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## **CHAPTER 10**

# **THE ROLE OF AZERBAIJAN IN ENSURING TÜRKİYE'S ENERGY SECURITY**

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## THE ROLE OF AZERBAIJAN IN ENSURING TÜRKİYE'S ENERGY SECURITY

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### **Abstract**

This article discusses the role of Azerbaijan in ensuring Türkiye's energy security. Generally, from a geopolitical perspective, Türkiye is located at the intersection of east-west and north-south corridors. Despite its strategic geopolitical position, Türkiye is not particularly rich in hydrocarbon resources, especially oil and natural gas, which are its main sources of energy. This leads to a significant dependency of the national economy on imported energy resources. Türkiye's energy policy is aimed at ensuring the country's energy demand in a continuous, reliable, and secure manner. Türkiye's annual oil demand exceeds 40 million tons, and gas demand approaches 60 billion cubic meters. Domestic production only meets about 15–20% of this need. The remaining 80–85% is supplied by neighboring and regional countries rich in energy resources, such as Azerbaijan, Russia, Iran, Iraq, etc. Currently, 54 oil and gas fields are being exploited in Azerbaijan. Several major projects have been initiated for the transportation of Azerbaijan's oil and gas resources to Türkiye and Europe, thanks to the efforts of National Leader Heydar Aliyev and, subsequently, President İlham Aliyev. Among these, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC), Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum, TANAP, and TAP oil and natural gas pipelines are of particular importance. These rich hydrocarbon reserves of Azerbaijan play a significant role in reliably and sustainably ensuring the energy security of brotherly Türkiye.

### **Keywords**

Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Energy Security, BTC, TANAP

## **Introduction**

Energy security has become one of the defining elements of national stability and geopolitical influence in the 21st century. For Türkiye, a country situated at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, ensuring a stable, diversified, and affordable energy supply is not only an economic necessity but also a strategic imperative. Limited domestic energy resources and rapidly growing consumption have compelled Türkiye to strengthen partnerships with key regional energy producers. Among these, Azerbaijan has emerged as a pivotal ally, offering both geographical proximity and a shared historical, cultural, and political bond.

Over the past two decades, bilateral cooperation between Azerbaijan and Türkiye in the energy sector has evolved from individual projects into a comprehensive strategic partnership. Landmark initiatives such as the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline, the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP), and the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) have transformed the regional energy map, enhancing Türkiye's role as an energy transit hub while securing its own energy needs. These projects not only ensure the diversification of Türkiye's supply sources but also reduce its dependency on less reliable markets, thus bolstering national energy security.

In this context, examining Azerbaijan's role in ensuring Türkiye's energy security offers valuable insight into how shared interests, infrastructural connectivity, and regional diplomacy can create long-term strategic benefits. This article explores the historical background, major joint energy projects, and the broader geopolitical significance of the Azerbaijan–Türkiye energy partnership, highlighting its contribution to Türkiye's energy independence and regional stability.

## **1. Geopolitical Location and Energy Policy of Türkiye**

Türkiye occupies one of the most geopolitically important positions in the world, acting as a bridge between continents, cultures, and civilizations. Located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, and with coastlines along the Mediterranean, Aegean, and Black Seas, Türkiye's geography has shaped its historical, political, and economic significance for millennia.

Türkiye's territory spans the Anatolian Peninsula in Asia and a small portion of Thrace in Europe, separated by the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits. These straits are among the most critical maritime chokepoints globally, connecting the Black Sea to the Mediterranean via the Sea of Marmara. Control over this passage gives Türkiye considerable influence in regional and international maritime trade and naval strategy.

Türkiye is a vital transit hub for energy pipelines transporting oil and natural gas from the Caspian region, Central Asia, and the Middle East to Europe. Major projects such as the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline and the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) strengthen Türkiye's role in ensuring energy security for Europe and beyond. Likewise, its modern ports, airports, and highways serve as key links in global supply chains.

Türkiye's strategic location places it at the heart of regional security dynamics. As a NATO member, it plays a significant role in the alliance's southern flank, addressing challenges such as migration flows, terrorism, and regional conflicts. Its proximity to the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Eastern Mediterranean makes it an indispensable actor in peacebuilding and crisis management.

