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HOW DOES COVID-19 IMPACT ON THE EAEU? THE VIEW FROM AZERBAIJAN

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Eurasian Economic Union	4
Azerbaijan	5
What will be the impact of the pandemic on the EAEU, Russia and member states?.....	6
Will the pandemic crisis make Azerbaijan to consider accession into the EAEU?.....	7
Conclusion	9
Policy Recommendations.....	10
References.....	10

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Executive Summary

2020 has been a year of some major paradigm-shifting developments globally and in Azerbaijan, when country was struggling with war amid the pandemic. Oil prices volatility, economic crisis and potential geopolitical shift following these events will shape Azerbaijan's foreign policy course towards regional integration and certainly with EAEU. This report reviews how the latest developments will affect Azerbaijan's foreign policy towards cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Union in the view of COVID19 pandemic and Nagorno Karabakh War and draws some key conclusions and policy recommendations.

Keywords: *Eurasian Economic Union, COVID-19 pandemic, Azerbaijan, Economic recession, Russia, Geopolitics, Eurasia, Central Eurasia*

Abbreviations: EAEU – Eurasian Economic Union; FTA - Free Trade Agreements; BRI – Belt and Road Initiative; NSITC – North-South International Transport Corridor; CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States; CSTO – Collective Security Treaty Organization; IMF - International Monetary Fund.

HOW DOES COVID-19 IMPACT ON THE EAEU? THE VIEW FROM AZERBAIJAN

Recent global events related to the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences have affected all countries of Central Eurasia.¹ Many of them have already started experiencing signs of recession due to economic slowdown and drop in oil prices. The pandemic has also forced these countries to enter the long-term social crisis. The crisis has revealed long-standing structural and governance problems of the region, especially in the time of heavy reliance on hydrocarbons, dependence on remittances from Russia and Turkey, growing poverty, as well as the lack of safety net to withstand the adversity and crisis. Some countries were able to tap into their Oil/Sovereign/Stabilization Funds². Others, like Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, began seeking urgent external support.

Azerbaijan in comparison with other countries of the region was in a better position at the beginning of 2020. The country had necessary exchange reserves; the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted some economic growth while the country slowly recovered from the 2015 economic crisis and undertook some reforms (International Monetary Fund 2019). The country was expecting the launch of Southern Gas Corridor³ and implementation of the deals signed between Azerbaijani and Chinese companies within Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2019 that was designed to benefit the continued economic growth of the country. But from March of this year (when the first COVID19 cases were confirmed) Azerbaijan was hit by reduced economic activity, shutting down schools, universities, and other venues, and suffered from the volatility in the oil market. The economy of the country is heavily depending on oil and gas resources despite the institutional reforms⁴ since 2015 economic crisis⁵ entered the period of stagnation and impending recession.

2020 has also been a year of political and social unrest in Central Eurasia. Anti-regime strikes following elections in Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, early parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan, clashes on Azerbaijan-Armenia boarder in July and large-scale war from September to November, referendum on constitutional reform in Russia, unrest following parliamentary elections in Georgia - all of these have made this year as one of the most politically turbulent for Central Eurasia over the recent decades. However, this time the global and regional players like China, European Union

¹ Central Eurasia in this paper refers to the geographical locality spanning Belarus in the west, Azerbaijan in the south and Kazakhstan on the east.

² An increase in transfer amount from the State Oil Fund of Azerbaijan (SOFAZ) to the budget supports the 1.7 AZN/USD exchange rate, which has faced less pressure in recent months (Fitch Ratings, 2020); As part of the stabilization function, the National Fund of the Republic of Kazakhstan (NFRK) in April 2020 has mobilized additional transfers of \$4.7 billion to finance increasing budget deficit <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/54188-001-sd-05.pdf>

³ Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) which is an essential part of the Southern Gas Corridor, offering a direct and cost-effective transportation route to South East European countries from the Caspian basin. Completion of its construction was announced in October 2020.

⁴ Despite efforts to diversify the economy, Azerbaijan remains a hydrocarbons dependent economy. Over the last few years oil output has declined, which was accompanied by a significant drop in oil prices. However, during this period consumption and government spending remained elevated. Azerbaijani Central Bank was forced to devalue its currency in late 2015 and early 2016, in response to falling foreign currency reserves. Overall, Azerbaijani manat depreciated almost twice with respect to the Euro and USD, immediately affecting the general price level in the country.

