



Section 1. Economic policy

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ZANGAZUR CORRIDOR: A GUARANTOR OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL COOPERATION

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Abstract

The 44-day war has brought about very serious changes in the region. Against the background of this process, the importance of a new connecting corridor passing through Zangazur – historic Azerbaijani land – which will connect the main territory of Azerbaijan with the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, an integral part of the country, as well as with Turkey, is clearly evident. Undoubtedly, issues such as the attitude of various states towards this matter, the new opportunities the corridor may create in the context of regional and global cooperation, and the content of Azerbaijan's activities as an independent state have become relevant. In this regard, a geopolitical analysis of the realization of the Zangazur Corridor is highly topical.

Keywords: *Zangazur Corridor, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Nakhchivan, Armenia*

Introduction:

As noted, one of the issues of particular importance for the Zangazur Corridor is the organization of economic relations in a cheap, safe, and fast way. Experts who approach this from various angles also refer to the corridor as the “Northern Route,” the “Middle Route,” and the “Southern Route.” More precisely, they classify the corridor according to different directions, arriving at these terms. For example, according to experts, the “Northern Route” passes through Russian territory and extends to Europe, ensuring deliveries to Europe. The “Middle Route” refers to the

route encompassing Central Asia-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey. The “Southern Route,” in turn, is the direction passing through the territory of South Asian countries and also encompassing Iran. The most interesting and important aspect of all this is that the common space for all three directions, approached differently by various experts, is Azerbaijan. In other words, in all three directions, the route intersects in the South Caucasus on the territory of Azerbaijan. This opportunity is formed by the North-South, East-West, and South-West transport projects in which the Republic of Azerbaijan is an active participant. Thus,

via the “North-South” corridor from Russia, and the “East-West” corridor from Central Asia, the roads intersect in Azerbaijan, while the “Southern Route” also passes through Azerbaijani territory via the “South-West” route (Nasirov, A., 2022).

The Zangazur Corridor will consist of two segments: automobile and railway. Projects for both the automobile and railway segments of the new corridor are being intensively implemented on the territory of our country. During President Ilham Aliyev’s visit to the Fuzuli, Zangilan, Lachin, and Jabrayil districts on February 14, 2021, the foundation was laid for the Horadiz-Aghband railway line, a crucial component of the Zangazur Corridor (Abdullayev, M. (n.d.)).

This 100-kilometer railway line is a very important infrastructure that will ensure the functionality of the Zangazur Corridor. The construction of the railway line is being carried out in 3 stages. In the first stage, it is planned to lay 30 km, including the Horadiz, Marjanli, Mahmudlu stations; in the second stage, 55 km, including the Soltanli, Gumlag stations; and in the third stage, 25.4 km of road, covering the Minjivan, Bartaz, and Aghband stations. Within the framework of the project, it is planned to construct 8 stations, 3 tunnels, 41 bridges, 3 galleries, 4 overpasses, and a total of nearly 300 artificial engineering structures. A great volume of work has already been carried out towards the implementation of the Horadiz-Aghband railway line project, an important part of the Zangazur Corridor. Certain parts of the transport connection have even been put into operation. Currently, the movement of freight trains is provided in those sections that have been put into use, and loads are being transported to the territories liberated from occupation. Simultaneously, work has also begun on the automobile road component of the Zangazur Corridor. Thus, on October 26, 2022, the foundation was laid for the Horadiz-Jabrayil-Zangilan-Aghband automobile road. The distance from the starting point of the road to Aghband, on the Armenian border, is 123.6 kilometers. This marks the beginning of the next stage in the creation of the Zangazur Corridor.

The line ending at Validagh will be extended 14 kilometers to the border with Armenia. If Armenia decides to contribute to the search

for peace in the region and participates in these transport projects, it could connect its railway line from Baku to Horadiz and from Horadiz to the north of Nakhchivan (Shukurova, E., 2021). Thus, Armenia could obtain uninterrupted transport to Russia and Iran. Parallel to the railway line, automobile roads along these routes are also being put into use. The construction project of the Ahmadbeyli-Horadiz-Minjivan-Aghband automobile road, extending to Zangazur in Azerbaijan, has been initiated and is proceeding rapidly.

Azerbaijan, for its part, has access opportunities to the Turkey-Europe direction both via Georgia and, in the future, via the Zangazur transport corridor. Already, the world’s major powers and large states recognize the importance of the Zangazur Corridor and support the realization of the project.

The Zangazur Corridor, promising intensive transport connections that are efficient for access to the global space, especially Europe, will first and foremost create broader-scale opportunities for the states of the region.

Our research and analysis show that the activation of the Zangazur Corridor on a regional and global scale will spur serious geopolitical and geoeconomic innovations in the region. Furthermore, the corridor will allow Azerbaijan to strengthen its position as a transport-logistics center of Eurasia and to consolidate its international status as an independent state (Aliyev, Z. B., 2023).

The geopolitical assessment of the Zangazur Corridor also has historical and political significance. It is no coincidence that in the ideas voiced by the President of Azerbaijan, in his interviews with transnational media, alongside the economic and strategic importance of the Zangazur Corridor, the historical-political motives of the territorial issue are also emphasized.

The realization of the Zangazur transport corridor, where regional, economic, and geopolitical interests intersect and collide, is a demand of the times. Roads leading to Zangazur in Azerbaijan are being rapidly repaired, and new roads are being built. It is possible that the corridor will be realized in a short time. At the current stage, Armenia must correctly assess the reality, comply with the terms of the Trilateral Declaration, and support the restoration of peace, security,

economic development, and progress in the region.

“Despite not having access to the open sea, we have turned Azerbaijan, located at the junction of East and West, North and South, into an important transport center. Based on the advantages of the geographical position, the entire transport chain has been diversified: a seaport, railway connection, several international airports, and highways,” (Geopolitical factor increases interest in Zangazur corridor – ANALYSIS. (n.d.)) said President Ilham Aliyev during his speech at the Azerbaijan-Lithuania business forum. Many new proposals are being received by various states regarding the use of Azerbaijan’s transport infrastructure. As the head of state noted, today the republic is a transit hub for the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and the entire Caspian region.

Conclusion

The Zangazur Corridor offers important functionality in terms of legal and international relations. The relevance of the Zangazur Corridor’s prospects is the continuation of regional development upon Azerbaijan’s interests. The main advantage is that this corridor, while presenting a regional power, can also provide a basis for solving transport issues (Ibrahimov, R., & Oztarsu, M. F., 2022). The corridor’s leading role in solving functional issues increases its prospects in the eyes of many countries. However, Armenia and its partners ignore issues related to the prospects of this corridor, prioritizing their own political interests, which harms the regional development of the corridor.

In general, both the Zangazur Corridor and the “3+3” platform created in the region will serve as a guarantor of strengthening friendship, neighborhood, and solidarity among the peoples of the region, as well as sustainable peace, stability, security, tranquility, and development in the region.

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