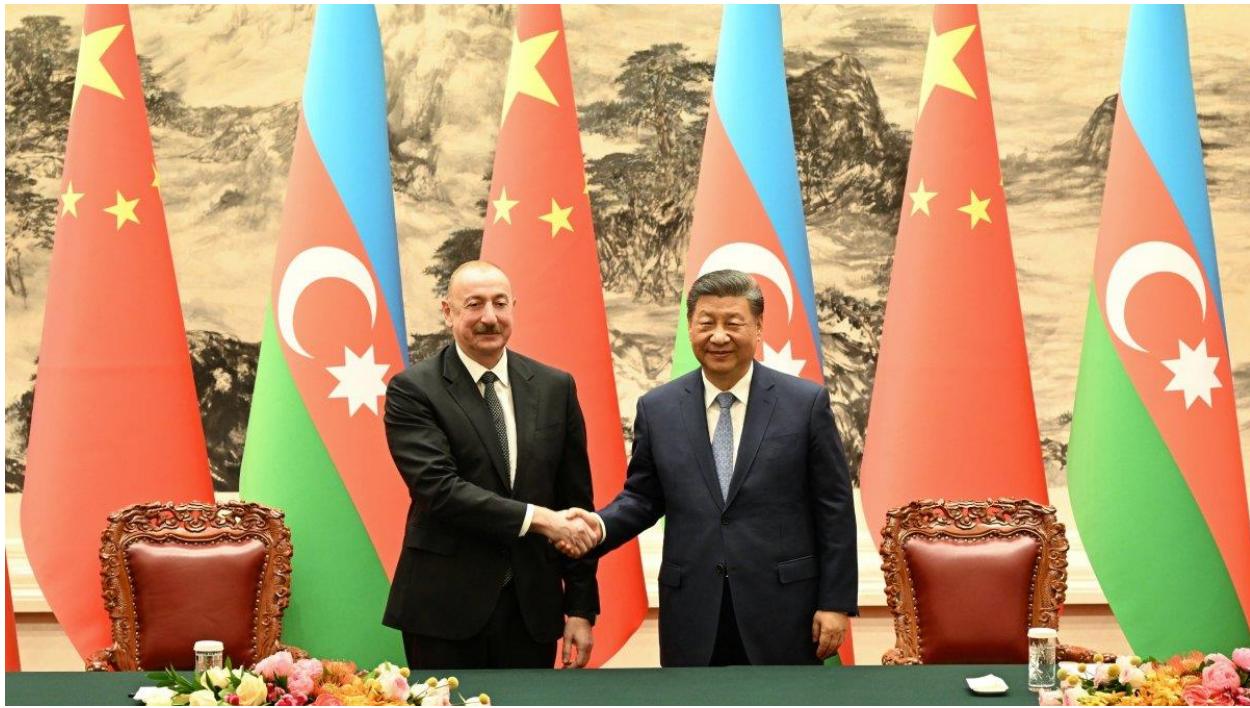


# Promises of Azerbaijan-China comprehensive strategic partnership

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[Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev \(L\) and Chinese President Xi Jinping shake hands during a signing ceremony at the Great Hall of the People, Beijing, China, April 23, 2025. \(DHA Photo\)](#)

Aliyev's China visit seals 11 deals, integrating the BRI and the Zangezur Corridor, boosting cooperation in renewable energy and trade

The state visit of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev to the People's Republic of China on April 22-24, accompanied by a large delegation, drew significant attention both regionally and globally. The visit was particularly noteworthy against the backdrop of the ongoing U.S.-China trade rivalry, which has dominated international discourse in recent years, as well as due to the important agreements signed between Azerbaijan and China. The two leaders, who signed a strategic cooperation declaration between the two countries in July 2024, transformed this cooperation into a comprehensive strategic partnership during their last visit.

In addition, 11 agreements were signed during the visit that will further develop the relations between the two countries. These included mutual visa-free travel, cooperation in space and the peaceful use of space, a cooperation plan for the joint promotion of the "One Belt, One Road"

(BRI) project, deepening bilateral cooperation in barrier-free trade, and a protocol of intent on the twinning of the cities of Nakhchivan (Azerbaijan) and Urumqi (China).

### **Political messages of the visit**

This visit is politically significant from various aspects. First, it reflects the growing geopolitical influence of China in the Middle East, Turkestan and the Black Sea region — a development that has increasingly attracted Azerbaijan's attention in recent years. Thus, Azerbaijan is increasing the number of its strategic partners against possible global and regional threats in the era of increasing global uncertainty, parallel to the fragmentation within the Western alliance.

Second, Azerbaijan's pursuit of deeper strategic ties with China aligns with its multidimensional foreign policy approach. In this regard, both countries share a common interest in supporting the Global South, further strengthening the foundation of their partnership.

Third, China has become a balancing factor for Azerbaijan, which is located in a difficult geopolitical position in the South Caucasus, where global competition is increasing. Establishing a strategic partnership with a global power like China significantly enhances Azerbaijan's regional and international position. This is particularly important given the recent Western support for Armenia, including increased military cooperation with France and India.

Fourth, this visit is important for the development of relations and cooperation between the Turkic world and China. In this context, one of the most notable aspects of the visit was the agreement to establish a sister-city relationship between Urumqi, the capital of China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Nakhchivan, a key city in Azerbaijan. Official Beijing's consent to the twinning of Nakhchivan and Urumqi is noteworthy in two respects. China does not oppose the development of relations of the Xinjiang-Uyghur region with Azerbaijan, a secular nation-state with a majority of Muslim people. By agreeing to the brotherhood between Urumqi and Nakhchivan, where the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) was established, China is expressing that it does not see [cooperation with the Turkic world](#) as a threat.

