

UDC: 327:351.824.11(510:479.24)

DOI: 10.5937/pnb30-62385

Original scientific paper

Политика националне безбедности

(The Policy of National Security)

Year XVI vol. 30

No. 3/2025

pp. 1–20

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## **ENERGY RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND AZERBAIJAN: BETWEEN PRAGMATIC COOPERATION AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

### **Abstract**

This paper analyses the contemporary relations between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Azerbaijan, focusing on the energy dimension of their cooperation and the impact of these relations on regional and broader energy security. In the context of China's growing involvement in the South Caucasus and Azerbaijan's strategic positioning as an essential transit and export energy hub, the paper seeks to address the key question of whether the relationship between Baku and Beijing represents a sustainable partnership based on complementary strategic interests or a limited, pragmatic cooperation driven by current economic and geopolitical circumstances. Special attention is given to the analysis

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of energy projects in which both states are directly or indirectly involved such as oil and gas pipelines as well as infrastructure initiatives like the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway, which connects China’s Belt and Road Initiative with Europe through Azerbaijani territory. Methodologically, the paper relies on a qualitative analysis of official bilateral documents, relevant scholarly and analytical literature, official government and institutional statements, reports from international energy organisations, and key infrastructural and energy project case studies. The theoretical framework is based on energy security, geoeconomics, and realpolitik, focusing on modelling energy relations as instruments of foreign policy influence. The paper also considers global geopolitical shifts, including the consequences of the conflict in Ukraine, changes in European energy strategy, and China’s position within the emerging multipolar order. The research contribution of this paper lies in its systematic assessment of the level of interdependence between China and Azerbaijan in the energy sector, as well as in evaluating the potential long-term stability of this relationship from the perspectives of regional security, economics, and politics.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan, China, energy security, “Belt and Road”, geopolitics, energy, South Caucasus, infrastructure.

## INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, geopolitical and energy transformations across Eurasia have significantly influenced the redefinition of bilateral relations between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Azerbaijan. Although geographically distant, these two countries are linked by shared interests primarily in energy, infrastructure, and trade. China, as a global economic powerhouse, and Azerbaijan, an energy-rich country located at the crossroads of East and West, have recognised the potential to enhance cooperation within the Belt and Road Initiative – BRI framework. This partnership represents a higher stage of bilateral cooperation and signals a substantial shift toward deeper political, economic, and security coordination between the two countries. In the context of global geopolitical redistribution and growing great-power competition, this development carries significant

implications for Azerbaijan's positioning as an active actor within Eurasian dynamics.

The concept of energy security in this study is viewed through the theoretical lens of international relations, emphasising realist and geoeconomic approaches. As a dominant paradigm in power relations, realism emphasizes the state as the primary actor in a system where energy resources serve as strategic instruments for maintaining sovereignty and projecting influence. From this perspective, cooperation between China and Azerbaijan can be interpreted as a mutual attempt to strengthen national capacities and expand strategic manoeuvring space amid global instability. Conversely, the geoeconomic approach underscores economic instruments and infrastructural connectivity as the foundations of contemporary power, understanding energy cooperation not merely as a matter of supply and export, but as a means of long-term positioning within the Eurasian trade, transport, and investment network. In this context, energy security represents a synthesis of security, economic, and political dimensions, a domain where the interests and strategies of primary and middle powers overlap. Such a theoretical approach enables a deeper understanding of China-Azerbaijan relations within the broader context of an emerging multipolar order.

During Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's state visit to Beijing in April 2025, a series of agreements was signed, elevating the relations between the two countries to the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership. These agreements cover the areas of energy, green energy, the digital economy, and infrastructure (Reuters 2025a). Particularly significant is cooperation in renewable energy, where China provides technological and financial support to Azerbaijan in developing solar and wind farms, thus contributing to the diversification of the energy sector and reducing dependence on fossil fuels (Sharifli 2025). The political dimension of the partnership is reflected in the mutual support for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Azerbaijan has expressed support for China's "One China" policy, while Beijing has reaffirmed its support for Azerbaijan's independence and stability. Through this move, Baku clearly demonstrates its commitment to a balancing policy, maintaining close relations with the West, Russia, Turkey, and Iran, while simultaneously building and deepening ties with China as an increasingly influential global actor. This approach

reflects a multi-vector foreign policy, characteristic of small and medium-sized states at geopolitical crossroads.

