

Navigating Multilateralism: Azerbaijan's Energy Diplomacy and Alliance Building

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This article sets out to examine how Azerbaijan strategically navigates its engagement within diverse multilateral organizations – namely the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the Organisation of Turkic States (OTS) – and leverages its energy diplomacy and regional alliances to advance its core national interests and enhance its influence in the evolving international system. The primary focus of this study is an examination of Azerbaijan's multilateral performance, notably its energy diplomacy, regional ties, and multilateral engagement with regional and cross-regional organizations. Through its proactive energy and pipeline diplomacy, which stretches to Europe through Georgia and Türkiye, Azerbaijan can leverage its energy resources to enhance its position in the international system. Azerbaijan has developed a diplomatic strategy that encompasses several geopolitical approaches to maintain stable partnerships with international institutions and protect its core national interests. This study finds that Azerbaijan strategically utilizes its membership in various multilateral organizations, coupled with its assertive energy diplomacy and the cultivation of regional alliances, as complementary tools to project influence and safeguard its national interests within the dynamic international environment.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, Multilateralism, Energy Diplomacy, CIS, NAM, OIC, OTS



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Introduction

Although Azerbaijan's energy resources, strategic location, and multilateral engagements contribute to its status as a significant regional actor, there has been limited scholarly attention to the mechanisms through which its energy diplomacy and participation in regional organizations interact to advance its national objectives. This article focuses on how Azerbaijan conceives multilateralism, its energy initiatives, and involvement in organisations such as CIS, NAM, OIC, and OTS with a view to pursuing its national objectives and establishing an international presence.

The article proceeds as follows. First, it will provide a historical overview of Azerbaijan's foreign policy development since independence, emphasizing the foundational role of energy diplomacy. Second, the article will analyse Azerbaijan's performance and the relevance of its membership of the OTS, CIS, NAM, and OIC for its foreign policy objectives. Third, it will examine Azerbaijan's diplomatic efforts in conflict resolution and its security relations with key actors, including NATO, Türkiye, and Russia. Fourth, the article will examine the impact of global energy challenges on Azerbaijan's foreign policy and its involvement in cross-border multilateral issues. Finally, the conclusion will synthesize the research findings, projecting Azerbaijan's potential future role in international affairs and highlighting the broader implications of its foreign policy strategy; furthermore, the research methods used in this article link Azerbaijan's multilateral actions to global international relations.

Azerbaijan's Diplomacy in Historical Context

Azerbaijan initiated a major shift in nation-building, economic reform, and foreign policy development immediately after gaining independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The volatility in the neighbourhood and the competing interests of global and regional forces prompted the recently independent state to address immediate geopolitical concerns with minimal damage to its sovereignty.

Thus, under the administration of then-President Ayaz Mutallibov, the nation adopted a methodical approach in its foreign policy to increase

its sovereignty and followed a path of deepening ties with Russia.¹ In 1992, Abulfaz Elchibey's nationalist and pro-Western government came to power. This government severed ties with Russia while advocating for relations with the Turkic states.² Apart from the internal strife inside the country, the military losses during the First Karabakh War provided the factor that finally led to Elchibey's fall. When Haydar Aliyev assumed the presidency in 1993, there was a notable turning point in Azerbaijan's foreign policy. H. Aliyev adopted a multi-vector, pragmatic approach that balanced relations with Russia and those with international Western stakeholders and other regional forces, enabling Azerbaijan to maintain its political sovereignty and foster economic development. This strategy enhanced Azerbaijan's position in international energy markets. The signing of the 'Contract of the Century' (the major oil deal of that period) was part of this strategy and established a foothold for Western energy companies in Azerbaijan's oil and gas sector, reducing their transit dependence on Russia. H. Aliyev pursued a productive foreign policy that enhanced Azerbaijan's participation in international organizations including the CIS and the OIC.³

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After the Soviet era ended, Azerbaijan began developing its diplomatic posture by strengthening ties with major and emerging powers as well as regional institutions. While maintaining economic ties and strategic security dialogue with Russia, Azerbaijan sought to strengthen its cooperation with the European Union (EU)⁴ and the United States of America in energy and security affairs. Simultaneously, the country strengthened its geopolitical ties within the Turkic world and its bilateral

1 Shiryev, Z., "Azerbaijan's relations with Russia closer by default?", *Chatham House: Russia and Eurasia Programme*, December 11, 2020, Available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/03/azerbaijans-relations-russia-closer-default> (Accessed 16 March 2022).

