

Russia-Azerbaijan Relations in terms of Energy

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Introduction

Azerbaijan has long been a strategically valuable territory for Russia, which saw it as both a threat and an opportunity. Geographically, Azerbaijan presents a potential because it serves as a regional gateway. At the same time, Azerbaijan's geographic location constitutes a threat to Russia, as it may be utilised by other countries for similar goals, but against Russia. Europe and the United States have already made Azerbaijan one of their energy alternatives. As a result, they make every effort to get active in Azerbaijan when it comes to the country's energy resources. As a result, Russia regards it as a threat as well. Azerbaijan's newly independent government lacks a distinct foreign strategy. It has a tendency to cave in to foreign countries' demands. Russia has an advantage over other states because it poses a direct danger to Azerbaijan and other regional powers. As a result, Azerbaijan strives to maintain a balance in its relations with Russia and the West.

Russia's position on the Caucasus has long been clear. It has a keen interest in the area. Despite post-Soviet changes and the desire of these states to further distance themselves from Russia's sphere of influence, the Caucasus remained Russia's backyard. As a result, Azerbaijan enjoys positive relations with Russia. It is a crucial region of the Caucasus. Russia's current President is adamant about keeping Western influence out of the country.

Since its independence, Azerbaijan has pursued a variety of policies toward Russia. It has been quite pragmatic in forming strategic alliances with its other neighbours in order to limit, if not completely defeat, Russia. Azerbaijan has been pro-Russian, anti-Russian, and neutral over the years. Both countries have seen many highs and lows as a result of the current circumstances. Biased perspectives and misperceptions have harmed their relationship. In general, Azerbaijan is playing the role of a silent actor, leveraging power imbalances to strengthen its position in comparison to Russia, which considers the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to be closer to home. Russia also understands that after the war is over, Azerbaijan will be able to join NATO at any time. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, recognises the need of maintaining a tight relationship with its largest trading partner, Russia. Because a big proportion of its inhabitants work in Russia, it cannot afford to offend it. The latest changes are extremely important for Russian-Azerbaijani relations because they affect the entire Caucasus area. While Azerbaijan desires independence, Russia plans to utilise Azerbaijan as a tool to fulfil its regional and worldwide foreign policy objectives. Azerbaijan was one of the first countries in the Caucasus to grant settlement to the West, particularly the United States. Because Western objectives clashed with Russia's policy of reaching out to the south, Russia exercised control over Azerbaijan. The Caucasus incidents of 2008 suggested that Azerbaijan and Russia are now on better terms.

Relations between Russia and Azerbaijan during Heydar Aliyev's presidency

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, both countries became independent countries. However, they had opposing viewpoints about each other. Azerbaijan was regarded by Russia as a strategically vital entity in the Caucasus area. During their liberation fight leading up to their first year of independence, the majority of Azerbaijanis maintained a negative view of Russia. In 1991, Russia declined to open diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan. It refused to sign the Azerbaijan-proposed Friendship and Cooperation Treaty.

At the time, Azerbaijan was led by Ayaz Mutalibov. Kozirev, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, conducted his first visit to the country on April 3, 1992. Finally, on April 4, 1992, Russia recognised Azerbaijan as an independent state, and diplomatic relations were established between the two countries. However, there were disagreements between the legislative and the government in Azerbaijan over Russia's treatment.

The Russian-created Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was not ratified by the parliament (Aslanli 2010). The Azerbaijan Popular Front, led by Ebulfez Elchibey, came to power in 1992. During his visit to Russia, a series of agreements between Russia and Azerbaijan were inked, despite simmering tensions in Azerbaijan due to anti-Russia sentiments. As a result, Russian enterprises were denied access to petroleum companies, prompting unrest on the Russian side, especially because Western companies were given priority. Elchibey also expelled a large number of Russian troops from the nation, leading to the 1993 coup and his removal from power (Aslanli 2010).

In June 1993, Heydar Aliyev was invited to Baku and elected Speaker of Parliament. His approach to Russia was regarded as moderate. Western firms' operations in Azerbaijan were halted on June 22, 1993, and their bank accounts were blocked. In the summer of 1993, Aliyev travelled to Russia to prevent Armenia's invasion. Heydar Aliyev has become a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). On September 20, 1993, Parliament passed the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Membership Agreement. On September 24, 1993, Aliyev signed a series of agreements in Moscow (Aslanli 2010).