In the East-West direction, the Anatolian Peninsula constitutes the most important link in the chain of strategic peninsulas covering the Eurasian continent. This geopolitical position has historically been a decisive factor in the fate of the region. For this reason, the Anatolian Peninsula has long held great importance as a political power center and continues to maintain this status in the modern era.

The region where Türkiye is located lies in close proximity to, and partly encompasses, what Zbigniew Brzezinski has termed the "Eurasian Balkans" (2020, p.187). A similar situation exists in Eurasia: the "Eurasian Balkans" are geographically much larger, have a denser population, and are more ethnically diverse. This area includes Southeastern Europe, Central Asia, part of South Asia, the Persian Gulf region, and the Middle East.

As can be seen, this area is one of the world's most geopolitically and geo-economically significant regions. It contains Eurasia's rich natural resources, particularly hydrocarbons, and is situated along the most direct route connecting the most developed regions of the West with the farthest points of the East. Moreover, being located on both sides of an inevitably emerging international transportation network further strengthens the strategic position of the region.

Türkiye's strategic position is not merely a matter of geography; it is the foundation of its historical legacy, economic power, and diplomatic influence. By leveraging its unique location at the intersection of continents and cultures, Türkiye continues to shape regional and global developments, making it an indispensable player in the 21st century.

According to Ahmet Davutoğlu, Türkiye can only move beyond being a passive player in the international system if it "initiates a process of renewal that recognizes the interconnection and interdependence between these geopolitical zones and incorporates it into its domestic political culture" (Davutoğlu, 2001, pp. 117-118). Essentially, one of the key priorities for the Turkish state is to reassess the internal dynamics and mutual dependencies of these regions-economically, culturally, and politically-within a new geopolitical framework, and to adopt a strategic direction in line with the emerging world order, aligning its foreign policy accordingly.

Davutoğlu (2001) warns that if this does not happen-if "the current political elite continues to regard the country's geopolitics as merely a tactical tool within the strategic planning of other centers of power-Türkiye will not only lose its influence in these geopolitical zones but will also become dependent on the status quo, unable to safeguard even its own state and internal unity" (p. 118).

While the Republic of Türkiye lacks substantial domestic hydrocarbon resources, its advantageous strategic location places it at the center of energy-rich regions such as Russia, Azerbaijan and the Caspian Basin, Iran, Iraq, and other countries of the Near and Middle East. The country lies in a zone that contains 71.8% of the world's proven natural gas reserves and 72.7% of its oil reserves. This positioning allows Türkiye to act as a natural bridge between energy-producing nations and the markets where these resources are consumed, functioning as a vital transit corridor. By playing a role in determining both sources and routes, Türkiye has become a prominent actor in energy security (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025) Its role as a "golden bridge" linking Europe and Asia, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, and ultimately the world's oceans, further strengthens its geostrategic value.

In summary, Türkiye's geographic location-situated between resource-rich areas and economically advanced regions-significantly enhances its geopolitical and geo-economic importance. Moreover, the notable growth of Türkiye's economy in recent years has increased its demand for energy resources. As a result, Türkiye's position is vital not only for transporting these resources to highly developed, energy-hungry European markets but also for ensuring a stable, comprehensive, and secure energy supply for its own expanding industrial sector.

## **2. Hydrocarbon Resources of Azerbaijan**

Since ancient times, alongside its other natural resources, Azerbaijan has been renowned for its oil and natural gas. The industrial-scale exploitation of oil in the second half of the 19th century further heightened global interest in the country-a level of interest that persists to this day. Azerbaijan possesses abundant hydrocarbon reserves. Overall, the oil reserves of the Caspian Basin are estimated at 203.2-257.7 billion barrels, of which 39-72 billion barrels belong to Azerbaijan (Məmmədov, 2023, p.99). The confirmed natural gas reserves of the Caspian region amount to 232 trillion cubic meters, with Azerbaijan accounting for 30 trillion cubic meters. The Shah Deniz field alone is estimated to hold 1.4 trillion cubic meters of natural gas (Məmmədov, 2023, p. 100).

The Caspian Sea Basin is of considerable geostrategic importance, lying within the sphere of interest of both regional and global powers, with Azerbaijan and its resources constituting a central component of this interest. The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has further enhanced the significance of Caspian hydrocarbon reserves in ensuring Europe's energy security. In today's globalized world, it is almost impossible to imagine modern life without oil, one of the most crucial and strategic raw materials of our time. Beyond serving as a major energy source, oil and petroleum products play a vital role in nearly every sector of the economy.

