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## 2022 Russian-Ukrainian War and the Future of EU Energy and Transport Security: Analyzing the Implications of Diversification the Transport and Energy Transit Routes – the Case of the Black Sea/Caspian Region

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### Abstract

Given recent events, such as the full invasion of Ukraine's sovereign territories by the Russian army in 2022, this article critically analyzes how the use of the Caucasus-Caspian region could serve Brussels as an alternative means of diversifying energy sources to ensure its energy security. The study is comprehensive and covers various forms of energy projects. Particular attention is paid to exploring the various phases regarding Shah Deniz and potential expansion plans. In addition, it carefully examines all other important factors associated with the production, transportation, and exploration of energy resources in the Caspian reserves.

In addition, a key task is to classify and compare the EU's geopolitical priorities before and after the 2022 war, present an analysis of the complex paths of transformation of the EU's energy supply, and clarify its new policies regarding the relations between the main regional players: the Russian Federation, the EU, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

It has been established that the Black Sea-Caspian steppe contains valuable energy reserves. Due to the critical geopolitical, geostrategic, and geoeconomic importance of the region, the EU has an interest in the region. The study provides a comparative overview of different aspects of EU energy diversification policies. It examines how these policies have influenced the approach of foreign states to the Caucasus-Caspian region, taking into account recent events. Moreover, it considers national goals and takes into account the important interests of leading powers.

**Keywords:** energy security, diversification of fossil fuels, Caucasus-Caspian region, Black Sea-Caspian steppe, EU policy on energy diversification, energy projects.

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## **Introduction**

In February 2022, Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine raised concerns among EU countries about Russia's credibility as a trading partner, especially regarding transport and energy projects. The use of military measures has hurt both diplomatic and economic ties between the EU and Russia and has also raised concerns about the safety of Ukrainian pipelines and export-import operations. This became a vital matter since the main transit route for goods, including oil and gas transportation went to Central and Western Europe through Ukraine. According to statistics presented by Reuters and Russia's Transneft, by the Druzhba pipeline approximately 244,000 barrels of crude oil from Russia to Europe were transported daily through Ukraine (Reuters, 2022).

With the outbreak of war, Russia's mission as a major supplier of gas oil, and other kinds of goods to European countries drew attention to the precariousness of the EU's dependence on a single supplier. Consequently, the EU faced the potential risk of losing access to its main source of energy while simultaneously refusing to cooperate with Russia. For example, the EU stopped the functioning of the Nord Stream 1 and North Stream 2 gas pipeline projects, since there were fears that energy dependence could turn the EU into an object of political and economic manipulation from the Kremlin side. This has led to a major challenge for the EU to diversify its trade and energy sources to ensure safer and more stable supplies (Oltermann, 2022).

Moreover, the ongoing conflict has also raised questions regarding the increasing geopolitical and geo-economic interests of the European Union toward the Black Sea/Caspian and Central Asia Regions related to energy and transport operations diversification strategies. To address these challenges, the EU needed to develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to transport and energy security that balances the need for diversification with the need for stability and security.

## **Theory**

The theory of neorealism in international relations explains the situation with transport and energy security since one of the elements of global security is transport and energy security, therefore similar theoretical approaches are used to study the problem of ensuring it in countries importing and exporting energy resources.

Importance.

## **Main changes in the EU transport and energy policy after starting the Russia-Ukraine war**

In today's world, it is a fact that transport and energy play an important role in protecting the national interests of big countries and in implementing several strategic plans. For example, we can take the recent active geopolitical interventions by the Russian Federation and the intensive use

of energy policy to "punish" Europe because of support of Ukraine in the Russia-Ukraine war and increase trade relations and the supply of Russian oil and gas first of all for China and India. In this regard, it should be mentioned about the high dependence of Europe on Russian gas and oil before the invasion of Russia in Ukraine on February 24, 2022. It is known that the EU consumed per year about 450 billion M3 of natural gas before the war in Ukraine. At the same time, more than 60% of the natural gas sales in Russia were carried out on the European market. According to the data from 2021, "Gazprom" has exported about 170 billion cubic meters of natural gas to the European market (Chitadze, 2021). At the same time, because of Russian military aggression against Ukraine, the EU's dependence on Russian gas by September 2022 decreased from 40% to 7% (Resonance, 2023).