While Mutalibov was punished for his pro-Russian actions, Elchibey was punished for his anti-Russian position. As a result, Armenia invaded the country and took over several of its areas. To punish Azerbaijan, Russia was on Armenia's side. Heydar Aliyev acted with great foresight, considering the destiny of previous leaders. During the first six months of his presidency, Obama did not take a combative stance against Russia. Despite this, the occupation of Armenia continued. In 1994, Aliyev's government established diplomatic contacts with the West.

Azerbaijan wants to make the most of the new opportunities offered by Western corporations. Negotiations with Western firms resulted in a new framework for Azerbaijan-Russia relations, dubbed "balanced foreign policy." Russia, on the other hand, has refused to acknowledge Azerbaijan's energy agreements with Western firms. During the reign of Prime Minister Victor Cernomirdin, Russian petroleum corporations worked hard to create excellent relations with Azerbaijan, and the two nations signed "The Contract of the Century" in Baku on September 20, 1994. The Russian corporation Lukoil was given 10 percent ownership of the petroleum sector under this arrangement. Russia, on the other hand, was remained opposed to Azerbaijan's oil partnerships with Western businesses (Aslanli 2010).

The matter of Chechnya was another source of tension between the two countries. Tensions in Chechnya began during the 1994-96 Chechen-Russian War. Azerbaijan was thought to be supporting rebel forces in Chechnya, according to Russia. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, has denied the Russian charges. As a result of all of this, Russia has placed three years of economic sanctions on Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan was hit hard by the sanctions because Russia accounted for 70% of its commerce. The Hasavyurt Treaty, which was signed between Russia and Chechnya in 1996, helped to reduce hostilities with Chechnya. Following the deal, Russia lifted economic sanctions. After invading Dagestan in August 1999, Russia launched an attack on Chechnya on October 1, 1999. The Gimir Village in the Zakatala region of north Azerbaijan was bombarded by a Russian jet. While Russian Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Anatoli Kornukov claimed that Russian forces were not involved in the attack, Russian Ambassador to Baku Aleksandr Blokhin admitted that "they lost the bomb." Since Putin's election as President of Russia, the Azerbaijan government has tightened restrictions on the activities of Chechens. Some Chechens were caught in Azerbaijan and deported back to Russia (Aslanli 2010).

During Putin's presidency, relations between Russia and Azerbaijan were strained

From 1991 to 2001, no Russian presidents paid a visit to Azerbaijan. On the 9th of January 2001, Putin travelled to Azerbaijan with a large group for a two-day visit. The visit was originally scheduled for 2000, however it was postponed due to a variety of factors. The visit took place in a pleasant atmosphere. The thorny topic of the Gebele base was discussed, but no decision was reached. On the other hand, a significant agreement on cooperation in the Caspian Sea's security was established. In 2002, Russia hosted the second round of Putin-Aliyev talks (24 to 26 January). Putin stated that Russia and Azerbaijan will cooperate militarily. Aliyev also praised Putin's contribution to the improving relations between Azerbaijan and Russia. The Status and Benefiting Principles of Gebele Radio Location Station, a long-term economic cooperation pact between the countries through 2010, and a joint declaration by the two leaders were among the agreements inked between them. These accords seek to create Russian-Azerbaijani economic cooperation. Its goal was to develop collaboration in order to prevent any fiscal invasion and to collaborate on border protection (Aslanli 2010).

Relations between Russia and Azerbaijan during Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev's presidency

In 2008, Medvedev was elected President of Russia. He served as Russia's third President. Despite this shift, neither Azerbaijan nor Russia's policy have changed significantly. While official visits at the highest levels of government continued, there were some clashes between the two countries. Tensions arose on four important areas in late 2002 and early 2003. These concerns included energy agreements, espionage accusations, and Russian assertions of Azerbaijani aid to Chechnya, all of which resulted in acts against Azerbaijanis in Russia (Aslanli 2010).