⁵ The crisis of 2015 created a momentum for structural reforms. Dozens of licenses for business activities were eliminated, while tax and custom authorities were rendered more transparent. Trying to break the monopolistic nature of the economy, the government also eliminated some duties and taxes for import-export operations. And in September 2016, the State Committee on Property Issues launched a new "Privatization Portal" to provide potential investors with information about state privatization efforts and legal frameworks. As a result, in 2018 World Bank's Doing Business Report Azerbaijan was included in the top 10 list of reformist countries in the world. The country also jumped 32 ranks up and became 25th in 190 countries for easiness of doing business. Meanwhile, another report called Global Competitiveness Index, compiled annually by the World Economic Forum (WEF) for 140 countries in the world, placed Azerbaijan on 35th place in 2017. However, UNIDO's Competitive Industrial Performance Index (2019) ranks the country 115th out of 150 economies.

(EU), United States of America (USA) and Russia are struggling to deal with their own problems leaving others to manage their own issues alone.

The following paper discusses possible scenarios of development of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and assesses possible reasons for the need of closer cooperation or even accession of Azerbaijan to the Union in view of economic and political turbulency this year.

Eurasian Economic Union

The Eurasian Economic Union is an international organization in the pursuit of economic integration originally established by the Russian Federation, Belarus, and Kazakhstan in 2015. The same year the Union was joined by Armenia⁶ and Kyrgyzstan⁷. Today the EAEU is a functioning regional trade bloc with a common market of 182 million people and accumulated GDP of around \$2 trillion (Vinokurov, 2017). The Union's largest economies are Russia and Kazakhstan. Goals of the EAEU integration can be summarized as "4 freedoms": Single market for goods, services, capital, and labour; Harmonization of regulations; Economic policy coordination. The major functions of the Union include establishment of customs union and tariff-free regulations. Being the first similar Union across the post-Soviet region, it aims to development of functional, rules-based framework to promote deeper economic ties between the EAEU members, and thereby integrate states into a new cohesive economic entity (Dragneva & Wolczuk, 2017).

Since its inception the EAEU is mainly viewed as Russia's flagship foreign policy tool for reinforcing and securing Russia's presence in neighboring countries, implementing shifts in the architecture of Eurasia with accession of all post-Soviet states into the Union (Hett & Szkola, 2015) (Libman, 2017) (Perović, 2018) (KseniaKirkham, 2016). Although, being the most important Russia-led regional organisation, the EAEU has not succeeded in attracting new member states since 2015. Moscow has been promoting the EAEU as an alternative to integration with the European Union for the former communist countries, such as Serbia⁸, Moldova⁹, Albania, and North Macedonia¹⁰. The EAEU has built on a network of the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with countries from outside of post-Soviet space with the view to promote mutual trade and investments. The list of countries expressing interest or already having signed the FTAs with the EAEU include Israel¹¹, Egypt¹², Iran¹³, Serbia, Vietnam¹⁴, and India¹⁵.

⁶ Accession Treaty signed 10 October 2014, entry into force 2 January 2015.

⁷ Accession Treaty signed 23 December 2014, entry into force 12 August 2015.

⁸ In 2019 Serbia signs Free Trade Deal with EUEA member states despite warning from EU on incapability of the deal with further EU integration and membership. *EU warns Serbia to cancel free trade pact with Russia if it wants to join bloc* <https://www.euronews.com/2019/08/28/eu-warns-serbia-to-cancel-free-trade-pact-with-russia-if-it-wants-to-join-bloc>

⁹ *Moldova granted observer status in Eurasian Union* <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/moldova-granted-observer-status-in-urasian-union/>

¹⁰ *Russia invites Albania, North Macedonia to join the Eurasian Union* <https://balkan.eu.com/russia-invites-albania-north-macedonia-to-join-the-urasian-union/>

¹¹ The first round of consultations on a free trade agreement between EAEU members and Israel took place in Moscow on April 23-24, 2020 <https://tass.com/economy/1043750>