The Kremlin's expansionist policy changed the energy strategy of the West, primarily Europe. In particular, the war forced the West to think more about "green technologies" and the use of nuclear energy (due to the increase in prices of traditional energy resources - gas and oil), as well as alternative energy projects, in particular, about receiving natural gas from the USA (shale gas), North Africa, Norway, as well as receiving oil and gas from the Caspian Sea region and Central Asia, etc.;

#### **The transit role of the Black Sea/Caspian region after the war in Ukraine**

In this case, it would be interesting to discuss transport and energy projects related to the Black Sea-Caspian region.

It should be noted that the volume of cargo transportation along the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR) in January-June 2023 exceeded 1.3 million tons, which is 1.8 times more than for the same period in 2022. The fact that according to the first quarter of the same year, the volume of cargo transportation via TITR for January-March amounted to 433.2 thousand tons, which is 1.6 times more than the same period in 2022 (Chitadze, 2023).

Thus, over the next three months, namely from April to June, the volume of TITR cargo transportation increased by at least 866.8 thousand tons (Chitadze, 2023).

In 2022, the total volume of TITR cargo transportation amounted to 1.5 million tons, which is 2.5 times more than in 2021 (Chitadze, 2023).

It should be noted that the multimodal route connects many countries in which seaports play a key role. Thus, daily activities are carried out with route participants to improve infrastructure, remove barriers, increase the capacity of the corridor, and reduce the time required to move goods.

The Trans-Caspian international transport route, known as the "Middle Corridor", passes through the territory of China, Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and then Turkey and European countries.

Last year, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey signed a “road map” for 2022-2027, which provides for the further development of the Trans-Caspian route and the joint removal of all barriers.

According to the forecast of the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Alikhan Smilov, made in April 2023, this year the volume of cargo transportation along the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route compared to 2022 may increase by 17.6%, to 2 million tons (Chitadze, 2023).

The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway is part of the corridor. Thanks to this, it will be possible to transport about 5 million tons of cargo per year from China to Europe. In addition, as you know, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey have approved a road map for the development of the Trans-Caspian route for 2022-2027.

It is expected that if the agreements are implemented, the throughput capacity of the Middle Corridor will increase to 10 million tons by 2025.

### **Black Sea Energy Submarine Cable – New projects in the Black Sea-Caspian region and the sustainability of the Middle Corridor**

As already noted, global cataclysms and the ongoing war on the European continent have particularly emphasized the political and environmental significance of energy. Despite the vital challenges, Europe is firmly committed to the Green Energy Agreement’s policies and ways to combat climate change. Reducing fossil fuel production was already a priority of environmental policy, which not only changed after the start of the war by Russia but also added sanctions imposed against the aggressor.

Several countries in the Black Sea/Caspian region are parties to the European Green Deal. In addition, they are implementing several reforms to the requirements of the EU Eastern Partnership program, which are also designed for climate change and involve the implementation of a European standard. In addition to harmonization with Europe at the legislative and political level, the countries of the region itself need to increase electricity production, which should be achieved through its natural resources, that is, renewable energy.

It should be understood that today the energy policies of developed countries are viewed in the context of climate change. The European Green Deal is a new initiative of the European Union whose goal is to make Europe the first carbon-neutral continent by 2050. The interim goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55% compared to 1990. by 2030. And by 2050, complete carbon neutrality must be achieved, that is, the level of net greenhouse gas emissions must be zero. According to the plan approved in 2022, by 2030 45% of all energy consumed in the EU should come from

renewable energy sources (Azerbaijan Today, 2023).

This means that the demand for green energy, local production, and imports in Europe will increase more and more shortly. In this regard, the laying of a power transmission cable stretched along the bottom of the Black Sea opens up completely new opportunities for the EU and the Black Sea-Caspian states.

### **Black Sea electricity Power Cable and its significance**

The Black Sea power cable, the possibility of producing green energy, production under quotas provided for by the Kyoto Protocol, as well as the country's natural potential are very attractive factors for investors. The Black Sea-Caspian region will seriously strengthen the function of the energy corridor and turn from a transit country for fossil fuels into an additional producing and transmitting country for electricity. All these factors will help strengthen the country's energy security and its independence.