The arrival of Turkish President Abdullah Gul sparked anti-Western sentiment in Azerbaijan. In September 2008, he attended a national football match in Yerevan and met Armenian President Serj Sarkisyan. Azerbaijan expressed its dissatisfaction by making many policy decisions. Azerbaijan signed a natural gas agreement with Russia after a dispute between Turkey and Azerbaijan over energy negotiations. Azerbaijan also signed the "Moscow Declaration" on November 2, 2008, which opposed the use of military force to resolve the Karabakh conflict.

The Nabucco deal, which was signed in Ankara, included Azerbaijan as well. As a result of these events, there have been discussions about changing Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Following Ilham Aliyev's visits to France, Russia, and Iran shortly after taking office, it was widely assumed that Azerbaijan was neglecting the regional power balance. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, has denied that Russian influence has influenced its foreign policy. According to Azerbaijan's authorities, Heydar Aliyev developed the "balance of power" as part of the country's foreign strategy (Aslanli 2010). As a result of all of this, Azerbaijan has realised the importance of maintaining a balance between its relations with Russia and the West. As a result, Azerbaijan took steps to maintain the balance.

The Role of NATO in Azerbaijan

After gaining independence, Azerbaijan enjoyed friendly connections with the West. The European Union and the United States are those powers. They were particularly interested in the oil and gas potential of Azerbaijan. This sparked the "Great Game" over Azerbaijan's natural resources. It has resulted in significant foreign investment in the gas and oil sectors (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

After gaining independence, the government stated its willingness to integrating the European and Euro-Atlantic communities. Azerbaijan's relationship with NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) dates back to 1992, when it joined a newly formed consultative group called the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), which included several other Central and Eastern European countries. In 1997, it was renamed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. On the 4th of May 1994, Heydar Aliyev signed the Partnership for Peace Framework Document, and the country legally joined the Partnership for Peace Framework Program. Since 2005, Azerbaijan has actively engaged with NATO under the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

The ambition to become a member of the Euro-Atlantic Community does not imply entire commitment to membership. The leadership was well aware of the South Caucasus' regional differences. To avert a future clash with Russia and Iran, the country joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 2011. Both Russia and Iran oppose NATO's expansion in the South Caucasus (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

During the early days of independence, Azerbaijan demonstrated an unwavering dedication to integration with European and Euro-Atlantic communities. The relationship between Azerbaijan and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) dates back to 1992, when the former, along with several other Central and Eastern European countries, joined the newly formed advisory body known as the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). This organisation grew into a full-fledged Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997. Heydar Aliyev, the 84th President of Azerbaijan, signed the Partnership for Peace Framework

Document on May 4, 1994. Since 2005, Azerbaijan has actively collaborated with NATO as part of its Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

It is crucial to emphasise that the desire to join the Euro-Atlantic Community does not imply complete commitment to participation in the Council. Azerbaijan joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 2011, knowing full well the regional framework of the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan was able to avert a clash with both Russia and Iran because to this strategic manoeuvre. Because both Russia and Iran resisted NATO's expansion in the South Caucasus, this is the case (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

As a result, we can conclude that Azerbaijan made a wise option since it recognises the need of having strong relations with both Russia and NATO. The oil and gas deposits of Azerbaijan are extremely geostrategic for the EU. It has sufficient resources to pose a serious threat to Russia's gas monopoly. The European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization both value Azerbaijan's territorial security and geographic stability. As a result, NATO and Azerbaijan's cooperation has grown stronger (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

Azerbaijan is one of the world's oldest oil producing countries, but it is also a major oil and gas producer today." Azerbaijan houses the majority of the South Caucasus' essential energy infrastructure. Because of its geostrategic location, the Azerbaijani energy infrastructure is of critical importance to NATO and the European Union. Azerbaijan has traditionally been an oil producer, but the importance of gas supply will define the country's future, particularly in relation to the EU market. Any threat to Azerbaijan's essential energy infrastructure would limit Azerbaijan's ability to diversify its gas suppliers to the EU (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

In Azerbaijan, some infrastructure is critical. As suppliers, its resources are critical and necessary to the national and worldwide markets. Oilfields, gas fields, existing natural gas and oil pipelines, and projected natural gas and oil pipelines are the different types of energy infrastructure in the country. It is critical to ensure the safety and security of all four primary resources. Any form of instability that these energy fields and pipelines are exposed to has the potential to cause irreversible damage and jeopardise the construction of new energy corridors. As a result, protecting energy infrastructure is important, required, and critical for the development of future energy corridors (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