¹² *Egypt-EAEU can sign free trade zone agreement in 2020* <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/3/71919/Egypt-EAEU-can-sign-free-trade-zone-agreement-in-2020>

¹³ *Interim Agreement signed between the EAEU and Iran enabling formation of free trade area* <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/en/nae/news/Pages/17-05-2018-1.aspx>

¹⁴ <https://www.vietnam-briefing.com/news/vietnam-eaeu-full-free-trade-agreement.html/>

¹⁵ *Eurasian Economic Union and India: search for new ways of interaction* <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/en/nae/news/Pages/14-08-2020-1.aspx>

Geopolitical interests of Russia in the promotion and expansion of the EAEU are exceeding post-Soviet space geographically driven by the desire to re-build Soviet Union politically. The EAEU is being promoted (mainly by Russia) as a body for structuring relations with international organizations such as the EU. The EAEU has become one of the key partners for China's BRI since it includes part of its overland route, namely the Silk Road Economic Belt, through Central Asia to Europe.

Azerbaijan

After the collapse of the USSR, over the past three decades Azerbaijan has found itself at the crossroads of all major Eurasian integration and connectivity projects, such as the EU's Transport Corridor Europe - Caucasus - Asia Project (TRACECA), China's BRI, and Russia-led EAEU - all aiming to build lubricative link through Central Asia - South Caucasus - Europe. At the same time, since gaining independence from the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan has been reticent to engage in integration projects among the post-Soviet states, keeping an equal distance and neutral status from all of them and avoiding endorsing one at the expense of the others. In other words, foreign policy of independent Azerbaijan characterized by balanced approach.

Since 1993 the EU has been investing in the region by innovating and renovating ports, railroads, roads along the corridor. In 2009 Azerbaijan joined the EU's Eastern Partnership programme and began negotiations on the Association Agreement which has not been signed as of today, due to noticeable disengagement with the West after the Russian-Georgian War in 2008. Azerbaijan joined Chinese BRI in 2015 with signing a Memorandum of Understanding in relation to joint encouragement of the establishment of the Silk Road Economic Belt and additionally 10 documents worth \$821 million between the Azerbaijani and Chinese companies (beltandroad.news, 2019). Chinese investments and projects were positively observed in the country because political establishment and public do not find China to have political interests in the region, mostly due to its geographical distance. Therefore, the BRI project and associated activities and investments are viewed as purely economic (Valiyev, 2016).

When Russia gradually began to turn back to the post-Soviet region in the mid-2000s with regional integration projects, Baku has been distancing itself from those. Russian initiatives were perceived as restraining for becoming an energy hub and an independent foreign policy player (Valiyev, 2014) (Valiyev, 2016) (Bayramov, 2013) Also, the economic benefits of Russia-led integration projects have not been sufficiently attractive compared to the European and Chinese initiatives.

Within the framework of existing analytical discussions of disadvantages of joining the EAEU a series of traditional limitations are mentioned. One of the most significant is a loss of freedom in independent energy policy development, energy resources price and routes negotiation particularly with the European partners (Cornell, 2015) (Valiyev, 2016). Turkey, Italy and the EU are major trade partners of Azerbaijan taking important place in existing distribution of export volumes, however, such strategic partnership and trust might be affected as Azerbaijan would be subject to the uniform EAEU external economic policy mainly formed by the Russia's geopolitical interests. So, even those who assume possibility of joining the EAEU, stipulate that Azerbaijan should secure as many exemptions of general accession terms as possible, especially in the EAEU's common energy policy and independent policy development freedoms (Bayramov, 2013). On the other hand, it is considered that pure economic integration with the EAEU (with exemptions on energy policy) would be attractive to Azerbaijan because it would increase and simplify access of Azerbaijani products to neighboring markets, import of agricultural products from the member-

states at lower prices would benefit proportion, a long-term visa-free regime in Russia, pension protection to working in EAEU states population (Bayramov, 2013) (Valiyev, 2016).

What is the impact of the pandemic on the EAEU, Russia and member states?

