

Analysis of the development of railway transport in the territory of Azerbaijan over the East-West transport corridor

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Abstract. We concentrate on the development of railway transport in the East-West Transport Corridor which is a highly appropriate and timely topic for today's regional purpose. Azerbaijan's geo-strategic location has always attracted attention from the times of the ancient Silk Road to modern times. Azerbaijan has a really big role in the East-West Transport Corridor. With the help of Azerbaijan's railway transport goods from east countries are sent to European countries. That's why the improvement of railway transport is one of the most strategic plans in Azerbaijan. So, in the article, railway transport was analyzed in the territory of Azerbaijan.

Key words: railway transport; logistics; transportation; Middle Corridor; infrastructure; train; goods

1. INTRODUCTION

Azerbaijan is a landlocked country. The world's oceans are not directly accessible to us. The fact that Azerbaijan has economic strength, political stability, and predictable government policies, together with efforts to build bridges and create deeper ties with as many nations as possible, has contributed to the situation that exists today. The middle corridor's full commissioning, which will be advantageous to all the countries in the region, cannot be accomplished without security and economic potential. Along with that, of course, is what each nation that makes up the middle corridor has done on the internal front, or more specifically, how well they completed their homework in order to develop a physical infrastructure for logistics and transportation. Our geographical advantage is that we are located between Europe and Asia. We are in the middle of two continents, which permits us to play a vital part in connection difficulties. However, of course, physical infrastructure availability was most critical, and we invested heavily in that area for many years. And now, when we look at our train links and roadway infrastructure in Azerbaijan, we realize that everything is prepared [1]. Figure 1 shows East-West Transport Corridor from China to Europe.



Fig. 1. East-West Transport Corridor map

In addition, additional transportation initiatives, such as the North-South corridor, will add to the East-West corridor's synergy. As a result, Azerbaijan is a participant in both corridors, and the majority of the transportation and logistics infrastructure for these corridors in Azerbaijan is complete. What we are doing currently is just updating; we are constructing new railway lines to boost the speed of trains and cargo trains. Simultaneously, we are investing in transportation infrastructure, including air cargo transportation infrastructure. Our trade seaport, a relatively new component of transportation connectivity initiatives, will be enlarged [2].

Azerbaijan's 44-day Patriotic War and the liberation of the occupied lands have created new opportunities for the regional transport corridors. We are in the midst of finishing our airport improvements. After the completion of Lachin Airport, which will be the third airport in the liberated areas, Azerbaijan will have nine international airports. This is, of course, not only for passenger transit but also for freight transportation. As a result, we anticipate a considerable expansion in cargo transportation through Azerbaijan and are prepared for it [3].

2. MAIN PART

Azerbaijan has an essential role not only in East-West Transport Corridor but also in North-South Transport Corridor. Rail may benefit the environment while also being a logistical advantage, reducing time on long-distance shipping. Many regional rail projects have been announced in the last decade. The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is one of these, connecting Scandinavia to the subcontinent while avoiding the Suez Canal. The 7200-kilometer route passes via Russia and Azerbaijan before arriving at the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas, where containers are loaded onto ships heading for the massive Indian port of Nhava Sheva near Mumbai [4].

This corridor transports cargo to Europe in both ways. The first is via the Georgian ports of Poti and Batumi, while the second is by the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway. The cost of transportation has been greatly lowered with the commissioning of Azerbaijan's Baku-Tbilisi-Kars project, making transit transportation more lucrative and increasing the amount they carry [5]. And figure 2 shows Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway map [6].



Fig. 2. Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway Map

Middle corridor which passes through Azerbaijan borders, integrates to the infrastructure projects and global logistics through right logistic solutions. So that, there have been marked improvement in transit containers in the middle corridor via the East-West corridor (both Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan directions) [7].

Azerbaijan inaugurated a new international airport in Zangilan, the second airport it has built in Karabakh since its victory over Armenia in 2020. The airport is intended to serve as a hub for Azerbaijan's "Zangezur Corridor" project. The Zangilan Airport is one of the most important developments, both economically and strategically. The Zangilan Airport will be connected with the Zangezur corridor, which will be operational soon.

It ought to be mentioned that the building and operation of Zangilan Airport would connect the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic to the main region of Azerbaijan. Moreover, big projects such as Fuzuli International Airport, which is set to open on October 26, 2021, and Lachin International Airport, which is now under construction, aim to provide ideal conditions not only for investment but also for the development of a large modern logistics hub in the region [8].

The 2nd Karabakh War concluded in the de-occupation of those territories in late 2020. The November 10 ceasefire deal includes a provision for the Nakhchivan corridor, which would allow for the re-establishment of cross-border transport lines along the Araz River's north banks [9]. Figure 3 shows Turkiye-Azerbaijan route through the Nakhchivan corridor by another name Zangezur corridor. Additionally, figure 4 provides a map of other major train routes and projects.



Fig. 3. Turkiye-Azerbaijan route through Zangezur Corridor



Fig. 4. Other major rail projects

The Zangezur Corridor runs through Azerbaijan and Armenia territories reaching Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan's autonomous region, which neighbours Turkiye [10].

78% of the design work for the Horadiz-Aghband railway line, which is scheduled to be finished in 2024, has been completed, while 38% (53.2 km) of the construction work has been completed.

The Horadiz-Aghband railway, as an internationally important route, will play a significant part in the quick transit of products between Asia and Europe in the near future.

The proposal calls for the construction of nine stations (Horadiz, Marjanli, Mahmudlu, Soltanli, Gumlag, Hakari, Minjivan, Bartaz and Aghband).

This route will also have 469 engineering structures, including 41 bridges, 22 road crossings, three tunnels, and other features. The project will be finished in three stages [11].

The completion of the Kars-Igdir-Aralik-Dilucu-Sadarak-Nakhchivan-Julfa railway project will expand the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic's export prospects and transform Nakhchivan into a regional transit hub.



Fig. 5. The test train has been operated on the first section of the Horadiz-Aghband railway, an integral part of the Zangezur Corridor, January 25, 2022, Fuzuli-Jabrayil, Azerbaijan / Azerbaijan Railways

Horadiz-Aghband railway is showed in the figure 5 an integral part of the Zangezur Corridor [12].

Azerbaijan is taking strong steps forward. While contributing to regional peace and security, this road will provide trade and investment opportunities for countries along the Middle Corridor route with access to the Caspian Sea [13].

The Zangezur Corridor will connect the Turkic globe, which is one of its most important features. As a result, the geography of the shattered Turkic world will be linked with transportation and logistics initiatives [14].

Inter-ministerial and governmental cooperation among Middle Corridor countries, as well as the formation of new multilateral initiatives and joint ventures, such as those within the Organization of Turkic States and the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), indicate the potential for integrated institutions dedicated to improved transportation and logistics. This would undoubtedly encourage the creation of regional trade and industrial zones, as well as other types of economic integration beneficial to Central Asia, the Caucasus, Turkiye, and southern Europe [15].

3. CONCLUSION

The article shows that the discussions today and tomorrow will advance the regional transport and connectivity agenda and bring more long-term peace to the region. Azerbaijan will reap significant economic gains from the East-West transport link in the future. Trains moving along the line will move at breakneck speed. As a result, whether it was our energy project or our transportation project, we

needed to work very hard in order to achieve our target. Moreover, opening of the new railway transport corridor will make Turkic states link with each other on transportation and logistics initiatives.

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