2 Waal, T. "June 1992–September 1993: Escalation", in *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (pp. 207-228). New York, 2013, USA: New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814770825.003.0019>.

3 Valiyev, J., "Foreign policy of Azerbaijan in 25 Years of independence: priorities, principles and achievements", *Caucasus International*, 2017, 7(1), 29-46.

4 The most important agreement between the EU and Azerbaijan is the EU-Azerbaijan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement which was signed in 1999 in order to enhance: Trade, Investment, The economy, Legislation, Culture.

connections with Türkiye and neighbouring countries in the region. This period laid the foundation for Azerbaijan's modern foreign policy strategy, which continues to be defined by pragmatism, multilateral engagement, and a focus on energy-driven diplomacy.

Strategic pragmatism and equilibrium in international relations are two key concepts that Azerbaijan follows to establish positive relationships with a diverse range of global and regional entities. Given its geopolitical location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia and its proximity to major players such as Russia, Türkiye, Iran, and the European Union, Azerbaijan has adopted a multi-vector foreign policy approach.⁵ Azerbaijan successfully balanced its cooperation with the CIS, NATO, and EU to maintain its position of autonomy. Azerbaijan's strategic political ties helped it to maximize diplomatic and economic benefits while avoiding reliance on a single powerhouse. Azerbaijan's post-independence foreign policy was largely built on the pillars of energy diplomacy, backed by substantial natural resources. By deepening economic ties through energy systems, specifically through the development of the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC), Azerbaijan positioned itself as a key natural gas supplier to Europe. Its energy-based diplomacy rendered the country a reliable energy partner and strengthened its economic security by enabling it to interact with worldwide power centres.⁶

Azerbaijan places great emphasis on multilateralism and regional cooperation, as diplomatic strength depends on collaborating with regional and international institutions to gain more influence. Such diplomacy helped Azerbaijan achieve its strategic goal of maintaining important alliances while demonstrating its strategic purpose of establishing diplomatic contacts in its near abroad and asserting influence within its territory. Azerbaijan's economic diplomacy is guided by diversification and sustainable development initiatives, as long-term economic stability depends on a diversified economy, not solely on hydrocarbon exports. To this end, Azerbaijan has sought to expand trade relations, attract foreign investment, and develop sectors such as transportation, logistics, and digital technologies. The country

5 Mammadov, F., "Azerbaijan's foreign policy—A new paradigm of careful pragmatism", in *The South Caucasus: Between integration and fragmentation*, May 2015, p.29.

6 Asgarov, S., "Influence and Norm Entrepreneurship: Azerbaijan's Strategic Deployment of Soft Power", *International Journal of Political Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2024), pp. 31-46.

could advance its objectives of becoming a major international conduit between Europe and Asia through significant transportation networks, including the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars (BTK) railway.⁷

Regarding its diplomatic ties, Azerbaijan places great emphasis on historical and cultural diplomacy. Through its linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage, Azerbaijan has bolstered regional interaction with Türkiye and other Turkic-speaking countries, thereby fostering national cohesion.⁸ Additionally, through cultural initiatives and international events, such as hosting the Islamic Solidarity Games and various summits, Azerbaijan has projected a positive image of itself on the global stage, reinforcing its soft power strategy.

Overall, Azerbaijan’s diplomacy is characterized by a pragmatic, multidimensional approach that strikes a cohesive balance among sovereignty, regional cooperation, energy diplomacy, and economic diversification. These principles have enabled Azerbaijan to maintain a flexible and resilient foreign policy, adapting to shifting geopolitical trends while safeguarding its national interests.

