in transportation. Thus, in April 2007, the project called "Black Sea Synergy" was prepared. This included Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. The European Union was particularly interested in the participation of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova and Greece in this project. Because these states were not Black Sea coastal states, and their geographical proximity and close ties would turn them into regional players.

Within the framework of "Black Sea Synergy", cooperation in the following areas was envisaged:

- Promote democracy, respect for human rights and quality management, training of employees, regional dialogue with civil society;
- Border control and customs cooperation at the regional level;
- Initiatives to improve control over migration and stop illegal migration;
- The "freezing of conflicts" that hinders close regional cooperation due to its lack of regulation;
- Energy – energy security dialogue aimed at adapting to the legal framework of the Black Sea

countries, focused on production, transport, transit of energy resources on the basis of EU rights;

- Transport – support for regional transport cooperation;

- Environment - strengthening strategic environmental cooperation in the region and using multilateral agreements on ecology;

- Maritime policy - improvement of cooperation in the field of monitoring maritime borders;

- Fishing - impact on sustainable and responsible use of fish resources;

- Trade - liberalization of trade in the region;

- Scientific researches and education - ensuring relations with scientific and educational societies and legal alignment of scientific and educational structures with EU scientific and educational structures;

- Science and technology – the scientific and technical program of the European Union reflect mutual interests in the scientific and technical programs of the European Union. Internal provision of specific types of research and problems;

- Employment and social issues – exchange of best practices and information;

When we consider the above, we see that there are a number of areas aimed at the development of energy dialogue between the European Union and the countries of the region. Nevertheless, energy cooperation is the most important area among them.

The presence of various initiatives in the Black Sea and Caspian region shows how important energy security is for European countries. To create energy stability and reduce energy dependence on Russia and the Middle East, they are trying to find alternative energy sources. As the South Caucasus analyst Tarkhan Murave showed: "Caspian oil and the transit routes of the region are attractive. The Caucasus creates a Euro-Asian energy corridor between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea" (Tarkhan Mouravi, 2007).

Georgia played the role of a connector between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. So, the value of Georgia EU because the energy carriers of the Caspian Sea were transported to Europe from Georgia.

2. Infrastructure leading Europe to the Caspian

3500 km, starting from the Sangachal terminal on the Caspian Sea coast and crossing the bottom of the Adriatic Sea towards the south of Italy. The "Southern Gas Corridor" is a combination of three different main gas pipelines.

The purpose of the project is to ensure the export of natural gas produced during the second stage of operation of the "Shahdeniz" gas condensate field to Turkey and Southern Europe through the expanded

South Caucasus Pipeline, TANAP and TAP.

"Shahdeniz" field was discovered by Azerbaijani geologists, scientists and oilmen in the 80s of the last century (Masimov, 2018, p.19). The "Shahdeniz" deposit, located at a distance of 70 kilometers from the coast to the sea, covers an area of 2580 square kilometers. The recoverable gas reserves of this field are 22.1 trillion cubic feet (about 1.2 trillion cubic meters of gas).

"Shah Deniz-2" or the full-scale field development project is a huge project that will produce 16 billion cubic meters of gas in addition to the 10 billion cubic meters of gas produced annually from the "Stage-1" project of the "Shah Deniz" field. The full-scale development of the "Shahdeniz" gas-condensate field is one of the largest and most complex gas projects in the world. On December 17, 2013, the shareholders of the "Shahdeniz" consortium signed the documents confirming the final investment agreement on the "Shahdeniz" project and the expansion of the South Caucasus Pipeline at the Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku. BP executive director Bob Dudley, who held a press conference on December 17, stated in his speech that the duration of the "Shah Deniz" project, which was signed in 1996 for a period of 30 years, was agreed with the Azerbaijani side. (Mardanov, 2006) "Shahdeniz-2" is a project that envisages the expansion of the South Caucasus Pipeline along the territory of Azerbaijan and Georgia, promotes the realization of plans related to the construction of French-Anatolian and French-Adriatic gas pipelines, and opens a new gas corridor to Europe.

