

TÜRKİYE'S STRATEGIC "DEVELOPMENT ROAD" PROJECT: GEOPOLITICAL IMPACTS AND REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**TÜRKİYE'NİN STRATEJİK "KALKINMA YOLU" PROJESİ: JEOPOLİTİK ETKİLER VE BÖLGESEL FIRSATLAR**

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Abstract

Transportation and economic development are indispensable elements for states. Road projects, which are used for trade purposes and have countless returns when the balance of exports and imports is under control, prepare the ground for the formation of political power and shape foreign policy in the process. This article focuses on the "Development Road" initiative on the "Belt and Road" project, which is planned by Turkey in cooperation with Iraq. This route project, which extends from the Persian Gulf through Iraqi territory and Turkey to Europe, constitutes an alternative to the project planned to open a space for the southern flank of the Chinese route or through the Suez Canal. Within the framework of the "Development Road" project, the study, which investigates the strategic goals, risks, opportunities, regional politics and their effects on countries, reveals an objective trend. Although the "Belt and Road" project, which is a Chinese breakthrough, has attracted much attention in the scientific field, the transit routes of the project have not been sufficiently emphasized. The conclusion of this study is that the "Development Road", which is carried out jointly by Turkey and Iraq, has the aim of directing the Chinese project and becoming indispensable for the general route. The research is based on qualitative methods, literature review and analysis. It is thought to contribute to the studies on the subject.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Development Road Project, Belt and Road Initiative, Türkiye-Iraq Cooperation, Geopolitical Impacts, Regional Opportunities.

Öz

Ulaşım ve iktisadi kalkınma devletler için vazgeçilmez unsurlardır. Ticaret amaçlı kullanılan, ihracat ve ithalat dengesi kontrol altına alındığında sayısız getirisi olan yol projeleri, siyasi gücün oluşmasına zemin hazırladığı gibi süreç içerisinde dış politikanın şekillenmesine de yön verir. Bu makalede "Kuşak Yol" projesi üzerinde bulunan ve Türkiye'nin Irak'la iş birliği çerçevesinde planladığı "Kalkınma Yolu" girişimi üzerinde durulmaktadır. Basra Körfezi'nden Irak toprakları ve Türkiye'den Avrupa'ya uzanan bu güzergâh projesi, Çin yolunun güney kanadından gelen kısmına bir alan açma veya Süveyş Kanalı üzerinden planlanan projeye alternatif oluşturmaktadır. "Kalkınma Yolu" projesi çerçevesinde; stratejik hedefler, riskler, fırsatlar, bölge siyaseti ve ülkelerine etkilerinin araştırıldığı çalışma, objektif bir eğilim ortaya koymaktadır. Çin atılımı olan "Kuşak Yol" projesi, bilimsel alanda oldukça ilgi bulmasına rağmen projenin geçiş güzergâhları üzerinde yeterince durulmamıştır. Bu çalışmanın vardığı sonuç, Türkiye-Irak beraberliğinde yürütülen "Kalkınma Yolu'nun" Çin projesini yönlendirme ve genel güzergâhın vazgeçilmezi

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olma hedefini taşımaktadır. Araştırma, nitel yöntemlerle, kaynak tarama ve analiz odaklı hazırlanmıştır. Konuyla ilgili çalışmalara katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.

Keywords: *Kalkınma Yolu Projesi, Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi, Türkiye-İrak İşbirliği, Jeopolitik Etkiler, Bölgesel Fırsatlar.*

Introduction

The Latin term transport or conveyance is derived from the words, "trans" meaning "across" and "portare" meaning "to carry". It is generally used to transport goods, people, and merchandise from one place to another (Sidig, 2019, p. 1). Studies conducted with the development of technology enable the development of transportation systems for the benefit of humanity.