Energy Diplomacy: A Crucial Component of Azerbaijan’s Foreign Policy

Azerbaijan’s energy resources play an essential role in its foreign policy, geopolitical position, economic growth, and relations with neighbouring countries. Since gaining independence in 1991, Azerbaijan’s hydrocarbon resources in the Caspian Sea have helped it to improve its international stance as a reliable energy provider, diversify its transit routes, and maintain national autonomy. In terms of the economy, Azerbaijan thus acquired additional assurance and established firm relations with the countries of the region. In 1994, Azerbaijan made a milestone deal called the ‘Contract of the Century’ with the world’s major oil companies, including BP, Chevron, and ExxonMobil. Signing the Contract of the Century was an important moment in the foreign energy policy of Azerbaijan. It opened a gateway for foreign investment in Azerbaijan and established a long-term partnership with leading

7 Prause, G., *The South Caucasian transport corridor: A new Eurasian transport option*, (No. 03/2024), Wismarer Diskussionspapiere. 2024.

8 Tabak, H. and Tüfekçi, Ö., “Turkey-Azerbaijan relations after 15 July: Expectations, Solidarity and Cooperation”, *Caucasus International*, 2017, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 83-96.

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Western energy conglomerates. As a consequence, Azerbaijan preserved the level of autonomy that was required for its energy industry, and it became one of the key players in the global energy market. Meanwhile, this situation also enabled Azerbaijan to gain greater autonomy in its foreign policy vis-à-vis its powerful neighbours. From then, Azerbaijan's export revenues rose significantly with the development of its oil fields, including the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli (ACG) complex, as well as the development of the Shah Deniz natural gas field.

The establishment of Azerbaijan's energy pathway towards Europe has significantly enhanced that continent's energy security by providing necessary substitute supplies, lessening Russia's influence in the sector. A key chain of pipelines delivering natural gas resources from Azerbaijan to European markets is the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC).⁹ The SGC, which runs from Azerbaijan to Europe via Türkiye, helps make Azerbaijan's gas reserves more easily accessible to the markets of Türkiye, Greece, Italy, and other East European and Balkan countries. This pipeline system not only boosted Azerbaijan's presence in European energy markets, but also provided the EU with an alternative supply route to reduce its members' dependency on Russian gas supplies. Energy cooperation between Azerbaijan and other countries has ventured into uncharted sectors, and the country established stronger links with Türkiye with the completion of the Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline (TANAP), which has brought the two countries closer together and also enabled Türkiye to reach its energy security targets. Moreover, Türkiye plays a significant transit role, following Georgia, for the transportation of Azerbaijan's hydrocarbon resources to neighbouring countries.¹⁰

By participating in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Azerbaijan is also seeking to work with other nations to upgrade critical infrastructure and services, including energy systems. Azerbaijan has invested in constructing energy infrastructure in various countries, including in the Balkans, the Black Sea region, and several Middle Eastern states,

⁹ Prause, *op.cit.*

¹⁰ Tüfekçi, Ö., "Turkey's Relations with Russia, Central Asian and the Caucasus States", in Yaşar Sarı & Seyit Ali Avcu (eds.), *Russia, Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Eskişehir: Anadolu University Press, 2020, pp. 207–231.

through its state-owned company SOCAR (State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic).

Given the current transition from fossil fuels to green energy, Azerbaijan is also investing in and gradually building its renewable energy sector. Azerbaijan's energy portfolio now includes solar and wind energy projects.¹¹ Azerbaijan's profile, including its cross-regional energy connection projects, makes the country an attractive energy hub for Europe, Asia, and the South Caucasus.

Azerbaijan's geopolitical position critically depends on how energy resources are utilized and the direction in which they are oriented. Meanwhile, maintaining the safety of energy transportation networks and infrastructure systems is one of the primary national security goals, with the aim of addressing threats emanating from within the South Caucasus region. Moreover, the financial influx from Azerbaijan's oil and gas sector strongly contributed to the country's modernization of its military and defence capability, in cooperation with allied state Türkiye and other military partners. Energy diplomacy is the cornerstone of Azerbaijan's foreign policy, based on the country's desire to ensure economic stability, foster strategic partnerships, and enhance its geopolitical influence.¹² The often-shifting dynamics of the global energy market necessitate that Azerbaijan strike a balanced approach between exporting hydrocarbon resources and simultaneously developing renewable energy sources, as well as linking to regional power networks, to maintain its current status as a major stakeholder in European energy security and the global energy scene.