According to this project, the construction of new technical processing and compressor facilities in Sangachal, the drilling of 26 underwater wells, as well as the construction of two platforms to be connected with a bridge are planned. The first commercial gas transportation under the project started on June 30, 2018. On July 30, the first gas was extracted from the SDCO3Z well dug in the Chimal side of the field, and the "Bravo" platform was supposed to be transported. "Shah Deniz" gas was supposed to supply consumer countries such as Georgia, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, and Italy. Although the first gas was planned to be delivered to Europe in 2019 when the final investment decision was made, this happened only on December 31, 2020.

Back in November 1999, at the summit held in Istanbul, an agreement was signed on the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, also named the South Caucasus gas pipeline. However, the existing reasons at that time did not allow its realization

and the construction of the pipeline was postponed until 2004. The renewed interest in the construction of this pipeline is due to the fact that the EU countries were paying for 4490 cubic meters of gas at the expense of Russia. After the Russian-Ukrainian gas conflict in 2004-2005, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline became more important as an alternative to Russian gas (Minaev, 2012).

692 km. the pipeline with a length of 42 inches in diameter was built to transport gas produced from the Shah Deniz field to the Georgia-Turkey border. The pipeline starts from the Sangachal terminal near the city of Baku and continues parallel to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline to the Turkish border and connects to the gas distribution system in Turkey. Azerbaijan supplies gas to Georgia through the branch that separates from the SCP on the Georgian border. SCP and BTC are built in the same construction corridor to reduce environmental impact and save operating costs.

Azerbaijan's share of the SCP, which started operating in 2006, was 443 km, and Georgia's share was 148 km. However, the current situation necessitated the development of the project of the expanded South Caucasus pipeline. The implementation of the project, which envisages the full-scale development of the "Shah Deniz" field, began in 2013. The project will be connected to the existing SCPK in Azerbaijan, 421-km. consists of a 48-inch diameter pipe, three compressor stations (one in Azerbaijan, two in Georgia), six connecting fitting stations (5 in Azerbaijan, 1 in Georgia) and a new gas flow measurement station located on the Georgia-Turkey border (Shaban, 2023). The length of the new pipeline is approximately 489 km. contane. The pipeline was commissioned on June 30, 2018. In the next stage of expansion, the transmission capacity of the SCP system can be increased to 31 billion cubic meters.

443 km of the SCP with a length of 692 km and a transmission capacity of 7.41 billion cubic meters passed through the territory of Azerbaijan and 249 km through Georgia. The previous distribution is signed based on the distribution of shares of the project shareholders passing through 13 regions¹, 7 regions of Azerbaijan (Mammadov, 2004).

3. European Commission projects

In February 2002, based on the proposals of Turkish, Bulgarian, Austrian and Romanian companies, the European Commission proposed the "Nabucco" project to strengthen Europe's energy security.

In 2002, the "Nabucco" project, which will ensure the delivery of gas to Europe by the European Com-

mission, was the implementation of the European Union's "speaking with one voice" energy project. In the first stage, "Nabucco" was to connect the European Union with Azerbaijan, and in the second stage, the gas pipeline was to extend through the bottom of the Caspian Sea to Central Asia.

The project envisaged Iraq, Iran and Middle Eastern countries as the main gas suppliers of Europe. During that period, Azerbaijan met its internal demand 244 pages.

The project envisaged Iraq, Iran and Middle Eastern countries as the main gas suppliers of Europe. At that time, Azerbaijan was not known for its gas potential because it was not able to meet its domestic demand and imported blue fuel from abroad. The tense military-political situation in Iraq and the strained relations with the United States due to Iran's nuclear program are the "Nabucco" of those countries.

Hindered him from acting as a gas supplier under the project. The existence of financial and technical problems delayed the realization of the project. In 2007, an international consortium for the construction of the Nabucco pipeline was established. The consortium included 6 members, each with an equal share (16.67 percent) - German "RWE", Austrian "OMV", Turkish "Botas", Bulgarian "Bulgargaz", Romanian "Fransgaz", Hungarian "Mol" companies. (Mehdiyev, 2018) Both Europe and the United States were interested in Azerbaijan joining this project. Thus, in June 2008, US President George Bush stated in his letter to President Ilham Aliyev: "Since Azerbaijan has begun to increase oil supply to the world markets, the United States of America and its European partners hope that gas production will be expanded in Azerbaijan as well. We believe that this will increase the strategic importance of Azerbaijan and deepen its relations with the Euro-Atlantic Union with the realization of the Turkey-Greece-Italy and "Nabucco" gas pipelines. Azerbaijan can play an important role in the future export of Central Asian gas to European markets" (Shaban, 2023).