Road projects, which occupy an important place in the political, social, and cultural spheres of societies, give a different richness to the countries in which they are located and are valuable in many ways, from security to transportation, from international trade to intercultural integration. It is evident from archaeological remains, stone reliefs and written records that societies from ancient Greece to the Roman Empire have carried out many activities on land and sea routes for transportation and trade (Temizgüney, 2008, p. 1). It should be noted that the greatest breakthroughs related to transportation and trade began with the geographical discoveries. The strategy of reaching different countries and seas of the world, which expanded with the participation of Portugal, Spain, England, France and later the Netherlands, led to the discovery of new regions and routes. Regional discoveries led to the emergence of new sea and land routes and thus to a change in political and commercial methods. It is known that the most extensive trade routes in history were the "Silk Road", the Spice Route and the Royal Route (Yıldırım 2022, p. 192). These routes became less important over time as European states utilized the "Cape of Good Hope" and trade routes shifted to new continents. In fact, important routes such as the "Silk and Spice Route", which were under the auspices of the Ottoman Empire, were weakened by the disputes with European states and the discovery of alternative routes (Tuğrul & Aydınbaş, 2014, p. 151-156).

It is necessary to explain trade transportation and projects not only in economic terms, but also in political and geopolitical terms. The social and technological developments, especially in the 19th century, which pursued political goals with the development of modern trade routes, make this definition necessary. The French Revolution, the process of industrialization and the national ideas that emerged in the aftermath paved the way for the founding of new states and the weakening of empires as well as the increase in regional expansion strategies. The discovery of underground resources and the goal of dominating the territories where these discoveries were made were realized not only through the use of purely military elements, but also through trade activities. In this regard, it is necessary to diversify the reasons underlying the road link initiatives that have been put on the agenda and projected.

This article is intended as a study that expresses various political, economic and integration-related developments in its content and focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of the "development road" initiative. It also describes Türkiye's foreign policy approach to its regional activities and the direction in which the political mechanism it has established with its stakeholders has been shaped with the current initiative. The study, in which the trade projects extending to the present are based on the assessments made in the historical context, is presented as both geopolitical planning and a current economic breakthrough. In particular, the "Development Road", which is seen as an attempt to open up a new area for the "Belt and Road" project initiated by the People's Republic of China, contributes to China's southern road route or creates a new model for this route. In this regard, the reactions of the dominant elements in the Middle East, such as the United States, to this initiative of Türkiye are important. Therefore, one of the issues addressed in the study is the approach of many countries such as the US and Iran to this issue. Although the foundation stone was laid in 2005, the "development road" project, which

has only recently come onto the agenda due to the political turmoil in Iraq and the foreign policy balance, has not yet been sufficiently researched. This initiative, which is seen as a new step in the southern corridor of the "Belt and Road" project, especially after the development of the "Belt and Road" project and the emergence of route planning, provides an opportunity for researchers to conduct various analyses on this issue. In this regard, the present research aims to contribute to the studies on this issue with its ideas.

1. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORICAL PROCESS

It is well known that states work on national and regional projects according to their interests. In particular, countries with geopolitical positions on seas, continental areas and strategic locations on these routes have project activities they want to implement in terms of transportation, trade and security.

Türkiye's role as a bridge between Asia and Europe through the straits and its strategic proximity to the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East and North Africa strengthen its geopolitical position. The territorial waters stretching from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and the transit route to the oceans passing through Anatolia also demonstrate Türkiye's exceptional position. Therefore, the value of land, rail and sea routes from the interior of the country to the outside is of particular importance. Efforts to open new road connections in Türkiye can be traced back to the time of the Ottoman Empire. Starting in the mid-19th century, project planning was carried out in direct proportion to the economic potential. This was because the Ottoman government, which had insufficient economic power, tried to use Western companies to carry out the road construction projects that had to be carried out with regard to trade and transportation. Until the 1850s, railroad projects were carried out in many European countries, especially in England, but there was no road construction work in the Ottoman lands (Quataert, 2006, p. 925). In the Ottoman Empire, these works, which were difficult to finance with national capital, were seen as a necessity to be carried out with the help of loans and the methods of trade agreements (Pamuk, 1999, p. 45). In fact, with the railroad initiatives that gave the impression of the most civilized nature of the time, the Ottoman Empire aimed to transport agricultural products to Europe, shorten the time for intervention in public order problems in the country and achieve a modern level of transportation in military terms (Şen, 2003, p. 23-24). However, these projects, costly in themselves, could not be realized and after some time became the material for political initiatives of states that wanted to meet their raw material and market needs. The process, which began with the Treaty of Balta Port signed with Great Britain in 1838, subsequently opened the Ottoman territories to exploitation by other countries seeking concessions. From the second half of the 19th century until the end of the First World War, trade routes and new project initiatives in the Ottoman territories, which became a field of competition between Germany, Great Britain, Russia, Italy and France, were the subject of this competition (Onursal & Başaran, 2020). The completion of Germany's political union with Great Britain and France and its rapid industrial breakthrough meant that Germany had to look for sales markets. The German government believed that it would be more peaceful and integration-friendly to meet these needs through commercial activities rather than military methods and began to make policy in the Ottoman territories. With the aim of undermining the colonial ways of their rivals and expanding their influence in the Middle East, the Germans developed a strategy based on close relations and trade concessions with the Ottoman Empire. The "Baghdad Railway" project, which aimed to develop rich underground resources through the Ottoman territories, can be described as a German policy in this direction (Korkmaz, 2023).

