

НАПРЯМ 9. МІЖНАРОДНІ ЕКОНОМІЧНІ ВІДНОСИНИ

Anvar Ismayilli

Junior Researcher,

*Institute of Economics of the Ministry of Education and
Science of the Republic of Azerbaijan*

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THE ROLE OF AZERBAIJAN IN DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT CORRIDORS: IN THE CONTEXT OF REHABILITATION OF POST-CONFLICT TERRITORIES

The geographical location of each country significantly affects its economic development level. Azerbaijan is located in the east of the South Caucasus region, which is located at the junction of Europe and Asia, and in order to take maximum advantage of the objective opportunities created by its favorable geographical position, it pursues a balanced and pragmatic policy in relations with neighboring countries and other countries of the world. Azerbaijan approaches bilateral and multilateral relations from the perspective of mutually beneficial cooperation and always takes into account the interests of the parties it cooperates with.

In recent years, the international political and economic situation in the world has become increasingly tense and it led to the disruption of stable logistics routes, and the role of international transport corridors became even more urgent.

Azerbaijan's location at the intersection of global international transport corridors (North-South and East-West) makes it an important actor in this sense. It actively participates in various projects related to transport and logistics promoted by both regional and global power centers. This mainly related to the fact that the development of the transport-logistics sector, which is an important factor for cross-country

economic integration, requires each of the subjects of the integration process to develop their own infrastructure.

Having achieved a victory in the Second Karabakh War in 2020, Azerbaijan gave a significant impetus to the change of the power configuration in the region by liberating its lands. The process of reintegration of Karabakh region into the current socio-economic system of Azerbaijan opens up new economic opportunities and prospects for Azerbaijan. The creation of Karabakh and Eastern Zangezur economic regions in 2021 created a fundamental basis for the further acceleration of economic integration processes within the country at the regional level. The favorable geographical position of the South Caucasus has always attracted regional and world power centers. The region's fulfillment of its transit potential and its geo-economic function has been limited to some extent due to political conflicts in recent decades. In the post-conflict period, the opening of regional transport communications creates conditions for intensive development of economic integration processes.

Since liberation of Karabakh, Azerbaijan has been done and continue to implement a lot in the direction of reconstruction of the road and transport infrastructure in post-conflict territories. Thus, the construction and completion of the 101-kilometer Victory road, which starts from the Hajigabul-Minjivan-Zangazur corridor highway, Khudafarin-Gubadli-Lachin and Shukurbeyli-Jabrayil-Hadrut roads, the construction of international airports in both Fuzuli and Zangilan, and the construction of the Lachin airports are important steps towards the reintegration of post-conflict zones into the socio-economic system of the country.

"Action Plan for 2024-2026 on increasing the transit potential of international transport corridors passing through the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan and promoting transit cargo transportation" approved by the President of Azerbaijan- Ilham Aliyev aimed at accelerating magnification of the transit opportunities of the country.

Within the framework of the current Plan, the reconstruction of the Alat-Osmanli-Astara railway in the direction of Iran is envisaged. It is planned to build new release points in Astara region, in the territory of Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and in Agband settlement of Zangilan region. At the same time, work on improving the transport and logistics infrastructure in the direction of the border with Russia continues.

The 150 km long Baku-Russia border highway already been put into exploitation.

Azerbaijan also continues to contribute to the development of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (Middle Corridor). Starting from 2023, works done on the development of the master plan for the construction of the second phase of the Baku International Sea Trade Port. After the construction of the second phase, the cargo handling potential of the port will be furtherly strengthened. Currently, additional infrastructure works carried out to further increase the transmission capacity of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line, which was commissioned in 2017 and is of great importance for transportation through the Middle Corridor. It is noteworthy, that currently works are being implemented on the realization of the road map for the development of the Middle Corridor and the elimination of narrow passages between Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Georgia until 2027. In their conclusion, the transmission capacity of the mentioned route expected to be 10 million tons of cargo per year.

One of the regional and international important issues is undoubtedly the idea of opening the "Zangazur Corridor". It is intended to provide transport links between the western regions of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. In this regard, works on the construction of the new Ahmedbeyli-Horadiz-Jabrayil-Zengilan-Aghband highway are being continued. Considering the Zangezur Corridor's connection with two major and relevant transport and logistics initiatives - "One Belt, One Road" and the Middle Corridor, we can say that it has an important role in the context of international trade. Its activity can significantly strengthen the interaction between Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. If we approach the issue from the perspective of China's "One Belt, One Road" project, we can say that Zangezur Corridor:

By providing communication between Azerbaijan and Turkey, it will also connect China with Europe through the South Caucasus region. The Zangezur corridor, which can act as a wider economic route of the Silk Road, can facilitate the flow of goods from China and Central Asia to Europe with less time and risks;

Taking into account China's financial support in the infrastructure construction and improvement of the countries involved in the

implementation of the mentioned transport project, it can be said that if the Zangezur corridor is operational, the investments that China can invest in the development of its logistics infrastructure can increase the effectiveness of the corridor within the Eurasian trade network. This, in turn, will lead to the strengthening of bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and China. As a result, the same or similar advantages can be made within the Middle Corridor route as well. Considering the possibility of the existence of the railway connection from Baku to Mincivan settlement in Zangilan, which is on the way to the Zangezur corridor, Azerbaijan can really benefit from this perspective in future.

Restoration of the infrastructure of the post-conflict territories of Azerbaijan stimulating the growth of the transit potential of the country, which is likely to contribute to the progress of its activities as a logistic hub in the Eurasia. In its turn, it will also serve as an essential ground for Azerbaijan to become an initiating core of regional integration processes in the South Caucasus region.

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