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## CHAPTER 14

# TÜRKİYE-AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS AFTER THE SHUSHA DECLARATION (2021-2025)

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## **TÜRKİYE-AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS AFTER THE SHUSHA DECLARATION (2021-2025)**

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### **Abstract**

Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations, which have been steadily progressing, took a significant leap forward with the Shusha Declaration, elevating them to an alliance and creating a new geopolitical reality for both countries, the region, and the Turkic world. The Declaration initiated a process of deepened cooperation in military, security, economic, and political spheres. During this period, these strengthened ties began to significantly influence the South Caucasus, fostering increased regional stability and enabling stronger economic and security networks that extend to the broader Turkic world. This chapter examines the momentum of Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations following the Shusha Declaration, highlighting aspects that directly contribute to regional stability, connectivity, and integration within the Turkic world.

### **Keywords**

*Türkiye-Azerbaijan Relations, The Shusha Declaration, Alliance, Connectivity, Turkic World*

## **Introduction**

Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations have steadily grown and deepened, with the exception of a few temporary crises. Relations between the two countries progressed from a level of friendship in 1994 to a strategic partnership in 2010 and an alliance in 2021. Following Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War, which Türkiye supported, the two countries signed the Shusha Declaration. This Declaration elevated the bilateral relations to the level of an alliance, creating a new historical, political, military and legal reality for the countries of the region and the Turkic world.

Relations between the two countries are deepening in many areas, including politics, military, economy, culture, and education, and are progressing with a shared consciousness consistent with the spirit of alliance. At the same time, relations between the two countries closely affect and guide the countries of the region and the Turkic world. Particularly after the Shusha Declaration, the volume, quality, and impact of relations between the two countries underwent an extraordinary leap. This is due to the global power vacuums caused by the fundamental changes and crises in the global system, as well as the unification of the Turkic World through the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). Additionally, Türkiye's role as a rule-setter and mediator in international politics, along with the momentum it has gained in the defense industry, also contributes to this development. Azerbaijan's increasing connectivity capabilities in East-West transportation, trade, and energy routes, particularly in the context of the Zengezur Corridor, play an important role.

This chapter does not cover the history of Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations, but rather the increasing and deepening process that followed the Shusha Declaration and provides projections about the future of the Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations. In this context, Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations are examined in terms of the Second Karabakh War and the Shusha Declaration, which marked a turning point, as well as in the areas of politics, military and security, economy and energy, and relations with the Turkic world following the Shusha Declaration.

## **1. The Second Karabakh War and the Shusha Declaration**

By the 19th century, Russia had begun to increase its influence in the Caucasus, implementing a policy of increasing the Armenian population (Armenianisation) in the Karabakh region. Russia increased the Armenian population in the South Caucasus with a policy of Armenianisation, settling over a million Armenians from Ottoman and Iranian lands between 1828 and 1911 (Armaoğlu, 1999, p. 936; Qasimova, 2021, p. 99). Consequently, Armenian armed groups intensified their pressure and attacks on Azerbaijani Turks. This process of violence and conflict led to the First Karabakh War (1988-1994), coinciding with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The war ended with the ceasefire agreement signed on 9 May 1994 by representatives of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the communities of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast. As a result of the ceasefire, Armenia occupied the former Nagorno-Karabakh region and the seven regions (districts) surrounding it, constituting approximately 20% of Azerbaijan's territory (Çelik & Aslanlı, 2022, p. 25). Although the massacres carried out by Armenian forces during the war, such as those in Khojaly, were criticised by international authorities, no sanctions were imposed on Armenia, and Armenia did not comply with UN Security Council Resolutions 822, 853, 874, and 884. Furthermore, the OSCE Minsk Group, established on 24 March 1992, has been unable to curb Armenia's aggressive and violent policy. In this misty process, Armenia attacked Azerbaijan's Tovuz region on 12-16 July 2020. Located far from the Karabakh region, Tovuz is a strategic point through which Azerbaijani oil and natural gas pipelines, as well as the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, pass. The conflict escalated into a frontline war on 27 September, marking the start of the Second Karabakh War.

The war, in which the Azerbaijani army achieved significant success, lasted 44 days and ended with the Trilateral Ceasefire Agreement between Russia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia on 10 November 2020. With this

agreement, the parties acknowledged that Agdam, Kelbecer, and Lachin would be returned to Azerbaijan by the end of 2020. Russia would deploy peacekeepers in the former Nagorno-Karabakh region and the Lachin corridor. Armenia would ensure communication and transportation between Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan exclave (Kremlin, 2020). The agreement also established a Turkish-Russian Joint Monitoring Centre in Agdam, Azerbaijan (Milli Savunma Bakanlığı, 2021). A memorandum of understanding was signed between Türkiye and Russia on November 11, 2020, and the Joint Centre operated from January 30, 2021, to April 26, 2024. Thus, Türkiye has translated its strong logistical, military, and diplomatic support for Azerbaijan into tangible results during the Second Karabakh War.