Popular project initiatives of many eras, such as the Hejaz and Baghdad Railways, Chester, the Suez Canal and the Yemen-Hijaz Line, were the scene of the struggle of Western states (Alperen, 2019). In the context of the struggle for regional supremacy, the strategic location of the Ottoman territories on the route to the underground resources is indispensable for Europe. The clash of interests between the countries that wanted to possess this fertile land, which stretched from the Mediterranean to India, and the tense environment led to geopolitical rifts and the First

World War. Most of the proposed road projects remained on paper (Temizgüney, 2008, p. 11). With the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye, many of the development plans and project initiatives that could not be realized during the Ottoman Empire were completed. In this context, the Hejaz Railway and the national railroad lines, which were completed during the reign of Atatürk, the founder of Türkiye, should be mentioned in particular. Many railroad lines such as Ankara-Kayseri-Sivas, Kütahya-Balıkesir were put into operation (Yıldırım, 2001, p. 76-77).

As a result of the rapid increase in mechanization brought about by the industrial revolution, developments in the field of technology, which began in the 19th century and continued into the 21st century, have paved the way for the emergence of a new order. The new understanding of order that has arisen as a result of financial overload and security problems in the world has put various projects on the agenda. In this context, important trade projects such as the "Belt and Road", which are considered to have a potential impact, have come onto the agenda and alternative breakthroughs have been planned on the routes through which these projects pass. The "Development Road" initiative through Iraq, launched by Türkiye, is seen as a breakthrough with regional value comparable to historical initiatives such as the "Baghdad Railway". This project, which has the potential to connect the Persian Gulf to the Anatolian land and the "Belt Road" to Europe from the south, is seen as one of the most important initiatives of the 21st century.

2. BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

In the 21st century, one of the most important steps taken by states that want to become a self-confident world power is to develop projects on regional trade routes. The "Silk Road", whose importance has diminished due to the conquest of new continents and trade routes by Western states in the course of geographical discoveries, is now once again in a position to make room for the world's economic congestion. The "Silk Road" or "Belt and Road" project (Yıldız, 2018, p. 1-25; Algül, 2020, p. 37-62), which has existed for a long time but whose geopolitical scope is extremely wide, is one of the most important strategic projects of the 21st century initiated by the People's Republic of China (Çakilci, 2021).

This project, which was announced and launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping during a program at Kazakhstan's Nur Sultan Nazarbayev University in 2013, aims to create a new financial and trade network between Beijing and London from Asia to Europe and attempts to create a new world economic network (Karagöl, 2017, p. 1-7). A specific fund has been set up for this project, which is defined as the "North, South and Middle Corridor" (Hussain, 2021) and is considered as part of a transportation strategy involving sea, rail and land routes. The "Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank" (Durdular, 2016, p. 87) established in Beijing on December 25, 2015, has met the fund and the investment partnership has been expanded with the participation of many countries. It is obvious that this structure, in which many European countries, including Türkiye, are involved as founders and partners, could be a breaking point politically and militarily. Although it is touted as a reasonable financial opening against Atlantic capitalism, the political benefits that the "Belt and Road" will bring to the Chinese state must be analyzed, as well as the negative aspects it may cause in various countries. Among the countries that view the "Belt and Road" project as threatening and oppose it are the United States, India and Japan. Supporters include Iran, Pakistan and the People's Republic of China (PRC), while the countries of the European Union and Russia are hesitant and skeptical (Bocutoğlu, 2017). Türkiye, on the other hand, is pursuing this project, which it sees as an opportunity for the future, with a balanced policy. The most critical point that will be affected by the Belt and Road Initiative is likely to be the financial markets (Wolf, 2016). This will lead to a new form of economy. Therefore, the socio-cultural aspects of the trade route should be studied, and measures should be taken against the possibility that it could turn into a mechanism of imperialist expansion and control.

