# The Importance of the Opening of the Zangezur Corridor in The Modern Middle East Transport System

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***Abstract:*** *The opening of the Zangezur Corridor is curicial for the transporation systemin the Middle East. İt facilitates faster and more efficient goods transport between Asia and Europe. Additionally, it strengthens economic ties between Russia, Turkey, Central Asia and China. This corridor enhances the region^s transit potential and expand market access for countries. The importance of the new corridor at the regional level will form an alternative in a number of different directions. The first and most important is the emergence of a new route between Turkey and Central Asia. In particular, Turkey's dependence on its regional rival, Iran, will be reduced and its connection with Central Asia will be through more acceptable countries.*

***Keywords: corridor, Zangezur, Middle East, transport, connection.***

## I INTRODUCTION

The opening of the Zangezur Corridor marks a transformative milestone in the development of regional transportation and trade. Strategically linking Azerbaijan with Turkey, the corridor not only shortens transit routes between the South Caucasus and the Middle East, but also promotes the integration of regional economies. By providing a more direct and efficient route for the movement of goods, energy resources, and people, the corridor is expected to increase trade volumes, reduce logistics costs, and stimulate economic growth in the neighboring countries. In addition, its creation is expected to strengthen geopolitical stability and foster new partnerships by diversifying transportation options that previously relied on longer and more congested routes. At a time when efficient connectivity is synonymous with competitive advantage, the Zangezur Corridor is emerging as a critical artery that underpins the modernization of the Middle East's transportation system and paves the way for broader regional integration.This introduction blends insights on economic, logistical, and geopolitical benefits to highlight the corridor's pivotal role in the modernization of transportation networks in the Middle East.

## II PROBLEN STATEMENT

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The military operations carried out against Armenia-Azerbaijan in September 2020 ultimately ended with the shameful defeat of Armenia. As a continuation of these military operations, the one-hour anti-terrorist operation that began on September 19, 2023 once and for all destroyed the myth of “many years of Armenian invincibility”. This victory was Azerbaijan’s victory not only over Armenia, but also over the “Armenian lobby,” which had been sheltering under the wings of major powers and terrorist organizations for many years, flattering them with dishonor and betrayal.The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the victorious Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, correctly assessing the purposeful policy pursued by him for many years, as well as the political and economic developments in the world, has once again confirmed his words "I know very well what to do and when." The opening of the "Zangezur Corridor", which was accepted as one of the conditions of the tripartite agreement concluded after the Second Karabakh War, which ended with the glorious victory of the Azerbaijani

people, was separately mentioned. Although more than four years have passed since the Karabakh war, Armenia is trying to prevent the opening of this corridor by all means. If we look at the issue from a broader perspective, we will see that Armenia's interests have perhaps been left in the background for this purpose. One of the main states preventing the opening of this corridor is Iran. (Although Iran did not participate in the trilateral agreement) At the same time, it is also within the interests of Russia, which has always had the same interests as Iran in the South Caucasus issue. It is just that the Russia-Ukraine war has caused Russia to be less visible in the political arena in this issue. It is a well-known fact that the implementation of East-West relations precisely through Azerbaijan undoubtedly does not coincide with the interests of either Russia, Iran, or Armenia. If this were not the case, Armenia, which is a slave and outpost of Russia, would have fulfilled the terms of the agreement signed by V. Putin long ago.

The Zangezur Corridor has the potential to have certain political and economic effects on the countries of the region in a different form. We can summarize the political and economic effects of this corridor for Azerbaijan as follows:

- The direct road connection with Nakhchivan would be fully ensured.
- The air communication with Nakhchivan has cost the state budget additional millions of dollars. The opening of the road will reduce transportation and communication costs by millions of dollars.
- The economic potential of Nakhchivan will be used more effectively as a border region.
- The diversification of Azerbaijan's international transport and communication routes will take place, and this will increase the ability to identify possible threats, as well as precautions against risks.
- Trade relations with Turkey will develop further.
- The access of Azerbaijani products to the eastern and western markets will be fully ensured. [10].