“Shusha Declaration on Alliance Relations between the Republic of Türkiye and the Republic of Azerbaijan” (The Shusha Declaration), which elevated relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan to the level of alliance, was signed due to Russia’s increasing influence in the region, the possibility of Armenia violating the ceasefire as it has done many times before, and the risks that may arise during the return of Azerbaijani Turks to the territories liberated from Armenian occupation. The Shusha Declaration was signed by the heads of state of both countries in Shusha on 15 June 2021. The declaration is characterized by several notable features. First, the Declaration is essentially a declaration of symbols. The Declaration was signed on 15 June, which was Azerbaijan’s National Salvation Day, marking a significant political turning point in 1993. Also, the Declaration was signed in 2021, marking the centenary of the Treaty of Kars in 1921. Which established the current Türkiye-Armenia border and confirmed Nakhchivan as Azerbaijani territory. The signing of the Declaration in Shusha, considered the cradle of Azerbaijani literature, culture, and science, and liberated from illegal Armenian occupation, has given the Declaration a symbolic and emotional significance.

Second, the 46-paragraph international agreement, the Shusha Declaration, elevates bilateral relations, previously defined as friendship in 1994 and strategic partnership in 2010, to the level of an alliance. This is clearly stated in the 4th paragraph of the Declaration. The Declaration aims to further deepen Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations in all areas. These areas include politics, commerce, economics, military, security, culture, health, information, transportation, and youth. The 18th paragraph states that Türkiye and Azerbaijan will pursue independent foreign policies to secure their national interests. The aim is to prevent different diplomatic choices with third countries from damaging bilateral relations. Finally, in the 26th paragraph, it is stated that military and political cooperation between the two countries is not directed against third states. This is intended to show the countries of the region that the Declaration is a peaceful initiative. Paragraphs 15, 18, and 26 aim to prevent momentary crises and tensions from disrupting cooperation under the Declaration (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2021).

Third, the Declaration is an initiative led by Türkiye and Azerbaijan to establish a new geopolitical structure and regional order in the South Caucasus. Every issue in Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations also directly affects regional countries such as Russia, Iran, Armenia, and Georgia. The Shusha Declaration aims to elevate bilateral relations to the level of an alliance and deepen cooperation in many areas. It also contains critical decisions aimed at establishing a sustainable order. In the 15th paragraph, the Declaration emphasizes the importance of the Turkish-Russian Joint Centre. This centre was accepted in the Trilateral Ceasefire Agreement signed by Russia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia on November 10, 2020, as a peacekeeping center for ceasefire monitoring. Its purpose was to bring peace and stability to the Karabakh region. Thus, Russia’s role in securing the ceasefire was acknowledged. This also contributes to the Shusha Declaration being considered legitimate by other parties in the region.

Fourth, the Declaration emphasises the importance of cooperation, integration, and connectivity in the Turkic World, and states that the activities of Turkic cooperation organizations such as the OTS, TÜRKSOY, TÜRKPA, the Turkic Academy, and the Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation should be accelerated (para. 41-43 of the Declaration). The Declaration has been the first and most concrete initiative demonstrating that cooperation between Turkic states can be elevated from strategic partnership to the level of alliance, and that cooperation can be deepened, as is the case with Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations.

The Shusha Declaration marks a new era in Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations. It serves as a joint roadmap for closer cooperation between the two countries. Beyond shaping bilateral ties, it commits both nations to integration efforts within the Turkic World, which refers to countries with Turkic languages and shared cultural ties. The Declaration also aims to ensure security and stability for East-West trade, energy, and transport routes that use the Zengezur Corridor, a land route connecting Azerbaijan with its exclave Nakhchivan and Türkiye through Armenia. This will strengthen connectivity within the Turkic World and global trade.

## **2. Political Relations After the Shusha Declarations**

The discourse of “one nation, two states”, frequently used to describe Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations, can be seen directly in diplomacy and on the field. Official relations, which began with Azerbaijan’s declaration of independence, were initially defined as “friendship” in 1994 and later as “strategic partnership” in 2010. The Shusha Declaration promoted relations to the level of “alliance”. It would be incorrect to explain the relations between the two countries solely on the basis of ethnic, historical, and cultural roots; they are based on rational grounds. The primary driving forces behind the relations between the two countries are bilateral and regional issues, including sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, as well as stability and order in the South Caucasus, and the integration of the Turkic World (Çelik & Aslanlı, 2024, pp. 65-66).

The intensity of bilateral relations is clear in the presidents’ official visits to both countries. Since becoming president, Erdoğan has made eighteen visits to Azerbaijan; Azerbaijan has been the country Erdoğan has visited most frequently, with nine visits between 2014 and 2021, and nine more in the four years since the Shusha Declaration. Aliyev has made thirteen visits to Türkiye between 2014 and 2021, and twelve more since the Declaration. Over nearly ten years, Erdoğan made eighteen visits and Aliyev twenty-five, underscoring the depth of political ties. Notably, the average number of visits after the Shusha Declaration has nearly doubled. As Aliyev stated, “if there is a serious issue concerning my country, the first person I will call and inform is my brother Recep Tayyip Erdoğan” (Rehimov, 2024), and the president’s repeated use of “brother” further demonstrates the closeness of their relationship.