The EUEA member states span huge and complex geographical space of Central Eurasia from Belarus in the Eastern Europe to Kyrgyzstan in the Central Asia. This geographical space has been in between of order-making struggles of the global powers during the last century, that have got disguise of connectivity initiatives between the EU, China, and Russia. Since the 2000th Russia has been making double attempts to rebuild its sphere of influence over the region, but this time those attempts are part of bigger “struggle for a multipolar world” (Baunov, 2018). Russia puts significant efforts to build reputation of the Eurasian Economic Union as an important initiative for both economic growth and geopolitical role in the region (and EAEU member states) by signing free trade agreements with countries outside of the post-Soviet space and sending message to China on a possibility of closer cooperation and formatting concept of Greater Eurasia (Kremlin.ru, 2017). Greater Eurasia has become Russia’s ambiguous “long march” geopolitical vision (Bordachev, 2019) that took form of the EAEU. At the same time, the Union is not going through its best times which is caused by COVID-19 pandemic crisis, and regional upheaval and instability.

COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a global economic recession. Changes in world economy could not bypass Russian economy. World Bank projected Russia’s 2020 GDP growth to contract by 6%, an eleven-year low, weaker ruble and raising unemployment (World Bank, 2020). However, not represented in official unemployment and GDP rates, informal economy which is around 1/5 in Russia (rbc.ru, 2017) was hit the hardest by the current crisis. It has dried up opportunities for migrant workers from both Central Asia and South Caucasus and put at risk important economic pressure instrument of Russian influence over the EAEU and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) member states. The EAEU member states have avoided high death tolls of COVID19, but pandemic has exposed many governance and economic problems: corrupt public health system, unequal opportunities and low access to distance education for both educators and students, high rates of unemployment and low national reserve funds.

The pandemic has become a real-life test for all regional integration initiatives through ability and readiness of member states to collectively respond to emerging challenges. On April 3, 2020 the heads of the EAEU member states approved two packages of the Eurasian Economic Commission on measures aimed at ensuring economic stability during the pandemic, maintenance of access to critical supplies, facilitation of macroeconomic recovery with the cooperation of regional financial institutions (EUEA, 2020). Customs duties within the Union on components and materials for significant sectors have been reduced and restricted supply to third countries of critically important medicines and equipment and socially important goods to prevent their lack on the Union’s market (russia-briefing.ru, 2020). Also, Russia has provided humanitarian assistance to the EAEU states, sending medical teams, PPE supplies, and test kits to member states. But overall, the pandemic crisis has displayed unpreparedness of the Union to offer adequate resources to support them in dealing with economic shock and social challenges. Newly established institutions have demonstrated incompetence and lack of sustainability to address crisis of such caliber while Russia (Union’s leading economy) has been preoccupied with its domestic economic downfall and politically was disengaged with constitutional reform¹⁶. Thus, the EAEU efforts and response to

¹⁶ Between 25 June – 1 July, 2020 have been conducted national wide vote in Russia on number of amendments to constitution. More: Elizabeth Teague, *Russia’s Constitutional Reforms of 2020* https://brill.com/view/journals/rupo/5/3/article-p301_3.xml

the pandemic has faded and looked unconvincing and inadequate when compared to those of the EU¹⁷.

The EUEA e-Summit of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council was held on 19 May 2020 with attendance of presidents of five member states to adopt the Union's new strategy document 2025. The e-Summit was remarkable for its rare critical rhetoric towards the EAEU from the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev: in particular, he criticized aspects of a new strategy for the development. (Sanchez, 2020) Another disagreement between the Union member states was about gas transportation prices from Russia to Armenia and Belarus. Their leaders insisted on switching to a single intra-union tariff close to the domestic Russian price, but this possibility was rejected by the Russian president (Stronski, 2020). Thereby, the Strategic Development document for Eurasian Economic integration has not been approved during the e-Summit¹⁸.

So, this year was remarkable for inability of the Union member states' leaders to achieve agreement on the most pressing issues, to smooth over many challenges¹⁹, to deeper regional economic cooperation, and in fact even Russia and Kazakhstan, the founding members of the Union, have been experiencing difficulty in shipping goods across their mutual borders (Zakon.kz, 2020).