How the Black Sea Electric Cable project started and what stages it went through - "the military factor accelerated the processes."

The idea for the Black Sea Electric Cable project came to Gross Energy Group back in 2017. However, at that time there was some skepticism on the part of Europe since they could obtain energy resources from other, alternative sources. Nevertheless, work on the project continued for years, and after the war in Ukraine presented the world with new challenges, its implementation accelerated.

As is known, Georgia, Romania, Azerbaijan, and Hungary signed a memorandum of understanding, which provides for the construction of a new energy cable along the bottom of the Black Sea and will allow the integration of the South Caucasus into the European system.

The estimated cost of the project is 2.3 billion euros. In addition, Georgia will finance research of the Black Sea bottom for the construction of a cable for \$20 million.

This project represents an alternative source for connecting the Black Sea-Caspian region with Europe, and the price of electricity in the latter is 3 times higher (Azerbaijan Today, 2023).

Azerbaijan is the main electricity-exporting country

Within the framework of this project, at this stage, Azerbaijan is considered the main exporting country. That is why it is important to take into account the energy potential of Azerbaijan. Let's start with electricity production. Electricity production in the country is growing almost every year. For example, according to the Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan, 27.8 billion kWh of electricity was produced in 2021, which is 7.9% more than last year's figure of 25.8 billion kWh and is a historical

maximum (Azerbaijan Today, 2023).

### **EU countries will purchase electricity from Azerbaijan via the undersea Black Sea cable**

Azerbaijan differs from other countries in the region not only because of its abundant reserves of natural gas, and it is not surprising that gas accounts for the largest share of electricity production. In 2021, thermal power plants accounted for 26.2 billion kWh of total electricity production, accounting for 94.2% of total production. The remaining 5.8% came from renewable energy sources.

According to the Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan, the total electricity generation capacity in Azerbaijan is 7542.2 MW. As for renewable energy sources, the total capacity of power plants of this type, including large hydroelectric power plants, is 1304.5 MW, which is 17.3% of the total capacity (Azerbaijan Today, 2023).

There are a total of 30 hydroelectric power plants in the country (10 large and 20 small) with a capacity of 1154.8 MW. The number of wind stations is 7, the capacity is 66.1 megawatts, and the capacity of 12 solar power plants is 45.9 megawatts (Azerbaijan Today, 2023).

In general, the Black Sea underwater cable project provides for the construction of an underwater high-voltage transmission network, which should connect the electrical power systems of Georgia and Europe. According to European Commissioner Oliver Varha, the estimated cost of the project is 2.3 billion euros (Commerzant, 2023).

If the project is implemented, a cable with a capacity of 1,000 MW and a length of 1,195 kilometers (1,100 km underwater and 95 km on land) will be connected from Georgia to Romania, which will allow the countries of the South Caucasus and Romania to take advantage of expanded export opportunities and take into account hourly prices on the market electricity. Trade (Commerzant, 2023).

The implementation of the project will help strengthen the energy security of Europe and the Black Sea-Caspian region, develop the renewable energy sector, as well as increase transit opportunities between the mentioned regions.

### **Russian-Ukrainian war and energy projects in the Black Sea-Caspian region**

Thanks to its favorable geographical location and huge reserves of oil (about 32 trillion barrels) and gas (about 40-50 trillion cubic meters) (BPN, 2022), the Caucasus-Caspian region is one of the most strategically important regions of Europe and plays an extremely important role. role in current issues of transregional security.

In this regard, it is interesting to discuss and analyze several plans related to energy projects in the

Black Sea-Caspian region and the future of EU energy security.

In particular, after the Russian-Ukrainian war, the goal of the Azerbaijani government is to export about 24 billion cubic meters of natural gas to the international market in 2023, of which about 12 billion cubic meters of natural gas will be supplied to Europe. It is worth noting the fact that in 2021 Azerbaijan supplied 8 billion cubic meters of gas to Europe (BPN, 2022).

Last July, the European Union and Azerbaijan reached an agreement according to which gas exports from Azerbaijan to the European Union will be doubled to 20 billion cubic meters by 2027. However, last year gas exports to Europe amounted to only 11.4 billion cubic meters. billion cubic meters m, although in 2023 this figure is expected to increase to 11.6 billion cubic meters. m (BPN, 2022).