The partnership's economic component focuses on enhancing cooperation in key sectors: renewable energy, the digital economy, industry, and petrochemicals. The Azerbaijani Ministry of Energy and China Energy Engineering Group – CEEC have agreed to establish a Working Group for Investment Cooperation within this cooperation. This group aims to promote collaboration in areas such as solar and wind energy, energy storage, and green hydrogen production (Zohrabov 2024). This orientation also contributes to China's energy diversification, as its interest in the Caspian region's resources grows amid instability in the Middle East and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Beyond energy, transport, and logistics, cooperation is gaining momentum. The signed agreements on multimodal transport and support for Trans-Caspian corridors, particularly the Middle Corridor, emphasise Azerbaijan's strategic role within the BRI. The country is positioning itself as a key transit hub between China and Europe, which brings economic benefits and strengthens its geoeconomic and geopolitical relevance. Alongside the financial and transport dimensions, the Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in April 2025 includes security and socio-cultural elements. Of particular note are the commitments to combat terrorism, cyber threats, and extremism jointly, as well as to intensify cooperation in education, culture, and scientific research. Abolishing visas for ordinary passport holders is a symbolic yet important step toward enhancing people-to-people exchanges and developing what is known as "soft power" (President of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2025).

The document's overall tone and the agreement's nature suggest a pragmatic yet ambitious relationship that extends beyond traditional trade cooperation. This agreement serves as a tool for diversifying partners and ensuring Azerbaijan's autonomy in its foreign policy. At the same time, for China, it serves as a means of expanding influence in a region connecting Europe and Asia. Thus, this partnership can also be interpreted as an attempt at geoeconomic consolidation amid global instability.

At the same time, Azerbaijan is positioning itself as a key transit point within the Middle Corridor, which links China with Europe through Central Asia and the Caucasus. This corridor offers an alternative to traditional transportation routes and has the potential to

enhance trade flows and regional economic integration (EU Reporter 2025). However, despite the intensification of cooperation, it remains unclear whether the relationship between China and Azerbaijan is based on a long-term strategic partnership or on pragmatic interests arising from current economic and geopolitical circumstances. This paper aims to analyse the nature and scope of China-Azerbaijan cooperation in the energy sector, focusing on the impact of these relations on regional energy security and geopolitical stability.

Based on the aforementioned circumstances and current developments in the Eurasian space, it is necessary to apply an appropriate methodological framework that enables a systematic analysis of the nature and scope of cooperation between China and Azerbaijan. In this regard, the following section of the paper presents the methodological approach, which defines the structure, sources, and analytical procedures applied in the research.

## **RESEARCH APPROACH AND ANALYTICAL FOUNDATIONS**

The research is based on a qualitative approach, employing content analysis, comparative analysis, and case study methods. The primary objective was to investigate the nature and scope of energy cooperation between China and Azerbaijan, its impact on regional energy security, and the geopolitical positioning of both countries.

Primary sources included official documents from government bodies and ministries of energy, international agreements, and official statements from institutions such as BP Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan, the European Commission, and the International Energy Agency, along with relevant academic papers and analytical reports (The Jamestown Foundation, Asia Development Bank Institute – ADB, Trend News Agency, Reuters). Within the case study framework, key infrastructural and energy projects were analyzed, including the Southern Gas Corridor, TANAP, the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway, Alat Port, and the Middle Corridor, which collectively represent a convergence of China's and Azerbaijan's energy and transportation interests.

The methodological approach allows for an interpretive analysis of data within the context of geoeconomic and political transformations in Eurasia, aiming to integrate empirical findings with theoretical

frameworks of energy security, geoeconomics, and realpolitik. The research was not experimental but descriptive and analytical, relying on verifiable and publicly available data. Such an approach contributed to a more reliable assessment of the impact of bilateral cooperation on energy security. It confirmed the validity of the chosen methods in achieving the stated research objectives.

