

The Role of Global Digital Governance in the Support of the East-West Transport Corridor: Azerbaijan's Current Advantages

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Abstract—The realisation of new alternative roads in the East-West Transport Corridor and the functionality of these roads are related to the management approach and administrative structure. In this respect, the article examines the importance of the global digital governance approach in terms of obstacles that may occur in the transportation corridor. Globality and digitalization are the basic conditions of the subject under study. In the Second Karabakh War, Azerbaijan's successful retrieval of occupied lands and clearing of the Armenian structures that kept the region paralysed gave birth to the perspective of an alternative route for the east-west transportation corridor. Azerbaijan has governance and digitalization features that can play an important role in the functionality of the corridor. The study focused on the factors covering the governance approach of the corridor. An actor analysis of the subjects of the corridor was made and evaluated in the case of Azerbaijan.

Keywords—global digital governance, digital governance platforms, governance phases, actor network theory.

I. INTRODUCTION

The East-West corridor, which was considered the Silk Road in different parts of history, had different alternatives. It is even claimed that once upon a time, when the level of the Caspian Sea was low, the Silk Road passed through a separate land route between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. The functionality of the Silk Road was ensured by the active participation of local actors along the road. Any obstacle that may occur on the Silk Road, such as robbery, cliffs, floods, war, or political instability, has led to the determination of new road alternatives with the immediate participation of local actors and information sharing. Of course, unlike the old times, the advantages of globalisation and digitalization today offer opportunities to provide interactive functionality for the east-west corridor.

Especially in terms of the disciplines of politics and public administration, we can define globalisation as the common integration of management subjects. This integration offers global-level suggestions to local government subjects to solve problems. Sometimes global recommendations fail to yield results in local applications, and problems cannot find their own solutions. An example of

this situation is the occupation of Azerbaijan's historical lands by Armenia and the Minsk Group's inability to reach conclusions that could solve the problem for a long time. Ultimately, the settlements occupied by Armenia for nearly 30 years were deprived of global integration, the land's ecology was terrorized, and they were isolated from the world. The fact that the Armenians did not want to accept any national, cultural, or religious differences other than their own in the lands they occupied and that they continued their land claims and aggressive policies kept the region paralyzed. Of course, there was no global governance involved in this case. It is possible to accept Azerbaijan's taking back its occupied lands through war during the Second Karabakh War as an example of a glocal solution. In a short time, Azerbaijan has cooperated with states such as Israel, Turkey, Italy, and Russia, as well as many transnational companies and non-governmental institutions, for the recovery of the lands liberated from occupation. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev created a new perspective on global governance by including the term "Zengezur Corridor" in the geopolitical lexicon [12]. This means that Azerbaijan's social and state traditions are possible for global governance.

Considering that the east-west transportation corridor has a global character, it is important to evaluate the activity of the corridor in terms of its global and digital governance approaches. In the study, the factors of global digital governance related to the corridor were examined in terms of the problems that may arise regarding the management of the transportation corridor. An actor analysis was made, including the interests of the subjects of the corridor, and the governance potential of Azerbaijan had evaluated.

II. GLOBAL DIGITAL GOVERNANCE: ENSURING CORRIDOR PLURALISM

Today, social transformation, followed by rapid technological development, has led to the use of concepts with a wide range of meanings. The concept of governance, which has come to the fore with a new semantic feature, especially in the field of management, has not only changed the management philosophy but also increasingly reflected its innovation in many areas. Especially since the 1990s, one of

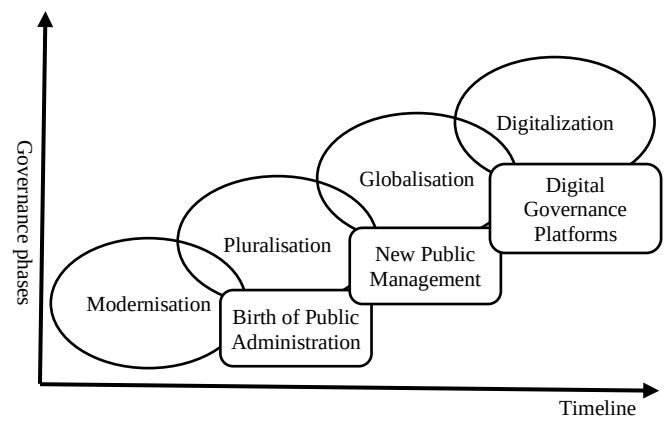
the innovations that has made itself known in management, politics, economy, and public issues at the international level is the concept of governance. Although the origin of the term governance dates back to ancient times, it has undergone semantic neologism and started to be used in a new sense, especially since the period when globalisation took a new phase [9]. The 1989 report of the World Bank, which we can consider a global actor, contributed to the use of the concept of governance in a new sense [17].