The High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) initiative, launched by Türkiye with many countries after 2009 (Aslanlı & Akgün, 2020), was also established with Azerbaijan. The multidimensional relations between the two countries have been continuously improved and developed within the framework of specific agendas, and the Shusha Declaration marked the beginning of a deepening of relations. Although military and economic issues have been more prominent in bilateral relations since the Shusha Declaration, important steps have also been taken to regulate political relations. Paragraph 18 of the Declaration stipulates that the two countries will demonstrate solidarity and mutual support on current issues and support each other in regional and international forums (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2021). The significant developments in the regional crises and security sphere in 2021 and 2022, following the signing of the Shusha Declaration, demonstrate the validity of the common security and cooperation vision presented in the Declaration.

The two countries have established numerous trilateral and quadrilateral mechanisms, particularly for regional cooperation and stability. Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Georgia (established in 2012), Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Turkmenistan (est. 2014); Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Iran (est. 2011), Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Uzbekistan (est. 2022), and Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan (est. 2022), as well as Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Pakistan (est. 2017), have been regularly held, demonstrating that Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations are not limited to bilateral ties but are also a foundational element of the regional order. In addition, the “Regional Cooperation Platform for Establishing Lasting Peace and Stability in the South Caucasus,” known as “3+3,” was launched in 2021 as an important mechanism that aims to bring together Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia with Türkiye, Russia, and Iran, to resolve regional issues through peaceful means, and with the active participation of

Türkiye and Azerbaijan. Although Georgia has not yet participated in the 3+3 mechanism, which held its third summit in Istanbul on October 18, 2024, it is invited to every summit and encouraged to contribute to peace in the South Caucasus.

### 3. Military and Security Cooperation After the Shusha Declaration

Following the signing of the Shusha Declaration, military and security collaboration between Türkiye and Azerbaijan began to develop along 3 main dimensions: (1) institutional cooperation between the secretariats of the two countries' Security Councils; (2) the restructuring of Azerbaijan's military education system on the basis of the Turkish modern military training model; and (3) the intensification of joint military exercises between the armed forces of the two states, also involving third countries.

The coordination and cooperation between the Security Council Secretariats of Türkiye and Azerbaijan have deepened further since the signing of the Shusha Declaration. According to the Shusha Declaration, "Security Councils shall hold regular joint meetings on national security issues, during which discussions will be conducted on matters related to national interests, as well as on regional and international security issues affecting the interests of the Parties" (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2021). Following the signing of the Shusha Declaration, a meeting was held in Ankara on October 13-14, 2021, between the Secretary of the Security Council of Azerbaijan and the Secretary-General of the National Security Council of Türkiye (Pravda, 2021). The discussions focused on strengthening cooperation between the two countries' security council secretariats in line with the provisions of the Shusha Declaration and discussions on the regional security challenges. Moreover, the Security Council Secretariats of Türkiye and Azerbaijan also cooperate within the framework of the OTS.

Immediately after the Second Karabakh War, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, at a press conference held for domestic and foreign media representatives on 26 February 2021, conveyed an important message regarding the restructuring of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan by stating: "We will create a small model of the Turkish army in Azerbaijan. The Turkish army model is the most appropriate model for us" (Rehimov, 2021). Subsequently, Lieutenant General Bahtiyar Ersay from Türkiye was appointed as Advisor to the Minister of Defense of Azerbaijan in 2022 (Nesib, 2025). Also, Azerbaijani generals, who had graduated from the Turkish Air Force Academy and the Turkish Military Academy, were appointed to key command positions within the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan, such as Commander of the Land Forces and Commander of the Air Forces. In 2022, upon the instruction of the President of Azerbaijan, the National Defense University was established to align the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan with the standards and model of the Turkish Armed Forces and improve the management of military education. Within the newly established National Defense University, Institutes of Military Research and Management, Training Centers, Military High Schools, and a Faculty of Medicine commenced to operate and function instantly (AZTV, 2022). During its foundation phase, the National Defense University of Azerbaijan received substantial support from the National Defense University of Türkiye. Within the framework of military education, assistance, and advisory activities carried out with Azerbaijan, Prof. Dr. Talat Canbolat, Vice-Rector of the Turkish National Defense University, simultaneously served as Vice-Rector of the National Defense University of Azerbaijan during 2023-2024 (Milli Savunma Üniversitesi, 2025).

Following Armenia's provocative attack on Azerbaijan's Tovuz region in July 2020, joint military exercises were conducted with the participation of the land and air forces of Türkiye and Azerbaijan. In fact, Türkiye's F-16 fighter jets, which participated in the "Turaz Eagle 2020" exercise, remained in Azerbaijan as a factor of deterrence until the end of the Second Karabakh War (Rehimov, 2020). Following the Shusha Declaration, joint exercises between Türkiye and Azerbaijan not only increased in frequency (with 16 joint military exercises planned for 2023 alone) but were also conducted with the participation of third countries such as Pakistan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Qatar (T.C. İletişim Başkanlığı, 2023). The Türkiye-Azerbaijan military alliance tried to expand combined power projection to Central Asia, the Arab Gulf, and the Middle East.