## **ENERGY COOPERATION BETWEEN CHINA AND AZERBAIJAN**

Relations between China and Azerbaijan in the energy field represent one of the key pillars of their overall bilateral cooperation, but also a complex domain where economic interests, geopolitical influences, and global energy trends intersect. Although cooperation between the two countries remains moderate compared to China's relations with other major energy producers in the region, it has shown steady growth. It is gaining importance in the global shift toward energy security and the transition to green energy.

According to Yiyun Su's analysis (Su 2024), cooperation in the energy sector between China and Azerbaijan is based on the long-term strategic interests of both sides. However, there remains room for deeper institutional linkage and technical collaboration. While China maintains significant partnerships with other Caspian energy producers such as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan occupies a unique position as a transit and production hub within the broader framework of the BRI. Nevertheless, bilateral cooperation is often subject to the influence of regional political instability and global geopolitical crises, which limit the pace of institutionalisation (Su 2024, 75–85).

At the same time, cooperation in the energy sector is increasingly shifting toward joint projects in renewable energy. China, a global leader in green energy technologies, and Azerbaijan, increasingly committed to the Sustainable Development Goals and carbon emission reduction, view their partnership as an opportunity for technological transfer and joint investment. This new phase of cooperation enables their energy relations to take on a long-term dimension, in which green solutions, such as solar and wind energy, gradually complement fossil fuels. In this context, China provides financial assistance and infrastructural expertise, which is especially valuable for developing

energy zones and new production capacities in western and southern Azerbaijan (Zeynalli 2024, 163–169).

From a geopolitical perspective, Azerbaijan is a significant partner in China's energy strategy. As a stable country in the South Caucasus, with well-developed oil and gas infrastructure and access to European markets, Azerbaijan has the potential to become a key link in China's energy diversification efforts. In this regard, the TANAP and the Southern Gas Corridor gain strategic importance as infrastructural components that, in the future, with Beijing's support, could be adapted to serve China's energy transport interests toward Central Asia or within the intermodal projects of the BRI.

However, cooperation remains in a steady but limited growth phase despite shared interests. The main challenges include competition with Russian, Turkish, and Iranian interests in the region, greater transparency in energy contracts, and the limited volume of direct gas trade between the two countries. Nonetheless, joint commissions and signed memoranda of understanding demonstrate both sides' intention to elevate the energy dialogue, particularly within the framework of the green transition (Novruz 2024).

Despite current limitations, energy cooperation between China and Azerbaijan shows significant potential for strategic expansion. Azerbaijan's position as a stable and energy-relevant partner, combined with China's technological and investment capacities, provides a solid foundation for further advancement of relations, with the potential to become an essential part of Eurasia's new energy security map.

## **INFRASTRUCTURAL CONNECTIVITY AND LOGISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Trade corridors in the Caspian region are gaining increasing importance in the global economy, especially in the growing connectivity between China and Europe. Historically, Central Asian routes were vital for trade between the East and West; however, since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they have been largely supplanted by maritime routes. Today, the region again emerges as a key logistical hub thanks to its energy resources and infrastructural development. Oil and gas pipelines primarily connect producers with markets, stimulating economic growth and stability. At the same time, railway corridors linking China and Europe through Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan represent a

vital alternative to traditional maritime lines. The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the significance of these land routes due to disruptions in global supply chains. However, further investment in infrastructure, political stability, and regional cooperation is essential for these corridors to become sustainable and competitive. In this regard, the Caspian region, and Azerbaijan in particular, have the potential to become a key link in Eurasia's trade network, provided that existing resources and geographical advantages are strategically leveraged (Kalyuzhnova and Pomfret 2021, 1–9).

Azerbaijan's role in modern geoeconomic processes has gained a new dimension through its active participation in China's BRI. Although it was not among the key member states in the initiative's early phase, Azerbaijan has positioned itself as a significant transit hub within the Middle Corridor, which connects China with European markets via Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. This corridor represents an alternative to the northern (Russian) and southern (Iranian) routes, making it particularly attractive in the context of sanctions, geopolitical instability, and the need for trade route diversification (Asian Development Bank Institute [ADBI] 2024).

