
ARTICLE

Unlocking the Potential in the South Caucasus: The Zangezur Corridor's Impact on the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route [Middle Corridor]

Turan GAFARLI *

Abstract

The South Caucasus region has increasingly become a focal point of geopolitical interest, particularly in light of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. This article examines the strategic importance of the Zangezur Corridor, a proposed transportation route designed to connect Azerbaijan's western regions with the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. The study identifies the internal and external factors influencing the development of this corridor, which promises to enhance regional connectivity and integrate the South Caucasus into the broader Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (Middle Corridor). Internally, the article discusses the political and economic challenges that Azerbaijan, Armenia, and neighboring countries face in realizing the corridor's potential. Externally, the research explores the influence of geopolitical actors such as Iran, Türkiye, and Russia, whose interests and interventions have shaped the corridor's trajectory. By analyzing the interplay between these internal and external factors, the article seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the Zangezur Corridor's potential to transform regional dynamics, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead in the pursuit of greater regional stability and economic development.

Keywords

Zangezur Corridor, South Caucasus, Middle Corridor, regional connectivity, geopolitics

* Non-Resident Fellow, Topchubashov Center, Baku, Azerbaijan. E-mail: gafarlituran@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0002-4600-4723.

Introduction

The South Caucasus, a region strategically positioned between Europe and Asia, has seen its importance rise, particularly in light of the conflict in Ukraine that began in February 2022. The ongoing war has prompted fresh evaluations of the strategic value of various transport routes, notably the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route—commonly referred to as the Middle Corridor—which runs through the South Caucasus. Although the countries in this region have followed different political trajectories since the fall of the Soviet Union, their destinies remain closely connected. The transport corridors in the South Caucasus not only offer significant economic advantages to several nations, but are also vital to maintaining regional stability and promoting growth.

The South Caucasus has historically served as a crucial transit hub, bridging the East and West. The corridor that extends from China through Central Asia, across the Caspian Sea, the South Caucasus, and Türkiye, and into Europe, stands out as one of the most efficient, secure, and dependable routes connecting these vast regions. Analysts view the aftermath of the 2020 Second Karabakh War as a transformative period, opening doors to new trade relations and economic collaborations in the region—opportunities that had not been present for decades. The proposed Zangezur Corridor, designed to link Azerbaijan’s western territories with the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, holds the potential to bolster this connectivity further. Should this corridor be realized, it could play a vital role in strengthening economic ties and trade among the countries in the region, fostering widespread regional development.

The shifting geopolitical landscape, characterized by regional interdependencies and rising security concerns, calls for a thorough understanding of the evolving dynamics within the South Caucasus. As transport routes traversing this region gain increasing importance, there is a pressing need for coordinated efforts to enhance economic ties and promote regional development. This article explores the strategic potential of the Zangezur Corridor, recognizing its capacity to strengthen trade links and foster economic cooperation. By analyzing both the challenges and opportunities associated with this proposed corridor, the study seeks to underscore its pivotal role within the broader framework of the Middle Corridor.

Azerbaijan’s active role in the development of the East-West corridor has earned significant recognition from its international partners. Despite this, there is a conspicuous lack of academic studies focused on the creation and consequences of the Zangezur Corridor. Specialists in the field underscore the

pressing need for Armenia to expedite the construction of this vital transport route, particularly given the geopolitical changes brought about by the conflict in Ukraine.

Amid shifting geopolitical landscapes, the South Caucasus faces both opportunities and challenges, with the proposed Zangezur Corridor poised to enhance regional connectivity significantly and reshape economic and strategic dynamics. This article critically examines the corridor's potential impact, highlighting the need for collaborative efforts to overcome obstacles and

Amid shifting geopolitical landscapes, the South Caucasus faces both opportunities and challenges, with the proposed Zangezur Corridor poised to enhance regional connectivity significantly and reshape economic and strategic dynamics.

maximize its benefits. By focusing on the corridor's integration into the Middle Corridor and its broader implications for regional and international trade, the study aims to contribute to academic discussions on transport infrastructure and its geopolitical significance. The Zangezur Corridor's successful implementation could dramatically improve connectivity, stimulate economic growth, and strengthen trade ties across the South Caucasus and beyond.

Understanding the Zangezur Corridor: An Overview

The 44-day Karabakh War in 2020 reshaped the region, presenting new opportunities for Azerbaijan, Armenia, and other involved powers. For these prospects to materialize, Azerbaijan and Armenia must finalize a peace agreement and meet their obligations under the Tripartite Agreement of November 10, 2020, which includes reopening transportation links and focusing on the Zangezur Corridor. Failure to do so risks reigniting regional tensions and harming the economies of both nations and their neighbors. The Zangezur Corridor is crucial, reconnecting Azerbaijan's Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic with the mainland, enhancing regional cooperation, and integrating Armenia into economic networks while strengthening Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

Two key documents signed in the aftermath of the Second Karabakh War have significant implications for the Zangezur region. The first of these is the Trilateral Ceasefire Statement, signed on November 10, 2020, by Azerbaijani

President Ilham Aliyev, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, and Russian President Vladimir Putin, which brought an end to the conflict that began on September 27, 2020. A close examination of Article 9 of this statement reveals a focus on projects aimed at fostering peace, with particular attention to Russia's strategic maneuvering. By leveraging its influence over Armenia's railway operations, Russia has positioned itself to control key trade routes, thereby enhancing its role in the region's postwar dynamics. Article 9 of the Trilateral Ceasefire Statement proclaims,

All economic and transport connections in the region shall be unblocked. The Republic of Armenia shall guarantee the security of transport connections between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic in order to arrange unobstructed movement of persons, vehicles and cargo in both directions. The Border Guard Service of the Russian Federal Security Service shall be responsible for overseeing the transport connections.¹

Article 9 underscores the restoration of Azerbaijan's land connection with the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, which had been severed for many years, focusing on integrating the Zangezur region within Armenia's borders. This direct link, crucial for overcoming challenges exacerbated during the Nagorno-Karabakh occupation, aims to connect mainland Azerbaijan not only with Nakhchivan but also with Türkiye. Despite Türkiye's absence as a signatory to the Tripartite Ceasefire Agreement, its support during the Second Karabakh War and the subsequent Shusha Declaration of July 15, 2021, ended Azerbaijan's diplomatic isolation, emphasizing the alignment of political, economic, and defense interests between Türkiye and Azerbaijan. The declaration writes,

The parties note that the opening of the corridor connecting Azerbaijan and Türkiye between western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of the Republic of Azerbaijan (the Zangazur corridor) and, as a continuation of this corridor, the construction of the Nakhchivan-Kars railway will make an important contribution to the development of transport and communication links between the two countries.²

The provisions outlined in the Shusha Declaration have effectively elevated Türkiye's involvement from a supporting role to a legally significant presence, despite not being a party to the 2020 Ceasefire Agreement. This shift means that Türkiye's participation alongside the other signatories in Shusha has become a legal expectation in international relations. Moving forward, Türkiye is

anticipated to play an active role in all processes related to the establishment and operation of the Zangezur Corridor.

