



## ENERGY POLICY OF UZBEKISTAN AND KAZAKHSTAN IN THE CONTEXT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA

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### ABSTRACT

*This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the energy policies of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in the context of economic security in Central Asia. The study examines the strategies for managing oil, natural gas, and electricity resources in both countries, political initiatives aimed at ensuring energy independence, and opportunities for regional cooperation. Furthermore, the article analyzes mechanisms for strengthening economic security through the energy sector, reducing competition, and mitigating risks. The findings demonstrate how the energy policies of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan influence regional stability, economic development, and integration with global energy markets.*

### INTRODUCTION

Central Asian countries are rich in natural resources, and their economic security is closely linked to the energy sector. Kazakhstan possesses abundant natural gas and oil reserves, while Uzbekistan is endowed with gas, oil, and electricity resources. Therefore, the energy policies of both countries are strategically important not only for national economic stability but also for regional security. Kazakhstan's energy policy is largely shaped by its geopolitical position and its borders with Russia and China. In contrast, Uzbekistan seeks to ensure economic independence by diversifying energy resources and expanding export routes. Cooperation between the two countries is therefore essential for enhancing energy security and ensuring economic stability in Central Asia.

Kazakhstan, as a resource-rich country, is one of the major energy hubs in the region. A significant portion of the country's economy relies on the export of oil, gas, and other raw materials. Consequently, the energy sector is not only the main driver of economic development but also a crucial factor in national economic security. Fluctuations in global oil prices, changes in the external political environment, and increased competition in export markets directly impact Kazakhstan's economic stability, particularly affecting the national currency, the Tenge. Strengthening energy security, modernizing oil and gas infrastructure,

expanding export routes, and enhancing technological independence are key tasks for the state. Therefore, analyzing Kazakhstan's economic security necessitates a focus on the oil and gas sector. Central Asia is abundant in natural resources; however, Kazakhstan borders two major powers, Russia and China, which increases the necessity of ensuring economic and military security. Kazakhstan also serves as a natural buffer for Uzbekistan, contributing to regional stability.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research applies a qualitative and comparative methodological approach to examine the energy policies of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and their implications for economic security in Central Asia. The study focuses on identifying key policy strategies, resource management practices, and regional cooperation mechanisms that influence the stability of the energy sector and national economies. The research primarily relies on secondary data analysis. Official reports, government policy documents, international energy statistics, and academic publications were analyzed to obtain reliable information about energy production, resource reserves, and national energy strategies. Particular attention was given to reports from international organizations such as the International Energy Agency (IEA), national energy ministries, and analytical publications related to the Central Asian energy sector. In addition, the study employs a comparative analysis method to evaluate similarities and differences between the energy strategies of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. This method allows the identification of how each country utilizes its natural resources, diversifies energy sources, and strengthens economic security through energy policy. The comparison also highlights the role of geopolitical position, export routes, and regional cooperation in shaping national energy strategies. Furthermore, the research uses a descriptive-analytical method to interpret the relationship between energy policy and economic security. This approach helps explain how energy diversification, infrastructure development, and renewable energy initiatives contribute to sustainable economic development and regional stability. Overall, the combination of comparative, descriptive, and analytical research methods enables a comprehensive evaluation of the role of energy policy in strengthening economic security and promoting long-term stability in Central Asia.

## **DISCUSSION AND RESULTS**

Economic security can be defined through various theoretical lenses. A state can be considered economically secure if its income allows it to meet societal needs without negatively affecting social layers and in alignment with national interests. Continuous analysis of economic resources, international trade, GDP, demographics, migration, and inflation is essential. Kazakhstan possesses some of the largest oil and gas reserves in Central Asia. Geological studies indicate that the country ranks among the top ten globally in oil reserves and holds a significant position regionally in natural gas. The oil and gas industry constitutes a substantial portion of Kazakhstan's GDP, and energy exports are a major source of state budget revenue. Tengrinews.kz reports that Kazakhstan has 271 oil fields and 61 gas condensate fields, with over 90% of oil reserves concentrated in 15 major fields. Key fields include Kashagan, Tengiz, Karachengek, Uzen, Royal, Yangiyol, Kalamkas, Karazhonbos, Buzachi North, and North Troya. These fields produce millions of tons of oil annually, meeting the country's economic and financial needs. Despite the strong potential of Kazakhstan's energy sector, systemic risks remain that directly affect economic security. Heavy reliance on raw material exports makes the economy sensitive to global oil price fluctuations, leading to budget deficits, currency instability, and investment delays. Transitioning from a single-industry energy system to a multi-sectoral industrial system is therefore essential. New projects, including the country's first nuclear power plant near Ulken village, Almaty region, aim to diversify energy production, with completion targeted for 2035–2036. Kazakhstan's

electricity sector also plays a crucial role in economic security. The national electricity grid (MET) facilitates transmission and distribution across the country and neighboring states (Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan), ensuring reliable supply for industrial and wholesale consumers. Uzbekistan, likewise, has significant energy potential in Central Asia. The country ranks among the regional leaders in natural gas reserves, forming a critical part of its economy and state budget revenues. Energy security in Uzbekistan is closely tied to the stability of the energy sector, which underpins domestic production, budget revenues, and international cooperation. According to the International Energy Agency, in 2023 Uzbekistan's proven natural gas reserves were approximately 2,239.9 billion cubic meters, sufficient for domestic consumption and export potential. Oil and condensate reserves also remain significant, supporting industrial production. Overreliance on natural gas poses risks to economic stability, especially in the face of global price fluctuations, potentially reducing state budget revenues and investment flows. Consequently, diversification strategies, including renewable energy development and nuclear energy initiatives, are central to Uzbekistan's energy policy. Uzbekistan plans to increase the share of renewable energy by 2030, particularly solar energy, given the country's high solar potential. Nuclear energy projects are also being explored to ensure stable electricity supply and long-term energy security. The electricity network supports regional cooperation and integration, contributing to GDP growth by sustaining industries reliant on a stable energy supply.

## **CONCLUSION**

The development of energy sectors and infrastructure in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan is crucial for ensuring economic security in Central Asia. Both countries possess rich natural resources that require effective management to support domestic production, export capacity, and uninterrupted industrial activity. Kazakhstan's oil and gas fields and nuclear energy projects enhance diversification, reduce carbon emissions, and stabilize electricity supply. Similarly, Uzbekistan's energy sector modernization, digitization, renewable energy development, and nuclear energy initiatives strengthen internal energy balance, reduce gas dependence, and support long-term sustainable growth. Overall, diversifying and modernizing energy infrastructure allows both countries to reinforce economic security, increase national energy independence, and ensure the continuity of industrial operations.

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