Every year, 150 billion cubic meters of gas was imported from Russia to Europe, which was 30 percent of Europe's gas demand. The Russia-Ukraine "gas crisis" that began in 2009 stopped Russian gas exports to Europe, and as a result, Europe faced fuel shortages. In such a situation, the relevance of the "Nabucco" project increased even more.

However, the "Nabucco" project "was not received unambiguously in European countries, and the presence of its alternatives ("South Stream" and "North Stream") prevented its realization.

Rejecting Nabucco, Europe proposed a new gas pipeline option in May 2012 called Nabucco vest. There was also a short version of this classic "Nabucco" with a length of 1300 km. will organize. The belt will extend from the borders of Turkey and Bulgaria to the Austrian city of Baymgarten. The new gas pipeline passing through Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Austria was supposed to deliver Azerbaijani gas from the "Shahdeniz-2" field to the European market. On January 13, 2011.

President Ilham Aliyev and European Commission Chairman Jose Manuel Barroso signed the "Joint Declaration on the Southern Gas Corridor" in Baku (Mardanov, 2006).

June 26, 2012, an important final agreement was signed between Turkey and Azerbaijan on energy security in Istanbul. The signed documents created a legal basis for the transportation of Azerbaijani gas to Europe. According to the agreements, 6 billion from the "Shah Deniz-2" project. the Turkish side that bought cubic meters of gas was given the right to sell (re-export) this gas to third countries. 10 billion of the gas to be transported. cubic meters would be exported to Europe (Masimov, 2018).

The idea of construction of a new gas pipeline by Azerbaijan and Turkey was laid in the agreement. The capacity of the gas pipeline was initially planned to be increased to 16 billion cubic meters and then to 24 billion cubic meters annually. The estimated cost of the project was seven-ten billion dollars.

The TANAP project, which is the largest gas pipeline of this length and diameter built in the Middle East, was born as a result of the logic of the long-term ineffective negotiations of the European countries around "Nabucco". President Ilham Aliyev said about the project: "We have seen that these discussions continue without stopping, but there is no result." As always, we have decided by conducting bilateral consultations that Turkey and Azerbaijan should take the leadership in this matter and implement this project together. This is purely a project of Turkey and Azerbaijan" (Masimov, 2018). TANAP could become an important factor in Europe's gas supply and energy security. Talking about the benefits of TANAP for Europe, US magazine "Forbes" wrote that "its favorable geographical location and the name of a reliable partner helped Azerbaijan to successfully use its gas resources." (Mehdiyev, 2018) TANAP caused the "Nabucco" project to undergo changes and become the "Nabucco West" option, starting from the Turkish-Bulgarian borders. BP

joined the TANAP project by acquiring a 12 percent stake in the agreement signed in Baku on December 18, 2012. According to the final document signed in Turkey on March 13, 2015, SOCAR (58 percent), "Botaş" (30 percent) and "BP" (12 percent) became shareholders of the project.

The first part of the TANAP pipeline was put into operation on June 30, 2018, and the TANAP pipeline commissioning ceremony took place on November 30, 2019 in the region located on the border with Greece.

The 1793 km long TANAP, with a diameter of 56 and 48 inches, passed through 20 provinces of Turkey.

Project developers faced an important and complex task of choosing one of the two routes supplying gas to Europe - "Nabucco" and TAP. Geostrategic and political factors could influence the adoption of the decision. In June 2013, the presidents of Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania expressed their support for the construction of the Nabucco gas pipeline in a letter addressed to the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. Nevertheless, on June 28, 2013, the Shah Deniz consortium announced that it had chosen the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) to transport Azerbaijani gas to Europe. Its length is 878 km. TAP connects Turkey, Greece, Albania and Italy and partly played its role in the gas supply of Bulgaria (Melikyan, 2014).

