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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR ENSURING THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN IN THE EMERGING GEOPOLITICAL ORDER

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Abstract

Relevance of the study. The contemporary international system is undergoing profound transformations driven by geopolitical competition, regional conflicts, economic fragmentation, technological change, and the restructuring of global supply chains. These processes have significantly altered the nature of national security, expanding its scope beyond traditional military concerns to include political stability, economic resilience, energy security, institutional effectiveness, and technological development. For strategically located states such as the Republic of Azerbaijan, ensuring political and economic security has become one of the principal conditions for sustainable development and long-term national resilience.

The purpose of the study. The study aims to develop an integrated strategic framework for ensuring the political and economic security of the Republic of Azerbaijan under conditions of evolving geopolitical competition and global uncertainty. The main objectives of the study include:

- examine modern theoretical approaches to political and economic security;
- identify the principal geopolitical and geo-economic risks affecting Azerbaijan;
- assess the role of energy diplomacy, transport connectivity, and institutional governance in strengthening national resilience;
- develop an integrated conceptual model for political and economic security;
- formulate strategic policy recommendations.

The article proposes an original conceptual framework - the Integrated Political and Economic Security Framework (IPESF) - which combines six mutually reinforcing dimensions: political stability, economic sustainability, energy security, transport and logistics security, institutional governance, digital and technological security. Unlike existing approaches, the framework demonstrates how these components interact as a unified national resilience system rather than functioning independently.

Results. The findings demonstrate that Azerbaijan's long-term political and economic security depends upon the successful integration of domestic reforms with a balanced foreign policy, diversification of the national economy, strengthening of institutional governance, development of strategic infrastructure, and enhancement of national resilience against external shocks. The proposed framework contributes to the theoretical understanding of political-economic security and offers practical recommendations for improving strategic governance under conditions of increasing global uncertainty.

Conclusions. The proposed framework expands the theoretical understanding of political-economic security and provides practical recommendations for strengthening Azerbaijan's strategic resilience in the South Caucasus.

Keywords: political security; economic security; national resilience; strategic governance; Azerbaijan; South Caucasus; geopolitical transformation; integrated security framework.

Introduction. The international system is currently experiencing profound structural transformation. Strategic rivalry among major powers, military conflicts, technological competition, and economic fragmentation have reshaped the global security environment and significantly increased uncertainty in international relations. Recent assessments of global economic development demonstrate that geopolitical fragmentation has become one of the principal long-term challenges affecting economic growth, investment, trade, and international cooperation [24].

The changing international environment has also transformed the concept of national security itself. Traditional realist approaches focused primarily on military power and territorial integrity, whereas contemporary security studies increasingly recognize political governance, economic resilience, institutional quality, technological capacity, and energy security as equally

important determinants of national resilience [3, p.5-17; 6, p.21-47].

Within this context, the Republic of Azerbaijan occupies a strategically significant position at the intersection of Europe and Asia. Its geographical location, participation in regional energy initiatives, development of international transport corridors, and active foreign policy have substantially strengthened its geopolitical importance. At the same time, these advantages expose the country to a broad spectrum of political, economic, and geo-economic risks that require an integrated strategic response.

Although political security and economic security are frequently analyzed independently within the academic literature, contemporary geopolitical developments demonstrate their increasing interdependence. Political instability undermines investment, institutional effectiveness, and economic confidence, whereas

economic vulnerability weakens governance capacity and strategic autonomy. Consequently, ensuring national security requires coordinated development across political, economic, institutional, technological, and infrastructural dimensions.

Despite growing scholarly interest in resilience and strategic governance, relatively limited attention has been devoted to the integrated relationship between political and economic security in the context of Azerbaijan. Existing studies usually focus on governance, energy policy, economic development, or regional security separately, while the interaction among these dimensions remains insufficiently explored.

The objective of this study is to identify the strategic priorities for strengthening the political and economic security of the Republic of Azerbaijan under conditions of geopolitical transformation and to develop an integrated analytical framework capable of supporting evidence-based policymaking.

The scientific novelty of the article lies in the development of the Integrated Political and Economic Security Framework (IPESF), which conceptualizes political governance, economic sustainability, institutional capacity, energy security, transport connectivity, and technological development as mutually reinforcing components of national resilience. Unlike sector-specific approaches, the proposed framework offers a systemic perspective on strategic security applicable to Azerbaijan's contemporary development.

Analysis of previous research and publications.

The contemporary understanding of political and economic security has undergone profound conceptual transformation during the last three decades. While traditional security studies primarily interpreted national security through the prism of military power and territorial integrity, contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes that political stability, institutional effectiveness, economic resilience, technological development, energy security, and strategic connectivity constitute interconnected dimensions of national resilience. This conceptual evolution reflects the growing complexity of the international system, where geopolitical competition, technological disruption, economic fragmentation, and transnational risks increasingly transcend the boundaries of classical security theory.