The significance of 'The Century Contract'

The Azeri-Chirag-Deepwater Gunashli is one of Azerbaijan's most important petroleum fields, with oil production beginning in 1997. It was also the first offshore Production Sharing Agreement in the country (PSA). The energy field complex, ACG, produced an average of 634 thousand barrels of oil per day, according to the British Petroleum report "BP in Azerbaijan Sustainability Report 2015." (more than 231 million barrels or 31.3 million tonnes in all or 3.2 billion cubic metres in total). ACG related gas was also transferred to the State Oil Company of the Republic of Azerbaijan at a rate of roughly 8.9 million cubic metres per day (SOCAR). Since 1997, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) route has transported over 2.36 billion barrels (315 million tonnes) of crude oil to the world market, loaded aboard more than 3,112 tankers (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

ACG was also known as 'The Contract of the Century' since it was the first large investment by Western multinational businesses in any country of the former Soviet Union. Eleven foreign businesses from six different countries founded the Azeri- Chirag-Deepwater

Gunashli oilfield (UK, USA, Russia, Norway, Turkey and Saudi Arabia). Western firms own the vast bulk of the ACG. The ACG is now controlled by nine firms from seven different countries (Korkut and Preljevic 2017). (See Table 1).

Table 1: Indicates the co-ventures of ACG (2016)

No	Name of the company	Percentage of ownership	Country
1	BP	35.7828%	United Kingdom
2	SOCAR	11.6461%	Azerbaijan
3	Chevron	11.2729%	United States
4	INPEX	10.9644%	Japan
5	Statoil	8.5633%	Norway
6	ExxonMobil	8.0006%	United States
7	TPAO	6.7500%	Turkey
8	ITOCHU	4.2986%	Japan
9	ONGC	2.7213%	India

Source: NATO's new energy security role in Azerbaijan: Balancing the interest between West and Russia (Korkut and Preljevic 2017)

To generate the gas and transfer it to the Georgia-Turkey border, around \$28 billion in capital investment will be necessary." This will result in an additional pipeline system delivering 6 billion cubic metres of gas to Turkey and a further 10 billion cubic metres of gas to European markets via the Southern Gas Corridor. The Southern Gas Corridor route has been selected by the EU as a strategic project for obtaining alternative suppliers. Phase 2 of the Shah Deniz gas field (SD) is one of the world's largest gas projects, and it will help to European energy security, which is a key NATO objective. As a result, SD is regarded as a source of supplementary and alternative natural gas for EU member countries. This highlights the significance of SD, as EU member states strive to lessen their reliance on Russian natural gas. Seven separate firms from six different countries possess SD (Korkut and Preljevic 2007). (See Table 2).

Table 2: Indicates the Co-revenues of Shah Deniz field (2016)

No	Name of company	Percentage of ownership	Country
1	BP	28.8%	United Kingdom
2	TPAO	19%	Turkey
3	SOCAR	10%	Azerbaijan
4	PETRONAS	15.5%	Malaysia
5	SGC Upstream	6.7%	Azerbaijan

6	LUKoil	10%	Russia
7	NIOC	10%	Iran

Source: NATO's new energy security role in Azerbaijan: Balancing the interest between West and Russia (Korkut and Preljevic 2017)

Both ACG and SD are connected to the Sanagachal Terminal via offshore and onshore pipeline infrastructure. The terminal, which is one of the world's largest, is critical to Azerbaijan's oil and gas industry. This terminal receives, processes, stores, and exports crude oil and gas from all of BP's Caspian basin assets (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

Relations between Azerbaijan and Russia after 2008

Azerbaijan-Russia relations after 2008 The events of 2008 in the South Caucasus sparked a wave of suspicion among intellectuals, who saw a growing Russian influence on Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Intellectuals questioned whether the policy was still balanced or if it was becoming increasingly prejudiced (Abilov and Isayev 2015).

