

“Differentiation through bargaining power in EU-Azerbaijan relations: Baku as a tough negotiator”

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Paper abstract

Using the case of democracy and human rights promotion, this paper examines bargaining power, as part of the othering process, in relations between Azerbaijan and the European Union. Post-independence, Azerbaijan increasingly positions itself as a strong and influential actor in the EU-Azerbaijan relations, demanding more discretion from the EU, based on perceivably equal input and interest representation. This paper argues that the EU policy-making machinery struggles to recognise and adjust to these demands. The EU approach, even under the new revision, remains too unilateral, causing the Azerbaijani government to resist and gain influence through different routes, including lobby activities. The paper concludes that EU policies and policy-making mechanisms should become more differentiated, to reflect the political reality of growing bargaining power between the EU and Azerbaijan.

Key words: Azerbaijan; bargaining power; democracy promotion; differentiation; Eastern Partnership; European Union; differentiation