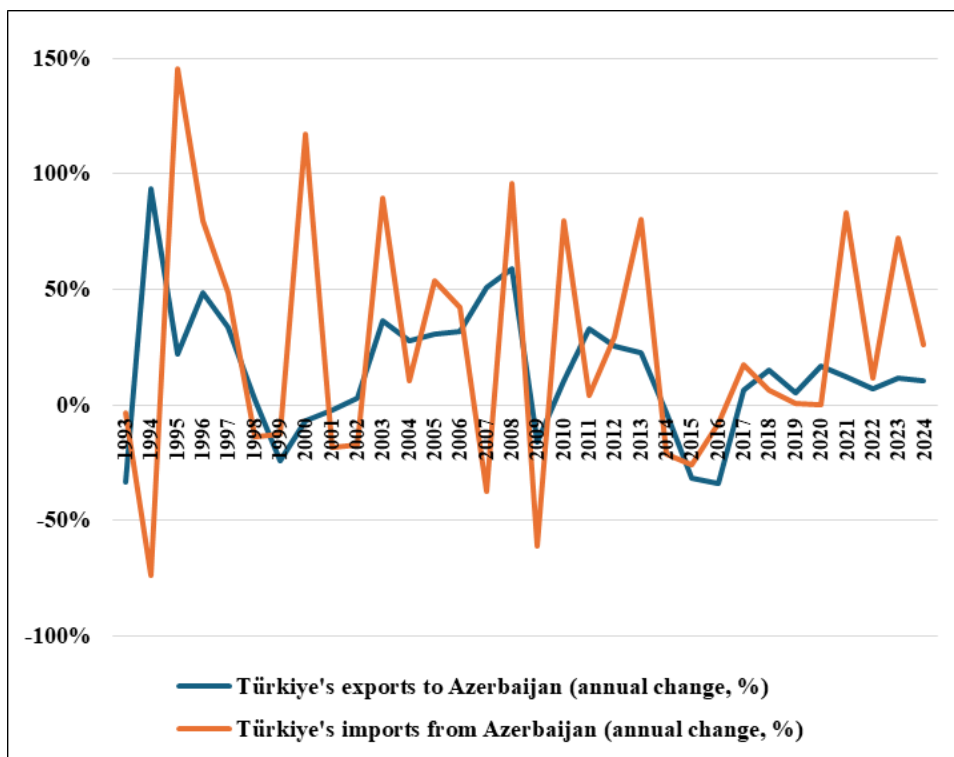
The Shusha Declaration represented the first concrete step toward developing cooperation among Turkic states at the level of strategic partnership and alliance. As a result, the relationship between Türkiye and Azerbaijan has a significant impact not only on bilateral relations but also on broader interactions within the Turkic World.

#### 4. Economic and Energy Relations After the Shusha Declaration

##### 4.1. Trade Relations After the Shusha Declaration

In the period following the signing of the Shusha, the bilateral trade volume between Türkiye and Azerbaijan reached historic levels according to Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) data. Türkiye's exports to Azerbaijan increased by an annual average of 10 percent during 2021-2024, thereby regaining the level above 3 billion USD in 2024 that had previously been achieved only in 2013-2014. On the other hand, Azerbaijan's exports to Türkiye rose by nearly 50 percent on average annually during 2021-2024, approaching the historic level of 2 billion USD in 2024. Consequently, the bilateral trade volume between Türkiye and Azerbaijan approached 5 billion USD in 2024 for the first time in more than 30 years, as shown in Graph 1 (TÜİK, 2025).

**Graph 1**  
Dynamics of Türkiye-Azerbaijan Bilateral Trade (annual change, %, TÜİK, 2025)



However, when we focus on the period between 1993 and 2024, which spans more than 30 years, it is observed that bilateral trade between Türkiye and Azerbaijan exhibits high volatility due to the direct influence of internal and external factors. Türkiye's imports from Azerbaijan (standard deviation of the annual change for 1993-2024: 0,52) displayed higher volatility than Türkiye's exports to Azerbaijan (standard deviation of the annual change for 1993-2024: 0,28). This trend may be related to the decrease in total imports in the Turkish economy due to the impact of different external shocks, the economic fluctuations experienced due to the oil-dependent structure of the Azerbaijan's national economy, and the changing ultimate patterns in the structure of regional trade.