The reasons and rationale that led to this mistrust were numerous, the first and foremost of which was the August 2008 Five-Day War between Russia and Georgia. The confrontation between Russia and Georgia has a clear cause. Russia, which sees itself as the region's only big power, is keenly interested in the region's politics and natural resources. So, when Georgia's Saakashvili government announced its intention to join NATO and established a pro-western foreign policy, Russia was provoked into action and launched a military operation from August 7 to August 11, 2008. This resulted in Russia's military triumph and acknowledgment of Abkhazia and South Ossetia's independence and sovereignty. Since the Russo-Georgian war in 2008, the region's geopolitical status and circumstances have changed. The war had several ramifications, one of which was the imposition of constraints on the region's Western foreign policy.

Not only did Georgia have to reverse its pro-Western foreign policy, but other Post-Soviet governments had to reconsider their views in the run-up to the war. For all of these countries, Russia imposed a policy re-evaluation. The conflict had a significant impact not just on governmental objectives and programmes, but also on Azerbaijan and its people. The Azerbaijanis were traumatised, and they were faced with the onerous task of redefining their entire psyche while adjusting to their dynamic and changing situations, according to the story. Azerbaijan's foreign policy had to be revised as well. Although no direct action was taken against Azerbaijan, the Five-Day War had a negative impact on its inhabitants. Russia had lost its regional respect, and everyone was living in fear. It's worth noting, however, that despite clear pressure from Russia to adopt its foreign policy, Azerbaijan managed to maintain its independence and prepare all international policies on its own. Azerbaijan's foreign policy after the war, according to Anar Valiyev, was a form of culmination. This approach is similar to Finland's post-World War II pursuit of neutrality while the hostile Soviet Union rose to power. (Isayev and Abilov 2015).

Turkey's attempt to ease the trade ban was another factor that upset Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Under international pressure from the United States and the European Union, Azerbaijan opened its border to Armenia. The decisions eventually became increasingly anti-

Western and anti-Turkish. As a result, the policy that was developed was heavily politicised. (Isayev and Abilov 2015).

The Protocols on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Armenia and Turkey were signed by Ahmet Davutoglu and Edward Nalbandyan on October 10, 2009. After the protocols were respected and completed by the Armenian and Turkish parliaments, it took two months for the two states' borders to open. The negotiations that took place in order to open the Turkish border damaged relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Nonetheless, Turkey developed closer and stronger ties with Yerevan (Armenia) and began to play a key role in South Caucasus politics. Turkey stated that by doing so, it will be easier to economically link Armenia to Turkey and provide economic incentives to the country. It was also told that it would sway Turkey's position on the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute.

The evacuation of Armenian armed forces from occupied Azerbaijani land came following efforts to reestablish bilateral relations with Armenia, but it was viewed as a betrayal. In Baku, the decision was chastised and rejected.

Politicians in Azerbaijan, according to Fariz Ismailzade, have also suffered as a result of the BTC issue, but the Baku official has not given up. The reason Azerbaijan opposes and is concerned about border opening issues is that it would make resolving the Karabakh conflict impossible. Araz Azimov (Azerbaijan's Deputy Foreign Minister) stated that opening the Turkish-Armenian border without the withdrawal of Armenian military forces from Azerbaijan's occupied territory would jeopardise the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Aside from that, the conflict would have ramifications for the entire South Caucasus region's political processes.

Azerbaijan was dissatisfied because Turkey's plan to open its border with Armenia would benefit Russia. A protocol was signed between Turkey and Armenia in October 2009, and it was signed in October 2009. Gazprom, a Russian energy corporation, has inked a contract with SOCAR to supply 0.5 billion cubic metres of Azerbaijani gas to the North Caucasus each year. The arrangement was not for a large sum of money, and Russia was expected to acquire as much gas from Azerbaijan as possible. Later, the sum was further doubled. The goal of buying Azerbaijan's gas at market price was to deplete the country's available resources to the point that no natural gas projects could thrive in the region and there would be insufficient gas to fill the proposed pipelines. Furthermore, Russia desired to secure energy supplies for the North Caucasus because supplying energy to remote locations from its own core was costly. When Russia buys gas from its southern neighbour, it saves money on transportation. All of this benefits Russia politically and economically. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, benefits from cooperation with Russia, at least in the gas sector. As a result, Azerbaijan will be able to sell its gas at market rates (Abilov and Isayev 2015).