Transport relations are one of the factors determining the cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia. Thus, at the conference held in Brussels in May 1993, two of the eight countries of the former USSR, which initiated the creation of the TRACEKA (historical silk road) program of the European Commission, were Azerbaijan and Georgia (Bolhova, 2012).

One of the most important transport projects for Azerbaijan and Georgia is "Baku

- Tbilisi - Kars" railway project. The foundation of the project was laid on February seven, 2007 in the Georgian Parliament building by the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, the President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili and the Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip.

It was established with the participation of Erdogan. After the presidents reached an agreement, the transport ministers of all three countries signed the historic agreement on the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project, which will serve as a bridge between countries and continents. The initiator of the project was the Republic of Azerbaijan. The project will be an in-

indicator of Azerbaijan's influence in the region and the international world, it will change the transport map of the region. Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway will play a special role in the creation of transport links of the Caspian basin region with Europe. The implementation of the project will enable the direct access of cargo and passengers to Europe by passing through the territory of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, which in turn will play an important role in the process of European integration. In addition, the 850 km long railway passing through the territory of three countries, which is of strategic importance in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, is divided as follows: Baku-Georgian border railway, which is 503 km in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan reconstruction of the road section, provision of a new variable electrical system, marking and provision of new communication systems. In the territory of the Republic of Turkey: it covered a distance of 75.6 km in the area of the Kars-Georgia border. The project covered three directions on the territory of Georgia: the Akhalkalaki - Turkey border area with a length of 26.3 km; three km long station area built for changing the pairs of wheels of trains; 153 km long section of the reconstructed railway in Marabda - Akhalkalaki area of Georgia. five million in the first phase through this way. tons, and 17 million in the next stage. tons, and after that it is planned to transport larger volumes of cargo (Gegeshidze, 1999).

President Ilham Aliyev stated in his speech at the opening of the "Iron Silk Road" on October 30, 2017: "Baku - Tbilisi - Kars" means the restoration of a part of the historical silk road, and it will be used by China, Kazakhstan, Central Asia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, and European countries. North-South transport corridor India, Pakistan. It will unite Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia and European countries. Azerbaijan is an active participant in both projects and is a country that reveals its financial resources".

Thus, from the analysis of the problem discussed above, we see that Azerbaijan's projects, economic development and security depend on Georgia, and the economic prospects of the neighboring country are mainly calculated on the transportation of energy resources from Azerbaijan to European countries, and the role of a transit corridor in its relations with European organizations. Although Georgia has achieved a number of successes in expanding and diversifying its economic relations in the international world, as a result of geographical proximity, the relations between the two states have become so deep and institutionalized that it cannot be shaken by ex-

ternal forces or the search for an alternative by some local incompetent politicians.

This image I prepared visually summarizes the role of Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus in the European Union's energy security policy:

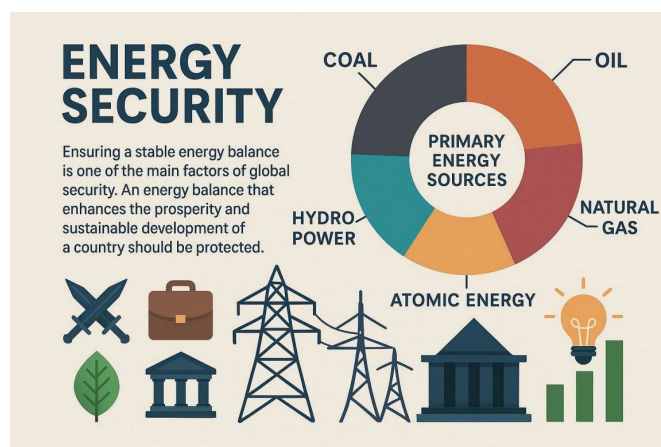


Figure 1. Energy transmission projects to Europe through the South Caucasus region.