Based on the annual growth dynamics of exports and imports in the bilateral trade volume between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, it is possible to identify certain historical turning points in these relations. One may observe that bilateral trade patterns between Türkiye and Azerbaijan has strictly followed 5-6 year-long cycles each lasting two consecutive years, characterized by sharp declines in imports and exports due to internal and external factors, followed by phases of recovery. In 1993, because of the political and economic turmoil that Azerbaijan was experiencing, the volume of imports and exports between the two countries declined sharply compared to the previous year. Within this cycle, Türkiye's economic growth contracted by -4.7 percent in 1994, and imports from Azerbaijan also fell dramatically during this period (World Bank, 2025). Following the 1993-1994 downturn, a phase of recovery in bilateral trade continued until 1998. In 1998-1999, however, bilateral trade once again declined, largely in parallel with the slowdown in Türkiye's economic growth caused by the Asian Financial Crisis. After this cycle, the bilateral trade relationship entered a volatile period lasting until 2003 (DSK, 2025).

Starting in 2003, a sharp increase was observed in mutual imports and exports between the two countries. The reasons why 2003 stands as a turning point in bilateral trade cannot be explained solely in economic narratives; rather, the question requires a political economy perspective. In particular, the political change and transformation process that took place in Azerbaijan in 2003, combined with the rise in Azerbaijan's oil revenues beginning in 2003-2004 (as global oil prices entered an upward phase in 2004), were underlying drivers (Energy Institute, 2025). This upward cycle in bilateral trade volume continued until 2008-2009, when the global financial crisis adversely affected trade between Türkiye and Azerbaijan.

In 2009, imports from Azerbaijan to Türkiye experienced an unprecedented decline (ranging between -60 and -80 percent) compared to earlier and later years. From 2010 onward, bilateral trade gradually recovered; however, the downturn in global crude oil prices from 2014 to 2016 once again disrupted this trajectory. From 2017, the upward trend in bilateral trade persisted until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and its associated economic repercussions. Since the signing of the Shusha Declaration in 2021, however, trade between Türkiye and Azerbaijan has once again entered a phase of significant expansion. These cycles in Türkiye-Azerbaijan trade relations can be confirmed through the foreign trade data of the official statistical institutions of both countries, TÜİK and DSK. But some statistical discrepancies exist between the annual figures reported by the two institutions regarding the bilateral trade, which may presumably arise from the application of different methodologies by official statistical agencies.

According to DSK data, 78% of Azerbaijan's total exports to Türkiye in 2024 consisted of natural gas and other gaseous hydrocarbons, while 10% comprised crude oil, petroleum products, oil derived from coal, and electricity (DSK, 2025). It means energy products and fossil fuels dominate Türkiye's imports from Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, Türkiye's exports to Azerbaijan had a more diverse product structure in 2024, led by pharmaceuticals, sanitary pads, furniture, irrigation systems, metal structures and metal pipes, carton packing materials, disinfectants, insecticides, tobacco substitutes, various bakery products, and petroleum products (DGK, 2025).

Türkiye and Azerbaijan signed a Preferential Trade Agreement in Baku on 25 February 2020 to increase bilateral trade turnover and to boost product diversification in trade relations. Preferential Trade Agreement aimed to promote trade through reducing or totally abolishing tariffs on goods, and to eliminate non-tariff barriers (Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu, 2025). According to the Shusha Declaration, Türkiye and Azerbaijan should "*intensify their efforts to diversify their national economies and exports in the sphere of trade and economic relations*" and "*take the necessary measures to establish mechanisms ensuring the free circulation of goods*" (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2021).

Following the Shusha Declaration, Türkiye and Azerbaijan intensified negotiations to expand the scope of bilateral trade arrangements. As a result, the "Protocol on Amendments to the Preferential Trade Agreement

between Türkiye and Azerbaijan” was signed in the city of Samsun on 29 April 2023. According to the Protocol, the number of categories of agricultural and industrial products (e.g., cheese, tea, sugar, fruits and vegetables, alcoholic beverages, equipment for packaging, semi-finished goods of iron and steel) that benefit from concessions under the preferential trade regime increased from 15 to 30 for the next 10 years (Abdullayeva, 2023). Preferential import and export of goods between Türkiye and Azerbaijan under the preferential trade regime will enhance and deepen bilateral trade relations and actual economic cooperation.

## **4.2. Energy Relations After the Shusha Declaration**

The political atmosphere in the bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Türkiye, following the Shusha Declaration, contributed to the widening and deepening of energy relations. New institutional mechanisms were devised between the two states to promote and align the energy cooperation agenda. Additionally, the scope of energy relations began to expand from the traditional oil and gas sector to include renewable energy, mining, and electricity sectors. Additionally, conventional relations in the hydrocarbon sector have deepened from upstream, midstream, and downstream blocks of the value chain to joint operations in third countries.