Azerbaijan's provision of gas exports to the North is potentially significant in the short term if it encounters difficulties with typical western allies. As a result, Azerbaijan has opened up new opportunities and delivered a clear message to Turkey and the rest of the world that Turkey is not the only country aiding Azerbaijan in exporting gas to Western markets.

Azerbaijan may also choose Russia as its primary transit country for gas exports to the Western market. Following this, Russia began to take an active role in the Nagorno-Karabakh war peace process in 2008. On the initiative of Dmitry Medvedev, a formal meeting between President Ilham Aliyev and Serj Sarkisyan took place on November 2, 2008. As a result of

the meeting, a Joint Declaration was signed. It emphasised the importance of conflicting parties negotiating on international law principles and norms. In the meantime, Azerbaijan's Parliament passed a new military doctrine that did not require the country to join NATO as a foreign policy goal. There was no mention of any western or pro-western country, including Turkey, as an 'ally' (Abilov and Isayev 2015).

Analysts began to study Azerbaijan's foreign policy after 2008, when it became more leaning toward Russia. The fear in the West was that Azerbaijan would not be able to supply enough gas to its energy projects. Policymakers in the United States and academics throughout the world have expressed concern that "Moscow" has been "gaining momentum and consolidating its position in the South Caucasus," both economically and politically.

In 2010, Dmitry Medvedev paid a visit to Azerbaijan (September). The partnership between Russia and Azerbaijan has reached new heights. Azerbaijan and Russia have signed a number of bilateral documents. One of the documents concerned the delimitation of the Russian-Azerbaijani border. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the border conflict has remained unresolved. The other paper said that Azerbaijan will expand its yearly gas delivery to Russia to two billion cubic metres. Medvedev did not condemn the Nabucco project, instead proposing agreements for future summits in which the two countries may discuss hydrocarbon resource strategy (Abilov and Isayev 2015).

Azerbaijan viewed all Russian-backed integration and regional organisation initiatives in post-Soviet spaces with scepticism, especially after gaining independence. Azerbaijan questioned Russia's motivations for forming regional groups, which he believed were aimed at bolstering Russia's dominance in the South Caucasus. As a result, Azerbaijan decided to withdraw from the Custom Union, the Common Economic Spaces, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, all of which were started by Russia (CSTO). Despite Russia's best efforts to persuade Azerbaijan to join the Eurasian Union, the country has rejected. Russia sought to place Azerbaijan in its own foreign policy circle, and it has two key cards to play to achieve that goal. The question of Nagorno-Karabakh is one, and the presence of about 2 million Azerbaijanis in Russia is another. In this backdrop, Russia made it mandatory for migrants from the Commonwealth of Independent States to pass a Russian language exam. The Russian Federal Migration Service has also stated that CIS citizens will require an invitation to visit Russia. The goal of this policy was to compel the CIS countries to join the Customs and Eurasian Union.

The Eurasian Union has proven to be a key instrument for Russia in its efforts to persuade post-Soviet states to join Russia's sphere of influence. This raises the important question of whether Azerbaijan will stick to its "balanced foreign policy" or succumb to Russian dictates. When Russia was at war with Georgia, Azerbaijan pursued a policy of appeasement. Azerbaijan's goal was to give the impression to Russia that it was uninterested in pro-Western integration. However, the situation has changed dramatically now that Russian actions have brought Azerbaijan into sharp focus. In a sense, Russia put a vote box in front of its southern neighbour to force a decision (Abilov and Isayev 2015).

Azerbaijan's Energy Infrastructure and Security

The European Union is concerned about Azerbaijan's energy infrastructure and security. Several Euro-Atlantic countries are still a long way from becoming energy suppliers to the West. They are having trouble diversifying their energy resources and establishing a supply network. As a result, these countries become reliant on countries such as Russia, which can

provide energy resources over relatively short distances. As a result, NATO member nations in Europe become subject to a variety of external variables that threaten the security of their energy resources. The political use of their energy resources by supply nations, increased demand for energy resources by emerging countries, escalating concerns of terrorist attacks on energy infrastructure, and so on are examples of negative impacts (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

