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# Strategic formulation of Azerbaijan's national security paradigm

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*This study explores the evolution and consolidation of Azerbaijan's National Security Concept, emphasizing the interplay of geopolitical, economic, and sociocultural factors in shaping the country's security policy framework. Drawing upon theoretical insights from international relations, strategic studies, and state-building literature, the research examines how Azerbaijan, as a newly independent state in the post-Soviet era, formulated and institutionalized a comprehensive national security doctrine to safeguard its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and socio-political stability. **The primary objective** is to analyze the strategic, political, and economic mechanisms deployed by the Azerbaijani state to address both internal and external security challenges, including territorial conflicts, regional instability, and global security dynamics. Through a historical-comparative approach, the study investigates the roles of key state actors—such as the Presidency, National Security Council, Ministry of Defense, and executive authorities—in designing, implementing, and adapting security strategies. **Methodologically**, the research integrates qualitative document analysis with policy and historical analysis, assessing primary sources including presidential decrees, national security programs, strategic energy agreements, and legislative acts, alongside secondary scholarly literature. The analysis identifies how Azerbaijan's security strategy encompasses military modernization, energy security, territorial defense, regional partnerships, and the harmonization of domestic and foreign policy measures to reinforce national resilience. Furthermore, it highlights the critical influence of President Heydar Aliyev's pragmatic foreign policy, geostrategic diplomacy, and economic initiatives—particularly the 1994 "Contract of the Century" and subsequent energy projects—in consolidating national security and positioning Azerbaijan as a regional actor of strategic importance. The study also emphasizes the adaptive nature of national security policy, noting that evolving regional dynamics, global energy markets, and socio-political transformations necessitate continuous recalibration of security priorities. The findings suggest that Azerbaijan's national security concept is not merely a static framework of defense and policy but a dynamic construct, integrating historical experience, strategic foresight, and geopolitical realities to ensure sustainable statehood and regional influence.*

**Key words:** National Security, Strategic Policy, Geopolitics, State-Building, Energy Security, Azerbaijan.

**Introduction.** The creation and development of national security policies in post-Soviet Azerbaijan is an important topic in modern security and strategic studies. This is due to the country's unique geopolitical position, historical background, and changing regional and global security situations. As Azerbaijan manages complicated relationships with neighboring countries, international organizations, and global powers, it is crucial to understand how authority, strategic vision, and institutional mechanisms shape national security. This understanding helps assess the state's resilience and regional stability prospects. In the 21st century, Azerbaijan's security landscape has been affected not just by traditional military and territorial issues but also by energy geopolitics, economic ties, technological progress, and international cooperation. Together, these factors define modern state security. Azerbaijan's experience shows that national security is not fixed; it continually changes in response to new internal and external challenges, including territorial disputes, regional conflicts, and global strategic changes. Additionally, the role of international players in supporting or limiting Azerbaijan's security policies—through diplomatic efforts, strategic partnerships, or economic tools—adds complexity to the development and execution of national security strategies. In a time of shifting regional alliances, competition for energy resources, and chan-

ging global power dynamics, examining how authority and strategic decision-making shape national security policies is vital for understanding the state's survival strategies and its long-term development path. In this respect, the main purpose of the current research is to explore the formation, evolution, and consolidation of the National Security Concept of Azerbaijan, underlining the interplay of geopolitical, economic, and socio-political factors, as well as the institutional mechanisms that sustain sovereignty, territorial integrity, and socio-economic stability.

**Methodologically**, this research applies a historical-comparative method by analyzing primary sources such as presidential decrees, national security programs, strategic energy agreements, and legislative acts, supported by secondary scholarly literature. Qualitative analysis of the documents and historical processes investigates the strategies, policies, and institutional practices applied to address internal and external security challenges in the spheres of restoring territorial integrity and energy security, or the development of regional partnerships. The current analysis underlines the key role of strategic vision, pragmatic foreign policy, and corresponding energy projects by President Heydar Aliyev, among which the «Contract of the Century» in 1994 and the following infrastructure projects feature as the most outstanding,