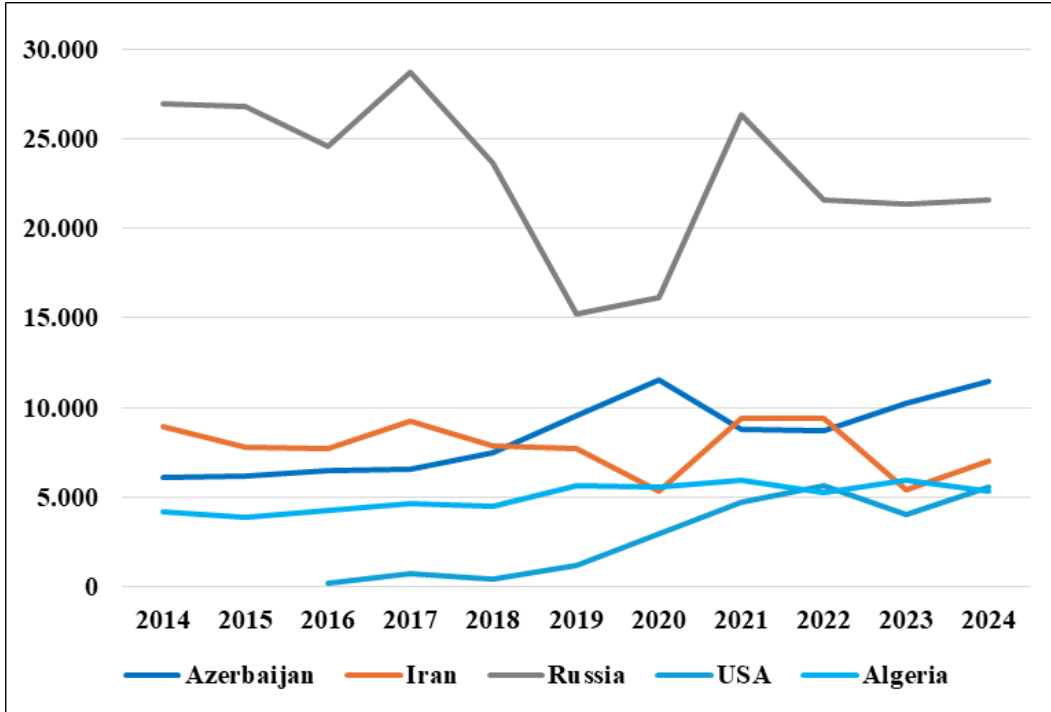
On December 21-22, 2021, just 6 months after the signing of the Shusha Declaration, the 1st Türkiye-Azerbaijan Energy Forum was organized in Baku with the participation of the energy ministers of both countries. Energy Forum was described as a platform that will support the elevation of Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations to the level of an alliance in the energy field (Energetika Nazirliyi, 2021). Under the auspices of the Forum, bilateral agreements were signed between Türkiye and Azerbaijan in the fields of energy and mining, including natural gas delivery, joint mining operations, cooperation in the field of earth sciences, and the electricity area (Yeni Şafak, 2021). The second, third, and fourth iterations of this energy forum, which later became a tradition between the two countries, were held in Istanbul in 2022, in Nakhchivan in 2023, and finally in Izmir in 2025. The 4th Türkiye-Azerbaijan Energy Forum consisted of 6 thematic Working Groups (previously, the number of active working groups was 3) with the participation of public and private sectors from Türkiye and Azerbaijan (Çağatay, 2025a):

1. Hydrocarbons and Petrochemicals
2. Renewable Energy
3. Electricity Market, Electricity Distribution and Transmission
4. Regulation
5. Energy Efficiency
6. Mining.

Türkiye-Azerbaijan Energy Forum gradually institutionalizes strategic energy cooperation after the Shusha Declaration and coordination of the activities between the two countries regarding to the global and regional energy organizations. On 31 December 2020, one and a half months after the end of the Second Karabakh War on 10 November 2020, Azerbaijani natural gas began to be exported to Europe through the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), which is the continuation of the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP). The Shusha Declaration has emphasized support for the strategic Southern Gas Corridor from the perspectives of the regional energy security and diversification of gas sources and export routes (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2021). More than 50 billion cubic meters of Azerbaijani gas reached European markets through TANAP and TAP between 2020-2025 (TAP, 2025). According to data from the State Customs Committee (DGK), Azerbaijan exported approximately 7 billion cubic meters of gas to Türkiye, worth 2,2 billion USD in 2022, approximately 11 billion cubic meters, worth 3,7 billion USD in 2023, and approximately 10 billion cubic meters, worth 3 billion USD in 2024 (DGK, 2025). According to the Natural

Gas Market Annual Sector Report of the Energy Market Regulatory Authority (EPDK), Türkiye imported 8,7 billion cubic meters of gas from Azerbaijan in 2022, 10,3 billion cubic meters in 2023 and 11,5 billion cubic meters in 2024, as shown in Graph 2 (EPDK, 2025). In 2024, Azerbaijan became the second largest supplier of gas to Türkiye with a share of 22% in the total gas import after Russia (41%).

**Graph 2**  
Türkiye's Natural Gas Imports for 2014-2024 (Million Sm<sup>3</sup>) (EPDK, 2025)



Türkiye's gas imports from Azerbaijan have undergone a significant transformation since 2021. In addition to imports based on long-term natural gas purchase agreements, Türkiye has begun importing short-term spot pipeline gas from Azerbaijan, contingent upon market conditions. The spot pipeline gas imports from Russia decreased in 2024 compared to the previous year (51% of the total spot pipeline gas imports), while spot pipeline gas imports from Azerbaijan increased (49% of the total spot pipeline gas imports). Spot pipeline gas imports accounted for 21.23% of total natural gas imports in 2024 (EPDK, 2025). Spot pipeline gas imports from Azerbaijan were handled by BOTAŞ and SOCAR Energy. SOCAR Türkiye invested more than 18 billion USD in the Turkish economy during the last 15 years until 2025 (BloombergHT, 2025). Azerbaijan has entered moderate competition with other gas exporters in the Turkish natural gas market, and this competition appears to have the potential for regional political and economic repercussions.