Energy resources are becoming increasingly vital around the world, and as a result, the threat to energy supply and security is increasing. Because European NATO members rely heavily on third-party suppliers, they perceive themselves to be constantly threatened by the supplier nation's neighbours. Because of this worry, an alliance was formed to solve security challenges within the framework of a defined policy. The energy security framework's goal is to allow current energy-supplying nations to diversify their sources of energy. The European Union receives electricity from a number of countries. Russia and Norway are the two most prominent countries. Norway meets 31% of the European Union's gas needs and 11% of the EU's crude oil imports. In 2013, Russia was responsible for 39% of the European Union's natural gas imports. Norway, on the other hand, is not a threat to the European Union or European NATO member states because it is a NATO member. In the year 1949, it was added to the group. As a result, energy security is a critical issue in determining how countries throughout the world should interact with the Caucasus region. The participating countries are genuinely ensuring a consistent and secure supply of their energy exports (see table 3). (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

Table 3: Imports of primary energy by country of origin, EU-28, 2004-2014 (percent of extra EU-28 imports)

Country	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Russia	32,5	32,9	33,8	33,7	31,8	33,6	34,7	34,8	33,7	33,7	30,4
Norway	18,7	16,8	15,4	15,0	15,0	15,1	13,7	12,5	11,2	11,8	13,1
Nigeria	2,6	3,2	3,6	2,7	4,0	4,5	4,1	6,1	8,2	8,1	9,1
Saudi Arabia	11,3	10,5	9,0	7,2	6,8	5,7	5,9	8,0	8,8	8,7	8,9
Kazakhstan	3,3	4,4	4,6	4,6	4,8	5,3	5,5	5,7	5,1	5,7	6,4
Iraq	2,2	2,1	2,9	3,4	3,3	3,8	3,2	3,6	4,1	3,6	4,6
Azerbaijan	0,9	1,3	2,2	3,0	3,2	4,0	4,4	4,9	3,9	4,8	4,4
Algeria	3,3	3,5	2,5	1,9	2,5	1,6	1,2	2,6	2,9	3,9	4,2
Angola	0,6	1,2	0,7	2,0	2,6	2,7	1,6	2,1	2,0	2,9	3,3
Others	24,5	24,0	25,2	26,0	26,0	23,8	25,6	19,8	20,1	16,7	15,4

Source: NATO's new energy security role in Azerbaijan: Balancing the interest between West and Russia (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

Azerbaijan is well-known for its huge oil and gas reserves. It is also an essential link in the worldwide diversification of oil and gas supplies, securing a crucial position for the Alliances that consider the security of this nation to be crucial for their own reasons. Even if we can overlook the importance of Azerbaijan's physical location and the role it plays in regional politics, we may not be able to dismiss a number of successful energy projects. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil export pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (South Caucasus pipeline) gas pipeline, both built by Azerbaijan, have helped to increase the importance of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea region. It has also made a significant contribution to the energy security of not only Europe, but the entire world. Azerbaijan's security is especially vital to NATO member states, owing to multiple substantial financial investments in Azerbaijan's energy sector by multinational corporations originating in NATO nations. For these reasons, Azerbaijan and NATO have become more and more closely united since 1994. (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

The current energy infrastructure and developing energy potential of Azerbaijan are critical to the Euro-Atlantic region's energy supply. Azerbaijan's crude oil reserves were assessed to be 7 billion barrels in 2015 by The Oil and Gas Journal. According to the journal, while the country generated approximately 850,000 barrels of petroleum and other liquid fuels per day, it consumed approximately 100,000 barrels per day. Georgia and Turkey were responsible for the majority of its gas and crude oil exports to the international market. Any threat to this transportation chain could cause a disruption in supplies. Hence, preserving state energy infrastructure has in fact become a question of national security. As part of a larger national security policy, each state is responsible for its proactivity and ability to neutralise threats to export pipelines. At now the energy supply map is in reality nationalised due to the vital nature of its infrastructure and its direct impact on millions of people around the planet. The security dimension is especially important in the NATO-Azerbaijan situation because Azerbaijan's oil resources represent an alternative to Russian energy sources (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