The economically advanced power centers of the world consider possessing oil and other hydrocarbon reserves—or maintaining control over the regions, countries, and territories where such resources are located—as a key element of their strategic advantage and energy security. The recent Russia-Ukraine war has clearly demonstrated the decisive role of these resources not only for regional nations but also for Europe as a whole in matters of energy security. In this sense, oil remains one of the primary focal points of competition in both international politics and international relations.

Since the advent of industrial oil use, great powers and major corporations have engaged in intense and persistent competition for access to oil resources. History is replete with examples of governments being established or overthrown, wars being fought, and uprisings, rebellions, and unrest being incited in countries possessing oil reserves. These realities stand as compelling evidence of the immense strategic importance of oil as a natural resource. From this perspective, the Caspian Basin and Azerbaijan in particular—holds a special role due to its geostrategic location.

In the work of the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev on the Caspian oil of Azerbaijan, detailed information is also provided on the hydrocarbon reserves of the country. According to the author (Алиев, 2003),

the accumulated oil and gas production in Azerbaijan accounts for approximately 1.84 billion tons of the total volume of hydrocarbons. 67 oil and gas fields have been discovered, 54 of which are currently under development. A total of 1382.0 million tons of condensate oil and about 458.5 billion cubic meters of gas have been produced from the subsoil. 28 oil and gas fields have been discovered offshore, 18 of which are under development, and since the beginning of their development, 450 million tons of condensate oil and 328.1 billion cubic meters of gas have been produced from underwater. (p. 64).

It should be noted that the oil reserves of the Caspian Sea basin, including those of Azerbaijan, have been studied by various institutions and individual researchers engaged in this field. After Azerbaijan gained independence, the arrival of foreign oil companies in the country accelerated. The main reason for this was the collapse of the USSR and the knowledge these companies possessed about Azerbaijan's vast oil reserves.

From the time industrial oil production began in Azerbaijan to the present day, a total of 1.35 billion tons of oil of which 415 million tons were extracted from offshore fields and approximately 435 billion cubic meters of gas have been produced from both onshore and offshore deposits within the country's territory (Orucov, 1995, p. 31).

According to calculations by the British oil giant BP, global oil production in 2022 amounted to 4.2 billion tons. Of this amount, Azerbaijan accounted for 35.1 million tons, Kazakhstan for 86 million tons, and Turkmenistan for 12 million tons (BP, 2025)

The research of Azerbaijan's renowned geologist, Doctor of Geological and Mineralogical Sciences, and academician Karim M. Karimov (Kərimov, 2012) holds significant value in the study of the Caspian basin, particularly Azerbaijan's energy resources. His presentations on Azerbaijan's oil and gas potential, delivered in various countries, have attracted considerable interest both domestically and internationally. Numerous works published by specialists in the domestic and foreign press also testify to this interest. Karimov has likewise prepared various reports on the matter, which were submitted to SOCAR. These reports played an important role both in assessing the country's oil potential and in shaping its oil policy

and strategy. According to the author (Kərimov, 2012, p. 370), many of the facts cited by various local and foreign experts on this subject were based on earlier data, and a large portion of them do not reflect reality. In particular, in many cases, the scale and industrial significance of the country's gas-condensate reserves were not adequately assessed. Yet these reserves are of great importance for the fuel-energy and petrochemical industries. Karimov also disagrees with the claim that there are only 145 structures in the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian. He argues that this figure was derived from data collected in the early 1990s. At present, the total number of such structures is 175, and this figure may change in the future (Kərimov, 2012, p. 370). Based on his research and calculations, Karimov notes that "the national sector of the Caspian under Azerbaijan's jurisdiction indeed possesses rich oil and gas resources. It is particularly important to emphasize that, according to our assessments, the total (geological) oil reserves are 5–6 billion tons." In this regard, it can be stated that, at the current historical stage, Azerbaijan has sufficient energy reserves to supply both newly constructed and older oil and gas pipelines.