The alliances created by the Chinese government through the "Belt and Road" project, which is referred to as a foreign policy initiative (Wolf, 2016), and the ability of these alliances

to transform into a political union, pose a great threat to the United States, which has been the dominant power in the world for nearly seventy years. As a result of this initiative, the US has put many options on the table, including an economic embargo against the rising power China (Tsai, 2021), and has even developed a policy against all countries that support or could support this project. Considering that the northern corridor of the "Belt and Road" lies on the lines reaching Poland via Russia, it is important to evaluate developments in the region in this way. The Middle East problem, which has developed into a global crisis, especially due to the war in Syria, and the fact that an unstable Palestinian geography, even if it can collapse at any time, causes such a great interaction, highlights the evaluation of 21st century trade route projects and the risks associated with these projects. The 21st century trade route projects and the risks associated with these projects. It is obvious that the "Belt and Road" project is one of the main reasons why the rivalry between the US and China has shifted to other countries and led to political crises. The reflexes of the countries in the regions through which the project runs are of direct interest to the US and therefore to the Chinese government. In this regard, the US is supporting the "India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor" (IMEC), i.e. a new route project (Güngör, 2023; Fazli, 2024) that starts from India and reaches Europe via the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Greece and the Mediterranean, as an alternative to the Belt and Road project. The aim of the India-focused project is to create a new alternative to China's "Belt Road" (Rai, 2023) and to suppress Chinese policy. In response to the economic congestion caused by the rivalry between the US and China, Türkiye responds with a more practical and appropriate project by establishing the "Development Road" and developing a new model for the transit routes of the projects in India and China.

Assessing the Chinese trade project from Türkiye's perspective makes developments between the US and Türkiye, two allied states, more privileged. This is because the US evaluates Türkiye's diplomatic moves in the region, including its stance on the "Belt and Road" project, against its own strategy. It is obvious that this strategy is based on US gains in the region. Accordingly, Washington, which does not want Türkiye to enter into independent alliances and participate in threatening initiatives in the region, wants Türkiye to stand by its side as a NATO ally. However, the insistence and perception of a Turkish government engaged in its orbit is more costly for the US government. From a regional perspective, the realization of the China project is closely linked to Türkiye's policy. Therefore, the US should adopt an understandable policy towards Türkiye and take concrete steps to address Ankara's concerns. In particular, it should review its relations with its local allies in Syria. Otherwise, the current US policy could lead to sharp differences with Ankara. Indeed, Türkiye has been moving away from a Western-oriented policy towards a balanced, new and unique Türkiye policy for some time. Even though these geopolitical maneuvers come at a mutual cost to US-Türkiye relations, Ankara has continued its current regional and global policies for nearly a decade (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, 2024). On the way to the new world order, diplomacy based on mutual respect and trust seems to be the right method for a sustainable foreign policy. If the two independent countries act with this understanding, it will help them develop a solution-oriented reflex on the above-mentioned issues.

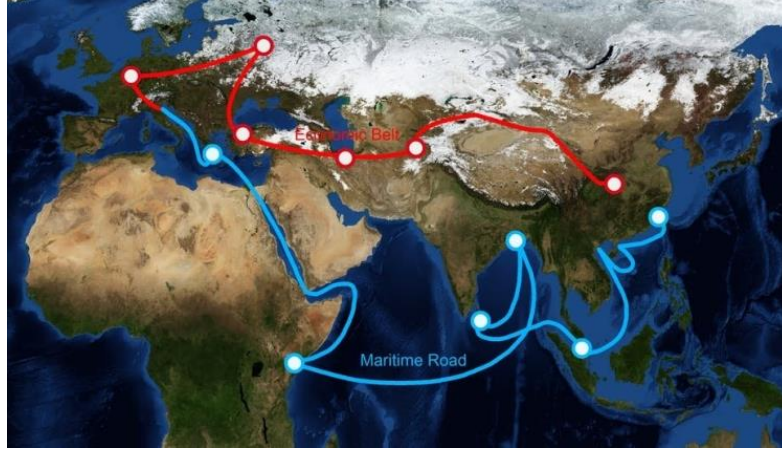


Figure 1. The Southern Wing of the Belt and Road, Source: 21st Century Türkiye Institute (June 22, 2022)