One of the most strategically significant infrastructure projects in this context is the Port of Alat, located on the western coast of the Caspian Sea. The port serves as a multimodal logistics hub, integrating maritime, rail, and road transport. It represents a key node for the transportation of Chinese goods through Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan and Europe via rail and road routes. In addition, the establishment of the Alat Free Economic Zone – AFEZ holds special importance, attracting foreign investment and fostering the development of export-oriented manufacturing industries (Alat Free Economic Zone [AFEZ] 2025).

In 2024, Azerbaijan significantly consolidated its position as a key transport hub of Eurasia, relying on the robust development of its railway and logistics infrastructure. According to data from the official company Azerbaijan Railways (ADY), the country transported over 18.5 million tons of cargo during the year, with notable growth in both transit and import traffic (an increase of 5.7% and 10%, respectively, compared to 2023). The role of the Middle Corridor was particularly strengthened as the main alternative route connecting China and Europe. In March 2024, the first block train from Xi'an arrived in Baku in only eleven days, demonstrating Azerbaijan's capacity to provide a fast and reliable transit route. Over the year, more than 27,000 containers were

transported via this corridor, exceeding the previous year's figures. Furthermore, Azerbaijan initiated the formation of a new branch of the Middle Corridor along the eastern Caspian coast, linking with Central Asian countries, and established joint international enterprises with Kazakhstan and Georgia to improve coordination of transport flows (e.g., Middle Corridor Multimodal Ltd. and BTKI Railways LLC). These steps form part of Baku's strategic vision to transform itself from a raw material exporter into a regional logistics leader, thereby reducing its economic dependence on the oil sector and positioning itself as a reliable partner within the BRI and the wider Eurasian region (Azerbaijan Railways [ADY] 2025).

Figure 1. The Middle Corridor: The Foundation of the Strategic Partnership between Baku and Beijing



Source: (Mammadov 2025)

Azerbaijan is also intensifying cooperation with Chinese companies in digital logistics, cargo tracking, and transport management. Chinese investments in logistics, digitalisation, and the development of “smart” border systems enhance the efficiency of goods transit. Accordingly, Chinese companies such as Huawei and ZTE Corporation are present in the Azerbaijani market as part of initiatives to modernise Information and Communication Technologies – ICT infrastructure (Zeynalli 2024, 163–169).

The Middle Corridor, also known as the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route – TITR, has gained increased significance due to geopolitical challenges affecting alternative routes, such as

sanctions on Iran and the war in Ukraine. This route connects China with Europe via Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, forming a multimodal transport network consisting of 4,256 kilometers of railway and 508 kilometers of maritime routes. Azerbaijan plays a key role in ensuring the efficiency and reliability of this route. Major infrastructure projects such as the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway, launched in 2017, and the Baku International Sea Trade Port, opened in 2018, have significantly reduced delivery times for goods transported from China to Europe by more than 50% in some cases compared to sea routes. Additionally, the Alat Free Economic Zone presents further opportunities for investors and contributes to the country's economic development (Rafi 2024).

To enhance its transit potential, Azerbaijan established the Coordinating Council for Transit Freight in 2015 and, in 2023, adopted an Action Plan for Increasing the Transit Potential of International Transport Corridors for 2024–2026. These measures aim to enhance the regulatory framework and improve the efficiency of transportation procedures. According to statistical data, the volume of freight passing through the Middle Corridor increased by over 120% in the first three months of 2022 compared to the same period of the previous year. Although total transit volume in 2022 amounted to 33,000 TEU, still lower than the Northern Corridor (410,500 TEU), the growth potential remains considerable. Reports by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development – EBRD suggest that the Middle Corridor could reach a transit capacity of 1.4 million TEU. Through strategic infrastructure investments, regulatory reforms, and regional cooperation, Azerbaijan has successfully positioned itself as a key player in global trade networks, contributing to economic diversification and the development of non-oil sectors (Rafi 2024).