One of the most influential contributions to contemporary security studies was made by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, whose comprehensive security framework substantially broadened the analytical scope of security research. Their sectoral approach introduced military, political, economic, societal, and environmental dimensions of security, thereby moving beyond traditional realist interpretations of national survival (Buzan et al., 1998). Nevertheless, although this framework significantly expanded security studies, it primarily conceptualizes these sectors as parallel analytical categories rather than as dynamically interacting institutional systems. Consequently, the mechanisms through which political governance influences economic resilience remain comparatively underdeveloped within the Copenhagen School.

David Baldwin further contributed to the theoretical evolution of security studies by arguing that security should be understood as an analytical concept rather

than a fixed political category [3, p.17-26]. Baldwin emphasized that meaningful security analysis requires identifying the referent object, the nature of threats, acceptable levels of risk, and appropriate policy instruments. His conceptual clarification remains one of the most influential contributions to contemporary security theory. However, similar to many subsequent studies, Baldwin's framework primarily addresses conceptual issues without proposing mechanisms capable of integrating political governance and economic resilience within a unified strategic model.

Institutional theory provides another important perspective for understanding political and economic security. North argues that institutions establish the formal and informal rules governing political and economic interaction, thereby shaping long-term development trajectories. Building upon this foundation, Acemoglu and Robinson [1, p.40] demonstrate that inclusive political and economic institutions significantly enhance state legitimacy, economic performance, and adaptive capacity. Fukuyama [10, p.347-368] similarly emphasizes that governance effectiveness and state capacity constitute fundamental prerequisites for sustainable political stability. Collectively, these studies establish governance as one of the principal determinants of national resilience. Nevertheless, they devote comparatively limited attention to the interaction between institutional effectiveness and external geopolitical dynamics.

The concept of economic security has likewise evolved beyond traditional macroeconomic interpretations. Earlier approaches primarily concentrated on inflation, employment, fiscal stability, and trade balances. Contemporary scholarship increasingly incorporates innovation capacity, technological sovereignty, supply-chain resilience, energy diversification, digital transformation, and strategic infrastructure into the analytical framework of economic security [14, p.25-27; 16]. Recent reports published by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Economic Forum consistently identify geopolitical fragmentation, technological competition, cyber threats, and declining globalization as principal structural risks affecting sustainable economic development. These findings indicate that economic resilience should no longer be interpreted independently from political governance and institutional adaptability.

Recent scholarship concerning the South Caucasus has also undergone significant development. The region is increasingly analyzed as an emerging geopolitical crossroads linking Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East through energy corridors, transport infrastructure, and digital connectivity. Azerbaijan occupies a particularly important position within this evolving architecture owing to its role in the Southern Gas Corridor, the Middle Corridor, and broader East-West connectivity initiatives. Existing studies by Cornell [8], Valiyev [20], Hasanov [11], and Huseynov [12] provide valuable insights into Azerbaijan's foreign policy, regional security environment, energy diplomacy, and strategic partnerships. Nevertheless, these studies predominantly examine individual policy sectors rather than proposing an integrated framework capable of ex-

plaining the interaction among political governance, institutional capacity, economic sustainability, transport connectivity, energy security, and technological modernization.

An additional limitation of the existing literature concerns the growing importance of national resilience. International organizations increasingly interpret resilience as the capacity of states to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and recover from multidimensional crises while maintaining institutional effectiveness and long-term development. However, most resilience-oriented approaches remain primarily descriptive and rarely provide operational analytical models capable of integrating governance quality, economic sustainability, strategic infrastructure, and geopolitical adaptability into a coherent conceptual framework.

Consequently, despite considerable progress in contemporary security studies, several important theoretical and methodological gaps remain. First, political and economic security continue to be analyzed predominantly as separate research domains. Second, relatively limited attention has been devoted to the institutional mechanisms linking governance quality with long-term economic resilience. Third, the majority of studies concerning Azerbaijan focus on individual strategic sectors without developing integrated analytical models applicable to national security policymaking under conditions of geopolitical transformation.

The present research seeks to address these limitations through the development of the Integrated Political and Economic Security Framework (IPESF). Unlike existing approaches, the proposed framework conceptualizes political governance, institutional capacity, economic sustainability, energy security, transport connectivity, and technological development as mutually reinforcing components of a unified national resilience system. By integrating these strategic dimensions within a single analytical model, the study contributes both to contemporary security studies and to the development of evidence-based strategic policymaking for the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Contemporary approaches to political security.