3. DEVELOPMENT ROAD PROJECT AND POTENTIAL IMPACT AREAS

In addition to its active policies, Türkiye is developing its own projects and trade route alliances against the Chinese "Belt and Road". In particular, Türkiye has made a major breakthrough against the Southern Sea Route, which runs from the Pacific to the Mediterranean and Europe, with new project agreements around the Persian Gulf. With a new corridor strategy called the "Development Road" (Duman, 2023), which extends from the port of Law to Iraq and then through the Anatolian land to Europe, Türkiye has set a new geopolitical line by developing an alternative to the "Belt and Road" project or planning to intervene in the direction of the project.

This project, which shortens the trade shift by at least two weeks and is a more suitable alternative to the trade routes in the region, is not only a step towards the trade route but also a geostrategic demand made within the framework of the law against terrorist activities in the region. The axis of the project, which started with the partnership between Türkiye, Iraq and the United Arab Emirates and may involve many other countries, holds the possibility of bringing economic and political growth to the countries of the region (Center for Eurasian Studies, 2023). This initiative, which is explained with a win-win logic, does not involve an imperialist concept and shows a serious approach to contribute to regional peace (Karataş, 2023). Therefore, it is obvious that a joint diplomacy can be developed between the countries of the region to respond to any actions that undermine this process. The trade route, which is estimated to require an investment of twenty billion dollars, has the potential to trigger major crises in the next decade. The situation is better understood when one considers the activities of the US in the region and the alliance organizations it is trying to create for the security of Israel. However, Türkiye has expanded its alliances through strategic moves and continues to push for regional activities that have the possibility of spilling over into its domestic politics and pushing it geopolitically beyond its borders.

The most arduous process of the "Development Road" project, which affects many regional lines including the Caucasus, is likely to be experienced with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Although it is not yet clear which political path Iran, which is trying to undermine the middle corridor of the "Belt and Road" in the Zangezur Corridor and pull it into its own orbit, will choose in this Iraq-based project that includes Mosul, Kirkuk and Erbil, it is obvious that there will be a political crisis. If we look at the issue from the Iranian side, we do not see a view that can be easily accepted. This is because Türkiye has practically encircled Iran with its regional strategies through the Zangezur in the north and the "development road" initiatives in the south. Although this situation is perceived as a threat by the Iranian government, it can become a common model. In fact, Türkiye's aim is to shield the region from the alleged imperialist policies by becoming a trade base and building a win-win partnership with development projects. However, it will not be

easy to convince Iran, which seeks strong diplomacy and expansion on its axis (El-Hilo, 2023). Turkish-Iranian diplomacy is much more important than its predecessors, forcing a policy based on trust for the two neighboring states. There is a climate of mistrust characterized by historical, sectarian and political sensitivities. However, there is still work to be done to overcome this. In view of Iran's influence on Iraq's internal dynamics, it is essential for Türkiye to develop a new Iran policy. Historically, Iranian influence on Iraq increased after the US-Iraq war in 2003. The Shiite population in Iraq is connected to Iran, even if they generally have a different mindset. Iran's foreign policy aspirations, especially after the US withdrawal from the region after 2013, have sought to be implemented through the Shia community in Iraq and its political influence. However, the method of Tehran's policy was based on strategic goals and interests (Sinkaya, 2013). In light of these developments, it is clear that the "development road" project is an Iranian reality".