## **GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT AND STRATEGIC POSITIONING**

The geopolitical dimension of China-Azerbaijan relations is a crucial aspect in understanding the more profound logic of their cooperation, particularly in light of ongoing regional and global transformations. Both countries aim to maintain balanced and pragmatic foreign policies, taking into account their respective interests and the sensitivities of their partners and other influential regional actors.

Although previously a peripheral zone in China's strategy, the South Caucasus has gained importance due to geopolitical changes, particularly following the 2022 Ukraine crisis. The region now serves as a key transit route for China within the BRI, particularly through the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), also known as the Middle Corridor, which links China with Europe via Central Asia and the South Caucasus. The article "China's Foreign-Policy Strategy in the South Caucasus – a Transit Window to Europe?" by Albert Kumukov and Sergey Luzyanin, published in Russia in Global Affairs, provides a comprehensive analysis of the South Caucasus' significance in China's foreign policy, with particular attention to Azerbaijan. The article reviews differing academic perspectives on the region's role in China's strategy. Some scholars argue that the South Caucasus holds a secondary role, citing the limited activity of Chinese financial institutions and the cautious approach of local countries toward Chinese investments. However, others highlight the region's potential, particularly in transportation, logistics, and energy, emphasising that China is increasingly interested in developing projects in these sectors (Kumukov and Luzyanin 2024, 178–179). The authors also note that China has expanded its regional presence through infrastructure projects and economic cooperation, especially with Azerbaijan. This includes investments in transport infrastructure and the energy sector, as well as strengthening bilateral relations and positioning Azerbaijan as a significant partner in China's foreign policy (180–182). The South Caucasus, particularly Azerbaijan, is increasingly important in China's transcontinental connectivity and economic cooperation strategy. This trend is driven by geopolitical shifts and China's need to diversify its transport routes to Europe, making the region a crucial element in the future development of China's foreign policy.

China maintains a neutral position in regional conflicts, including the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh. Since establishing diplomatic relations with the South Caucasus countries in 1992, Beijing has refrained from participating in controversial United Nations votes concerning Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia (Mammadov 2025). For its part, Azerbaijan pursues a multi-vector foreign policy, seeking to maintain balance in its relations with the West, Russia, Turkey, and China. This strategy enables Baku to attract investments and ensure security, particularly in light of its long-standing conflict with Armenia.

Diplomatic pragmatism between China and Azerbaijan is reflected in the intensification of bilateral cooperation in various fields. A mutual visa exemption for holders of ordinary passports has also been established, which is expected to stimulate tourism, educational exchange, and business travel (Reuters 2025b). This approach allows both countries to advance their interests without engaging in confrontational politics, thereby contributing to stability and creating potential for the long-term development of their relations.

## **AZERBAIJAN IN THE CONCEPT OF ENERGY SECURITY**

Azerbaijan occupies an increasingly important position in the global energy architecture as a stable and reliable partner, a crucial factor in the era of profound global energy security changes. Its geographic position at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, combined with proven natural gas reserves exceeding 2.6 trillion cubic meters and well-developed infrastructure, allows it to serve as a strategic supplier of energy resources to multiple regions (International Energy Agency [IEA] 2023). Through the Southern Gas Corridor, Azerbaijan already supplies the European market via the TANAP and Trans Adriatic Pipeline – TAP, which enable the direct transport of gas from the Shah Deniz field to consumers in the European Union, significantly contributing to Europe's energy diversification and reducing its dependence on Russia (European Commission 2022). These corridors ensure Europe's oil and gas supply while bypassing Russia and Iran, which increases Azerbaijan's strategic significance not only for Western actors but also for China, which sees in this arrangement alternative routes and partnerships within its BRI. At the same time, through cooperation with China under the BRI framework, Azerbaijan is expanding its energy and transit relevance to Asian markets. This position, supported by active participation in multilateral energy initiatives such as the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) and long-term investment partnerships with companies like BP and TotalEnergies, contributes to Azerbaijan's perception as a stable energy hub in an otherwise volatile region (BP Azerbaijan 2023). Domestic political stability, pragmatic foreign policy, and neutrality toward regional conflicts enable Azerbaijan to position itself as an "energy bridge" of Eurasia, connecting Caspian resources with European and Asian consumer

centres. Such a role makes Azerbaijan an indispensable player in global energy security's current and future map.