## III THE MAİN PART

It is an irrefutable assertion that no entity, whether individual, institution or nation state, can obstruct the unimpeded flow of interstate economic relations. Indeed, the pursuit of the state's economic advancement and the conditions that facilitate it represent pivotal considerations within the broader context of political processes and machinations. In this context, the aspirations of individual states, such as those seeking to impede the establishment of the Zangezur corridor, are rendered moot. On the one hand, China, with its considerable economic, political, and military power, exerts a significant influence on global politics. On the other hand, Europe and America challenge the world with their financial policies. In such a scenario, the establishment of transit relations between the West and the East, given their economic importance, particularly through Azerbaijan, is indisputable. The East-West Transport Corridor project is influenced by a number of factors. The Suez Canal, a pivotal waterway that handles over 12% of global trade, exemplifies the significance of this route. However, the canal's narrowness has recently led to significant disruptions, with large ships becoming stuck, resulting in the closure of the route and consequent interruptions to global trade. This, in turn, has led to an increase in the price of energy commodities and global inflation. While water transport is recognised as the most economical mode of global trade, it is not without its own particular challenges. As the global economic demand increases, there is an increased need for larger-capacity vehicles for transportation. However, as previously mentioned, the Suez Canal also has its own issues. The canal's dimensions remain constant, yet the intricacies of political processes in the Red Sea and canal basin, the pervasive challenges in the Near and Middle East, and the requisite investment of time and financial resources to address these issues, underscore the pivotal role of the "Middle Corridor".

The People's Republic of China has unquestionably initiated the project to revive the most significant trade route in history: the Silk Road. This initiative presents a multifaceted opportunity for Azerbaijan, accompanied by significant challenges. The project's implementation is currently hindered by several challenges. A substantial portion of the route traverses Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, two Central Asian states of considerable strategic significance for Russia and China, whose relations with the West are characterised by instability (it should be noted that the West's negative stance towards Russia is attributable to the events in the Kerch Strait).As previously mentioned, the economic interests of all states invariably inform their foreign policy decisions. In this context, the revitalisation of the historical Silk Road trade route in a contemporary framework is an inevitability. The security challenges posed by this route necessitate a comprehensive approach, precluding the consideration of alternative options. The "Zangezur Corridor" is a case in point where the resolution of this issue is contingent on a resolution to a historical injustice. In comparison to the Trans-Siberian Railway, the "Middle Corridor" is less than 200 km in length and traverses regions that are conducive to transportation. The average transit time along this 5,400-kilometre corridor is 15 days. It is estimated that cargo can be transported from China to Europe via the East-West transport corridor in three times less time than by sea. The East-West transport corridor is a significant transportation route that facilitates the efficient movement of goods and materials, offering a competitive advantage in terms of time

and cost efficiency. It is important to note that, in contrast to the transit route, the distance travelled via the "Middle Corridor" will be reduced to one-third of the original distance. This will not be limited to a mere reduction in travel time. Consequently, transportation costs will also be reduced by a factor of three, thereby preventing subsequent price escalations. A more expansive view reveals the potential for a multifaceted impact, including benefits for the ecological system.

SWOT Analysis of the Zangazur Corridor

Strengths:

- Strategic Geopolitical Significance: The corridor serves as a crucial link between Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan, enhancing direct connectivity and reducing transportation barriers, providing significant strategic value in the region.

- Potential for Regional Integration: Facilitating trade and transport routes, the corridor offers the potential to strengthen regional cooperation, fostering economic growth, stability, and integration within the South Caucasus.

- Economic Opportunities: Opening up trade routes, reducing transportation costs, and attracting investments, the corridor presents economic potential by contributing to economic development in the region.

Weaknesses:

- Geopolitical Tensions: Ongoing conflicts and historical disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia may pose obstacles to the corridor's development and operational effectiveness.