The trade base that China wants to create in the Middle East through the "Belt and Road" Initiative is of the utmost importance for the countries in the region. The realization of the Iraq-Türkiye route through the Persian Gulf, as opposed to connecting the southern corridor through the Indian Sea with the Suez Canal, completely changes the equation in the region. Especially if costs are reduced over time and safety is assured, it seems more feasible for Asia to reach the mainland from the seas and from Europe via modern rail lines. Clearly, the planned Persian Gulf port, when operational, will provide an alternative to the congestion of the Suez Canal. However, as the "Development Road" is fully utilized, the importance of many transit routes and ports in the region, including the Suez Canal, could diminish or even be eclipsed. The dispute between China and the US in the region and Iran's intention to link its rail activities to the Persian Gulf via Iraq are seen as important risk factors for the future of the "Development Road" project. Just as the declining interest in the Suez Canal has caused the Egyptian problem, Kuwait's efforts to reach Basra via Iraq could cause other problems. In this context, there is a possibility that the project could be detrimental to many countries, especially Egypt. Issues such as the fact that Iran considers Iraq as a starting point for access to the Mediterranean, Kuwait's aim to develop its own ports, such as Mubarak Al Kabeer Port, which is still under construction at the time of writing this article, and the extent to which the UAE's Jebel Ali port will be affected by this project make the future of the "Development Road" dependent on the attitude of countries in the region (Anadolu Ajansı, 2022).

At the center of the "Development Road" is the "Al Faw Port", which is being built by the South Korean company Daewoo and is scheduled for completion in 2025. This port and the "Development Road", which is to serve as a base for the transportation of products from Asia to the Arab world and Europe, must also be assessed with regard to terrorist activities in the region. One of the biggest risks of the project is that terrorist structures of the PKK/Daesh could disrupt order in the region, which is one of the diplomatic developments between the Iraqi central government and Türkiye. In addition, the disagreements between the central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) are another reason that makes the current situation problematic (Al-Hilo, 2023). The United States' support for the SDF, which operates under the name "Syrian Democratic Forces", also reveals a different planned policy for the region. The connection of the YPG with the PKK as its armed wing and the relations of the organization's members who came to Syria from the Iraqi area, especially from Xinjiang and its surroundings, explain this situation. The diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Iraq and the approaches of the states that legitimize these structures will shape this issue, which is one of the most difficult problems of the "development road" project. The PKK/YPG alliance, which is seen as a threat to national security by Türkiye, can be overcome through the functioning of the joint political mechanisms established with Iraq. In this regard, the potential of the Iraqi government to act independently and the development of a common policy against the reasons that will disrupt the "Development Road" initiative, which is extremely important for its future of the country, will become a real result. It is extremely important for the security of the region that Iraq, which has been in an unstable process for almost two decades, seizes this opportunity presented to it by

global developments. With the involvement of the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and other states with significant influence in the region in Turkish-Iraqi relations, there is a possibility that the problem can be fundamentally resolved. However, the steps taken by Israel in its Palestinian policy, the reflexes of Western states, particularly the USA, and the uncertainties of the Chinese government in its Belt and Road" policy are leading to an increase in the security risk in the region.

The Development Road can bring many benefits for Iraq and Türkiye. In this context, the Iraqi government is maintaining its relations with Ankara as it has the opportunity to enter European trade through Türkiye. Through its soft power approach towards Baghdad, Türkiye increases its influence in the region on the one hand, and on the other hand, it has the opportunity to eliminate the elements threatening the Anatolian country. With a solution-oriented reflex that takes into account the mutual risks and benefits, the two states are gradually completing a positive process. While Iraq maintains close contacts with Türkiye due to the importance of the issue, it is also developing a new foreign policy understanding with other European countries, especially Germany. It is clear that this initiative, which will connect the Middle East with Europe, will be a win-win situation for both Europe and the countries in the region. Resolving the political crises in the region is important for the continuation and smooth running of the process. The "Development Road", which covers a larger area than the "Baghdad-Berlin Railway" project planned before the First World War, can bring significant benefits to European countries in meeting their energy needs. In view of the uncertainty of the Russian-Ukrainian war and the crisis with the Russian government, this project is of great importance for Western countries and represents an alternative for covering the energy deficit.