In modern geopolitics, energy security has become one of the key factors shaping bilateral relations between states possessing significant energy resources and those that are major consumers. Azerbaijan, as a supplier located at the intersection of Europe and Asia with projects such as the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Southern Gas Corridor, has managed to diversify its export routes and position itself as a reliable partner not only for Europe but also for China. Within the context of China's BRI, Azerbaijan gains strategic value as a hub through which energy and infrastructure projects can develop. China's recent energy diversification policy focuses on stable partners across Eurasia, and Azerbaijan is assuming an increasingly important role. As noted, during Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's state visit to Beijing in April 2025, more than twenty bilateral agreements were signed in the fields of renewable energy, digital economy, and petrochemicals, signalling the growing complexity and institutionalisation of relations (Reuters 2025). Furthermore, in November 2024, in preparation for The 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference or Conference – COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan's Ministry of Energy signed agreements with China Datang Co. Ltd. – CDT and China Energy Overseas Investment Co. Ltd. – CEOI for the construction of solar power plants and the development of renewable energy projects (Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan 2024). Establishing a Joint Working Group on Investment Cooperation with CEEC further confirms the strategic partnership in developing solar and wind energy, as well as producing green hydrogen (Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan 2024). Energy cooperation between China and Azerbaijan is no longer based solely on fossil fuels but is increasingly shifting toward the green transition, which aligns with global climate goals. This partnership allows China to diversify its supply sources while enabling Azerbaijan to expand its export infrastructure, solidifying its role in international energy flows and contributing to preserving a multi-vector foreign policy amid rising geopolitical uncertainty.

## CONCLUSION

The relationship between China and Azerbaijan in the energy sector represents one of the most compelling examples of modern geo-economic cooperation between a mid-sized state striving to preserve its energy independence and a global power seeking to expand its influence through infrastructure and investment. Despite geographical distance, the two countries have, over the past decade, built a stable and functional framework of cooperation grounded in mutual interests, political realism, and economic pragmatism. China views Azerbaijan as a reliable partner and stable anchor in the South Caucasus. At the same time, Azerbaijan regards cooperation with Beijing as a means to diversify its foreign partnerships and reduce economic dependence on Western and Russian markets. This cooperation spans multiple levels from energy and green transition to infrastructure, logistics, digital economy, and education, making it multidimensional and resilient to political change.

However, despite the depth and dynamism of this relationship, it can be concluded that China-Azerbaijan energy relations have not yet reached the level of a fully developed strategic partnership in the classical sense. Their nature remains primarily pragmatic, based on economic benefits, mutual political moderation, and the avoidance of confrontation with other regional actors. Although both Beijing and Baku formally use the term “comprehensive strategic partnership”, it is functional and dominated by economic projects rather than security alliances or political commitments. There is a clear tendency toward the gradual evolution of relations from pragmatic cooperation to a pragmatic strategic partnership, built through institutionalised bilateral mechanisms, collaboration in renewable energy and infrastructure, and growing technological connectivity. The success of this process will largely depend on the stability of the South Caucasus, China’s priorities within the BRI framework, and Azerbaijan’s domestic political consolidation. The research contribution of this paper lies in the systematic analysis of China-Azerbaijan energy relations as an example of a new model of cooperation between major and middle powers within a shifting geopolitical architecture. It enhances understanding of the energy interdependence between China and Azerbaijan as a reference model for analysing the impact of energy

on states' foreign policy behaviour in the post-crisis Eurasian structure, with special attention to the period 2022–2025.

From the perspective of the coming decade, China-Azerbaijan cooperation can potentially become a significant factor in Eurasia's energy security. Developing joint projects in green energy, expanding the Middle Corridor's logistics capacity, and growing technological cooperation could create preconditions for a new model of regional integration, connecting Europe and Asia through energy and infrastructure interdependence. In this context, Azerbaijan could emerge as an energy and transport hub within the Eurasian network, while China would consolidate its influence without direct political dominance.