in consolidating national security and positioning Azerbaijan as a key regional actor. These findings contribute to academic debates by giving nuanced insight into how national security policy has been formulated, institutionalized, and adjusted in post-Soviet states facing complex geopolitical pressures. By underlining the dynamic nature of national security, shaped by institutional authority, strategic foresight, and external engagement, the research provides insights into the conditions under which state resilience and regional stability can be achieved, therefore making theoretical and empirical contributions to security studies, geopolitics, and state-building research. Drawing on a theoretical framework based on international relations, strategic studies, and state-building theory, this study integrates geopolitics, energy security, and institutional governance to show how Azerbaijan's national security both structures and adapts itself dynamically to changing regional and global realities. After the Republic of Azerbaijan gained independence in 1991, discussions began at various levels of government institutions, academic circles, and socio-political institutes regarding the main goals of national security, the identification and safeguarding of national interests, and the determination of the functions, mechanisms, methods, and tools of national security policy. Naturally, defining the foundations of national development strategy, the scope of national interests, the security of the country, and ensuring its proper organization, creating its security framework and geopolitical code, and implementing national security policy were not easy tasks for a newly independent state whose national security system had not yet been sufficiently strengthened. Only from 1993 did a special nationwide focus on a unified national development and security policy based on common principles begin. The theoretical and practical issues of Azerbaijan's national development and security were brought into broad socio-political and scientific discussion, and their conceptual foundations were established. From that period onwards, this policy began to cover all areas of the independent state-building process and became one of the main tools of national development and state governance. It took considerable time for the Azerbaijani government to fully establish the National Security Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan and to fully develop its security policy. The main purpose of the state's security policy is to protect and ensure, at the highest level, the country's vital national interests in interactions with the external world. The state's national interests, national security, and global influence are recognized both as subjects of international law and protected by international institutions, while also being ensured through the state's internal and external resources [1]. Strengthening the country's national security refers to the protection of Azerbaijan's unified and independent

territory from internal and external threats, ensuring sovereignty, neutralizing internal and external dangers, and countering various types of threats, ranging from military-political to informational security. All of this is closely linked to the country's internal and external security policies. The foundation of Azerbaijan's national security is the protection and safeguarding of the state's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, constitutional order, national interests, and the rights and interests of its citizens from internal and external threats. National security policy should be based on international legal norms, the country's constitution, domestic laws and principles, a balance between the interests of individuals, society, and the state, and the mutual responsibility of these parties [2]. Positioned in a complex geopolitical area, Azerbaijan, from the moment it gained independence, declared itself a secular and legal state, a democratic society, and a political pluralism path as the foundation of its development and constitutional order. The country pursues cooperation on an equal footing with neighboring states in peace and friendly relations, and with the world's leading political, economic, and security systems, aiming to integrate into these structures. These objectives required Azerbaijan to ensure both its internal security and a specially considered, consistent implementation of the National Security Concept in its relations with regional and global power centers, geopolitical actors, and transnational structures. The creation of this concept and addressing the issues arising from it constitute one of the main goals and tasks of the country's national security policy. National security policy should not only protect the country's specific interests but also contribute to improving the security environment in its region and the world. In this sense, the goals and directions of Azerbaijan's security policy include positively influencing international processes for a stable, just, and democratic world, contributing to equal and mutually beneficial cooperation between states, identifying common interests with other states and international unions to ensure national interests, and establishing bilateral and multilateral partnership relations based on these common interests[3]. The provision of the Republic of Azerbaijan's national security involves the purposeful activity of state bodies to detect and warn about threats to the security of the state, society, and individuals, and to take necessary and urgent countermeasures to protect the country's national security and interests. This activity is determined by the policy for ensuring the national security of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Thus, national security consists of three main levels:

1. Individual security.
2. Societal security.
3. State security [4].

Azerbaijan, now experiencing the third decade of its state independence, prioritizes the protection of its statehood through the preparation and implementation of appropriate strategic concepts, drafting relevant laws, and developing mechanisms for their enforcement. The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan «On National Security,» consisting of 4 chapters and 28 articles, was specifically designed to address gaps in this area. This law aimed to establish the legal foundations of national security policy for the development of Azerbaijan as an independent, sovereign, and democratic state [5]. Ensuring the national security of the Republic of Azerbaijan is a set of activities aimed at protecting national interests and practically implementing them. It pertains not only to the state but also to society as a whole and, individually, to each citizen. The policy of ensuring national security involves the political leadership of the country setting principal objectives for the protection of national interests, determining goals, and developing forms, methods, and means for achieving these goals. The main directions of Azerbaijan's national security policy are determined by the need to develop and use effective mechanisms to protect the vital interests of the state and to act against internal and external threats to national interests. The primary objective of ensuring the national security of Azerbaijan is to establish and maintain the necessary level of protection for all security objects that create favorable conditions for the development of the state, society, and individuals. These security objects prevent any reduction of Azerbaijan's role and significance as a subject of international law and ensure that the state's capabilities to realize national interests are not undermined [6].