The concept of governance includes the multi-actor condition and participation approach demanded by the new conditions and dynamics that have emerged, especially in the fields of management and politics. The understanding of global governance, which is the upper dimension of governance, characterizes the transition of any event from the framework of the nation-state to a multidimensional and polycentric process with the participation of transnational, supra-state, and intra-state actors. Global governance is defined as the expression of the common interests of the state, market, citizen, and all institutions at the global level through laws, responsibilities, and regulations [15]. For a more specific definition, we can define global governance as follows, based on the definition of globalisation we have stated:

“It is the multi-actor and participatory integration of management subjects at a global level.”

An American expert in international relations and professor of political sciences, James Rosenau, had evaluated governance as different from its traditional meaning. James Rosenau gave "global governance" the meaning of regulating mutual relations in the absence of political power [14]. Later, in his article published in 2021, he focused on the displacement of political power rather than its lack. Governance, which is repeatedly emphasised in the documents of international organisations, is recommended as a tool for solving many problems such as economic growth and development, access to services, employment, health, education, gender equality, protection of vulnerable groups, social integration, resource management, sustainable development, technology, security, and global partnership.

G. Shabbir Cheema, in his study on cross-border governance issues, charted the United Nations Development Programme's support for strengthening governance in three stages: modernization, democratisation, and globalization [3]. Although we contribute to his evaluation based on the activities of the international organisation, we define the governance phase differently in four stages: modernization, pluralization, globalisation, and digitalization. The criteria we based this determination on were the public development process and the current conditions of the corridor.



Source: Developed by the author with contribution from Shabbir Cheema's article.

Fig. 1.: Phases of Governance

Modernization can be considered the main phase in the transition from traditional society to modern society. Modernization based on economic development has led to the emergence of public administration consisting of certain principles, the formation of a political environment suitable for civil society values, and ultimately the emergence of the main elements needed by governance. Shabbir Cheema defined post-modernization as democratisation, like Seymour Martin Lipset [8]. On the other hand, we take the critical aspects of modernization into consideration, agree with Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel's claim that democratisation occurs at a later stage, and focus on the view that the next stage is pluralization [13]. The pluralization phase of governance is the phase where traditional public administration and civil society principles are applied and the realisation of governance is attempted at the local level.

Pluralization has divided state power horizontally and vertically into civil society and market organisations, transnational institutions, local governments, and other social structures. This situation has weakened the decision-making ability and management effectiveness of the bureaucratic, administrative, and burdened structures of the state. The ability of many public agents to react quickly to emerging problems signalled the need for the state to reform its management and transition to a governance approach. In developed countries, the inefficiency of the state has been eliminated by "new public management" practices based on the adoption of private sector management principles.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the bipolar world gave birth to a new tempo of globalisation and increased the social role of international organizations. Thus, the phase of transition of all states to governance under the name of new public management at the global level through international organisations has begun [3]. If pluralization increases the role of actors who can adopt governance well, globalisation has increased the power of transnational and corporative structures to the detriment of the state. The globalisation phase of governance has brought public-private partnerships, participatory and transparent management, the rule of law, accountability and responsiveness, decentralisation, and privatisation to the public administration of states [1]. As we mentioned before, we can conclude that globalisation has gained global characteristics in its governance, based on its definition of integration of

management subjects. Thus, it is necessary to characterise global governance not only as economic but also as managerial.

We can interpret the penetration of digital technologies into all areas of our daily lives and the digital integration of public space as digital transformation or digitalization. COVID-19 actions, especially at the global level, have started the digital transformation era in the world, whether mandatory or voluntary. Digitalization, like globalisation, enables the integration of management subjects. Unlike globalisation, this integration occurs through digital governance platforms. Thus, we can define global digital governance as the integration of management subjects into digital governance platforms with multi-actor participation.

The importance of global digital governance increases with the problems caused by globalisation and digitalization processes, such as global digital currency, the internet, global information policy, cross-border data flow, patents, digital tax conflict between countries, the structure of global power, the regime of global governance, and artificial intelligence [6]. We see that as the problems take on a wide spectrum, there is a need for global governance based on digital cooperation and, at the same time, digital governance based on global cooperation. In response to these needs, one of many examples is the establishment of the "UN High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation" by the United Nations Organisation in 2018. The panel's report, titled "The Age of Digital Connectivity," gave five recommendations regarding global digital governance.

