

# Is Oil and Gas Really a 'Gift from God'? Why Azerbaijan's President is Wrong About Fossil Fuels

13.11.2024



## 1. Introduction

Azerbaijan's president recently made a controversial statement at COP29, calling oil and gas reserves a "gift from God" and arguing that countries with fossil fuel resources should not be blamed for contributing to climate change. While his viewpoint may resonate with some, it fails to acknowledge the long-term environmental consequences of burning fossil fuels. The world did not always have a habitable atmosphere. To create one, the planet buried carbon in its soil, forests, and fossil fuel reserves. Now, by

extracting and burning these carbon stores, humanity is reversing the natural process that made life possible. The question remains: is oil and gas really a divine gift, or is it a dangerous curse that could ultimately threaten our planet's habitability?

## 2. The Origins of Our Habitable Atmosphere

At the dawn of Earth's formation, the planet was inhospitable. There was no breathable atmosphere, no lush forests, and certainly no oceans teeming with life. Over millions of years, Earth underwent a transformation, burying excess

carbon in the form of carbonate rocks, forests, and fossil fuels. This process helped create the breathable air we enjoy today. But by extracting these fossil fuels and releasing stored carbon back into the atmosphere, we're undoing the very process that gave us life.

### **3. The Role of Fossil Fuels in Climate Change**

It's undeniable that fossil fuels have played a significant role in modern civilization, driving industrial development and global economies. However, the burning of oil, gas, and coal has led to an unprecedented rise in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels.

According to NASA, the current concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is higher than it has been for at least 800,000 years. This surge in greenhouse gases is the primary driver of global warming, leading to extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and ecosystem disruptions.

### **4. Is Oil and Gas a 'Gift from God'?**

The notion that oil and gas are a "gift" implies they were meant to be used without regard to long-term consequences. While fossil fuels may have been a natural result of Earth's geological processes, their widespread extraction and consumption are far from benign.

Fossil fuel reserves are not gifts; they are geological remnants of a time when the Earth had to sequester carbon to maintain a stable climate. Now, humanity is releasing that carbon back into the atmosphere at an alarming rate, destabilizing the climate system that took billions of years to perfect.

### **5. The True Cost of Fossil Fuel Extraction**

Despite claims that countries with fossil fuel reserves should not be blamed for their existence, we cannot ignore the consequences of burning these resources. Every ton of carbon released contributes to the greenhouse effect, pushing us closer to a future where our planet is unrecognizable. The urgency of addressing this issue is clear. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that we have only a small window of time to prevent catastrophic warming, with current trajectories leading us to a 2°C temperature rise within decades.

## 6. Conclusion

Azerbaijan's president may believe oil and gas are a divine blessing, but this view overlooks the critical responsibility we bear in managing our planet's resources. Fossil fuels were not meant to be endlessly extracted and burned. They represent a bygone era when the Earth buried carbon to maintain stability. Now, humanity's actions are reversing that process, and the consequences are dire. When the air becomes unbreathable and the Earth grows unbearably hot, we will realize whether oil and gas were truly a "gift" or, as it seems more likely, a dangerous legacy that we must learn to manage before it's too late.



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