The proposed Zangezur Corridor will establish a highway and railway link connecting Azerbaijan's western regions with Nakhchivan, crossing Armenian territory. This includes the construction of a new 166 km railway from Horadiz in Fuzuli province to Ordubad in Nakhchivan, integrating it into the existing Baku-Horadiz railway. With the opening of Fuzuli International Airport in 2021, the region's air transportation is fully operational.³ Historically, a Soviet-era railway extended from Horadiz to the Armenian border, but parts were destroyed or submerged during the occupation. To bridge this gap, a new 43 km railway segment will pass through Armenia's Zangezur region, pending an agreement with Russia, which controls Armenia's railways. Additionally, extensive repairs will be made to the 158 km Ordubad-Velidağ railway, extending it by 14 km to reach the Armenian border, creating a continuous transportation corridor from Armenia to Russia and Iran.

The construction of the Horadiz-Aghbend railway, managed by Azerbaijan State Railways with significant Turkish involvement, is also underway. This 110.4 km line, featuring nine stations and approximately 500 structures, is 82% through the design phase and 45% complete, with 69.7 km of rail laid. Despite challenges posed by land mines and difficult terrain, the project is on track for completion by the end of 2024.⁴ Parallel to this, the Ahmetbeyli-Horadiz-Mincivan-Aghbend highway, largely completed, will run alongside the railway, further enhancing connectivity in the region.

In parallel with the creation of the transportation corridor connecting Azerbaijan's western regions with Nakhchivan, a separate railway line has been planned to link Kars with Nakhchivan. The project, for which the tender process has already been completed, is scheduled to commence in 2024.⁵ Once these projects are fully realized, a new transportation link between Türkiye and Azerbaijan will be established. Additionally, this will create an uninterrupted land and railway connection between Türkiye and Russia via Azerbaijan.

The Zangezur Corridor is crucial on multiple levels and is expected to ease long-standing congestion in the South Caucasus, a historically significant crossroads for human and commercial activity.

The Zangezur Corridor is crucial on multiple levels and is expected to ease long-standing congestion in the South

Caucasus, a historically significant crossroads for human and commercial activity. This development could invigorate regional economies, especially those hit hard by the pandemic, and promote cooperation among South Caucasus countries, Türkiye, Russia, and Iran. Globally, the corridor has the potential to enhance the efficiency of the North-South axis and Middle Corridor, benefiting global trade and providing Türkiye with alternative routes to Central Asia. In the medium to long term, the Zangezur Corridor could foster socio-economic integration and cultural exchange, transforming regional cooperation into lasting peace and stability.

Integrating the Zangezur Corridor into the Middle Corridor

The Middle Corridor is a multimodal transport route that combines land and sea transportation, significantly shortening distances and facilitating the movement of goods. This corridor offers the most direct path for products traveling from China to Europe, passing through Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, the South Caucasus, and Türkiye before reaching their European destinations. A key advantage of the Middle Corridor is its total length, which is approximately 3,000 kilometers shorter than Russia's Northern Corridor.⁶ This route not only reduces transit times, but also circumvents Russia, thus avoiding sanctions-related issues. As a result, it has become an increasingly attractive option for businesses seeking alternative trade routes and markets.

To grasp the potential of the Middle Corridor, it is instructive to consider the trade volume between Europe and China. Trade in goods between China and the European Union (EU) rose from €737.9 billion in 2022 to €857.8 billion in 2023.⁷ In the most recent year, approximately 5% of the total containers transported from China to Europe were moved by land, with the remaining 95% transported by sea. This modest increase in land-based transportation is largely due to the growing instability of maritime routes, particularly through the Red Sea, and the rising importance of alternative corridors like the Middle Corridor. The Middle Corridor has attracted attention for its potential to offer greater safety and shorter transit times compared to traditional sea routes.⁸ These figures also highlight the ongoing shifts in global logistics as companies seek to reduce their reliance on vulnerable maritime routes by increasingly utilizing land-based transport options.⁹

The Middle Corridor has experienced a notable surge in cargo transit volume, reaching 2.76 million tons in 2023—a 65% increase compared to 2022.¹⁰ This marked a new record for freight traffic along the corridor, underscoring its

potential to accommodate the growing demands of global trade. Currently, the corridor's capacity is generally cited as 5.8 million tons per year, with projections suggesting an increase to 10 million tons annually by 2027. Transit times range between 14 and 18 days, reflecting ongoing improvements in infrastructure and a rising interest in this route, particularly given the instability of alternative corridors like the Northern Corridor.

In November 2023, the World Bank released a report titled "The Middle Trade and Transport Corridor: Policies and Investments to Triple Freight Volumes and Halve Travel Time by 2030." The report emphasizes the Middle Corridor's importance as a key transport link between China and Europe, gaining prominence following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While highlighting the increased traffic along the corridor, the report stresses the need for significant efficiency improvements to realize fully its potential as a major global trade route.¹¹ The World Bank projects that by 2030, travel time between China and Europe's western border could be halved, and freight volumes could triple, reaching 11 million tons.

On December 13, 2023, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) released a report titled "Realizing the Potential of the Middle Corridor." The report underscores the significant potential of the Middle Corridor, despite the various challenges it faces. It emphasizes that the policies adopted by the states involved will play a crucial role in enhancing the corridor's importance and capacity.¹² The projections within these reports suggest a promising future for the Middle Corridor. The report also highlights the need for collaborative efforts among the governments of Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Kazakhstan to develop the corridor's capacity further. Additionally, bilateral and multilateral initiatives by Turkic States and the Organization of Turkic States¹³ aim to boost the corridor's efficiency. Furthermore, growing interest from Europe and China in the corridor strengthens positive expectations for its future.

Despite significant progress in developing the Middle Corridor, it still faces operational inefficiencies and high costs, causing many operators to revert to sea routes. Unpredictable delays ranging from 14 to 60 days, combined with underperforming ports and inefficient rail infrastructure, hinder the corridor's potential. While the introduction of a single operator may address coordination issues, a more critical problem is the inadequate infrastructure for oil and gas transportation, particularly in the Caspian and Transcaspian regions. For example, transporting oil from Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan via the Middle

Corridor involves multiple stages: the oil is first moved by rail to Kazakh ports, transferred to a ship bound for Baku, and then reloaded onto a train before reaching a pipeline for further distribution. This complex process results in significant delays and technical challenges compared to the more straightforward route through Russia via the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) even though both Kazakhstan and Europe are in search of alternatives.¹⁴

Another major challenge facing the Middle Corridor is the varying customs regulations across the countries it traverses, including Türkiye, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan. Unlike the Northern Corridor, which enjoys more streamlined procedures under Russia's centralized control, the Middle Corridor suffers from a lack of standardized customs practices and digitalization. This fragmentation results in delays, higher costs, and unpredictable transit times, complicating the movement of goods and diminishing the corridor's competitiveness as a trade route between Europe and Asia.