Azerbaijan's Regional and Cross-regional Cooperation

Azerbaijan's geopolitical position and economic networks were strengthened through its continual development of strategic ties with other countries. The development of favourable relations with regional neighbours and international organizations is contingent upon the

11 Energynews, *Masdar and SOCAR launch IGW solar and wind projects in Azerbaijan*, June 5, 2024, Available at: <https://energynews.pro/en/masdar-and-socar-launch-1gw-solar-and-wind-projects-in-azerbaijan/> (Accessed: May 24, 2025).

12 Asgarov, S., "Navigating Geopolitical Alliances: Understanding Azerbaijan's Relationship with Israel over Iran", *Journal for Interdisciplinary Middle Eastern Studies*, 2024, 10(1).

careful and rational management of relations with neighbouring Russia, Türkiye, and Iran. As a result, Azerbaijan has adopted a pragmatic and multi-vector approach to regional and cross-regional structures, balancing its commitments among various blocs, including OTS, CIS, NAM, and OIC.

Membership of these structures grants access to diplomatic platforms, but they also provide mechanisms for advancing Azerbaijan's national interests, particularly in the realms of security, trade, and energy diplomacy. One of Azerbaijan's most significant regional engagements is its participation in the OTS, formerly known as the Turkic Council. As a country with strong ethnic, linguistic, and cultural ties to Türkiye and other Turkic-speaking nations, such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan has played a central role in fostering regional cooperation within the Turkic world. By supporting projects such as the Trans-Caspian Trade Corridor, which links Central Asia to Europe, Azerbaijan doubled its political and economic security links with other Turkic republics. Its membership in the OTS can leverage this potential. Moreover, Azerbaijan's deepening alliance with Türkiye under the framework of the OTS has significantly shaped its regional strategy, particularly in military cooperation, joint defence initiatives, and energy transit projects.¹³

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan remains a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This regional organization includes former Soviet republics and is often perceived as an extension of Russian influence in the post-Soviet space. Unlike some CIS members, whose relations with Russia are very close, Azerbaijan has chosen a more pragmatic approach to its CIS participation, whereby it serves rather as a diplomatic platform than as a fixed security or economic arrangement.

Azerbaijan has significant authority within NAM, which has 121 members. Azerbaijan assumed the chairmanship of NAM in 2019, utilizing this position to enhance its and the movement's global diplomatic profile and advocate for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its member states. Azerbaijan's membership of NAM also helped to mobilize wider support for its territorial integrity, which was

13 Shafiyev, F., "Azerbaijan and the Rise of Turkic Unity", *Insight Turkey*, 2023, 25(4), 13-24.

violated for three decades by Armenia.¹⁴ Azerbaijan's effective performance within NAM underscores its commitment to a multilateral approach that extends beyond regional alliances and reflects its desire to maintain a balanced foreign policy amid great-power rivalries.

In the broader Islamic world, Azerbaijan is an active member of the OIC, which has served as a crucial forum for strengthening its diplomatic ties with Muslim-majority countries. OIC membership also enables Azerbaijan to expand its economic, humanitarian, and cultural relations with the Gulf states, Türkiye, and the Muslim nations of Southeast Asia by establishing trade agreements and collaborating on investments with Islamic countries.

In conclusion, Azerbaijan's engagement with regional and cross-regional structures reflects a pragmatic, multi-vector foreign policy that prioritizes strategic autonomy, economic cooperation, and security partnerships. Whether through Turkic solidarity, the post-Soviet space, non-aligned engagement, or Islamic cooperation, Azerbaijan has effectively utilized regional structures to strengthen its geopolitical position. Moving forward, Azerbaijan's ability to balance these relationships while advancing its national interest will be a key determinant of its regional and international influence.