Source: Diagram compiled by the author

From the above, we see that Azerbaijan has an exceptional role in solving the energy security problem of the EU. This is explained by the fact that Azerbaijan is in the center of attention not only as a rich source of oil and gas resources, but also because of its favorable geographical position that leads to the rich resources of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia.

The energy transfer program of the European Union in the South Caucasus has become an important means of cooperation. At the same time, the European Union is trying to solve a number of tasks. First of all, the strengthening of economic and political stability in the South Caucasus region is envisaged in connection with the diversification of energy resources. Strengthening the special political influence of the European Union in the region is one of the main priorities (Barilsky, 1995).

4. Conclusion

The activity of the European Union in relation to energy resources in the South Caucasus is explained by certain political factors: On the one hand, the European Union is objectively interested in the diversification of energy resources exporters and their transport routes; on the other hand, the competitive struggle regarding the perspective of the region is intensifying.

An important point for Azerbaijan, which is considered to be the energy source of the South Cauca-

sus region, is to try to stay out of the aggravation of the competitive struggle regarding the transfer of energy resources to the European Union in relation to other CIS states. In this regard, the Republic of Azerbaijan should present itself to the European Union as a reliable supplier of energy resources. On the other hand, Azerbaijan should achieve the implementation of mutually beneficial projects with the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia and unite relevant efforts in this direction.

The growing competition between the European Union, the United States, and China regarding energy resources must be taken into account in energy exports in the South Caucasus. Likewise, the special interests of regional players such as Turkey, Iran, and Russia should not be overlooked. Here, the action plan of the European Union in the region supports balanced and sustainable economic development, focuses on the development of rural areas, reduces poverty, promotes the creation of social territorial associations, and protects the environment.

In order for the European Union to secure its interests in the South Caucasus, it is necessary to play an active role in ensuring peace in the region.

Conclusions. The analysis demonstrates that Azerbaijan has become a key player in the European Union's strategy for achieving energy diversification and ensuring long-term energy security. Through its vast hydrocarbon resources, geostrategic location, and political willingness to cooperate with European institutions, Azerbaijan has successfully positioned itself as a reliable energy partner. Its role as both a producer and a critical transit hub for Caspian energy resources contributes directly to the EU's efforts to reduce dependency on Russian gas and stabilize energy flows across the continent.

The development of major infrastructure projects—such as the Southern Gas Corridor, TANAP, and TAP—has not only enhanced Azerbaijan's strategic importance but also reinforced the interconnectedness between South Caucasus countries and European energy markets. The EU's support for initiatives like the Baku Initiative, Black Sea Synergy, and TRACECA reflects its broader intention to strengthen economic, political, and energy linkages with its eastern neighbors.

However, this partnership is not without challenges. The competitive environment shaped by the involvement of other regional and global powers—including Russia, Iran, Turkey, China, and the United States—creates a complex geopolitical backdrop for EU energy policy in the South Caucasus. In this

context, Azerbaijan must balance its foreign policy priorities to avoid entanglement in great-power rivalries while maintaining its image as a stable and predictable energy supplier.

For the EU, sustained engagement in the region requires not only economic investment but also a commitment to political stability, regional cooperation, and the promotion of democratic governance. The future of EU–South Caucasus energy relations will largely depend on the continuity of mutually beneficial projects and the successful management of political and security risks in the region.

Ultimately, the Azerbaijan–EU energy partnership stands as a model of pragmatic cooperation in the face of shared strategic interests, highlighting how energy can serve both as a tool of economic integration and as an instrument of geopolitical balance.

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Avropa İttifaqının Cənubi Qafqazda enerji təhlükəsizliyi kontekstində maraqları

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XÜLASƏ

Bu məqalədə Avropa İttifaqının (Aİ) enerji təhlükəsizliyi siyasəti, xüsusilə Cənubi Qafqaz regionunda Azərbaycan Respublikası ilə strateji əməkdaşlıq prizmasından tədqiq olunur. Aİ-nin məhdud daxili enerji istehsalı — global qaz ehtiyatlarının cəmi 2%-ni, neft ehtiyatlarının isə 4%-ni təşkil etməsi — onu xarici mənbələrdən getdikcə daha çox asılı vəziyyətə salması, öz növbəsində geosiyasi həssaslığı artırmışdı. Bu struktur asılılığına cavab olaraq, Aİ alternativ istehsalçı və tranzit ölkələrlə əməkdaşlıq vasitəsilə enerji təchizatının diversifikasiyasına (şəxələndirilməsinə) üstünlük verir.