### 3. Türkiye's Participation in Azerbaijani Oil Contracts

One of the most pivotal milestones in Azerbaijan's modern economic and geopolitical history was the signing of the "Contract of the Century" on September 20, 1994. This landmark agreement marked Azerbaijan's formal entry into the global energy arena as an independent actor following the dissolution of the USSR. The contract was concluded between the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) and a consortium of 11 major international oil companies from 8 countries, including British Petroleum (UK), Amoco (USA), LUKoil (Russia), Statoil (Norway), Turkish Petroleum (Türkiye) and others. It covered the joint development of three major offshore oil fields in the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea: "Azeri", "Chirag", and the deep-water portion of "Gunashli" (collectively known as the ACG fields). (Алиев, 2003, s. 176). In his speech at the signing ceremony of the agreement, President Heydar Aliyev stated (1997): By taking such a step, we demonstrate that Azerbaijan is a country open to the world, to the world economy (p. 259).

In this contract, the Turkish company (Turkish Petroleum) was represented with a 1.75% share. Of course, this was not a large percentage compared to the shares of other companies. Therefore, both Türkiye and Azerbaijan had to work to increase it by all possible means. However, the signing of the "Contract of the Century" played a very important role in raising Azerbaijani-Turkish relations to a higher peak. Türkiye got the opportunity to participate more closely in the oil sector of the Azerbaijani economy and to be represented in subsequent oil contracts. The Minister of State N. Cevheri, who signed this document on behalf of the Republic of Türkiye, especially emphasized the great importance of the contract for both states (Allahverdiyev & Sultanzadə, 2003, p. 132). Thus, in accordance with the contract and the share distribution therein, Türkiye would invest 150 million dollars in the oil industry of Azerbaijan, and in return would receive 2 billion dollars in income and 9-10 million tons of oil (Məmmədov, 2023, p.112).

The agreement envisaged an investment of approximately \$7.4 billion over 30 years (Алиев, 2003, p. 175), which, for the time, represented one of the largest foreign direct investment projects in the post-Soviet space. Its significance went far beyond the economic domain. Politically, the "Contract of the Century" demonstrated Azerbaijan's ability to attract Western capital and technology despite the geopolitical uncertainties of the early 1990s, including the ongoing Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Academician Yagub Mahmudov (2011), analyzing the mentioned issue, writes: President Heydar Aliyev developed an oil policy strategy against the "Armenian card". In the near future, time itself will show how deeply thought out and far-sighted this policy, the author of which was Heydar Aliyev! (p.356).

The signing of the "Contract of the Century" and other oil and gas contracts with transnational oil companies by the leading states of the world in September 1994 and other oil and gas contracts, no matter how difficult and tense diplomatic steps were, confirmed its importance by the political will and foresight of this national leader.

From an energy security standpoint, the agreement laid the groundwork for the creation of new export routes for Caspian hydrocarbons, thereby reducing dependence on Russian-controlled pipelines. The development of the ACG fields led directly to the construction of the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline, inaugurated in 2006, which allowed Azerbaijani oil to reach Mediterranean markets without passing through Russian territory.

Economically, revenues generated from ACG production became the foundation of Azerbaijan's State Oil Fund (SOFAZ), enabling large-scale infrastructure projects, social programs, and macroeconomic stability. The agreement also had a profound impact on regional cooperation, prompting similar contractual arrangements in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, and attracting global interest in the Caspian basin's untapped reserves.

The term "Contract of the Century" reflects not only the scale of the financial commitments involved but also its transformative effect on Azerbaijan's role in international energy geopolitics. It marked the beginning of a long-term strategic partnership between Azerbaijan and Western energy companies, setting a precedent for future energy diplomacy in the region. In September 2017, a new agreement was signed that extended the term of the "Contract of the Century" until 2050.

Following the initial signing of the "Contract of the Century," interest in developing other oil fields in the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea increased significantly, and related negotiations continued. The next major agreement involving Türkiye concerned the Shah Deniz field. This field, discovered in the 1980s by Azerbaijani specialists, contains substantial natural gas reserves.

In September 1992, the Government of Azerbaijan and the companies BP and Statoil signed an agreement granting them special rights to conduct joint exploration and preparatory work on the field. Later, Türkiye's Turkish Petroleum company also joined the project. Negotiations between Azerbaijan and Western oil companies regarding the development of Shah Deniz were concluded in the summer of 1995. In June 1995, SOCAR signed a document with the BP/Statoil alliance and Turkish Petroleum on the joint development of the Shah Deniz field (Алиев, 2003, p. 196).