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Azerbaijan's Multilateral Diplomacy in a Post-conflict Context

The diplomatic approach of Azerbaijan towards conflict resolution and security developments is linked to its geopolitical circumstances, alongside its historical struggles and strategic thinking. As a country that operates in a volatile regional environment, Azerbaijan has actively engaged with multilateral institutions and diplomatic mechanisms (bilateral and multilateral talks, mediation, informal negotiations, etc.) to safeguard its sovereignty, enhance regional stability, and strengthen its security architecture. While military capability and bilateral alliances have played an essential role in Azerbaijan's security policy,

¹⁴ Kurt, S., and Tüysüzoğlu, G., "Another perspective regarding the 2020 War in Karabakh: The relationship between a frozen conflict and securitization", *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 2022,13(2), 145-155.

multilateralism has served as a complementary strategy that reinforces its just position, fosters international support, and positions Azerbaijan as a responsible actor in global and regional security frameworks. One of the most defining aspects of Azerbaijan's multilateral security diplomacy has been its engagement with international organizations to address its just position regarding the [now former] conflict with Armenia. Since the early 1990s, Azerbaijan has actively advocated for issues related to the violation of its territorial integrity on multilateral platforms, such as NAM, and in international organizations, including the United Nations (UN), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the OIC.¹⁵ The United Nations Security Council's passing of the four resolutions (822, 853, 874, and 884) adopted in 1993 was the first ever international response demanding the withdrawal of Armenia's armed forces from Azerbaijan's [formerly] occupied territories.¹⁶ The resolutions passed by other international bodies, however, remained symbolic in light of Armenia's non-compliance with them, which ultimately led to Azerbaijan's decisive military moves during the Second Karabakh War in 2020 to liberate its occupied territories.

The engagement in multiple international security cooperation frameworks is one of the important components of the foreign policy of Azerbaijan. The country actively contributes to the strengthening of international peace and security through its membership of the UN, OSCE, and CIS, and participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme. Azerbaijan, as a member of the OSCE, actively contributes to this organization's arms control and confidence-building activities through the 2011 Vienna Document. Azerbaijan, as a member of the CIS, has participated in certain security and law enforcement collaborations with the CIS member states. Since 1994, NATO's PfP programme enabled Azerbaijan to conduct defence reforms including developing its peacekeeping capabilities, allowing its soldiers to participate in multinational peacekeeping operations, as well as engaging in multinational large-scale military exercises. The country also expanded its defence and security portfolio through its strategic

15 Museyibzada, J., "International Organizations as a Means of Building Image and Reputation: The Case of Azerbaijan", *Eurasian Research Journal*, 2024, 6(3), 75-89.

16 Askerov, A., "The Nagorno Karabakh Conflict: The Beginning of the Soviet End" in A. Askerov et al (eds.), *Post-Soviet conflicts: The thirty years' crisis*, 2022, p.55.

relationships with Türkiye and members of the OTS. Under the Shusha Declaration of 2021, Türkiye and Azerbaijan strengthened their military ties, including mutual operational support. In addition, Azerbaijan strengthens its military defence capabilities through the OTS by conducting joint military training programmes with OTS members and through intelligence sharing and security coordination systems among Turkic states.¹⁷

Energy security is an integral part of Azerbaijan's multifaceted security policy, given its significant role as a provider of oil and natural gas to Europe.¹⁸ The SGC, with its commercial and strategic value, constitutes one of the important pillars of Azerbaijan's energy security and policy in this regard. Azerbaijan has developed a substantive domestic security background to ensure the security of its energy infrastructure, as it understands that threats such as cyberattacks, sabotage, and geopolitical pressure can jeopardize its role as a trustworthy energy supplier. Multilateral cooperation for the diversification of energy export routes is at the core of Azerbaijan's broader energy security strategies.¹⁹

Azerbaijan's approach to conflict resolution and security is grounded in a pragmatic and flexible multilateralism that balances diplomatic engagement with military preparedness. By actively participating in multilateral institutions, regional blocks, and strategic defence partnerships, Azerbaijan seeks to safeguard its national interests, reinforce its sovereignty, and enhance its regional influence. This multilateral engagement not only strengthens Azerbaijan's defensive capabilities, but also provides the diplomatic space and flexibility needed to pursue its broader foreign policy objectives. Azerbaijan remains a crucial stabilizing force in the South Caucasus region, thanks to its ability to maintain multilateral partnerships, promote regional cooperation, and address emerging security threats.