NATO's energy security policy framework for energy resource transportation was more fruitful, as it provided many more opportunities and assurances for the preservation of Azerbaijan's essential energy infrastructure in a broader context. From the Riga Summit Declaration in 2008 through the Warsaw Summit Communiqué in 2016, NATO has established a variety of tools to assist its members and partners, including Azerbaijan. Projecting regional stability, merging and sharing information and intelligence, supporting and managing consequences, increasing regional and international cooperation, holding training workshops with NATO-accredited Energy Security Centre of Excellence (maritime and landscape security), and thus providing strong support to the protection of critical infrastructure are all examples of these methods (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

NATO can match the European Union's energy security ingenuity, which is largely owing to the Caucasus and Central Asia's savvy nurturing of alliances. Furthermore, both alliances share the majority of their members, allowing them to handle energy issues jointly. According to a statement made by, the preservation of Azerbaijan's energy infrastructure has become important to the European Union and NATO. During a joint press conference with Azerbaijan's President Ilham in Brussels in 2014, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stated that Azerbaijan is critical to not only Europe's energy security, but also peace and stability in the Caucasus (Korkut and Preljevic 2017).

The ebbs and flows in relations between Russia and Azerbaijan are numerous. In the context of Nagorno-Karabakh, their relationship is exceptionally strained. A worsening of Russia's relations with Azerbaijan as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict could have serious strategic implications for the entire region. It is suggested that Russia ignore minor disputes with Azerbaijan that could have a significant impact and disrupt the region's stability. A move like this could help Russia maintain a healthy and productive relationship with Azerbaijan. Both countries have solid human ties, which are built on strong people interactions, diaspora movement, increased trade, military collaboration, and informed political discussion.

Azerbaijan has also made progress in this direction. It tends to overlook anti-Russian sentiments emanating from former Soviet nations on occasion. Azerbaijan is a firm believer in the Caucasus region's peace and stability. To achieve peace and stability, it promotes mutually beneficial cooperation, economic and political partnership, and respect for each other's internal affairs. Diplomats in the region frequently promote the Russia-Azerbaijan partnership and encourage others to do the same. Azerbaijan maintains strong relations with Russia while being outside the Russian-controlled Eurasian Economic Union, Customs Union, and Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) (Ismail 2017).

The Trans-Anatolian pipeline is currently scheduled to be finished in the near future. Around 16 billion cubic metres of Caspian gas are planned to be transported to European markets. The European Union is actively advocating in the context of this pipeline because it will be the first element of the Southern Gas Corridor. For several years, Russia's gas giant Gazprom has been opposed to this pipeline, but it has now been accepted. However, Russia may be irritated by this pipeline because it will benefit the European Union (Ismail 2017).

Azerbaijan's energy agreements with Georgia, which have been in place since 2006, have given Georgia a new energy sponsor. As a result of its energy dependency, Azerbaijan was able to do so without incurring Russian retribution. It remains to be seen how Azerbaijan will use the political influence it has gained by striking energy deals with Georgia. It's worth remembering that Armenia is completely reliant on Russian gas imports, which are delivered via pipelines that cross Georgian territory. Whether this turns into a long-term reality or not is yet to be seen as Azerbaijan controls substantial parts of the Georgian gas distribution networks and so is in a strong position to hinder the receipt of gas from Russia to Armenia.

It is also not difficult to forecast that this may constitute a tool for Azerbaijan to pressurise Armenia in the negotiations on the topic of Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan will not be able to fight militarily with Russia, but it will be able to use its energy resources to acquire supremacy in the Nagorno-Karabakh region (Kjaernet 2009). However, circumstances have changed dramatically since the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia. Russia still takes advantage of Nagorno-Karabakh crisis as it tries to achieve control over South Caucasus.

Conclusion

Azerbaijan has been attempting to strike a balance between its Russian and Western roles. Azerbaijan has been attempting to improve its economy while maintaining a balance of relations with both Russia and the West. Azerbaijan is concerned about Russia establishing influence over its land, but it does not want to jeopardise its relationship with Russia. As a result, it seeks to strike a balance in its relations with Western countries and Russia. In this

way, it strives to contain Russia's might and wrath at the same time. The Western governments also aid Azerbaijan because it inhibits Russia to obtain authority over the South Caucasus region.

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