



Section 4. Psychological aspects of historical events

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ENERGY SECURITY AS A CATALYST FOR GEOPOLITICAL, EDUCATIONAL, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL COOPERATION: THE EU–AZERBAIJAN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

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Abstract

This article examines the European Union's (EU) energy security policy with a focus on its strategic partnership with Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus. The EU's limited internal energy reserves (2% of global gas, 4% of oil) necessitate supply diversification, making the Caspian region a priority. Azerbaijan, with its substantial hydrocarbon resources and geographical position, has emerged as a key producer and transit hub. The study traces the evolution of EU-Azerbaijan energy cooperation from the early 2000s through initiatives like the Energy Charter Treaty, European Neighborhood Policy, Baku Initiative, and Black Sea Synergy. regional stability, and broader educational and strategic partnerships in the Eurasian corridor.

Keywords: *Energy security, European Union, Azerbaijan, South Caucasus, Southern Gas Corridor, geopolitical cooperation, educational partnership, psychological stability*

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. From a psychological perspective, energy security also influences collective identity, social trust, and public

perception of state stability, as populations tend to correlate access to reliable energy with national resilience and personal well-being. 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.

Materials and Methods

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 and South Caucasus states, particularly Azerbaijan. The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach that encompasses political science, international relations, energy economics, psychology, and educational studies to evaluate the strategic role of Azerbaijan in the EU's energy security framework.

Results and Discussion

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.

Following the "Baku initiative", the European Commission proposed a new regional cooperation initiative called "Black Sea Synergy" in April 2007, which included Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. Within the framework of "Black Sea Synergy", cooperation in energy was a key priority – an energy security dialogue aimed at adapting to the legal framework of the Black Sea countries, focused on production, transport, and transit of energy resources on the basis of EU rights. The presence of various initiatives in the Black Sea and Caspian region shows how important energy security is for European countries. 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" (Tarkan Mouravi, 2007).

European Commission Projects

In February 2002, the European Commission proposed the "Nabucco" project to strengthen Europe's energy security, envisaging Iraq, Iran and Middle Eastern countries as the main gas suppliers. However, the tense military-political situation in Iraq and strained relations with the United States due to Iran's nuclear program hindered those countries from acting as gas suppliers. Financial and technical problems delayed the realization of the project. The Russia-Ukraine "gas crisis" that began in 2009 stopped Russian gas exports to Europe, increasing the relevance of the "Nabucco" project. However, the project was not received unambiguously, and the presence of alternatives ("South Stream" and "North Stream") prevented its realization.

Rejecting Nabucco, Europe proposed a new gas pipeline option in May 2012 called Nabucco West. 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). On June 26, 2012, an important final agreement was signed between Turkey and Azerbaijan on energy security in Istanbul, according to which 6 billion cubic meters of gas from "Shah Deniz-2" bought by Turkey was given the right to sell (re-export) to third countries, while 10 billion cubic meters would be exported to Europe (Masimov, 2018).

Transport relations are another factor determining cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia. The "Baku – Tbilisi – Kars" railway project, founded on February 7, 2007, enables direct access of cargo and passengers to Europe through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. President Ilham Aliyev stated at its opening 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. Azerbaijan is an active participant in both projects and reveals its financial resources".

Psychological and Educational Dimensions

Beyond geopolitical and economic dimensions, the EU-Azerbaijan energy partnership has significant psychological and educational implications. The perception of being part of a major international project like the Southern Gas Corridor enhances national self-esteem and collective identity among Azerbaijani citizens. Energy diplomacy has become a source of pride and a symbol of the country's sovereignty and international recognition. This psychological effect is particularly important for a post-Soviet state seeking to establish its place in the global community.

Conclusion

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.

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