Following the Second Karabakh War and the signing of the Shusha Declaration, energy cooperation with Turkmenistan has further deepened. On 21 January 2021, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Azerbaijan and the Government of Turkmenistan on the Joint Exploration, Development, and Exploitation of Hydrocarbon Resources of the "Dostluk" Field in the Caspian Sea was signed in Ashgabat. Subsequently, in November 2021, a swap agreement was concluded concerning the delivery of Turkmen natural gas to Azerbaijan via Iran, with an initial capacity of 4,5 million cubic meters per day. As of 1 March 2024, Turkmenistan commenced natural gas exports to Türkiye. During the period up to March 2025, the gas supplied from Turkmenistan met the needs of approximately 1,5 million households in Türkiye. It was anticipated that the volume of gas deliveries from Turkmenistan would increase to 1,3 billion cubic meters by the end of 2025 (T.C. İletişim Başkanlığı, 2025). Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan intend

to launch a natural gas supply with significant volumes using the Caspian Sea transit route as part of their energy partnership.

Türkiye and Azerbaijan have set their priorities regarding the integration and synchronization of their electricity grids. The export of the Caspian Sea's great renewable energy potential to the European market via Türkiye will operationalize the "Caspian Sea - Türkiye - European Union (EU) Green Corridor". The most secure and rational route for exporting renewable energy resources from the wider Caspian Sea region to the EU electricity market is through Türkiye. The agreements reached on uninterrupted electricity transmission between Türkiye and Azerbaijan will deepen regional energy cooperation and strengthen the energy dimension of the Zengezur Corridor (Çağatay, 2025b).

### **4.3. Regional Connectivity and the Zengezur Corridor After the Shusha Declaration**

The Second Karabakh War and the Shusha Declaration have also given rise to new realities in the context of establishing regional transport corridors and connectivity networks. Article 9 of the Joint Declaration, which ended the Second Karabakh War and was signed on November 10, 2020, by the President of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of Armenia, and the President of Russia, stipulated the restoration of all economic and transportation connections in the region. Armenia guaranteed the security of transportation links between the western regions of Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan, ensuring the uninterrupted movement of citizens, vehicles, and cargo in both directions (Azerbaycan Prezidentinin resmi internet saytı, 2020).

The Shusha Declaration was the first interstate and international legal document that embodied the transportation link between the western districts of Azerbaijan, the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan, and Türkiye via the southern part of Armenia (43 kilometers long) as the Zengezur Corridor in June 2021. The Shusha Declaration contained a proposition to construct the Nakhchivan-Kars railway as a continuation of the Zengezur Corridor to intensify transportation and communication connections between the two countries. Türkiye officially launched and initiated the Kars-Iğdır-Aralık-Dilucu Railway Line with 5,5 million passengers and 15 million tons of cargo carrying capacity annually in August 2025, which will be an integral component of the Zengezur Corridor (T.C. Ulaştırma ve Altyapı Bakanlığı, 2025).

At the same time, the Shusha Declaration envisaged a broader regional vision towards the International Trans-Caspian Transport Route (Middle Corridor) passing through the territories of Azerbaijan and Türkiye (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2021). The Shusha Declaration positioned the Zengezur Corridor as a part of a strategic international transport corridor that connects Europe and Asia as production and consumption edges of the wider Eurasia and consolidates the transit transport potential of both countries. In August 2025, US President Donald Trump hosted the President of Azerbaijan and Prime Minister of Armenia to sign an agreement covering also regional transportation and energy connectivity. The agreement granted the US-led consortium the right to operate the transportation corridor for 99 years (alternative name was the "Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity") (BBC News Türkçe, 2025). While Russia and Iran openly opposed the US plan to operate the connectivity corridor in the South Caucasus, China preferred to remain silent. The Zengezur Corridor has already become the geopolitical and geoeconomic playground among global and regional actors (USA, EU, China, Russia, Georgia, India, Iran, Pakistan, and the Gulf states) (Anadolu Agency, 2025). However, Türkiye and Azerbaijan will have a decisive role in the future implementation and fate of the project. Full realization of the Zengezur Corridor can potentially generate multiple advantages, ranging from the economy-energy nexus to a new regional geopolitical equilibrium for the benefit of Türkiye and Azerbaijan (Elbir, 2025).