1. Building an inclusive digital economy and society,
2. Developing human and institutional capacity,
3. Protecting human rights and human agency,
4. Promoting digital trust, security, and stability,
5. To promote global digital cooperation [5].

The demand for global cooperation in digitalization is related to the need to accelerate the process and participate as global stakeholders in solving social problems as well as obtaining economic benefits. In addition, since the digital technologies that the Internet finds fundamental are located outside the borders of sovereign countries, governance will manifest itself globally in order to solve many problems [16].

Adam Nobis evaluates the new Silk Road, globalisation, and world order as concepts that affect each other. According to him, the formation of the new Silk Road also represents a new type of international relations, globalisation, and world order [11]. The phenomenon he defines as "silk road globalisation" has historically had different types, such as iron globalisation, bronze globalisation, silk globalisation, Atlantic globalisation, angloglobalisation, and cyber globalisation. For example, it is similar to Helle Vandkilde's conceptualization of the globalisation of the Bronze Age through bronzing [11]. Kevin Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson defined the globalisation of the 19th century as "Anglobalisation.". In terms of these references, we can conceptualise today's eastern and western corridor under the name of "digital silk road globalisation" or digital globalisation.

III.CORRIDOR SUBJECTS PARTICIPATION AND PLURALIZATION

If the global and digital aspects of the corridor explain the scale and layer of governance, pluralism explains the style of governance. To understand governance from a pluralistic perspective, an actor analysis of the corridor is needed. Identifying the subjects of the corridor also helps to ensure its governance and create a transportation infrastructure that can accommodate the different functions of the corridor. The capacity of the corridor is determined by where it is narrowest and has the most obstacles, where the transport infrastructure is inadequate, and where the terminal has the most time-consuming procedures [2]. Such phenomena weaken trade, reduce economic relations, and generally reduce the importance and functionality of the corridor. To avoid bottlenecks in the corridors, the close cooperation of different actors in the corridor's operation and joint strategic planning are required [2]. The identification of interested parties in the operation of the corridor should focus on stakeholders as well as shareholders. The decisive factor in actor analysis is the subject's overriding interest in its activity. The resources and interests of the actor make him different from other actors. Therefore, we identify the subjects of the East-West corridor by referring to their current interests. Some of the subjects of the corridor have been identified using different sources, as follows:

TABLE 1. SUBJECTS AND INTERESTS OF THE EAST-WEST TRANSPORT CORRIDOR

Subjects of the Corridor	Interests related to the Corridor
Developed countries	Provision of the global market, distribution of natural resources
Developing countries	Additional source of income for the development of the country's economy
Local companies	Opportunities to earn revenue from foreign markets
Multinational corporations	New investment opportunities, influencing the economies and social policies of states
International organizations	Enabling new integrations
Traders	It is the growth of the trade area and capacity
Shareholders	
- Consumers	Ability to benefit from goods and services not available in the internal market
- Workers	Integration into the global labor market, new job opportunities
- Supplier	Offering a wider range of goods and services to buyers
- Local citizens	Infrastructure problems and the formation of new areas of activity
Customs	Full control of the quantity and type of products entering and leaving the country
Logistics	
- (Inland) shipping companies	Higher quality of service and entering of new markets.*
- Existing shippers	Lower transport costs, more transport opportunities/alternatives, greater reliability and safety.
- Potential (new) shippers	Better access to market, opening up of new markets, more transport opportunities/alternatives, lower transport costs.*
- Railways	Higher quality of service and possibility to compete with the separate market segments.*
- Road haulage industry	Higher quality of service, greater flexibility and reliability.*
- Forwarding industry	Greater range of transport opportunities/alternatives, lower costs.*

- Intermodal transport operators (MTO's)	Better coordination of activities, higher quality of service, more transport alternatives, lower costs. *
- Global governance	Development of a shared transportation system

Source: Table created by the author. Those marked with * are cited [2].