The opening of the Zangezur Corridor is expected to transform the regional transit landscape and significantly influence the future of the Middle Corridor. This new route will provide a direct land connection between Azerbaijan and Türkiye, and enable the construction of a railway line linking Armenia and Russia through Azerbaijan. The Zangezur Corridor will thus serve as a crucial link, connecting Azerbaijan and Türkiye, as well as Armenia and Russia, and for the first time in modern history, it will establish a railway connection between Russia

The opening of the Zangezur Corridor is expected to transform the regional transit landscape and significantly influence the future of the Middle Corridor. This new route will provide a direct land connection between Azerbaijan and Türkiye, and enable the construction of a railway line linking Armenia and Russia through Azerbaijan.

and Türkiye. Additionally, the Zangezur Corridor is poised to become the shortest land transport route between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, serving as a key junction for North-South and East-West routes. Its establishment will significantly enhance the efficiency and scope of land transport networks connecting Europe and Asia. As the missing link in one of the few East-West trade routes that bypass Russia, the Zangezur Corridor is strategically critical. A broader look at the Caspian-Black Sea region reveals that the most efficient route to both the Far East and the West runs through the Türkiye-South

Caucasus-Caspian corridor, with Azerbaijan's active participation being crucial for these routes to become fully operational.

The trade volume between China and the EU amounts to trillions of dollars, with goods typically transported via Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway to Türkiye, taking about two weeks. The Zangezur Corridor, however, offers a shorter and more reliable route between the EU and China, bypassing the strained relations between Moscow and Tbilisi. Amid global supply chain disruptions, this corridor reduces the distance by at least 3,000 kilometers compared to the northern route through Russia, highlighting its strategic importance. The Zangezur Corridor aligns with China's Belt and Road Initiative, enhancing the South Caucasus's transit potential and supporting the EU's TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia) project.¹⁵ Türkiye's role is pivotal, as it signed a Memorandum of Understanding with China in 2015 to link the Middle Corridor with the Belt and Road Initiative, positioning itself as a logistics hub for EU-China trade while addressing regional instability.¹⁶

Table 1: Türkiye's Brief Trade Data with China, South Caucasus, and Central Asia in 2021

	Export (USD thousand)	Share in Türkiye's total export, %	Import (USD thousand)	Share in Türkiye's total import, %	Trade Balance (USD thousand)	Trade Turnover (USD thousand)
Armenia	2,341.58	0.00	3,684.11	0.00	-1,342.53	6,025.69
Azerbaijan	2,342,788.74	1.04	751,290.08	0.28	1,591,498.66	3,094,078.82
China	3,662,747.79	1.63	32,238,051.68	11.88	-28,575,303.90	35,900,799.47
Georgia	1,703,745.40	0.76	470,851.04	0.17	1,232,894.36	2,174,596.44
Kazakhstan	1,288,142.38	0.57	1,595,313.34	0.59	-307,170.96	2,883,455.72
Kyrgyz Republic	749,441.17	0.33	86,460.87	0.03	662,982.30	835,902.04
Tajikistan	258,353.54	0.11	195,730.98	0.07	62,622.56	454,084.52
Turkmenistan	984,446.06	0.44	710,865.12	0.26	273,580.95	1,695,311.18
Uzbekistan	1,841,623.05	0.82	1,800,043.71	0.66	41,579.34	3,641,666.76

Source: "Turkey Trade Balance, Exports and Imports by Country and Region 2021," World Integrated Trade Solution, <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/TUR/Year/2021/TradeFlow/EXPIMP#> (Accessed 01.07.2024).

As illustrated in Table 1, data from the “World Integrated Trade Solution” highlight Türkiye’s significant trade turnover (imports and exports) with China, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia, which is crucial for analyzing the Middle Corridor’s impact. In 2019, Türkiye’s total trade turnover with Central Asian countries was approximately US\$8.5 billion. By 2021, this figure had only modestly increased to around US\$9.5 billion, a growth rate that can be largely attributed to the disruptions in global trade caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

However, these trade figures are far from satisfactory for Türkiye and its regional partners. Türkiye has set ambitious trade turnover goals: US\$10 billion with Kazakhstan,¹⁷ US\$5 billion each with Uzbekistan¹⁸ and Turkmenistan,¹⁹ and a target of US\$7.5 billion with Azerbaijan²⁰ by 2024, with plans to double that figure to US\$15 billion in the coming years. Additionally, Türkiye has already achieved a US\$1 billion trade turnover with Kyrgyzstan²¹ and has set the same target for its trade with Tajikistan²².

As evident, Türkiye’s preference for the Middle Corridor is driven by its goal to boost trade turnover with the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and China. In contrast, the southern route through Iran has become less favorable. Turkish-owned trucks traveling along the route face significant delays due to long queues at the Gürbulak customs post, the main crossing point between Iran and Türkiye, and are further burdened by fuel taxes imposed by Iranian authorities.

As evident, Türkiye’s preference for the Middle Corridor is driven by its goal to boost trade turnover with the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and China.

The Zangezur Corridor allows for direct entry into Azerbaijan, and when comparing route lengths, it is estimated that the total travel distance will be reduced by an average of 25% with the corridor’s opening. This reduction becomes even more significant when considering the time required for a typical truck to pass through border crossings. For instance, given that the average fuel consumption for a truck is 20 liters per 100 kilometers, fuel usage could decrease from approximately 163 liters to 130 liters if vehicles can move without stopping.²³ Additionally, when factoring in the time spent in queues at border crossings and the savings from eliminating the entry-exit procedures at a third country’s border, the benefits become even more substantial.

It is important to note that the Middle Corridor currently lacks the capacity to meet the demands of trade volume fully or replace the routes passing through Russia, as it currently holds only about 10% of the capacity of the

Russian route.²⁴ However, it remains a highly valuable project in terms of route diversification, especially given that China-EU shipments along the Northern Corridor have decreased by 40% since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.²⁵

It should be noted that Central Asian countries have been making significant investments to develop modern infrastructure. Over the past five years, Kazakhstan, for example, has invested approximately \$35 billion in its transport sector. This substantial investment has led to the construction of 2,500 kilometers of new railways, 19,500 kilometers of roads, 15 airports, and expanded port capacities along the Caspian Sea.²⁶ Additionally, in 2022, Kazakhstan announced a \$20 billion investment package to diversify transit and freight transport routes further and integrate advanced logistics solutions. Recent initiatives include plans to increase the capacity of the Caspian Sea ports of Aktau and Kuryk by 50% and to triple container capacity by 2028, underscoring ongoing efforts to modernize infrastructure and strengthen Kazakhstan's role in international trade routes.

It is also worth noting that Azerbaijan joined the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) in 2005. This project was initiated with the aim of significantly reducing the delivery time of freight from India to Russia, as well as to northern and western Europe, from over six weeks on the current route to an expected three weeks via the North-South Transport Corridor. Once the Zangezur Corridor becomes operational, Armenia will have the opportunity to benefit from this North-South Transport Corridor as well.

National Perspectives and Strategic Interests

Azerbaijan

The Zangezur Corridor holds three key strategic advantages for Azerbaijan:

1. Geographical integration with Türkiye: The Zangezur Corridor will play a crucial role in bridging the physical and geographical gap between Türkiye and Azerbaijan. By providing a more direct and efficient connection between the two countries, this corridor will enhance regional integration.
2. Azerbaijan's access to Europe: The opening of the Zangezur Corridor will secure Azerbaijan's access to Europe via Türkiye, thereby expanding its transit routes. This development has the potential to strengthen Azerbaijan's economic and trade relations with European nations.