This year was also full of unprecedented political activities in the EAEU member states. The mass anti-regime uprising in Belarus since August 2020, combined with the pandemic, has forced the Belarusian ruble to fall to its record low (bne IntelliNews, 2020). Parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan have sparked protests mainly due to complaints on violations on polling stations, but also the rhetoric²⁰ of ruling elite on the need of further integration within Eurasia (namely Russia) was interpreted as a threat for sovereignty of Kyrgyzstan and led to protests. In Armenia, geopolitical constraints, primary Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan, and socio-political problems, have always been viewed as the primary determinants to join the EAEU. Thus, it is not clear how foreign policy of Armenia will evolve after the dire outcomes of the recent Nagorno-Karabakh war.

Will the pandemic crisis make Azerbaijan to consider accession into the EAEU?

The COVID-19 pandemic and world oil price drop have harshly affected macroeconomic stability, employment, and business activity in Azerbaijan. In the revised budget the projected GDP growth has been cut to 5.0% by the end of the year from projected growth of 2.4%. This cut reflects pandemic containment measures, oil supply cuts and oil prices fall. The planned budget deficit has been raised to 12.4% of GDP from 2.3% in the original budget (Fitch Ratings, 2020). In view of entering the period of recession and instability caused by the pandemic crisis, the willingness of

¹⁷ As part of its global response to the coronavirus outbreak, the European Commission has mobilised an emergency support package for EaP countries allocating 80 mln euros for immediate needs. More: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/coronavirus_support_eap.pdf

¹⁸ *Outcomes of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council* <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/en/nae/news/Pages/19-05-2020-6.aspx>

¹⁹ Disputes over the application of sanitary, phytosanitary and veterinary measures by national departments, for example: between Minsk and Moscow on dairy products; between Nur-Sultan and Moscow on watermelons and chicken meat; claims for certain exemptions from the common customs tariff of the EAEU for third countries, for example, for used foreign cars and sugar imports; complaints about unlawful restrictions on transit supplies, etc.

²⁰ A video appeared on social media where political party leader Marat Amankulov talks in Moscow: "30 years of our independence have shown that it's time to come to your senses and it's time to return... On the territory of Eurasia, only a united state can be sovereign. And for us — the Kyrgyz — not to lose our subjectivity, we must now be together and integrate."

Azerbaijan to join the EAEU might increase. Accession may reduce the costs of imported industry and agricultural products, while increasing the volume of exports of non-oil sectors industries to the EAEU area and its numerous FTA partners; and providing access to the EAEU single labour market and Russian foreign direct investments (FDIs).

However, as the EAEU and other Russia-led regional initiatives²¹ in Azerbaijan have always been perceived as essentially political rather than merely economic, the rhetoric towards the possibility of joining those was dependent on perception of Russia's rising geopolitical presence in the South Caucasus, rather than on economic benefits. Regional instability (Russian-Georgian War of 2008, undeclared Russo-Ukrainian War and following Crimea annexation) and disengagement of the West in these events, have constrained Azerbaijan's foreign policy's room for maneuver. In the recent years, rhetoric towards Russia-led regional integration initiatives have gradually moved to hypothetical from total rejection, as Azerbaijan's perception of Russia as both a threat and the only assertive power center in the region able to affect Nagorno-Karabakh conflict grow (Shiriyev, 2019). Thus, fluctuation and softening of the official Baku position towards the EAEU accession should be analysed from the perspective of geopolitical tactic towards conflict resolution.

Since 2015 Azerbaijan has taken a position that membership in the EAEU is possible if it is accompanied with prior political gains (Shiriyev, 2019). From this standpoint, it has been occasionally hinting Russia on potentials of greater cooperation and integration such as consideration of shipping Russian gas to Europe through the Southern Gas Corridor (Garibov, 2020). At the same time it was multiple times publicly stated that Azerbaijan is not planning on joining the EAEU yet and prefers development of bilateral relations with trade block member states (VestnikKavkaza, 2015); (Trend.az, 2020).

Nevertheless, Azerbaijan is a vital part of the joint Russian-Indian connectivity project, the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), connecting South Asia to Northern Europe via the Persian Gulf and the Caspian region (Contessi, 2020). The project considered to be the main rivalry to the BRI in Eurasia, which may increase Russia's influence over the region and countries it involves. Within the transport corridor participating countries will naturally have closer commercial ties and standardized tariffs and customs duties. This kind of economic cooperation supports the argument that Azerbaijan does not entirely reject the possibility of closer cooperation (signing FTA) or accession to the EAEU, but its sovereign interests prevail over any economic benefits accession may provide.