During the preparation of the contract and the implementation of practical measures for the field's utilization, SOCAR proposed involving other international companies in addition to the named partners and succeeded in doing so. As a result, Russia's Lukoil, France's Elf Aquitaine, and Iran's oil companies also joined the Shah Deniz development project. After lengthy negotiations, on June 4, 1996, in Baku, SOCAR and the foreign oil companies signed the agreement on the joint development of the Shah Deniz field. Following its ratification by the Milli Majlis on October 17, 1996, the agreement entered into force (Алиев, 2003, p. 221).

Under the terms of the agreement, the companies held the following shares: BP/Statoil (UK/Norway) 25.5% each, totaling 51%; SOCAR 10%; Lukoil 10%; TotalFinaElf (France) 10%; OIEC (Iran) 10%; and Turkish Petroleum 9% (Алиев, 2003, p. 222). At the signing ceremony, President Heydar Aliyev specifically emphasized the active participation of Türkiye's Turkish Petroleum company in the agreement.

In March 2001, a major discovery of gas and condensate in the field was announced. On March 12, an intergovernmental agreement on Shah Deniz gas was signed between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, along with a "Natural Gas Purchase and Sale Agreement" between BOTAŞ and SOCAR. According to the agreement, SOCAR and the Shah Deniz partners would sell a maximum of 6.6 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually at the Georgia-Türkiye border to BOTAŞ for a period of 15 years during the first stage of the project's development and production. During the same period, part of the planned 8.4 billion cubic meters of annual gas output was to be supplied to Georgia and Azerbaijan, as well as to the BTC pipeline company as fuel. In addition, production of 271 million barrels of condensate and its transportation through the BTC pipeline was planned (Məmmədov, 2023, p. 120).

Türkiye's involvement in Azerbaijan's oil and gas projects has been a cornerstone in shaping the economic, political, and strategic dynamics of the South Caucasus and the broader Eurasian energy landscape. From

the historic signing of the “Contract of the Century” in 1994 to subsequent landmark agreements such as the Shah Deniz project, Türkiye has been both a committed investor and a crucial transit partner. Through its state-owned oil and gas company (Turkish Petroleum), Türkiye has actively engaged in exploration, development, production, and export operations of Azerbaijan’s hydrocarbon resources.

Economically, Türkiye’s participation provided Azerbaijan with more than just capital investment-it offered an indispensable route to global markets. Projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline, the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP), and later the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) have become essential arteries for transporting Caspian energy resources to Europe via Türkiye. This transit role allowed Azerbaijan to diversify its export markets, reducing its dependence on Russian-controlled routes and ensuring greater resilience in the face of geopolitical instability.

#### **4. Türkiye as an Energy Transit Hub**

After assuming office in 2003, President Ilham Aliyev further developed the oil strategy initiated and implemented by the National Leader Heydar Aliyev. His deep familiarity with this issue stemmed from his direct participation in the preparation of the “Contract of the Century” and other oil agreements, his role in the working group engaged in diplomatic negotiations, and, in particular, his successful talks with high-ranking U.S. officials that led to the removal of the issue concerning the Caspian’s legal status from the text of the “Contract of the Century.” Moreover, his service as First Vice President of SOCAR allowed him to be closely involved in all processes related to the country’s oil policy. These factors played a decisive role in ensuring the successful, consistent, and nationally beneficial continuation of Azerbaijan’s oil strategy during his presidency.

As President Aliyev has noted, Azerbaijan initially focused on enabling the development of the country’s oil reserves by major international companies and securing their access to global markets. Later, the country’s abundant natural gas resources were also integrated into this process. As a result, Azerbaijan’s energy exports expanded to a broader geography and became a crucial component of Europe’s energy security. More recently, plans have been made to include electricity-particularly from alternative energy sources-into this export framework, which would further enhance Azerbaijan’s significance as a reliable and strategic partner.

The Republic of Türkiye plays a major role in ensuring this partnership. As is well known, Türkiye was the first country to recognize Azerbaijan’s independence. After Azerbaijan regained its independence, Türkiye began to pursue an Azerbaijan-centered policy in the South Caucasus-an entirely natural step given the brotherly ties between the two nations. Former Turkish Foreign Minister and later Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu emphasized this in his work, describing the importance of the South Caucasus for Türkiye as a geopolitical space enabling access to Central Asia, Western Asia, the Caspian Basin, and the North-South transport corridor (Davutoğlu, 2001, p.119).