Türkiye and Azerbaijan also successfully launched the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway (BTK) in collaboration with Georgia after 2017. BTK Railway's long-term annual capacity is 1500 block trains and 6,5 million tons of freight via the Middle Corridor (Toptaş, 2024). In addition to Georgia's prospective perception about the rivalry between BTK and the Zengezur Corridor, interoperability of both corridors (we can even add the Aras Corridor via Iran) will be one of the challenging issues in 2028-2030 when both transportation corridors could be fully operational and functional. The Zengezur Corridor and the BTK Railway could help

attract investments to Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and Türkiye, provided that an advantageous business and investment climate is completely established as a prerequisite. In the period following 2020, when regional connectivity networks and global supply chains were being reshaped, Türkiye and Azerbaijan consolidated their central positions in the geopolitics of Eurasia and the Turkic World through the signing of the Shusha Declaration in 2021.

## 5. The Effects of Bilateral Relations on The Turkic World

The relationship between Türkiye and Azerbaijan during the Second Karabakh War established a new model for inter-state relations among Turkic states, defined by political and military alliance. For Turkic states situated between Russia, China, and the United States, Türkiye has become a significant partner in political and military affairs and a primary supplier in defense industry procurement. The Shusha Declaration, signed by both countries, provided a strategic framework for cooperation and integration within the Turkic World.

Paragraph 9 of the Declaration states that activities aimed at the continuous development of the Turkic World should be promoted, while paragraphs 41-43 outline the acceleration of activities by Turkic organizations for this purpose (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2021). Expressions frequently used in the Declaration, such as the unity and prosperity of the Turkic World, Turkic solidarity, and Turkic cultural heritage, show that the Declaration addresses other Turkic states besides the two countries. Therefore, in a sense, the Declaration has the capacity to lay the foundation of an alliance system that other Turkic states can also join (Çelik & Aslanlı, 2022, pp.58-59).

The Shusha Declaration also had significant effects on the Organization of Turkic States. Five months after the signing of the Declaration, at the 8th Summit held in Istanbul in November 2021 - where the name of the organization was changed from the Turkic Council to the Organization of Turkic States - the traces and effects of the Shusha Declaration can be clearly seen in the Turkic World 2040 Vision Document and the Final Declaration. The 2040 Vision Document and the Final Declaration mention the East-West Central Corridor and the Zengezur Corridor (Turkic World Vision 2040, 2021), which were emphasized for the first time in the Shusha Declaration, and highlight the need to increase the activities of Turkish institutions and deepen inter-country cooperation, demonstrating the impact of the Declaration on the 8th Summit. Furthermore, the cooperation initiative mentioned in Paragraph 21 of the Shusha Declaration, aimed at increasing communication between the secretariats of the National Security Councils of Türkiye and Azerbaijan on regional security issues, similarly led to the organization of a consultation meeting of the National Security Councils of OTS member states approximately one year later, in July 2022. Consultation and cooperation meetings between the National Security Councils of member states within the OTS have become customary, with the fourth meeting scheduled to take place in Bishkek on 12 September 2025 (T.C. MGK Genel Sekreterliği, 2025). When examined specifically in the context of the OTS, the 2009 Nakhchivan Agreement, which is the founding document of the organization, was also realized as a result of the strong and determined initiative of Türkiye and Azerbaijan.

## Conclusion

Following the Shusha Declaration, political, economic, and military relations between Türkiye and Azerbaijan acquired new depth and new dimensions. The structural frameworks have been reinforced between the two countries to ensure coordination in political, diplomatic, military, and security affairs. After the Second Karabakh War and the Shusha Declaration, Turkish companies played a significant role in the infrastructure projects aimed at the reconstruction of the liberated Karabakh region and its reintegration into the Azerbaijani national economy. The deepening of bilateral relations has laid the groundwork for the establishment of trilateral and multilateral relations with third countries. The new geopolitical equilibrium

that emerged in the South Caucasus following the Second Karabakh War and the signing of the Shusha Declaration has also exerted influence on the Turkic Republics of Central Asia. It is no coincidence that one of the most substantial Summits of the Leaders of Member and Observing States of the OTS was held on 12 November 2021 in Istanbul, Türkiye. In that summit, the entity changed its name from the “Turkic Council” to the Organization of Turkic States. OTS adopted Turkic World Vision-2040 as a strategic document, established the Turkic Investment Fund as a joint project financing mechanism, and granted observer status to Turkmenistan.

In the aftermath of the Shusha Declaration, coordination at the governmental level between Türkiye and Azerbaijan has essentially deepened across the domains of political, economic, energy, transportation, military, and security relations. Nevertheless, regional and global issues such as the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Iran war, and the strategic rivalry between the US and China pose distinct challenges to the bilateral relationship. These challenges require Türkiye and Azerbaijan to strengthen their joint crisis management capacity and experience in political, economic and security domains through new bilateral agreements and institutional mechanisms stemming from the commitments of the Shusha Declaration. The unique “spirit of history” gave rise to the Shusha Declaration in 2021. However, it would be unrealistic to expect that the same momentum could be sustained for years. For this reason, in the current era of multiple crises - or even permacrises - the imperative should be to take the Shusha Declaration as the foundational reference in bilateral and regional relations, to elaborate new binding texts, and to ensure their effective implementation.

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