The equidistant position of Russia to Armenia (member of all the Russian-led integration projects in post-Soviet Eurasia) and Azerbaijan in the Second Karabakh war has availed Azerbaijan to regain much of the occupied territory. This was embraced by the public that saw Russia as a setback power on way of resolution (both diplomatic and military) of the conflict. Russia-brokered peace agreement signed between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the deployment of 1960 Russian peacekeepers to Nagorno-Karabakh, may appear as a geopolitical coup of Russia in the region since it has not resolved the conflict but rather stopped the ongoing violence, anchored significant territorial advances of Azerbaijan in war and prevented total abolishment of illegal unrecognized Armenian enclave in Nagorno-Karabakh. Thus, further development of the EAEU-Azerbaijan relations will be influenced by the outcome of the Nagorno-Karabakh war in 2020 that has structurally changed the character Russian-Azerbaijani relations.

²¹ Such as Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

Conclusion

The chain of events in the Central Eurasian space during the 2020, including pandemic and socio-economic crisis, political turbulence, and social unrest, have revealed a number of factors that will shape the EAEU's development path and geopolitical stand in the upcoming years:

- indisposition of the EAEU to counter economic crisis as it does not have resources to support its members
- internal disagreements within the Union
- unwillingness of the member states to limit their sovereignty to accommodate deeper integration within the Union
- lack of soft-power appeal of Russia within the post-Soviet space
- crucial internal problems in the member states, *inter alia*, poor governance, corruption, and unsustainable economic model
- rise of new internal critical rhetoric toward the Union
- stagnation in deeper integration among current members

Azerbaijan and other states in the Central Eurasia find themselves under constraints in the face of Russia's strengthening geopolitical position in the region for the last decade, yet Azerbaijan had able to pursue the policy of neutrality and non-alignment to date. The chances of yielding to pressure to access to the EAEU in view of economic and political turbulence of this year should be reviewed with consideration of the following:

- It is hard to maintain regional security and resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with respect of Azerbaijan's sovereign interest without recognition of increasing presence of Russia in the South Caucasus with view of developments of 2008 and 2014
- The outcome of the Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020 and Russian-brokered peace agreement have strengthened Russian influence over the South Caucasus and will impact Russian-Azerbaijani relations
- The pandemic led trend of deglobalization and diplomatic irrelevance of US and France in the peace agreement will further disengage the West from the region while the latter will become deeper engaged in Russia and China-led initiatives (INSTC and BRI) trying to overcome economic recession
- The pandemic-triggered economic crisis has revealed the EAEU's ineffectiveness, and even its backwardness for Azerbaijan comparing to existing other regional integration formats

Policy Recommendations

For the current situation accession to EAEU would hardly bring Azerbaijan any extra benefits. Moreover, it may hurt Azerbaijan's growing non-oil export. Meanwhile, the Russian possible closing of borders or recent embargo on import of tomatoes from Azerbaijan, may also negatively affect Baku's future economic diversification aspirations. Thus, the following policy options could be considered for Azerbaijan.

1. Azerbaijan should reach and sign Preferential Trade Agreement with EAEU that would allow export of certain Azerbaijani products to the markets of union countries. The Union has experience of signing similar agreement with Vietnam, Serbia, China and Iran. Azerbaijan had concluded similar agreement with Turkey and working on such agreement with Iran. Reaching such agreement with EAEU would allow Azerbaijan to increase its export and domestic production.
2. With the end of Karabakh conflict, actively use EAEU platform to normalize Azerbaijan's economic relations with Armenia; deblock transportation connections as well as get help from Union to initiate and build trans-border trade with Armenia.
3. To link Azerbaijani electricity system with EAEU's one for getting access to electrical supply in case of emergencies.
4. Establish joint center with EAEU for coordinating issues of environmental pollution, transborder river issues, emergency management, crime, drugs and weapon smuggling issues etc.

Thus, having close economic and managerial connection with EAEU without political component would be beneficial for Azerbaijan in the long run.

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