3. Lifting the blockade on Nakhchivan: Currently, the land connection between Nakhchivan and Azerbaijan is facilitated through Iran. The Zangezur Corridor will break this blockade, offering new avenues for Nakhchivan's economic development and reintegration into Azerbaijan's broader economy.

The Zangezur Corridor is expected to boost Azerbaijan's trade with Türkiye and Europe by up to 15%, while reducing transport costs by up to 30% and cutting travel time by up to 50%. These benefits will extend to other regional countries as well. Strategically, the corridor is vital for Azerbaijan's efforts to diversify its economy beyond oil and gas, fostering growth in sectors like agriculture and manufacturing, particularly in rural areas. Additionally, the corridor positions Azerbaijan as a key transit hub for Caspian oil and gas exports to Europe. With significant investments in transport infrastructure, including new highways, railways, and airports, the Zangezur Corridor offers a direct route to Türkiye and access to the Black and Mediterranean Seas, enhancing Azerbaijan's export efficiency to Europe.

The Zangezur Corridor, passing through Azerbaijan and Türkiye, holds significant potential to enhance economic ties between the two nations and stimulate development in Türkiye's eastern regions bordering Azerbaijan.

The southwestern districts of Azerbaijan—Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Qubadli, Zangilan, and Lachin—faced limited economic development due to partial control by Baku from the 1990s until the Second Karabakh War in 2020. Following the war, Azerbaijani officials prioritized the swift economic recovery of these regions, which were integrated into the East Zangezur and Karabakh economic regions in July 2021.²⁷ The Zangezur Corridor is expected to enhance development significantly, with Zangilan earmarked as a key transportation hub due to its upcoming international airport and highways. Additionally, Fuzuli, Lachin, and Khojaly each host airports, further boosting the region's infrastructure.

The Zangezur Corridor project aims to reestablish a direct overland link between Azerbaijan's western regions and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, which was severed during the 1990s Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. Since then, Azerbaijan had to rely on alternative routes through Georgia, Iran, and Türkiye. Reopening these transport links is expected to reduce subsidies for Baku-Nakhchivan flights by \$10 million and significantly boost the economy,

with estimates projecting more than \$710 million in increased exports, a 2% rise in non-oil GDP, and growth in the manufacturing and mining sectors by 3% and 2.7%, respectively.²⁸

Türkiye

Türkiye's active role in the Middle Corridor aligns with its objective of ensuring reliable transportation of Chinese products between Europe and Asia. The convergence of hydrocarbon reserves, railway networks, and pipelines in the South Caucasus and Central Asia with the Silk Road initiative bolsters Türkiye's negotiating position. Economically, Türkiye benefits by directly adding transit fees to its balance sheet. The Second Karabakh War has cleared the Zangezur Corridor's path, making trade more sustainable in terms of time and cost. Türkiye's recent megaprojects, like the new Istanbul Airport, the Marmaray, and high-speed railways, underscore its strategic importance in transportation and logistics, positioning it as a central transit hub. As a key player in Central Asia and the Caucasus, Türkiye has spearheaded regional cooperation through projects like the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) crude oil pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) natural gas pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway, and Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP), crucial for diversifying energy routes and reducing reliance on Russia.²⁹

Transporting goods to Europe via Türkiye, which is central to the Middle Corridor, allows for bypassing Russia, and the shortened transportation distance strengthens China's strategic position. By utilizing transit routes that avoid Russian territory, there may be a potential reduction in Russia's aggressive and non-compliant behavior in foreign policy. This scenario opens a new window of opportunity for Türkiye to collaborate with Russia, China, and the Turkic States. The concept of sustainable trade that connects Europe with eastern countries, particularly those with deficits in raw materials and semifinished products, enhances Türkiye's economic prospects.

The Zangezur Corridor, passing through Azerbaijan and Türkiye, holds significant potential to enhance economic ties between the two nations and stimulate development in Türkiye's eastern regions bordering Azerbaijan. Türkiye has long faced territorial and economic imbalances, with the western regions dominating population and GDP.³⁰ To address these disparities, Türkiye has implemented various development projects in the east, including the Eastern Anatolia Regional Development and Transportation Infrastructure initiatives. The construction of the Turkish segment of the BTK railway aligns with these efforts. Even before the 2020 ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh and discussions

about the Zangezur Corridor, Türkiye planned a railway line from Kars to the Azerbaijani-Turkish border, with high expectations that the Iğdır-Nakhchivan corridor will triple trade with Azerbaijan and elevate Iğdır's strategic importance with the newly built gas pipeline.³¹ This route, complementing the BTK railway, is expected to play a crucial role in revitalizing the historic Silk Road and further developing transport infrastructure in Türkiye's eastern regions adjacent to the Azerbaijani-Turkish border.

Armenia

Armenia is highly skeptical of the Zangezur Corridor project, strongly opposing the term "corridor" as it is not mentioned in the ceasefire agreement and is seen as implying a loss of sovereignty.³² The use of the name "Zangezur" is also rejected by Armenians, who interpret it as an assertion of Azerbaijan's historical land claims on Armenian territory. Many Armenian experts fear that the corridor could pose significant geopolitical risks and potentially undermine Armenia's sovereignty.³³ There is particular concern about the corridor's location along Armenia's 40-kilometer border with Iran, as its implementation could complicate border management and oversight of the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline. The Armenian leadership worries that the corridor could become extraterritorial and militarized, which they view as a violation of territorial sovereignty, and fear it might become a hub for illicit activities.³⁴

While Armenia is skeptical of the Zangezur Corridor, Yerevan supports unblocking regional transport links and has proposed the construction of the Horadiz-Meghri-Ordubad-Yeraskh railway line through its territory, with Azerbaijan responsible for its portion. A section of this railway would overlap with the proposed Zangezur Corridor. However, some argue against the Zangezur route, noting that goods from Armenia to Russia would face a longer journey compared to the traditional Ijevan-Gazakh route.³⁵ Instead, Armenia's government envisions broader regional connectivity by reopening *de jure* borders and restoring Soviet-era cross-border roads and railways, all within the framework of international law and respect for sovereignty. Armenia believes this approach would yield immediate economic benefits for all South Caucasus countries. This vision hinges on the signing of a peace treaty, requiring mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Summarizing the Armenian proposal for the connectivity in the region, Prime Minister Pashinyan introduced the "Crossroads for Peace" initiative.³⁶

Armenia contends that the core issue lies not in the corridor itself, but in the coercive manner of its implementation, accusing Azerbaijan of using a

threatening and expansionist approach. There is also concern in Yerevan that a Zangezur Corridor beyond Armenian control could complete a sanctions-resistant network linking Iran, Türkiye, and Russia via Azerbaijan. To address these fears, President Aliyev suggested setting up checkpoints at both ends of the corridor, which would prevent it from being extraterritorial and protect Armenia's territorial integrity.³⁷ Meanwhile, Armenia highlights that its "Crossroads for Peace" initiative, with support from the EU and the U.S., has paved the way for transport projects connecting Tehran to Moscow through Azerbaijan, sidestepping Western sanctions.