Azerbaijan’s rich hydrocarbon reserves have played an important role both in meeting Türkiye’s growing energy needs and in enabling Türkiye to function as an energy transit hub. Dependence on geopolitical competitors such as Russia and Iran in the South Caucasus and Central Asia constrained Türkiye’s ability to independently determine its foreign policy directions. In this regard, Azerbaijan emerged as an alternative energy partner for Türkiye. Conversely, Azerbaijan regarded Türkiye as its natural ally and gateway to Europe. Through Türkiye, Azerbaijan could not only export its own energy resources to the world but also serve as a transit country for delivering the energy reserves of Central Asian states to Turkish and global markets (Davutoğlu, 2001, p. 125).

Türkiye is one of the three principal regional states that play a pivotal role in determining the fate of the Caucasus. Its position in the region is largely maintained through relations with Azerbaijan and Georgia. As A. Hasanov has noted (Həsənov, 2005, p. 563), “Considering Russia’s and Iran’s interests and concrete actions in the Caucasus, one can see how complex and challenging the Türkiye–Azerbaijan and Türkiye–Caucasus relations truly are”.

As a result of the tireless efforts of National Leader Heydar Aliyev, the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline project was initiated in 2002, with its groundbreaking ceremony held in his presence. The pipeline was officially inaugurated on 12 July 2006, with the participation of President Ilham Aliyev, who continued and further developed the political course of the National Leader (Məmmədov, 2023, p. 138). Starting from Azerbaijan's Sangachal terminal, the oil transported through the BTC pipeline reaches the Turkish port of Ceyhan, from where it is shipped via tankers to global markets. Speaking about the significance of the BTC main export oil pipeline, National Leader Heydar Aliyev stated (2012):

Naturally, these projects carry great economic significance. But not only economic; we believe that the work we have done, the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline, has political significance as well. This project and its implementation can serve as a guarantor of peace, stability, and security in the Caucasus region. This pipeline, this steel artery, will connect Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Türkiye more closely. (p. 92).

The BTC pipeline passes through 13 districts in Azerbaijan, 7 in Georgia, and 9 in Türkiye, with a current daily throughput capacity of 1.2 million barrels. In March 2022, the loading of the 5,000th tanker carrying oil from the BTC's Ceyhan terminal to international markets was celebrated.

To ensure the transportation of natural gas from the Shah Deniz gas field in the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea to world markets, the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP)-also known along its route as the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline-was implemented. Like the BTC, this pipeline begins at the Sangachal terminal near Baku. Following the same route as the BTC to the Türkiye border, it connects at Erzurum to Türkiye's gas distribution system. With a diameter of 42 inches, the SCP runs 443 km through Azerbaijan and 248 km through Georgia. At the Georgia-Türkiye border, it is linked to a 280 km pipeline section. Designed with due consideration for environmental and social impacts, and to optimize costs, the SCP was built in parallel with the BTC and made operational by late 2006, with gas deliveries starting in 2007. The SCP constitutes the initial segment of the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline system.

In 2012, at the initiative of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and then-Prime Minister of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) agreement was signed in Istanbul. Beginning at Türkgözü village in Posof district of Ardahan province on Türkiye's border with Georgia, TANAP runs through 20 provinces and terminates at İpsala in Edirne province on the Greek border. The project is designed to transport natural gas from the Shah Deniz-2 field in the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea, as well as other sources in the Caspian, to Türkiye and from there to Europe. TANAP, together with the South Caucasus Pipeline and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), forms part of the "Southern Gas Corridor"(Socarmidstream, 2025)

With a maximum throughput capacity of 31 billion cubic meters, TANAP extends for 1,805 km. In 2013, the Shah Deniz consortium selected the TAP project to carry Azerbaijani gas via TANAP from the Türkiye–Greece border to southern Italy. Construction of the TAP was completed in November 2020. Of its total length of 880.8 km, 551.5 km lies in Greece, 215.9 km in Albania, 105 km under the Adriatic Sea, and 8.4 km in Italy. With a maximum capacity of 20 billion cubic meters, TAP was built as one of the main elements of the Southern Gas Corridor to deliver Caspian gas to Europe (Azərbaycan Respublikasının Energetika Nazirliyi, 2025). These interconnected projects link the Shah Deniz field to southern Italy, enabling the realization of the Southern Gas Corridor.