In the table above, the subjects of the corridor are analysed and identified within the framework of global governance. It is clear from the actor analysis that the same type of subject may have different interest objectives. For example, there are differences of interest in the corridor between underdeveloped or developing countries and developed countries. Consumers, businesses, suppliers, and local communities are considered to be subjects of the corridor as sub-stakeholders due to their interaction with the corridor's activity. At the same time, it is possible to see that the sub-subjects of the corridor, which are calculated as the same type of logistics-related corridor, have different interests. The importance of global governance is that subjects (actors) with different goals and interests can reach a consensus on the functionality of the corridor. If we pay attention to the table, we have considered global governance as the self-interested subject of the corridor, drawing on the actor-network theory approach [7]. In fact, the development of the common transport system is not only in the interest of global governance but also in the interest of national governments, investors, shareholders, traders, and all other subjects. The fact that Azerbaijan, unlike Armenia in terms of the corridor, is a governance-enabling subject increases the importance of Azerbaijan as a state in the development of the common transport system. The interests of the Azerbaijan Republic and its human, financial, governance, technological, and geographical resources are sufficient for this.

The actor of the corridor, which we classify as an important developed country from the historical point of view or from the point of view of today's globalisation and conditions, is the People's Republic of China. The combination of the New Silk Road, in which China plays an active role, and the strong sides of globalisation is called "chiglobalisation". "Chiglobalisation" has been conceptualised as globalisation with Chinese characteristics, China's increasing global role, "globalisation is Silk Road 2.0" [11]. One of the first questions that comes to mind is whether the chiglobalisation alternative of the New Silk Road is multilateral or not. After all, China, as a powerful actor, may want a monocentric global Silk Road. Chinese President Xi Jinping's use of the terms "community of shared destiny" and "cooperation and common prosperity" in his interpretation of the corridor seems to give chiglobalisation a pluralistic and democratic character [10]. It remains to be seen whether China's reference to a pluralistic approach is due to its awareness of the emergence of a polycentric world or to its Confucian philosophy. From the assessment in the first part of this paper, it is clear that the pluralistic and multilateral approach is not a subjective preference, but is related to the multilateral character that today's global digital governance requires, with the participation of all stakeholders. Indeed, the design and implementation of the new routes of the East-West corridor will involve the actions of the United States, Russia, the European Union, China, India, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Afghanistan and other states, companies and international organisations.

IV.CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

The global nature of the East-West transport corridor, the need for cooperation from a large number of governance subjects and the recent trend of digitalization have increased the importance of the concept of global digital governance for the realisation and functioning of its new routes. As a result of the analysis, four phases of governance in terms of the public development process were identified: modernization, pluralization, globalisation, and digitalization. Both governance phases enable the integration of the subjects of governance. The East-West corridor is currently experiencing the dualism of the governance phase of globalisation and digitalization. From the analysis of governance phases, we can conclude that there is a need for global governance based on digital cooperation and digital governance based on global cooperation in the transport corridor.

In this study, the concepts of globalisation, governance, and digitalization are discussed and the concept of global digital governance is determined. Today's digitalization has led to the emergence of global digital governance platforms. An example of a digital platform that will enable global digital governance is the Digital Stability Board (DSB) [4].

When it comes to the provision of the east-west transport corridor, it would be wrong to consider it only as ensuring the availability and security of trade routes. Because the corridor can be considered as existing and functional only if the opportunities offered by it are attractive and the involvement of interested parties is ensured. The functionality of the corridor is related to financial, customs, technological, and economic conditions, security, and legal credibility. The participation of many and different actors in the complex, their interaction, proper assessment of interests, and provision of feedback are important for the functionality of the corridor.

The actor analysis of the transport corridor in terms of governance shows that the range of existing problems that may occur is quite wide. The assessment of the interests of the subjects identified as indicators in the actor analysis enabled the identification of governance issues. Thus, by ensuring the governance of the corridor, it is possible to eliminate obstacles such as management potential, market demand matching, economic dependence, multilateral agreements, the dilemma of internal price formation and globalisation of prices, political obstacles, inadequate customs and logistics infrastructure, and digital backwardness. Due to the limited size of the article, these problems are not emphasised separately.

One of the subjects of the corridor, which can be considered in the category of developing countries in the actor analysis, is the Republic of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's active role in the region in recent years has saved the region from geopolitical deadlock, offered the global community an alternative to the New Silk Road, increased digital transformation practices and demonstrated its high governance potential. It is clear from the analysis that although Azerbaijan is in the category of developing countries, it has the qualities of other subjects of global governance, such as international organisations and multinational companies, taking into account the importance

it attaches to digitalization. China, which belongs to the developed country category, is also an active actor in the corridor, which has the characteristics of various governance subjects. China's globalisation as "Chiglobalisation" and its Silk Road model proposal transform it into an important actor in the transport corridor. China's pluralistic approach to the governance of the corridor can be considered an important phenomenon in terms of global digital governance.

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