Georgia

The opening of the Zangezur Corridor in the South Caucasus could have mixed effects on Georgia's economy. While it might challenge Georgia's status as a key transit country, particularly as Azerbaijan previously relied on Georgia to maintain links with Türkiye due to its conflict with Armenia, the new route doesn't necessarily diminish the value of transit roads through Georgia.³⁸ Azerbaijan and Türkiye have heavily invested in the BTK transport corridor running through Georgia, with Azerbaijan providing substantial financial support, including recent commitments to further invest in the project. This continued interest suggests that Georgia's transit relevance may persist despite the emergence of the Zangezur Corridor.

However, the construction of the Zangezur Corridor could raise concerns in Georgia about increasing Russia's influence in the region. The reopening of transport links in the South Caucasus, possibly including a Russia-Armenia railway through Azerbaijan, might reduce the importance of Georgian routes. Despite Armenia's political hesitations, there is recognition that the Zangezur Corridor could economically benefit the country by addressing logistical issues, such as the bottleneck at the Georgian checkpoint "Verkhny Lars," which hampers Armenia's agricultural exports to the Eurasian Economic Union.

Official Tbilisi remains uninvolved in negotiations concerning the Zangezur Corridor, partly due to its geographical distance from Georgia and partly to preserve the unique status of the "Verkhny Lars" route, which currently serves as the sole road for Armenian trucks reaching Russia. With a daily capacity of 200 passenger cars, 170 trucks, 30 buses, and 4,000 individuals, this route generates significant revenue along the lines of US\$80 million per annum for Georgia, making it economically beneficial to maintain and expand.³⁹ Although the opening of the Zangezur Corridor could offer an alternative route for Armenian cargo, Georgia's leadership sees the existing infrastructure, including

ports in Batumi and Poti, as crucial for the region's trade, despite the potential outflow of some goods to Russia due to occasional bottlenecks at the "Verkhny Lars" checkpoint.

While the Zangezur Corridor could shorten and make the Yarag-Kazmalar route more attractive for cargo delivery to Armenia, Georgian experts believe their ports and transport routes will remain vital. They acknowledge that even with the reopening of old and the construction of new Armenian-Azerbaijani-Russian transport links, these alternatives are unlikely to meet fully the demands of Azerbaijan, Nakhchivan, and especially Türkiye. Despite this, Georgia stands to benefit from the overall increased transport importance of the South Caucasus once the Zangezur Corridor opens, although experts agree that the political complexities in Azerbaijani-Armenian relations, compounded by Russia's involvement, may delay its realization.

Iran

Iran views the Zangezur Corridor with significant concern due to its historical and geopolitical implications. The disruption of Iran's railway access to the former Soviet network during the First Nagorno-Karabakh War caused considerable economic harm, making Tehran eager to restore connections, particularly through the Julfa Iron Bridge and the Nakhchivan Railway. While Iran has historically supported unhindered transportation between mainland Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan, it strongly opposes any definition of the corridor that would place Armenia's Syunik Province under a special legal regime, effectively removing it from Armenian control. Additionally, some Iranian analysts see the corridor as a pan-Turkism project supported by NATO, with the potential to destabilize regions within Iran where ethnic Turks reside.⁴⁰ They argue that the corridor could be part of a broader NATO strategy to encircle and weaken Iran, Russia, and China by increasing influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia, thus contributing to the encirclement and potential disintegration of these nations.

Iran's strategy in the Caucasus involves direct communication with Russia and Armenia to address concerns over the Zangezur Corridor while remaining cautious of Türkiye's growing ties to Central Asia and the potential for increased NATO influence. Despite more than 70 years of bordering Türkiye, a NATO member, Iran's friendly relations with Ankara have mitigated any significant harm. However, Tehran's opposition to the Zangezur Corridor is likely to persist, fueled by nationalist sentiments and fears of broader Turkic ambitions. Iran is also wary of Baku possibly seizing southern Armenian territory to create

a direct link with Nakhchivan, which would sever Tehran's connection to Yerevan, a key ally. Furthermore, Iran opposes the normalization of Armenia-Türkiye relations, fearing it could reduce Yerevan's dependence on Tehran and lead to greater Western influence in the region.

The shifting regional dynamics and declining Russian influence present challenges to Iran's long-term geopolitical and security goals. Tehran fears that if Ankara's efforts to normalize relations with Yerevan succeed, leading to the establishment of the Zangezur Corridor, Iran could be marginalized. This development could bolster Turkish and Azerbaijani influence by creating a direct link between them, bypassing Iran and diminishing its role as a key regional transit hub. In July 2024, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned against creating a land corridor through Armenia to Azerbaijan's Nakhchivan exclave, stressing that such a move would harm Armenia and that foreign powers should not impose restrictions on relationships between neighboring countries.⁴¹

Russia

For years, Russia considered the South Caucasus part of its post-Soviet sphere of influence, employing economic, military, and other tools of dominance.

For years, Russia considered the South Caucasus part of its post-Soviet sphere of influence, employing economic, military, and other tools of dominance. However, recent uncertainties have led Moscow to reassess its regional priorities, with Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict becoming less central.

However, recent uncertainties have led Moscow to reassess its regional priorities, with Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict becoming less central. Now, Russia views its South Caucasus agenda primarily through the lens of its confrontation with the West, leaving it without a clear regional strategy. This shift is reflected in the omission of Nagorno-Karabakh from Russia's 2023 Foreign Policy Concept,⁴² a departure from previous versions. Limited resources due to the war in Ukraine have pushed Moscow into a reactive stance in the South Caucasus, evident in its failure to

uphold security guarantees to Armenia. Russia's primary concern is to exclude Western influence from the region, aiming to maintain dominance either alone or with non-Western allies in the post-Ukraine war order. A peace agreement

between Armenia and Azerbaijan brokered by European or U.S. mediators would represent a significant loss for Russia, undermining its role as the primary peace broker, a scenario Russia is determined to avoid.

A key strategy for Russia in sustaining its influence in the region has been its long-standing involvement in regional connectivity, especially concerning Armenian-Azerbaijani communications. Russia sought to prioritize the railway connection between Armenia and Georgia as a response to Western sanctions and efforts to isolate it. However, this proposal was swiftly dismissed by Tbilisi. Considering Russia's interest in maintaining communication channels with Georgia, Moscow might back Armenia's "Crossroads of Peace" initiative, which aims to unblock all regional routes. A crucial North-South corridor for Russia runs through Azerbaijan, and in 2023, Russia and Iran agreed to build a railway linking Rasht and Astara.⁴³ This new route will provide Russia with direct access to the Persian Gulf via Azerbaijan and Iran, further connecting to India and other Asian markets. Coupled with the free trade agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the completion of this railway will significantly boost Azerbaijan's strategic economic importance to Russia.