This goal is achieved by addressing a series of key tasks in the field of national security, including:

- Identifying internal and external threats to the national security of Azerbaijan;
- Issuing warnings about internal and external threats and implementing operational measures to neutralize them;
- Ensuring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the security of its border areas;
- Maintaining and supporting the state's military potential at an adequately high level;
- Detecting, warning against, and taking effective measures to prevent intelligence and subversive activities directed against Azerbaijan by foreign states;
- Strengthening the role of the state as a guarantor of society's and individuals' security, establishing the necessary legal basis, and developing mechanisms for its implementation;
- Expanding mutually beneficial international cooperation in the field of security;
- Efficiently using and developing intelligence and counterintelligence capabilities to detect threats in a timely manner and identify their sources [7].

The main principles of ensuring national security in Azerbaijan are: legality; adherence to the interests of the state; state responsibility for ensuring security; integration into international security systems; and the unity, interconnection, and balance of all types of security. The legislative basis for ensuring security consists of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, laws, presidential decrees, other normative acts of Azerbaijan, and international treaties and agreements concluded and ratified by Azerbaijan. Except for cases directly provided for by law, the restriction of citizens' rights and freedoms is not permitted in the process of ensuring security [8]. National security in Azerbaijan is ensured through the implementation of a unified state policy across all spheres of life, with a system of economic, political, and organizational measures adequate to threats to the vital interests of the state, society, and individuals. To establish and maintain the necessary level of protection for security objects and vital interests, a system of legal norms regulating relations in the field of national security has been developed. The main directions of the activities of state authorities and relevant leadership in this area are defined. Mechanisms for controlling and supervising national security agencies and their activities are either created or restructured. Key legislative acts include: the 1991 Law on the Ministry of National Security, the 1997 Law on Defense, the 1996 Law on State Secrets, the 2004 Law on Intelligence and Counterintelligence, and the establishment of the Academy under the Ministry of National Security in 1999 [9]. Presidential decrees and other relevant legal documents reflect the principles of ensuring Azerbaijan's national security. The system of ensuring national security by the state, according to the law, includes the state authorities of Azerbaijan involved in security provision, as well as legislation regulating relations in the field of security. The state system for ensuring national security comprises legislative, executive, and judicial authorities, state organizations, and the legislation regulating relations in the field of security [10]. To implement short-term and long-term state programs for ensuring national security, measures are formed and developed in accordance with the decisions of the President and the Government of Azerbaijan. The forces responsible for ensuring national security include the military forces provided for by Azerbaijani legislation, other troops, and military institutions and departments. Azerbaijan's national security is ensured through the consistent implementation of its national security policy using all means at the state's disposal. Participants in the formation and implementation of Azerbaijan's national security policy include: the President of Azerbaijan, the National Assembly (Milli Majlis), the Government of Azerbaijan, the Security Council of Azerbaijan, the Ministry of National Security of Azerbaijan,



executive authorities, and judicial bodies. The National Security Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan was approved by the Presidential Decree dated May 23, 2007, and adopted as a basis for action. The National Security Concept of Azerbaijan reflects all elements of contemporary realities and incorporates the most advanced aspects of international experience. This document was developed taking into account extensive scientific, political, and public discussions, as well as the scientific and practical experiences of modern democracies and the long-term fundamental interests of Azerbaijan. In doing so, it considers Azerbaijan's complex and sensitive geopolitical, geostrategic, geoeconomic, and geocultural environment, which is both advantageous and potentially dangerous due to several features. Ensuring Azerbaijan's national security primarily involves identifying long-term fundamental national interests and the external and internal risks, threats, and dangers directed toward them, and developing an effective national security strategy and concept based on modern global experience. According to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On National Security," the main principles for ensuring the country's national security are:

- Compliance with the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- Basing national security on a unified state policy and balancing and coordinating its implementation;
- Precise definition of the powers of the bodies ensuring national security, coordinating their activities, and ensuring mutual, operational information exchange between them;
- Supervising the activities related to ensuring national security;
- Integration into international security systems; and
- Maintaining a balance between the interests of individuals, society, and the state, and ensuring their mutual responsibility [11].

National security is not limited to the creation of security institutions; it also requires preserving and protecting the country's economic system, political and cultural traditions, historical and psychological memory. The main directions of Azerbaijan's national security policy are:

- Ensuring security through foreign policy instruments;
- Restoring the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- Integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures;
- Contributing to international security;
- Cooperation with international organizations;
- Regional cooperation and bilateral relations;
- Cooperation with neighboring countries;
- Strengthening defense capabilities;
- Ensuring security through domestic policy instruments;

- Strengthening democracy;
- Preserving an environment of national and religious tolerance;
- Protecting science, education, culture, and morality.
- Strengthening internal security;
- Strengthening border security;
- Migration policy;
- Energy security policy;
- Transport security;
- Emergency management, environmental protection, and public health;
- Information security policy [12].