Overall, China-Azerbaijan relations exemplify a flexible and evolutionary partnership, adaptable to global changes while maintaining a balance between national interests and regional stability. If the current cooperation trends continue, this model could become a reference point for understanding the new patterns of energy diplomacy in Eurasia in the coming decade.

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## **ЕНЕРГЕТСКИ ОДНОСИ КИНЕ И АЗЕРБЕЈЦАНА: ИЗМЕЋУ ПРАГМАТИЧНЕ САРАДЊЕ И СТРАТЕШКОГ ПАРТНЕРСТВА**

### **Резиме**

У априлу 2025. године, током званичне посете председника Азербејцана Илхама Алијева Пекингу, Азербејцан и Народна Република Кина формализовали су успостављање свеобухватног стратешког партнерства. Ово партнерство представља виши степен билатералне сарадње и указује на снажан заокрет ка дубљој политичкој, економској и безбедносној координацији између две земље. Овај догађај имао је политичке рефлексije на позиционирање Азербејцана као активног актера у евроазијском региону. Политичка димензија партнерства огледа се у узајамној подршци суверенитету и територијалном интегритету обе државе. Азербејцан је изразио подршку политици „једне Кине”, док је Пекинг поновио подршку азербејцанској независности и стабилности. Овим потезом Баку јасно исказује приврженост политици балансирања, у оквиру које паралелно одржава блиске односе са Западом, Русијом, Турском и Ираном, али истовремено гради и продубљује везе са Кином као све утицајнијим глобалним чиниоцем. Такав приступ одражава вишевекторску

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спољну политику, карактеристичну за мале и средње земље на геополитичким раскрсницама. Економска компонента партнерства фокусирана је на унапређење сарадње у кључним секторима: обновљивим изворима енергије, дигиталној економији, индустрији и петрохемији. Кроз споразум о оснивању Радне групе за инвестициону сарадњу, истиче се институционализација економских односа. Обе стране изразиле су спремност да продубе заједнички рад на развоју глобалног партнерства за чисту енергију, што рефлектује растући значај зелене енергетике као инструмента економске и еколошке безбедности. Ова оријентација доприноси и енергетској диверсификацији Кине, чији интерес за ресурсе Каспијског региона расте у контексту нестабилности на Блиском истоку и сукоба у Украјини. Поред енергетике, сарадња у области транспорта и логистике добија на замаху. Потписани споразуми о мултимодалном транспорту и подршка транкаспијским коридорима (нарочито Средњем коридору) наглашавају стратешку улогу Азербејџана у иницијативи „Појас и пут”. Земља се позиционира као кључна транзитна тачка између Кине и Европе, што не само да доприноси економској добити, већ и оснажује њену геоекономску и геополитичку релевантност. Упоредо с економским и транспортним аспектима, сарадња се паралелно одвија и на безбедносној и друштвено-културној сфери. Посебно се истиче договор о заједничкој борби против тероризма, сајбер претњи и екстремизма, као и интензивирање сарадње у области образовања, културе и научних истраживања. Укидање виза за носиоце обичних пасоша симболично је али важно средство за унапређење људских контаката и развој тзв. „меке моћи”. Укупне активности усмерене на све дубљу сарадњу две земље указују на прагматичан али амбициозан однос који превазилази класичну трговачку сарадњу. За Азербејџан, ова сарадња је средство за диверсификацију партнера и осигурање спољнополитичке аутономије, а за Кину начин да прошири утицај у региону који повезује Европу и Азију. Стога се ово партнерство може тумачити и као покушај геоекономске консолидације у времену глобалне нестабилности.

**Кључне речи:** Азербејџан, Кина, енергетска безбедност, „Појас и пут”, геополитика, енергетика, Јужни Кавказ, инфраструктура.

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\* This paper was received on October 25, 2025, and accepted for publication at the Editorial Board meeting on November 5, 2025.