Azerbaijan's push for the Zangezur Corridor, connecting its main territory with the Nakhchivan enclave, has not received explicit support from Russia for a control-free passage. However, Moscow views the opening of this route favorably, aligning with the 2020 Trilateral Ceasefire Statement, as it is seen as a step toward regional stability. According to the statement, Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) was tasked with overseeing the transport links between Azerbaijan's western regions and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. The creation of this new route could prompt a reassessment of Russia's influence in the South Caucasus. Amid anti-Russian economic sanctions, Moscow is seeking reliable alternative routes for its suppliers. Here, the International North-South Transport Corridor, which will link Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and India, can be highlighted as a crucial overland route.⁴⁴ In this context, the strategic importance of the Zangezur Corridor, particularly its western branch through Azerbaijan, becomes increasingly clear.

The corridor through Armenia will also facilitate railway and transport links to Türkiye and the Middle East, offering a crucial alternative to the current route from Russia to Armenia, which faces operational challenges, particularly during winter on the Georgian Military Road, and complications due to Russia's strained relations with Georgia. Additionally, for greater transportation and logistics efficiency, some of the commodity flow from East Asia, which

currently passes through Russia, may be rerouted through the Trans-Caucasus via the Zangezur Corridor. Given China's growing influence in the global economy, involvement in its international initiatives to strengthen economic ties with Europe is vital for the development of all countries in the region. This suggests that Russia should be actively interested in the Zangezur Corridor's development. Without such involvement, the existing Baku-Tbilisi-Kars route, where Russia has limited participation, will likely continue to dominate. By backing the Zangezur Corridor, Russia could enhance its economic power in the South Caucasus.

United States

The U.S. position on the Zangezur Corridor, a proposed link between mainland Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan exclave through Armenia, is characterized by cautious engagement. While Washington supports efforts to stabilize the South Caucasus and facilitate dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan, it has refrained from fully endorsing the corridor due to concerns over Armenian sovereignty and the complex geopolitical implications. The U.S. emphasizes the importance of respecting territorial integrity, aligning with its broader principles of sovereignty and non-interference.

During a visit to Yerevan, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James O'Brien highlighted the strategic importance of the Zangezur Corridor within the Middle Corridor, which connects Central Asia to the Mediterranean.⁴⁵ He stressed that the current regional dynamics, particularly the desire to reduce Russian influence, create a unique opportunity to advance the corridor's development. However, the U.S. prefers diplomatic and political solutions over military intervention, viewing Türkiye as a key partner in counterbalancing the influence of China, Russia, and Iran, which could complicate the corridor's realization.

While recognizing the Zangezur Corridor's potential to enhance regional connectivity and trade between Europe and Asia, the U.S. is wary of it becoming a source of renewed conflict. American policymakers have supported peace talks and urge Armenia and Azerbaijan to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. The U.S. is also concerned about Russia and Iran's influence in the region, as their involvement in the corridor could increase their leverage, potentially destabilizing the area. Thus, the U.S. advocates for a solution that minimizes these risks and promotes long-term peace and stability.

Conclusion: Prospects and Future Implications

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has increased interest in the Middle Corridor as European nations seek alternatives to Russian transit routes. However, the corridor's limitations quickly became evident, with border crossing issues, transportation challenges, and coordination problems leading to significant delays and a 37% decrease in container transportation in the first eight months of last year compared to 2022. High and variable transport costs, lengthy transit times, and

To improve the corridor's attractiveness, medium-term investments in coordination, logistics, and digitization are essential, along with short-term measures to enhance efficiency.

inadequate infrastructure, including a shortage of ships and poor logistics, have further hindered its effectiveness. To improve the corridor's attractiveness, medium-term investments in coordination, logistics, and digitization are essential, along with short-term measures to enhance efficiency.

If the Middle Corridor extends through the Zangezur Corridor, Armenia could connect with Russia, its key trade partner, by leveraging Azerbaijan's transport routes via Gyumri-Nakhchivan-Meghri-Baku and Ijevan-Kazakh-Baku. A railway from Kars to Gyumri, estimated to cost US\$434 million, could become profitable within 13 years, handling 10 million tons of cargo annually. Additionally, the Kars-Nakhchivan railway through the Zangezur Corridor would enhance the project's strategic importance. Armenia's integration with Azerbaijan's and Türkiye's railway networks will hinge on its policy decisions. Furthermore, Armenia could explore connections with Iran via Azerbaijan and Türkiye, though the challenging geography makes significant investment in the Armenia-Iran railway unlikely. Opening South Caucasus communications would provide access to major maritime routes through Iran's Bandar Abbas port.

However, the successful implementation of the Zangezur Corridor project hinges on resolving the region's most significant challenge: the ongoing peace negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In August 2024, reports emerged that the article concerning the Zangezur Corridor had been removed from the draft peace agreement with Armenia.⁴⁶ This removal seems to align with calls from Western powers to expedite the signing of the peace agreement. Nevertheless, expectations for a swift conclusion to the peace deal remain low.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been engaged in peace negotiations for more than

two years, with Western powers, including the U.S. and the EU, urging both South Caucasus nations to finalize an agreement soon. Azerbaijan has demanded that Armenia remove the constitutional clause calling for “reunification” with Karabakh as a precondition for signing the peace agreement, asserting that Karabakh has never been part of Armenia.

While the opening of the Zangezur Corridor is not a central issue in the broader peace agreement, the draft does emphasize the importance of reopening all communication links. The specifics of these communications and their operational rules can be addressed later through a separate agreement or multiple agreements. The crucial point here is the necessary amendments to Armenia’s constitution, without which the peace agreement cannot be signed.

Thus, despite the Zangezur Corridor’s potential economic benefits, the project faces significant obstacles due to the conflicting interests of regional powers. Even with Western support for the corridor, there is no guarantee that Russia will not attempt to use it to circumvent sanctions. Meanwhile, Armenia is seeking to escape regional isolation on its own terms, rather than following the path outlined by Azerbaijan. Iran, for its part, is trying to curtail Türkiye’s influence in the region and has taken a stance in favor of Armenia. However, if the Zangezur Corridor is implemented—whether before or after a peace agreement—it could play a pivotal role in advancing regional and global economic development, as well as enhancing the Middle Corridor.

To overcome the identified geopolitical and infrastructural challenges, Azerbaijan and Armenia should address the development of the Zangezur Corridor through direct bilateral dialogue, minimizing third-party involvement. By keeping external actors out as much as possible, the two nations can build a foundation of trust, which would have significant implications for achieving lasting peace in the region. Such an approach would also foster social harmony between the peoples of Azerbaijan and Armenia, creating a monumental step toward reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

Future research could delve deeper into the socio-economic impacts of large-scale infrastructure projects like the Zangezur Corridor on local populations. Questions such as how local economies and job markets are influenced by improved connectivity, and whether these benefits are equitably distributed among marginalized communities, require thorough investigation. Moreover, environmental concerns, particularly related to the construction of new roads and railways, warrant analysis. Research on how these developments might affect biodiversity, land use, and carbon emissions in the South Caucasus would

provide critical insights into sustainable infrastructure planning in the region.