Cənubi Qafqaz, xüsusən də Azərbaycan və Gürcüstan bu strategiyanın mərkəzi komponenti kimi çıxış edir. Azərbaycanın zəngin karbohidrogen ehtiyatları və əlverişli coğrafi mövqeyi ona Xəzər enerji resurslarının Avropa bazarlarına çatdırılmasında həm istehsalçı, həm də tranzit qovşağına çevrilmək imkanı qazandırmışdır.

Tədqiqatda 2000-ci illərin əvvəllərindən etibarən Aİ-Azərbaycan enerji əlaqələrinin təkamülü, Enerji Xartiyası Müqaviləsi, Avropa Qonşuluq Siyasəti, Bakı Təşəbbüsü və Qara Dəniz Sinerjisi kimi mexanizmlər çərçivəsində nəzərdən keçirilir. Bu əməkdaşlıqda mühüm mərhələ "Şahdəniz" qazının Avropa bazarına təhlükəsiz və birbaşa çatdırılmasını təmin edən, Cənubi Qafqaz Boru Kəməri, TANAP və TAP-dan ibarət 3500 km-lik integrasiya olunmuş boru kəmərləri şəbəkəsi — Cənub Qaz Dəhlizinin (CQD) yaradılmasıdır. Aİ-nin həm siyasi, həm də maliyyə dəstəyini alan bu layihələr İttifaqın daha geniş enerji diversifikasiyası strategiyasına mühüm töhfə verib və onun Rusiyanın nəzarətində olan marşrutlardan asılılıqdan yan keçmək imkanlarını gücləndirmişdir.

Açar sözlər: *Cənubi Qafqaz, əməkdaşlıq, enerji, Avropa İttifaqı, Xəzər dənizi.*

Интересы Европейского Союза на Южном Кавказе в контексте энергетической безопасности

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РЕЗЮМЕ

В данной статье исследуется политика энергетической безопасности Европейского Союза (ЕС) с особым акцентом на его стратегическое сотрудничество с Азербайджанской Республикой в регионе Южного Кавказа. Ограниченное внутреннее производство энергии в ЕС, составляющее всего 2% мировых запасов газа и 4% запасов нефти, делает его все более зависимым от внешних источников, что, в свою очередь, усиливает геополитическую уязвимость союза. В ответ на эту структурную зависимость ЕС уделил первоочередное внимание диверсификации своих поставок энергоносителей посредством взаимодействия с альтернативными странами-производителями и транзитерами.

Южный Кавказ, в частности Азербайджан и Грузия, стал центральным компонентом этой стратегии. Значительные запасы углеводородов и выгодное географическое положение Азербайджана позволили ему стать как производителем, так и транзитным хабом для доставки каспийских энергоресурсов на европейские рынки.

В исследовании прослеживается эволюция энергетических отношений между ЕС и Азербайджаном с начала 2000-х годов, в частности через такие механизмы, как Договор к Энергетической хартии, Европейская политика соседства, Бакинская инициатива и Черноморская синергия. Ключевой вехой в этом сотрудничестве является развитие Южного газового коридора (ЮГК) — интегрированной сети трубопроводов протяженностью 3500 км, включающей Южно-Кавказский трубопровод, TANAP и TAP, которая обеспечивает безопасную и прямую доставку газа с место-

рождения Шахдениз на европейский рынок. Эти проекты, поддержанные как политически, так и финансово со стороны ЕС, внесли значительный вклад в более широкую стратегию диверсификации энергетики Союза и расширили его возможности обходить зависимость от маршрутов, контролируемых Россией.

Ключевые слова: Южный Кавказ, сотрудничество, энергия, Европейский Союз, Каспийское море.

*Rəyçi: Şəlalə Bağirova, ADU, Qafqazşünaslıq
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