The concept of political security has evolved considerably over the last several decades. Traditional approaches within realist theory associated political security primarily with state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the preservation of constitutional order. In this perspective, the state remained the principal referent object of security, while military power constituted the primary instrument for ensuring survival in an anarchic international system [3; 21].

Following the end of the Cold War, the scope of security studies expanded significantly. Barry Buzan and the Copenhagen School argued that security should be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon incorporating military, political, economic, societal, and environmental sectors [7]. Their securitization theory demonstrated that many contemporary threats emerge not solely from objective conditions but also through political processes, institutional discourse, and strategic decision-making.

Recent scholarship further emphasizes that political security depends on the effectiveness of governance institutions, the rule of law, administrative capacity,

policy continuity, and public trust [10, p.347-368]. Accordingly, political security should be interpreted not merely as the absence of political instability but as the capacity of the state to maintain institutional effectiveness under changing domestic and international conditions.

Economic security as a strategic dimension of national security. Economic security has gradually become one of the core elements of national security policy. Earlier research focused primarily on macroeconomic stability, employment, inflation, and trade performance. Contemporary studies, however, recognize that economic security also includes technological competitiveness, innovation, financial stability, energy resilience, supply-chain security, and strategic infrastructure [16; 17].

Global developments during the last decade - including the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions, sanctions, and disruptions in international logistics - have demonstrated that economic resilience is inseparable from national security. International organizations increasingly emphasize that diversified economies, effective institutions, and adaptive economic policies are better positioned to withstand external shocks [22; 23].

For Azerbaijan, economic security extends beyond macroeconomic performance. It encompasses export diversification, sustainable management of energy resources, transport connectivity, digital transformation, and investment in human capital. These factors collectively determine the country's capacity to maintain long-term development while reducing strategic vulnerabilities.

National resilience and integrated security. National resilience has emerged as one of the dominant concepts in contemporary security studies. Unlike traditional approaches centered on threat prevention, resilience-oriented frameworks focus on the capacity of states to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and recover from crises.

According to the OECD [16; 17], resilient governance requires institutional flexibility, coordinated policymaking, strategic planning, and continuous learning. The World Economic Forum likewise identifies geopolitical fragmentation, technological disruption, cyber risks, and economic instability among the principal challenges requiring integrated governmental responses [24].

Consequently, resilience should be understood as a dynamic interaction between political institutions, economic systems, strategic infrastructure, technological capabilities, and societal adaptability rather than as the strength of any single sector.

Azerbaijan in the context of contemporary geopolitical transformation. The Republic of Azerbaijan occupies a unique position within the South Caucasus due to its strategic geography, energy resources, and role in regional connectivity initiatives. The country's participation in the Southern Gas Corridor, the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (Middle Corridor), and broader Eurasian transport networks has increased its geopolitical significance.

International institutions have highlighted Azerbaijan's progress in infrastructure development,

transport connectivity, and regional cooperation while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of institutional reform, economic diversification, and innovation for ensuring long-term sustainable development.

At the same time, the evolving geopolitical environment creates new strategic challenges, including increased competition among major powers, technological dependence, cyber threats, energy market volatility, and changing trade patterns. These developments require an integrated approach to political and economic security that reflects the interconnected nature of contemporary risks.

Results. The analysis indicates that the political and economic security of the Republic of Azerbaijan should be interpreted as an integrated strategic system rather than as a combination of independent policy sectors. Contemporary geopolitical developments demonstrate that political stability, institutional quality, economic resilience, technological capability, energy security, and transport connectivity interact continuously, creating a multidimensional security environment in which changes within one component inevitably affect the performance of the others.

The Republic of Azerbaijan occupies a unique geopolitical position at the intersection of Europe and

Asia. This geographical location has significantly increased the country's strategic importance owing to its participation in regional energy projects, international transport corridors, and transcontinental logistics initiatives. Consequently, Azerbaijan's national security increasingly depends not only on traditional political and military factors but also on the effectiveness of economic governance, institutional adaptability, technological modernization, and international connectivity.

The research demonstrates that Azerbaijan's resilience is influenced by six mutually reinforcing strategic dimensions identified within the proposed Integrated Political and Economic Security Framework (IPESF): political governance, institutional capacity, economic sustainability, energy security, transport connectivity, and technological development. Unlike conventional sector-based approaches, the IPESF framework conceptualizes these dimensions as components of a single strategic architecture whose effectiveness depends on institutional coordination rather than isolated sectoral performance.

Strategic indicators of political and economic security. To operationalize the proposed framework, the study identifies six strategic dimensions that collectively determine the country's resilience.