Additionally, further research could explore the corridor's alignment with broader international strategies like the EU's Global Gateway. A new perspective from China, examining its evolving economic interest in the Zangezur Corridor beyond its Belt and Road Initiative, could offer valuable insights into the potential shift in China's strategic outlook. Understanding China's deeper economic involvement could help clarify the corridor's role in shaping future global trade routes and regional economic alliances.

In its current state, there are significant challenges for researchers analyzing the Zangezur Corridor. The corridor has yet to reach its full practical implementation, and the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia remains crucial. Additionally, the lack of accessible open-source data from both countries makes accurate calculations difficult. For research to be truly effective, a complete non-biased approach is necessary, one that transcends political and ideological concerns. Only by prioritizing objective analysis can the true impact of the Zangezur Corridor be fully understood and leveraged for regional development.

Endnotes

- 1 “Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation,” President of Russia, November 10, 2020, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384> (Accessed: 04.07.2024).
- 2 “Shusha Declaration on Allied Relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey,” Permanent Representation of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe, June 21, 2021, <https://coe.mfa.gov.az/en/news/3509/shusha-declaration-on-allied-relations-between-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-and-the-republic-of-turkey> (Accessed: 04.07.2024).
- 3 Orkhan Bagirov, “The Karabakh Air Gate Opens: Future Prospects for Fuzuli Airport,” *Jamestown Foundation*, November 10, 2021, <https://jamestown.org/program/the-karabakh-air-gate-opens-future-prospects-for-fuzuli-airport/> (Accessed: 05.07.2024).
- 4 “Zengezur Koridoru’na Uzanan Kara ve Demir Yollarının İnşaatı aralıksız sürüyor,” *TRT Avaz*, January 9, 2024, <https://www.trtavaz.com.tr/haber/tur/avryasadan/zengezur-koridoruna-uzanan-kara-ve-demir-yollarinin-insaati-araliksiz-suruyor/659d03607b6096f62a6e8d87> (Accessed: 05.07.2024).
- 5 Sabina Alizade, “Turkey to Connect New Kars-Nakhchivan Railway to Zangezur Corridor,” *News.Az*, May 29, 2024, <https://news.az/news/-turkey-to-connect-new-kars-nakhchivan-railway-to-zangezur-corridor> (Accessed: 05.07.2024).
- 6 Elvira Mami, “The Middle Corridor: Trends and Opportunities,” *ODI*, January 22, 2024, <https://odi.org/en/insights/the-middle-corridor-trends-and-opportunities/> (Accessed: 07.07.2024).
- 7 “China-EU International Trade in Goods Statistics,” Eurostat, February 2024, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=China-EU_-_international_trade_in_goods_statistics#:~:text=In%20January%202022 (Accessed: 01.07.2024).
- 8 Hunter Stoll, “The Middle Corridor: A Renaissance in Global Commerce,” *The Diplomat*, March 11, 2024, <https://thediplomat.com/2024/03/the-middle-corridor-a-renaissance-in-global-commerce/> (Accessed: 01.07.2024).
- 9 “Record Volumes of Marine Container Shipping from China to the U.S. and Europe: Spot Rates at Peak,” *Railway Supply*, August 14, 2024, <https://www.railway.supply/en/record-volumes-of-marine-container-shipping-from-china-to-the-u-s-and-europe-spot-rates-at-peak/> (Accessed: 16.08.2024).
- 10 Saniya Sakenova, “Cargo Transportation through Middle Corridor Soars 147% in January,” *The Astana Times*, February 27, 2024, <https://astanatimes.com/2024/02/cargo-transportation-through-middle-corridor-soars-147-in-january/> (Accessed: 02.07.2024).
- 11 “The Middle Trade and Transport Corridor: Policies and Investments to Triple Freight Volumes and Halve Travel Time by 2030,” World Bank, November 27, 2023, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/middle-trade-and-transport-corridor> (Accessed: 11.07.2024).
- 12 “Realising the Potential of the Middle Corridor,” OECD, December 13, 2023, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2023/12/realising-the-potential-of-the-middle-corridor_c458041c.html (Accessed: 11.07.2024).
- 13 “OTS Delegation Attended the OECD Event Dedicated to Realising the Potential of the Middle Corridor,” Organization of Turkic States, November 6, 2023, https://www.turkicstates.org/en/haberler/ots-delegation-attended-the-oecd-event-dedicated-to-realising-the-potential-of-the-middle-corridor_3117 (Accessed: 11.07.2024).

- 14 Wilder Alejandro Sánchez, “Kazakhstan’s Ports: A Vital Node of the Middle Corridor,” *The Diplomat*, May 9, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/05/kazakhstans-ports-a-vital-node-of-the-middle-corridor/> (Accessed: 14.07.2024).
- 15 Araz Aslanlı & Yunis Şerifli, “Zengezur Koridoru, Pekin-Londra Hattı ve Türkiye’nin Artan Önemi,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, May 26, 2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/zengezur-koridoru-pekini-londra-hatti-ve-turkiye-nin-artan-onemi/2254505> (Accessed: 14.07.2024).
- 16 Mehmet Ali Koçakoğlu, “Belt and Road Initiative and Turkey China Relationships through Soft Power Concept,” *Uluslararası Toplum Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Vol. 18, No. 39 (2021), p. 764.
- 17 “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Kazakistan ile Atacağımız Adımlarla 10 Milyar Dolar Ticaret Hacmi Hedefine Ulaşacağız,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, May 11, 2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-kazakistan-ile-atacagimiz-adimlarla-10-milyar-dolar-ticaret-hacmi-hedefine-ulasacagiz/2584043> (Accessed: 02.07.2024).
- 18 “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Özbekistan Cumhurbaşkanı Mirziyoyev ile Ortak Basın Toplantısında Konuştu,” Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı, June 6, 2024, <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-ozbekistan-cumhurbaskani-mirziyoyev-ile-ortak-basin-toplantisinda-konustu> (Accessed: 02.07.2024).
- 19 “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Türkmenistan Halk Maslahatı Başkanı Berdimuhamedov ile Görüştü,” Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, March 1, 2024, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/151360/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-turkmenistan-halk-maslahati-baskani-berdimuhamedov-ile-gorustu> (Accessed: 02.07.2024).
- 20 “Türkiye-Azerbaycan Ticaret Hacmi İlk Kez 7,5 Milyar Dolara Ulaştı,” *BloombergHT*, February 19, 2024, <https://www.bloomberght.com/turkiye-azerbaycan-ticaret-hacmi-7-5-milyar-dolara-ulasti-2347872> (Accessed: 02.07.2024).
- 21 “Türkiye ile Kırgızistan Arasındaki Ticaret Hacmi İlk Kez 1 Milyar Doları Geçti,” *TRT Avaz*, January 5, 2024, <https://www.trtavaz.com.tr/haber/tur/avrasyadan/turkiye-ile-kirgizistan-arasindaki-ticaret-hacmi-ilk-kez-1-milyar-dolari-gecti/6597e3afb8121324440701c0> (Accessed: 02.07.2024).
- 22 “Tacikistan ile Ekonomik İlişkiler İvme Kazanıyor,” T.C. Sanayi ve Teknoloji Bakanlığı, May 28, 2024, <https://www.sanayi.gov.tr/medya/haber/tacikistan-ile-ekonomik-iliskiler-ivme-kazaniyor> (Accessed: 02.07.2024).
- 23 Thomas Bousonville et al., “Data Driven Analysis and Forecasting of Medium and Heavy Truck Fuel Consumption,” *Enterprise Information Systems*, Vol. 15, No. 5 (December 2020), pp. 1–22.
- 24 Seamus Duffy, “Why the Middle Corridor Is a Double-Edged Sword,” *The Diplomat*, December 14, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/12/why-the-middle-corridor-is-a-double-edged-sword/> (Accessed: 03.07.2024).
- 25 Emil Avdaliani, “China Still Ambivalent about the Middle Corridor,” *Choice*, January 26, 2023, <https://chinaobservers.eu/china-still-ambivalent-about-the-middle-corridor/> (Accessed: 03.07.2024).
- 26 Assel Satubaldina, “Nearly \$35 Billion Invested in Kazakhstan’s Transport Sector over Last Five Years,” *The Astana Times*, October 19, 2022, <https://astanatimes.com/2022/10/nearly-35-billion-invested-in-kazakhstans-transport-sector-over-last-five-years/> (Accessed: 03.07.2024).
- 27 Anri R. Chedia, “Zangezur Corridor: Economic Potential and Political Constraints,” *Russia in Global Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (January/March 2024), pp. 194–216.