17 Sari, B., "Security Aspect of the Integration in Turkic World under the Organization of Turkic States", *Insight Turkey*, 2023, 25(4), pp. 139-162; Egeresi, Z., "Azerbaijan and the Turkic World", *Hungarian Institute of International Affairs*, p.54.

18 Azakov, S. I., "Contribution of Azerbaijan to the energy security of the European Union", in *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering*, December 2018, Vol. 459, No. 1, p. 012011, IOP Publishing.

19 Abbasov, N., and Souleimanov, E. A., "Azerbaijan, Israel, and Iran: An unlikely triangle shaping the northern Middle East", *Middle East Policy*, 2022, 29(1), 139-153; Winrow, G. M., "Azerbaijan and Iran", in *Regional Power Rivalries in the New Eurasia*, 2016, (pp. 93-111). Routledge.

Challenges and Opportunities for the Future of Multilateralism in Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan's multilateral participation plays an essential role in its foreign policy performance. The country has achieved the protection of its national interests by advancing multilateral cooperation. Albeit Azerbaijan had to adjust its foreign policy engagement in the aftermath of the war in Ukraine, which started in February 2022, it has been able to achieve strategic successes in energy diplomacy, regional coalition formation, and conflict resolution. Azerbaijan was also able to strengthen its international relationships by expanding diplomatic engagement, promoting regional stability, and successfully adopting global economic and technological trends.

Geopolitical instability in the South Caucasus region created substantial challenges for Azerbaijan in practising multilateralism. Azerbaijan reclaimed most of its internationally recognized territories during the 2020 Second Karabakh War through military victory. However, several outstanding issues remain in the way of achieving sustainable diplomatic solutions. The ongoing border demarcation process, delays in signing the peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and intermittent border incidents between the two countries are slowing down the process of building a stable region. Relations between Azerbaijan and its neighbours in the South Caucasus are deeply affected by Russia's strategic activities, along with its changing foreign policy course since the start of the war in Ukraine in 2022.²⁰ The government of Azerbaijan cultivates pragmatic relationships with Russia, cooperating through frameworks such as the CIS while carefully resisting deeper integration into Russian-led organizations like the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) or the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). The shifting regional balance of power (such as Russia's weakening influence due to the war in Ukraine, Türkiye's rising role, Western interest in the South Caucasus, or Iran's shifting posture) may compel Azerbaijan to reconsider its multilateral approach, including its engagement within international and regional organizations.

²⁰ Nuriyev, E., "Geopolitical breakthrough and emerging challenges: The case of the South Caucasus", *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, 2001, 6(2); Garibov, A., "Friends and Foes in the South Caucasus: Sources of Divergent Security Policies and Alliances in the Region", *EUCACIS Online Paper*, 2019, (9).

Notwithstanding these difficulties, Azerbaijan has good prospects for strengthening its multilateral involvement in new and emerging areas. One of those areas is cyber diplomacy and digital cooperation, where Azerbaijan can emerge as a leading regional nation for cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and the development of smart infrastructure. Participation in multilateral forums, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), on issues of technology governance and digital trade can enhance Azerbaijan's international reputation and promote economic diversification. The regional security challenges present another opportunity for Azerbaijan to become a diplomatic mediator, enabling it to contribute more to cross-regional security issues.²¹ As one of the leading states of the NAM and a supporter of diplomatic initiatives to stabilize the South Caucasus after conflicts, Azerbaijan plans to serve as a neutral diplomatic agent in worldwide affairs. Azerbaijan can enhance its diplomatic influence by leveraging this role as a platform to participate in international conflict resolution processes.