- Infrastructure Development Challenges: The construction complexities and need for substantial investments might lead to delays and difficulties in completing the corridor's infrastructure, affecting its functionality.

- Security Concerns: Potential security threats and disputes could hinder safe and efficient corridor operations, impacting trade and transportation.

Opportunities:

- Regional Economic Growth: The corridor's successful operation could act as a catalyst for economic development, encouraging regional trade and investment, and fostering economic integration.

- Enhanced Connectivity: Improved connectivity through the corridor can attract foreign investments, drive market accessibility, and boost overall regional development.

- International Collaboration: Diplomatic agreements and cooperation among involved nations offer trade opportunities, fostering regional stability and economic prosperity. [5].

Azerbaijan's Middle Corridor project represents a significant contribution to the unity of the Turkic world. This project can also be regarded as a value chain. The advantages and geographical positioning of this corridor establish its potential to serve as the primary coordinating body for the Organisation of Turkic States. The trajectory of the corridor is such that it is reasonable to conclude that it is a project connecting the Turkic states with a gross domestic product of more than one trillion US dollars. Azerbaijan is widely regarded as a pivotal player in the execution of the Middle Corridor project. The "Central Corridor" project, driven by global economic interests, is poised to serve as a unifying force among the Turkic States, which have historically been subjected to deliberate isolation. The project will contribute to the establishment of Turkey's economic relations with the Turkic states of Central Asia on even more solid foundations. Following the dissolution of the USSR, the Turkic states of Central Asia emerged as a primary area of interest for Turkish integration, arguably ranking among the foremost regions of interest.

Considering all these factors into account, we deduce the following three possible scenarios regarding the opening of the Zangezur corridor, and each of these scenarios has a different implication on the security architecture of the overall region: Scenario 1. The opening of the Zangezur corridor will be achieved as soon as all necessary infrastructure is completed. This is the option preferred by Azerbaijan and is the most realistic one, even though it may damage the reputation of the current Armenian government.

Scenario 2. The opening of the Zangezur corridor will be achieved as soon as the opposing group in Armenia (which is apparently supported by foreign actors) is counterbalanced by the vast majority of Armenians who are interested in the prosperity of their country. For the time being, this tendency is increasing and there is progress, but not enough. In fact, this is an option embraced by the Armenian government. It is apparent that the leadership is trying to gain time, since it is not easy for a country like Armenia to shake off the tentacles of foreign actors (both state and non-state) with their strong leverage on Armenia.

Scenario 3. Armenia rejects the opening of the Zangezur corridor. This is the least plausible option since the tripartite agreement of 10 November 2020 explicitly dictates the opening of communications. This option will definitely undermine the prospects of long-lasting peace in the region and spur Azerbaijan into military action, which is not desirable for any party. Only the foreign actors will benefit from the renewed conflagration—actors who have gained the upper hand over the Armenian economy, society, and security. [7]

As a result, the most plausible scenarios (i.e., Scenarios 1 and 2) regarding the Zangezur corridor, which anticipate the success of this important project, serve the same objective, maybe with different time frames. In this regard,

the opening of the Zangezur corridor will be a stepping stone towards long-lasting peace in the region.

## IV CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the geopolitical and economic importance of the Zangezur Corridor and the wider East-West transport network cannot be overstated. As Azerbaijan continues to consolidate its position as a central hub of Eurasian connectivity, it is clear that efforts to impede this strategic development are both short-sighted and unsustainable. The Zangezur Corridor is not just a regional project; it is a vital artery in the global economic system, offering time- and cost-efficient alternatives to existing trade routes such as the Suez Canal. It is also a unique opportunity to strengthen the unity and cooperation of the Turkic world, anchoring Azerbaijan's pivotal role in shaping regional integration. The successful implementation of the Middle Corridor project is a testament to the triumph of strategic foresight, economic necessity and the unyielding drive for regional cohesion in the face of external opposition.

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