- 28 “Vüsal Qasımlı: Regional Kommunikasiyaların Açılması İqtisadi Arxitekturanı Dəyişəcək,” Azərbaycan Respublikası *İqtisadi İslahatların Təhlili və Kommunikasiya Mərkəzi*, January 12, 2021, <https://ereforms.gov.az/az/media/xeberler/vusal-qasimli-regional-kommunikasiyalarin-acilmasi-iqtisadi-arxitekturanı-deyisecek-11> (Accessed: 11.08.2024).
- 29 Khayal Iskandarov & Piotr Gawliczek, “The ‘New Great Game’ in the South Caucasus: Competition for Power and Influence,” *Journal of Scientific Papers Social Development & Security*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2020), pp. 25–33.
- 30 Hülya Saygılı & K. Azim Özdemir, “Regional Economic Growth in Turkey: The Effects of Physical, Social and Financial Infrastructure Investments,” Central Bank of Republic of Türkiye, Working Paper No: 17/16 (July 2017).
- 31 David O’Byrne, “Azerbaijan, Turkey Start Construction of Nakhchivan Gas Pipeline,” *Eurasianet*, October 6, 2023, <https://eurasianet.org/azerbaijan-turkey-start-construction-of-nakhchivan-gas-pipeline> (Accessed: 12.08.2024).
- 32 “Why Did Baku and Moscow Recall the Trilateral Statement with Yerevan? Opinion,” *JAMNews*, April 27, 2024, <https://jam-news.net/zangezur-corridor-for-baku-and-moscow/> (Accessed: 12.08.2024).
- 33 “Security Council Chief: Regional Communications Shall Be Unblocked under Armenia Sovereignty, Jurisdiction,” *News.Am*, January 5, 2024, <https://news.am/eng/news/800823.html?fbclid=IwAR1yjeZ5OyVD9NZpj18FqzxX9IDXP5ncmYB33MYiKkjGXfC3MMikVZD4IZo> (Accessed: 12.08.2024).
- 34 Fin DePencier, “Fears Linger in Armenia of Azerbaijani Invasion,” *Eurasianet*, October 13, 2023, <https://eurasianet.org/fears-linger-in-armenia-of-azerbaijani-invasion> (Accessed: 12.08.2024).
- 35 Ani Mejlumyan, “Armenia Proposing Restoration of Rail Route through Azerbaijan to Russia,” *Eurasianet*, May 4, 2021, <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-proposing-restoration-of-rail-route-through-azerbaijan-to-russia> (Accessed: 12.08.2024).
- 36 Sheila Paylan, “How Armenia’s ‘Crossroads for Peace’ Plan Could Transform the South Caucasus,” *Atlantic Council*, August 7, 2024, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/how-armenias-crossroads-for-peace-plan-could-transform-the-south-caucasus/> (Accessed: 12.08.2024).
- 37 Elena Teslova, “Azerbaijan Offered Armenia to Open Checkpoints on Border, Says President Aliyev,” *Anadolu Agency*, February 19, 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/azerbaijan-offered-armenia-to-open-checkpoints-on-border-says-president-aliyev/2824350> (Accessed: 12.08.2024).
- 38 Thomas de Waal, “Putin’s Hidden Game in the South Caucasus,” *Foreign Affairs*, June 3, 2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/azerbaijan/putins-hidden-game-south-caucasus> (Accessed: 11.08.2024).
- 39 “Georgia Does Not Consider the Zangezur Corridor to Be a Competitor to the Existing Road through «Verkhny Lars»,” *Turan*, March 2, 2024, <https://turan.az/en/economics/georgia-does-not-consider-the-zangezur-corridor-to-be-a-competitor-to-the-existing-road-through-verkhny-lars> (Accessed: 11.08.2024).
- 40 Ahmad Kazemi, “Conspiracy of Creating ‘NATO Turani Corridor’ with Geopolitical Consequences against Iran, Russia and China,” *Strategic Council on Foreign Relations*, September 11, 2022, <https://www.scfr.ir/en/300/30101/146069/conspiracy-of-creating-nato-turani-corridor-with-geopolitical-consequences-against-iran-russia-and-china/> (Accessed: 14.08.2024).

- 41 “Iran’s Leader Vows Stronger Ties with Armenia,” *Iran International*, July 30, 2024, <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202407300680> (Accessed: 14.08.2024).
- 42 “The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation,” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, March 31, 2023, https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/fundamental_documents/1860586/ (Accessed: 15.08.2024).
- 43 “Iran, Russia Finalizing Agreement for Constructing Rasht-Astara Railway,” *Tehran Times*, April 16, 2024, <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/497208/Iran-Russia-finalizing-agreement-for-constructing-Rasht-Astara> (Accessed: 15.08.2024).
- 44 Vali Kaleji, “Iran and Russia Cooperation in the Construction of Rasht-Astara: The Only Remaining Railway of the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC),” *Valdai Club*, March 30, 2023, <https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/iran-and-russia-cooperation-in-the-construction/> (Accessed: 16.08.2024).
- 45 “US Assistant Secretary of State Discussing in Armenia Road from Nakhichevan to Azerbaijan?” *News.Am*, June 11, 2024, <https://news.am/eng/news/828404.html> (Accessed: 16.08.2024).
- 46 Gunay Hajiyeva, “Azerbaijan, Armenia Temporarily Remove Zangezur Corridor Issue from Peace Deal, Facilitating Progress in Peace Talks,” *Caspian News*, August 9, 2024, <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/azerbaijan-armenia-temporarily-remove-zangezur-corridor-issue-from-peace-deal-facilitating-progress-in-peace-talks-2024-8-8-0/> (Accessed: 17.08.2018).