### **Central Corridor-BRI integration**

The visit also took place at a time when transportation and connectivity projects, particularly the Middle Corridor, have gained increased strategic importance in the region. Prior to the visit, on April 4, the EU-Central Asia joint summit was held in Uzbekistan, during which the European Union pledged 12 billion euros (\$13.55 billion) in support for the development of the Trans-Caspian Corridor, a critical component of the Middle Corridor. However, on one hand, the EU's imposition of its political agenda on Turkic nations, and on the other hand, the increasing support for Armenia in the South Caucasus, is met with discomfort in Azerbaijan.

Additionally, the EU and the U.S. have recently supported Armenia's "Crossroad for Peace" project, which is seen as a counter to the Zangezur corridor in the South Caucasus. This support was further underlined in the strategic partnership agreement signed between Armenia and the U.S. From the Western perspective, the primary goal is to prevent the Zangezur Corridor from being utilized by China, Iran and Russia. Consequently, one of Azerbaijan's main objectives during Aliyev's visit was to secure China's political backing for the Zangezur Corridor project.

Another important point here is that the corridor extending from India to the Middle East and Europe is in conflict with and even rivals China's BRI and the "Central Corridor" of the Turkic world, which is one of the reasons that pushes Azerbaijan and China to establish friendship with the proposed plan.

### **Cooperation in renewable energy**

As part of Aliyev's official visit to China, six agreements were signed between Azerbaijan and Chinese partners to strengthen cooperation in the field of renewable energy. These agreements encompass a range of initiatives, including the construction of solar power plants with a total capacity of 260 MW, a 100 MW floating solar plant, a 30 MW battery energy storage system, the development of an offshore wind farm with a minimum capacity of 2 GW, a separate 2 MW wind energy project, and broader cooperation on renewable energy development and power system planning. Azerbaijan aims to increase the share of renewables in its energy mix to 30%-33% in the coming years.

Developing renewable energy sources is one of the most important goals in combating climate change and global warming. According to data from the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), renewables have the potential to supply up to 90% of global electricity by 2050, up from 25% in 2018. Under IRENA's 1.5 degree Celsius (2.7 degree Fahrenheit) scenario, installed renewable power generation capacity must rise from approximately 2,500 GW today to nearly 27,800 GW by 2050. Achieving this goal requires a drastic acceleration, reaching around 850 GW of new renewable capacity additions annually — a fourfold increase over current levels.

In 2021, China's total installed renewable power generation capacity reached 1,063 GW, accounting for more than one-third of the global total renewable power generation capacity. China aims to increase the share of non-fossil fuels in its primary energy consumption to 25% by 2030. IRENA's cost data show that the cost of renewable power in China has dropped sharply over the past decade. China remains a leader in patenting green technologies across the Eurasian region.

### **Trade volume increasing**

During the visit, important agreements were signed between the two countries in the fields of trade and investment, and it was stated in the comprehensive strategic partnership declaration that the parties are against protectionist trade policies.

It is particularly striking that the trade volume between the two countries has increased rapidly since 2015. Azerbaijan's official participation in the BRI project in 2015 and the successful implementation of the agreements signed between the parties during the same period have an important role in this. The trade volume between the two countries increased from \$1.33 billion in 2018 to \$3.74 billion in 2024. China, which was Azerbaijan's sixth-largest trading partner in 2018, became its fourth-largest trading partner in 2023.

The reduction of customs and taxes is also of great importance in increasing the trade volume between the parties. As of 2019, the import and sales VAT of electric cars imported to Azerbaijan has been gradually reduced. Meanwhile, on Nov. 11, 2022, the 15% import tax on electric passenger cars for up to three years was reduced to 0%, and the import tax rate on second and third

level electric energy chargers for electric vehicles has been reduced from 5% to 0%. These developments have led to a 20.7% increase in China-Azerbaijan trade relations.

On the other hand, before the COP-29 summit in Azerbaijan, 160 electric buses were purchased with the framework agreement signed between Azerbaijan and China's BYD. The agreement plans to cooperate in areas such as electric bus production in Azerbaijan to meet both domestic demand and export as of 2025, low-tonnage electric trucks, electric vehicles for public services and electric passenger cars as of 2026, and battery assembly for electric energy storage as of 2028. A total of approximately \$60 million of additional investment is planned to be made by the joint venture to be established for these projects. In 2024, China's direct investment in Azerbaijan was \$920 million, and most importantly, 298 of the 375 Chinese companies operating in Azerbaijan are actively carrying out projects in the liberated territories. China's "Huawei" company, in particular, is working on projects such as smart villages and smart cities. Azerbaijan accepts these projects as support for the redevelopment of its territories liberated from occupation.

In conclusion, the transformation of Azerbaijan-China relations into a comprehensive strategic partnership following Aliyev's visit marks the beginning of a new phase of cooperation for Eurasia and the Turkic world. Against the backdrop of fragmentation and decline within the Western alliance, the strengthening **cooperation between China and the Turkic world** emerges not just as an opportunity but as a necessity. By establishing a strategic partnership with Azerbaijan – an advocate for the empowerment of the Turkic world – Beijing signals that it does not view the OTS as a threat. On the contrary, both sides are demonstrating a preference for partnership over competition, offering a new model of cooperation for the Eurasian region.