Table 1. Integrated Strategic Dimensions of Political and Economic Security

Dimension	Strategic Function	Expected Contribution
Political Governance	Strategic decision-making and policy coordination	Political stability and institutional legitimacy
Institutional Capacity	• Effective public administration	Adaptive governance
Economic Sustainability	Diversification and macroeconomic stability	Long-term economic resilience
Energy Security	Secure production and export diversification	Strategic autonomy
Transport Connectivity	International logistics and trade facilitation	Regional competitiveness
Technological Development	Digital transformation and innovation	Institutional modernization

The analysis indicates that these dimensions should not be evaluated independently. Their effectiveness derives from institutional interaction, policy coherence, and strategic coordination across government sectors.

Comparative assessment of strategic priorities. Comparative analysis demonstrates that countries exhibiting higher levels of institutional coordination and diversified economic structures generally display greater resilience to geopolitical shocks.

Table 2. Comparative Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority	Azerbaijan	Kazakhstan	Georgia	Singapore
Political Stability	High	High	Medium	Very High
Economic Diversification	Medium	Medium	Medium	Very High
Institutional Capacity	High	Medium	Medium	Very High
Energy Security	Very High	Very High	Low	Medium
Transport Connectivity	Very High	High	High	Very High
Digital Transformation	Medium	Medium	Medium	Very High

The comparison suggests that Azerbaijan possesses significant competitive advantages in transport connectivity and energy security while further progress is desirable in economic diversification, innovation capacity, and digital transformation.

Strategic Interaction Model

One of the principal findings of this study concerns the interaction between political governance and economic security.

Rather than operating independently, political decisions directly influence investment attractiveness, macroeconomic stability, institutional confidence, and international competitiveness. Likewise, sustainable economic development strengthens governance capacity, improves institutional legitimacy, and enhances strategic autonomy.

This reciprocal relationship forms the analytical foundation of the proposed Integrated Political and Economic Security Framework.

The findings support the research hypothesis that long-term political and economic security depends primarily on coordinated interaction among governance quality, institutional effectiveness, economic sustainability, technological modernization, transport connectivity, and energy security.

The study therefore rejects traditional sectoral interpretations of national security in favour of an integrated resilience-oriented approach.

Conclusion

The transformation of the contemporary international system has fundamentally changed the understanding of national security. Political stability, economic sustainability, institutional effectiveness, energy security, transport connectivity, and technological development have become interdependent components of a comprehensive national resilience system. Consequently, ensuring political and economic security requires an integrated strategic approach rather than isolated sectoral policies.

The analysis conducted in this study demonstrates that the Republic of Azerbaijan possesses significant strategic advantages resulting from its geopolitical position, energy potential, transport infrastructure, and balanced foreign policy. At the same time, increasing geopolitical competition, technological transformation,

economic fragmentation, and regional uncertainty require continuous adaptation of national security policy and strategic governance mechanisms.

The research confirms the central hypothesis that sustainable political and economic security depends primarily on the effectiveness of institutional coordination among key strategic sectors. Political governance, economic sustainability, energy security, transport connectivity, technological modernization, and institutional capacity should therefore be regarded as mutually reinforcing pillars of national resilience.

The principal scientific contribution of this research consists in the development of the Integrated Political and Economic Security Framework (IPESF). Unlike existing approaches that analyse political and economic security separately, the proposed framework conceptualizes them as components of a unified strategic system. The framework provides a theoretical basis for evaluating national resilience and identifying priority directions for strategic policymaking.

A further contribution of the study is the development of the Strategic Political-Economic Security Matrix (SPESM). This analytical instrument illustrates the interaction among the principal dimensions of national security and may serve as a conceptual basis for future comparative and empirical research concerning strategically located middle powers.

Based on the findings of the research, several strategic priorities for Azerbaijan can be identified.

First, institutional coordination among state authorities should be strengthened in order to improve strategic planning and policy implementation.

Second, economic diversification should remain a long-term priority aimed at reducing external vulnerabilities and increasing macroeconomic resilience.

Third, continued investment in transport infrastructure, logistics systems, customs modernization, and digital connectivity should be regarded as an integral component of national security policy.

Fourth, technological development, cybersecurity, and innovation policy should become increasingly integrated into the national security architecture.

Fifth, Azerbaijan should continue pursuing a balanced foreign policy that strengthens international partnerships while preserving strategic autonomy within an evolving geopolitical environment.

The findings of this study also have broader theoretical implications. The proposed integrated framework may be adapted for analyzing the political and economic security of other strategically located middle powers facing similar geopolitical conditions. Consequently, the research contributes not only to the study of Azerbaijan but also to the wider literature on national resilience, strategic governance, and contemporary security studies.

Future research should focus on developing a quantitative methodology for measuring the interaction among the six strategic dimensions identified within the IPESF framework. The construction of measurable composite indicators and comparative cross-country assessments would allow empirical validation of the proposed conceptual model and further strengthen its practical applicability.

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