Azerbaijan's national security concept is divided into two directions:

1. Political strategy – defines the main goals, interests, and objectives of national security.
2. Political tactics – determines the methods and means for achieving national security.

The National Security Concept reflects the national interests of the Republic of Azerbaijan. National interests are fundamental values necessary for the existence and life of the people, as well as for their formation and protection. The content and priority of Azerbaijan's national interests depend on the internal and external conditions of the country. The strategic formulation of the national security paradigm of Azerbaijan reflects a conscious and multi-dimensional approach in the direction of safeguarding the state's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national interests in an increasingly complex regional and global context. This paradigm represents the culmination of a coherent integration of political, military, economic, and socio-cultural instruments, orchestrated to ensure resilience against internal instability, external threats, and transnational challenges. The visionary policies and pragmatic foresight of President Heydar Aliyev provided the foundational framework for a modern, adaptive security apparatus with the capability for balancing immediate exigencies with long-term strategic objectives. It is through active diplomatic engagement, participation in international security frameworks, and leveraging energy and infrastructure projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline that Azerbaijan has managed to strengthen its geopolitical leverage while fostering economic stability and regional cooperation. The experience of Azerbaijan, meanwhile, underlines the point that institutional capacity-building, ideological cohesion, and societal resilience are complementary elements of national security and that security is not purely a matter of military capability but also of political legitimacy, socio-economic development, and strategic international partnerships. By keeping domestic policy priorities in line with regional and global security imperatives, Azerbaijan has managed to get out of complex geopolitical rivalries and was able to assert its agency while mitigating risks due to historical conflicts as in the protracted challenges over Nagorno-Karabakh. Ultimately, the national security

paradigm of Azerbaijan exemplifies a model of proactive, adaptive, and integrative statecraft where strategic foresight, resource management, and diplomatic acumen intersect in an endeavor to safeguard and advance national interests. This comprehensive approach offers a broader lesson for states that are confronted with multidimensional security challenges: enduring stability ensues from strong institutions, visionary leadership, strategic alliances, and the sustained harmonization of domestic and international imperatives.

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## Стратегічне формулювання парадигми національної безпеки Азербайджану

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*Це дослідження досліджує еволюцію та консолідацію Концепції національної безпеки Азербайджану, підкреслюючи взаємодію геополітичних, економічних та соціальнокультурних факторів у формуванні рамок політики безпеки країни. Спираючись на теоретичні висновки з міжнародних відносин, стратегічних досліджень та літератури з державотворення, дослідження розглядає, як Азербайджан, як нова незалежна держава в пострадянську епоху, сформулював та інституціоналізував комплексну доктрину національної безпеки для захисту свого суверенітету, територіальної цілісності та соціально-політичної стабільності. Головною метою є аналіз стратегічних, політичних та економічних механізмів, що використовуються Азербайджанською державою для вирішення як внутрішніх, так і зовнішніх проблем безпеки, включаючи територіальні конфлікти, регіональну нестабільність та динаміку глобальної безпеки. За допомогою історико-порівняльного підходу дослідження досліджує роль ключових державних суб'єктів, таких як Президент, Рада національної безпеки, Міністерство оборони та виконавча влада, у розробці, впровадженні та адаптації стратегій безпеки. Методологічно дослідження інтегрує якісний аналіз документів з політичним та історичним аналізом, оцінюючи первинні джерела, включаючи президентські укази, програми національної безпеки, стратегічні енергетичні угоди та законодавчі акти, а також вторинну наукову літературу. Аналіз визначає, як стратегія безпеки Азербайджану охоплює військову модернізацію, енергетичну безпеку, територіальну оборону, регіональні партнерства та гармонізацію заходів внутрішньої та зовнішньої політики для зміцнення національної стійкості. Крім того, він підкреслює вирішальний вплив прагматичної зовнішньої політики, геостратегічної дипломатії та економічних ініціатив Президента Гейдара Алієва, зокрема «Контракту століття» 1994 року та наступних енергетичних проєктів, на зміцнення національної безпеки та позиціонування Азербайджану як регіонального суб'єкта стратегічного значення. У дослідженні також наголошується на адаптивному характері політики національної безпеки, зазначаючи, що розвиток регіональної динаміки, світові енергетичні ринки та соціально-політичні трансформації вимагають постійного перекалібрування пріоритетів безпеки. Результати дослідження свідчать про те, що концепція національної безпеки Азербайджану – це не просто статична структура оборони та політики, а динамічна конструкція, що інтегрує історичний досвід, стратегічне передбачення та геополітичні реалії для забезпечення сталої державності та регіонального впливу.*  
**Ключові слова:** національна безпека, стратегічна політика, геополітика, державотворення, енергетична безпека, Азербайджан.

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