As for the position of another state in the Caspian region - Turkmenistan, it is worth noting the fact that at the end of 2022, the leaders of Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan discussed the issue of supplying Turkmen gas to Europe through the territory of Turkmenistan. Georgia at the trilateral summit. In general, gas from Turkmenistan is planned to be transported to Azerbaijan and then transferred to the Southern Corridor pipeline network connecting Azerbaijan to Europe through Georgia and Turkey. It is important to note that the issue of supplying Turkmen gas to Europe bypassing Russia was discussed before but without success. However, after the war in Ukraine, the topic of searching for alternative routes for transporting energy trains became relevant.

It should be emphasized that the vast resources of Turkmenistan were largely unused since Ashgabat could not transport them to Europe. The reason is that no agreement was reached on transporting Turkmen gas through the Caspian Sea and then via pipeline. At the current stage, almost a third of Turkmen gas is supplied to China, and the rest to the domestic market and Russia. At the end of 2020, Turkmenistan's gas reserves amounted to 13.6 trillion cubic meters, which was one-third of Russia's reserves (BPN, 2022).

As for oil policy, the following should be noted. In particular: as a result of the introduction by the G7 of a price ceiling on Russian oil, which amounted to \$60 per barrel, the price of Russian Urals oil in December 2022 fell to \$50.47 per barrel, which is less than the limit set by Western countries. For comparison, at the time of publication, Brent crude futures were trading at \$78.28 per barrel, and in February 2023, WTI crude futures were trading at \$73.11 per barrel. In addition, in the last four weeks of 2022, oil exports from Russia fell to a minimum (BPN, 2022).

In particular, in December 2022, seaborne oil supplies from Russia decreased by 117 thousand barrels per day, which includes an average of 2.615 million barrels per day (BPN, 2022).

In addition, the issue of oil exports from the Caspian Sea region, bypassing Russia, to Europe and the

international market as a whole is on the agenda.

For example, Kazakhstan has formed a working group to increase oil exports through Georgia to 15 million tons. The purpose of this is to work on the development of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR) for the export of Kazakh oil. According to representatives of the Kazakh authorities, the goal of the working group is for TITR to provide transport capacity for the export of 6.5 million tons of oil in 2023, which should increase to 7.5 million tons in 2024 and to 15 million tons by 2024. end of 2025 (BPN, 2022).

As is known, the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), that is, the “Middle Corridor,” passes through China, Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey, and then through European countries. The existing Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway is part of this corridor.

Currently, the main export route for Kazakh oil is the Caspian Pipeline Consortium system, which will pass through Russia and ensure that Kazakh oil enters the international market through the Russian port of Novorossiysk. The share of Kazakh oil in the volume transported via the Tengiz-Novorossiysk pipeline is more than 80%. In total, the pipeline capacity ensures the transportation of 67 million tons of oil per year (BPN, 2022).

Discussions on diversifying oil export routes in Kazakhstan began in 2022, the reason for this is primarily political. In particular, in June last year, at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Kazakh President Tokayev personally told Putin about Russia’s recognition of the so-called Donetsk and Lugansk regions. According to the President of Kazakhstan, these “republics” are “quasi-state territories” and Kazakhstan will never recognize them.

The following month, July 2023, Tokayev ordered the national oil and gas company Kazmunaigas to urgently diversify oil supplies. Then Tokayev included this issue in his election program.

The updated policy of the Black Sea-Caspian region for Europe is a positive development for the region. The EU is a major economic power and its participation will promote economic development and regional cooperation.

### **EU and diversification of its transport and energy policy related to the Black Sea/Caspian Region**

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned factors, it should be pointed out, that the following are some of the key challenges that the EU faces in its efforts to implement transport projects and diversify its energy supplies from the Black Sea/Caspian Region:

- Geopolitical challenges: a region is a volatile region with several unresolved territorial disputes. This makes it difficult for the EU to invest in the region.