Since 2015, annual ministerial meetings have been held within the framework of the Southern Gas Corridor Advisory Council. On 29 May 2018, the TANAP pipeline, an essential part of the Southern Gas Corridor and a key infrastructure project for ensuring energy security, was officially inaugurated at the Sangachal terminal. The expansion of the South Caucasus Pipeline, as one of the Corridor's core elements, enabled the start of commercial gas deliveries to Türkiye under Shah Deniz-2 on 30 June 2018. The opening ceremony for TANAP's section connecting to Europe took place on 30 November 2019 in İpsala, Edirne province, marking the completion of the project (Əliyev, 2020, p.44). Since December 2020, commercial gas deliveries from Azerbaijan's reserves to Europe have been made through the TAP pipeline. Thus, the successful implementation of these projects has ensured the delivery of Azerbaijan's abundant gas reserves to Türkiye and European markets through a short, secure, and diversified route.

From Türkiye's perspective, these contracts reinforced its long-standing ambition to become a key regional energy hub. At the same time, according to President Ilham Aliyev (Yüz beşinci kitab, 2020), Azerbaijan currently holds the first place in the Türkiye's gas market (p. 292). By facilitating the flow of Azerbaijani oil and gas to European consumers, Türkiye strengthened its leverage in energy diplomacy, gaining strategic importance not only to its immediate neighbors but also to the European Union, which seeks secure and diversified energy supplies.

Politically, energy cooperation has elevated the Türkiye-Azerbaijan partnership to the level of a strategic alliance. Shared historical, cultural, and linguistic ties—the concept often summarized as “one nation, two states”—were translated into concrete economic and security cooperation. Joint energy ventures have served as a foundation for broader collaborations in trade, defense, and regional security. Türkiye's active participation in Azerbaijani energy projects also signaled strong political support for Baku's sovereignty and territorial integrity, particularly in the context of regional conflicts and post-war reconstruction efforts in liberated territories.

Regionally, Türkiye's engagement in Azerbaijani oil and gas projects has contributed to greater economic interdependence in the South Caucasus and beyond. The development of large-scale infrastructure such as BTC and TANAP has attracted foreign investment, created employment opportunities, and encouraged stability through mutual economic interests. Moreover, by linking the Caspian basin directly to European markets, these projects have positioned the South Caucasus as a vital component of the global energy supply chain.

Strategically, Türkiye's participation has been instrumental in shaping the Southern Gas Corridor, a flagship initiative of the European Union aimed at reducing reliance on Russian gas. Through joint projects with Azerbaijan, Türkiye has not only bolstered its own energy security but also played a decisive role in enhancing Europe's supply diversification. This alignment of national and regional interests underscores the geopolitical significance of Türkiye's role in Azerbaijani oil and gas contracts.

In conclusion, Türkiye's involvement in Azerbaijan's hydrocarbon sector is far more than a commercial partnership—it is a multidimensional strategic engagement that strengthens bilateral relations, fosters regional stability, and contributes to global energy security. By combining investment, transit infrastructure, and political alignment, Türkiye has secured a position as both a beneficiary and an enabler of Azerbaijan's transformation into a major energy supplier on the world stage.

## **Conclusion**

Azerbaijan's role in ensuring Türkiye's energy security extends far beyond the supply of oil and natural gas—it is a testament to how strategic cooperation, cultural affinity, and shared geopolitical objectives can redefine regional energy dynamics. Through major infrastructure projects such as BTC, SCP, and TANAP, the two nations have not only strengthened Türkiye's energy diversification and reliability but have also elevated their collective influence in global energy markets.

For Türkiye, Azerbaijan offers a stable and trusted energy partner whose resources and infrastructure directly contribute to reducing vulnerability to supply disruptions and market volatility. For Azerbaijan, Türkiye provides a secure export route, access to European markets, and a partner committed to mutual growth. This synergy has created a mutually beneficial framework that advances both national interests while promoting regional stability.

Looking ahead, continued investment in joint projects, expansion of renewable energy cooperation, and further integration into the Southern Gas Corridor will deepen the partnership. In an era where energy security is inseparable from national security, the Azerbaijan-Türkiye energy alliance stands as a model of how regional collaboration can deliver long-term strategic resilience and prosperity.

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