Figure 2. Development Road Project, Source: The National News (April 24, 2024)

CONCLUSION

The "Development Road", which is regarded as an important project initiative of recent years, is being implemented by the Turkish-Iraqi governments. The most expensive section of the project lies on Iraqi territory. The government in Baghdad, which is struggling to manage this process economically, plans to solve this problem through a partnership with Türkiye, Europe and the countries of the region. In reality, Iraq, which relies on Türkiye's diplomatic power, is trying to form an alliance with this project and obtain the financial contribution of powerful countries in the region such as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. There are many factors behind Ankara's intense diplomacy for the current project. These are the Chinese government's economic and political goals under the "Belt and Road" project. Türkiye wants to activate alternative trade routes in the future as the Chinese economy, which is undergoing strong development, cannot be ignored. The "Development Road" move is undoubtedly in this direction. The dialog that Western countries have started with Beijing through the "Asian Infrastructure Development Bank" is another explanation. The relations between Asia and Europe, whose communication mechanism seems to go beyond the normal level with the establishment of a joint fund, continue to progress.

In addition, Türkiye has also developed a policy against the trade project via the "India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor" (IMEC) and has put forward the reality of the "Development Road" against the cost of this route. This initiative, which has emerged with the claim of a new road link in the midst of the dispute between the US and China, meets the expectations of both sides.

China's foreign policy, which is expected to evolve significantly as the reflexes put forward by the US against China's rise and a general defensive orientation subside, is expected to continue through the "Belt and Road". By moving in this direction, Türkiye aims to solve the problems in its own region through the "Development Road" initiative. This is not only an economic project, but also a breakthrough that legitimately defines Ankara's foreign policy. Seeking partnerships based on mutual benefit, Türkiye has seized the opportunity to find solutions to the threats to its security on its borders. Ankara, which has long intervened in the Syrian crisis with military and diplomatic means, has developed numerous activities against the spread of the PKK from Iraq to Syria. These activities include the "Development Road" project, which regulates relations between Türkiye and Iraq by offering a legitimate economic partnership. The trade project, which is intended to serve as a shield against future PKK expansion, is based on Türkiye's arguments. The continuity of the policy of Iraq and regional countries to participate in the ongoing project will increase Ankara's effectiveness.

Türkiye, which has the most favorable geopolitical connection between Europe and the Middle East, is trying to turn the crises in the world into opportunities by using its exceptional position. With the policy of turning the rivalry between the US and China in its favor through the "IMEC-Belt Road" projects, Ankara is strengthening the southern corridor between the Pacific and the Mediterranean with an alternative road project and expanding the opportunities for the most economically profitable and fastest trade between Asia and Europe. The post-Covid 19 tensions due to the wars between Ukraine and Russia and between Israel and Palestine and the congestion of energy pipelines have enabled the creation of new trade routes. Ankara's multilateral diplomacy and its "Development Road" initiative on the transit route of the "Belt and Road" and "IMEC" projects provide Europe with the desired transportation conditions to meet its needs for cheap energy and raw materials. The Law Port built on the Persian Gulf offers a practical and cost-effective system for the transportation of products from Asia and the Middle East to Europe via Türkiye. This initiative, similar to the "Baghdad Railway" project developed in the past between the Ottoman Empire and Germany but covering a wider area and reaching the Pacific via the Persian Gulf, will offer extensive potential in the new world order. The "Development Road" is likely to make not only economic contributions but also promote political and cultural integration, opening the door to the overall development of Türkiye and its partners. Al Faw has the potential to bypass many ports such as the "Suez Canal", "Jebel Ali" and "Mubarak Al Kabeer Port", which remain active in the region, and the "Development Road", although it may be seen as a risk for the countries benefiting from these port rights, can create the opportunity for mutual gain with a strong partnership. The "Development Road", which will contribute to the reconstruction of destroyed cities, the development of jobs and the growth of industrialization in many areas, is seen as an important opportunity for the overall stability of the region, particularly due to the wars that have long been waged in many countries in the Middle East, including Iraq.

Etik Beyan

"Türkiye'nin Stratejik "Kalkınma Yolu" başlıklı çalışmanın yazım sürecinde bilimsel kurallara, etik ve alıntı kurallarına uyulmuş; toplanan veriler üzerinde herhangi bir tahrifat yapılmamış ve bu çalışma herhangi başka bir akademik yayın ortamına değerlendirme için gönderilmemiştir. Bu araştırma etik kurul kararı zorunluluğu taşımamaktadır. Makale, Etik Kurulları Yayın Etiği Komitesinin (Committee on Publication Ethics-COPE) yazar, hakem ve

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