

Energy security policy in the context of cooperation of Azerbaijan and Turkey

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The history of relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey is ancient and rich. It is well known that common roots, language, religious unity, similar cultures, customs and traditions are among the factors that determine the interaction. On the other hand, Turkey is one of the three regional states that play an important role in the fate of the Caucasus, including Russia and Iran.

Fundamentals of Azerbaijan's energy security policy, principles of its provision and other issues are reflected in the "National Security Concept", the new oil strategy, many official state documents adopted in 2003-2014 (Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Energy", "Alternative" and the State Program on the Use of Renewable Energy Sources ", the State Program "Development of the Fuel and Energy Complex of the Country in 2005-2015 ", the Shah Deniz-2 Natural Gas Project, etc.).

Among the threats to the national security of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Concept on National Security specifically mentions "action against the energy infrastructure of the Republic of Azerbaijan (3.6.)". It states that "Revenues from the development and transit of energy resources are the basis of the economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In light of this, attempts to destabilize the industry through political means or physical damage to infrastructure are among the possible threats" [1].

The document emphasizes that the Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Energy Partnership signed between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the European Union in 2006 will contribute to the diversification of energy sources and transport routes of EU member states, development and modernization of energy infrastructure in the Republic of Azerbaijan, efficient use of energy resources and their use of inexhaustible energy sources [1].

The concept includes "Energy Security Policy" in a separate paragraph (4.3.8). Development, operation of existing oil and gas fields in the sector of the Caspian Basin belonging to the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as promising structures, construction and installation of modern oil and gas foundations, detection, assessment and adequate measures of threats to major export oil and gas pipelines and terminals are highlighted as one of the most important activities to ensure the national security of the Republic of Azerbaijan [1].

The analysis of the provisions of the paragraph (4.1.5.1.) On “Cooperation with the countries of the region” in the document shows its importance for both countries. It states with confidence that “the trilateral strategic partnership and expanding cooperation between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey has become a factor of stability in the region. This cooperation has been successful as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan export oil pipeline named after Heydar Aliyev and the South Caucasus Gas Pipeline (Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum), which increase the importance of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions and contribute to European and global energy security. It has laid the foundation for a new vital and safe source of energy for Europe through its energy infrastructure project” [1].

Energy security can be achieved in three ways: security, demand and transit security. In terms of countries capable of “providing adequate quality and environmentally friendly energy that is necessary for the development of a country at reasonable prices and without deficits” [2], the Republic of Azerbaijan “Turkey can be cited as an example of countries where demand and energy security are at the forefront” [3].

In this sense, we consider it important to look at the specific facts about both countries. First of all, let’s look at the measures taken to ensure energy security in Azerbaijan.

Some sources say that the rich energy resources discovered in the Caspian region in the early 2000s have the potential to become the third largest in the world. For this reason, the idea that the Caspian region could become a second Persian Gulf in the XXI century has emerged [4, p.9]. In this sense, the Caspian region, which occupies a key place in the architecture of regional and international energy security, has become a field of geo-political and geo-economic competition after the collapse of the USSR. Therefore, the countries of the Caspian Basin also had to start “games” in international political goals, which are: a) the real geoeconomic values of the Caspian Sea; b) Caspian pipeline route area; c) Legal status and division of the Caspian Sea; d) It is connected with alternative pipelines, etc [5, p.14].

Azerbaijan's reserves of about 5 billion tons of oil and 5-6 trillion m³ of gas in the Caspian region account for about 4% of world energy reserves [6, p.655]. BP estimates that Azerbaijan's total oil reserves in 2009 were estimated at 7 billion barrels and natural gas reserves at 1.20 trillion m³ [7], resulting in one of the world's ten largest reserves [4, p.26]. Therefore, the country’s oil and gas reserves have always been in the spotlight of the world, and one of the most important directions of the foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan has been energy policy.

In particular, offshore oil production in Azerbaijan showed the dynamics of development in 1948-1991, underwent a deep decline in 1991-1994, and in the period after 1994 entered a new stage of development. Significant events took place in Azerbaijan’s energy diplomacy and oil and gas sector before and after the “Agreement of the Century” signed in September 1994 [8, p.759].

Speaking at a conference on “Investment Opportunities in Azerbaijan” in London in 1995, President Heydar Aliyev said: “For centuries, Azerbaijan’s energy potential has served to develop the Russian economy and the Soviet Union for the last 70 years. Now this potential can be an effective stimulus for a new economic leap around the world. The West and Azerbaijan need each other. Global cooperation facilitates the entry of one of the parties into the world market, and saves the other party from a possible expected energy crisis” [9, p.5-7].

Research shows that Azerbaijan is not only able to ensure its energy security, but also plays a key role in the energy security of some other countries. At present, the important role of Azerbaijan and Turkey in Europe’s energy security is unequivocally recognized by the developed countries and leading international organizations. It is impossible to disagree with the following conclusion of a researcher studying Azerbaijan’s energy policy:

Azerbaijan's policy of diversification of oil and gas pipelines not only serves the country’s specific energy security, but also has a significant impact on more efficient and targeted organization of transnational energy exports in the region and strengthening regional cooperation, ensuring mutually beneficial interests of energy producers, consumers and transit countries.

At present, Azerbaijan receives serious energy, transport and communications, etc. from any country in the region. It acts as a country without geopolitical dependence and able to meet its needs completely independently. Both the countries of the region and the superpowers are already skeptical of “the possibility of implementing any transnational energy, corridor and transport and communication project in the region without the participation of Azerbaijan”. With his participation, the number of regional and international initiatives aimed at implementing new energy projects is growing [10, p.157-158].

Thus, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the export of the rich energy resources of the Caspian Basin to the world market, the search for alternative energy sources in Europe, the serious interest of foreign countries and multinational companies in the region, and so on. As a result, a new geopolitical and geoeconomic situation has emerged in the region. Turkey has played and continues to play an important role in the implementation of the international energy policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Republic of Azerbaijan has played and continues to play an important role in the energy security of Turkey, a consumer of natural oil and gas. It should be noted that at the present stage, the Azerbaijani-Turkish energy cooperation, founded by Heydar Aliyev, is developing at a higher pace. This successful policy, along with Azerbaijan and Turkey, makes an invaluable contribution to both the countries of the region and global energy security. According to President Ilham Aliyev, this has also created stability, predictability and very sincere cooperation in our region [11].

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