- Technical challenges: The Caspian Sea is a difficult region to extract energy from. The seabed is deep and the water is cold. This makes it expensive to develop oil and gas fields.
- Environmental challenges: ecology is extremely delicate. Potential harm to the environment as a result of different goods transportation and oil and gas production growth in the area.
- Europe is aware of the challenges that it faces in its efforts to diversify its transport projects and energy supplies from the Black Sea/Caspian Region. Despite these obstacles, the European Union (EU) is dedicated to cooperating with the governments along the Black Sea/Caspian region to secure transportation movement and reliable energy supply.

Some of the most important suggestions the EU may offer to the governments bordering the Black Sea/Caspian to improve transport and energy security in the region are as follows.

1. Promote local participation: The EU can advance provincial collaboration in the Black Sea / Caspian by supporting undertakings that further develop transport and energy foundations and by giving specialized help to the Black Sea/Caspian littoral states.
2. Invest in sustainable power: The EU can put resources into environmentally friendly power projects in the region. This can assist with decreasing the district's reliance on petroleum products and make the area more energy secure.
3. Protect the environment: The EU can support projects that protect the environment. This could help to ensure that transport movement and development of resources in this region does not damage the environment.
4. The EU's commitment to the Black Sea/Caspian is an improvement for the region. The EU is a significant monetary power and its commitment to the locale assists with advancing financial turn of events and interregional collaboration. The EU can play a key part in advancing energy security in the Caspian locale by advancing territorial collaboration, putting resources into sustainable power, and safeguarding the climate.

Thus, the geopolitical significance of the Caucasus Caspian Region deserves a more detailed examination. This region holds immense importance due to its strategic location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Additionally, its abundant energy resources, particularly natural gas and oil reserves make it a major player in global energy markets.

Recognizing the need for the activation of the East-West corridor diversifying energy sources and reducing reliance on Russian supplies the EU sees the Black Sea/Caspian Basin as an attractive alternative.

## Conclusion

The research provided a dynamics of relations between the EU and the Caucasus-Caspian region and identified its benefits and strong and weak sides. Because of the advantageous geographical position and the immense capacity of the reserves of oil (approximately 32 trillion barrels) and gas (approximately 40-50 trillion cubic meters) (BPN, 2022), the Caucasus-Caspian region is one of Europe's most strategic regions and plays an extremely important role in current transregional security issues.

The fundamental shifts in the geopolitical map of the region occurred, as is widely acknowledged, with the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war. In the course of this paper, it was found that the European Union's states changed dramatically their energy policy regarding diversification of the Caspian oil and gas while fighting the monopoly of Russian energy sources through different methods, such as sanctions against Russian energy, for example, sanctions on buying of Russian gas on Rubles, which Serbia, Hungary or Germany tried to do.

The Caucasus and Caspian region is a potential source of new energy supplies for the EU. The region has significant reserves of natural gas and oil, and it is located close to the EU. However, there are several challenges to accessing these resources. The region is politically unstable, and there are several disputes over the ownership of energy resources.

### *Restoring Security in the Black Sea Region after the Russian invasion of Ukraine*

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### Restoring Security in the Black Sea Region after the Russian invasion of Ukraine

Taking into account those realities, to restore and ensure security in the Black Sea/Caspian region, certain actions are required, as well as political choices both on the part of Ukraine and its international partners, including:

1. The security of the Black Sea/Caspian region should be seriously considered by NATO and the EU as one of the key determinants of European and Euro-Atlantic security. The restoration of the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the establishment of a fair balance of power in the Black Sea should prevent the existence of exclusive exclusion zones/zones (A2 / AD), guarantee the security of all coastal states, as well as freedom of navigation and ground and maritime trade.
2. Successfully addressing Black Sea/Caspian security issues requires a significant and closely coordinated build-up of the integrated infrastructure of coastal defense and the interaction of the naval and other forces of Romania and Ukraine in partnership with Bulgaria and Georgia, which could be done much more effectively if Ukraine and Georgia joined to NATO and the EU.
3. The restoration of relations between the US and Turkey is of great importance for the security of the Black Sea/Caspian, and closer cooperation between the EU and Turkey is also urgently needed for the further successful implementation of the transport and energy projects in the region.
4. Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova should reconsider cooperation in the GUAM format and focus more on practical mutually beneficial cooperation with each other in multilateral or bilateral formats, where their interests coincide. In particular, this concerns countering hybrid threats, developing energy projects, and trade.

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