Beneath its geopolitical, economic, and security strengths in its multilateral dealings, Azerbaijan is also in a strong position to increase its global footprint through dynamic diplomacy, economic reforms, and mutually beneficial security alliances. Having in mind the processes that are ongoing in the international system, Azerbaijan's capacity to adjust itself to changing power arrangements, leverage its regional partnerships, and be part of building multilateral institutions would play a pivotal role in shaping its role in global governance. Looking ahead, Azerbaijan will need to remain relevant in the changing world by adopting a balanced approach that maintains strategic autonomy, encourages economic innovation, and interacts with regional and international organizations.

Conclusion

Azerbaijan's involvement in multilateralism demonstrates a pragmatic and adaptive foreign policy that balances national interests with regional

21 Rauf, S., "The Paradoxical Role of Mediators in the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict", *Insight Turkey*, 2023, 25(4), 163-180; De Mares, K. C., & Caro-Vargas, S., "The emergence of Azerbaijan as a regional power: Between tensions and neutrality", in *Handbook of Regional Conflict Resolution Initiatives in the Global South*, 2022, (pp. 147-170). Routledge.

and global dynamics. Through the use of regional alliances, multilateral partnerships, and innovative strategies, Azerbaijan has emerged into the limelight, in the South Caucasus and worldwide. This article has identified the importance of foreign policy dependence on sovereign interests, pragmatic decision-making, and responsible management of energy assets by Azerbaijan for improving its international image. For Azerbaijan to have long-lasting stability and growth, it needs to expand the level of its engagement in regional and global networks. In light of the changing energy trends, changing global power relations, and continued conflicts, there is an urgent need for this policy development.

Among the prevailing themes of this examination is the centrality of energy diplomacy as a cornerstone of Azerbaijan's foreign policy. By leveraging its hydrocarbon wealth, Azerbaijan has positioned itself as a key supplier of natural gas to the European continent, particularly through the SGC. Not only has this energy-led strategy strengthened Azerbaijan's economy, it has also made it a more geopolitically relevant actor. Yet, amidst growing international focus on renewable energy and decarbonization initiatives, Azerbaijan is seeking to diversify its economic model while preserving its strategic role in the global energy market. To remain competitive in an evolving energy landscape, Azerbaijan is actively increasing investment in green technologies, participating in international climate initiatives, and fostering cooperation in developing renewable energy sources.

The regional pillar of Azerbaijan's foreign policy has been a key driver of its multilateral affairs. Azerbaijan's active participation in the OTS, CIS, NAM, and OIC has facilitated an increase in Azerbaijan's diplomatic interaction and collaboration in regional security agendas. Azerbaijan's ability to sustain an independent foreign policy while adapting to reshuffles in international relations has allowed it to effectively manage its relations with Russia, Türkiye, the EU, the U.S., China, and other regional actors. Azerbaijan will maintain a strategic balance of relationships between global and regional powers as it seeks to maintain its sovereignty, achieve economic growth, and adapt to changing geopolitical conditions.

The resolution of the conflict with Armenia in 2020 marked a turning point in Azerbaijan's security policy, demonstrating its ability to ensure its territorial integrity while employing international legal mechanisms

and engaging in multilateral diplomatic efforts. Multilateral security dialogues and regional defence pacts will be instrumental for Azerbaijan in ensuring a stable and secure environment in the South Caucasus.

The ability of Azerbaijan to adapt to global developments and enhance its regional power status, as well as its economic and defence system ties worldwide, will define its future posture in international relations. Azerbaijan's foreign policy also eyes the further strengthening of its relationship with the European Union and Global South countries through expanded trade and investment participation, as well as deeper engagement in technology and digital governance. Azerbaijan can also utilize its position as a bridge between Europe and Asia, advancing greater integration through connectivity initiatives between those two continents.

Azerbaijan, through the use of multilateral strategies, can manoeuvre in a complex world while still maintaining command of its own strategic agenda. Azerbaijan's foreign policy, by embracing realism, foresight, and balance, aids in the preservation of economic stability, regional leadership, and global peace. To succeed globally in the intricate world of many power blocs in the long term, Azerbaijan will need to adjust to global changes by forging further strategic partnerships.