



## East-West Transport Corridor for Azerbaijan Importance and Geo-Economic Interests

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## EAST-WEST TRANSPORT CORRIDOR FOR AZERBAIJAN IMPORTANCE AND GEO-ECONOMIC INTERESTS

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*"In the context of the development of our relations transport and logistics fields occupy an important place. Azerbaijan has established itself as a reliable transit country between Central Asian countries with Turkey and European markets. "Azerbaijan makes a valuable contribution to the sustainable operation of the East-West Transport Corridor."*

Ilham Aliyev

In modern times, 2019 will be remembered for strengthening its position as a transport corridor for our country.

Azerbaijan acts not only as a transit country, but also as an executor of a number of transport projects, acting as an important link of a huge global initiative towards the restoration of the historic Silk Road.

Azerbaijan acts not only as a transit country but also as an executor of several transport projects, as an important link in the huge global initiative to restore the historical Silk Road.

Our country is not only a gateway connecting East and West, but also an important corridor connecting North and South [1]. Also, the East-West or Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TMTM) is intended for the increase of cargo transportation from China to Turkey, as well as to EU countries and vice versa.

Azerbaijan has shown serious political will and make investments for the formation of this corridor - transport infrastructure.

This is what increases the importance and functionality of Azerbaijan as a transport corridor.

The development of Azerbaijan's transport lines is observed in four directions: Air transport, Railway transport, Sea transport and Road transport.

The transformation of a landlocked country into one of the international transport centers is of course the result of a well-thought-out policy.

Azerbaijan is diversifying both foreign and domestic railway transport infrastructure. Azerbaijan currently operates six international airports. Considering the size of the territory of our country, this is a very high indicator. With the idea of restoring the Great Silk Road, Azerbaijan is taking important measures to turn the entire transport infrastructure, as well as highways, into the leading link of this chain. Azerbaijan supports all initiatives aimed at expanding the transport and transit opportunities of its geography, as well as closely participates in the projects implemented for this purpose.

**Keywords: geostrategic, infrastructure, alternative, transit opportunities, geoeconomic.**

The management and development of the transport corridor is carried out by a Consortium created by the participating countries. Consortium members are: in China – Chinese Railways, in Kazakhstan – KTZ Express. In the Caspian Sea – Caspian Shipping Company, in Azerbaijan – ADY

Express, in Georgia – Trans Caucasus Terminals. Nomad Express, a block train that runs through this corridor to increase freight traffic, delivers goods to Europe from China on average of 10 to 12 days.

In April 2016, in Baku, Azerbaijan, the agreement on the establishment of the International Trans-Caspian Transport Consortium was signed, which is currently engaged in the management and development of the route.

Its location at the intersection of very important international transport and communication corridors stretching from east to west and from north to south and in a strategically important geopolitical space has kept Azerbaijan in the sphere of special interest of transnational world powers for centuries.

Heydar Aliyev, the architect and founder of the modern independent state of Azerbaijan, a world-famous political figure, the national leader of our people, and his successor, President Ilham Aliyev, correctly assessed the current reality as one of the main factors for the independent state of Azerbaijan, and in the past 25 years, both the transnational transport and communication policy and skillfully used as the main factor in the implementation of the new oil strategy.

Azerbaijan's relations with power centers and the world states are based on superior geo-economic, geopolitical, and geographical realities, which accordingly play a leading role in ensuring the country's strategic interests at a high level [1]. Azerbaijan is located at the intersection of the East-West and North-South transport corridors and has a favorable geostrategic position. The location of our country is among the largest economically developed countries in Europe and Asia and its geographical features create a real basis for participation in the international transport network. The main goal of Azerbaijan's transport policy remains the future development of transport infrastructure. Large-scale projects related to the development of transport infrastructure has been implemented in the country. It should be noted that the construction of the Baku International Sea Trade Port, the East-West and North-South transport corridors, the reconstruction of roads and railways in the direction of Georgia, Russia, and Iran based on international standards, and the measures implemented by international airports in Baku and the regions will increase the transit potential of Azerbaijan. The work done in recent years regarding the development of transport corridors in Azerbaijan, which is located at the intersection of East-West and North-South transport corridors and has a favorable geostrategic position, deserves special attention. The East-West transport corridor is the shortest route between China and Europe and is convenient for transit and cargo transportation. With the launch of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, which is the shortest route connecting Europe with Asia, a significant increase in container transportation through the East-West international transport corridor has been achieved.

The launch of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line called the "Iron Silk Road," on the initiative of President Ilham Aliyev, made it possible for goods to reach Europe directly by land. At the same time, Azerbaijan has also done serious work in the direction of the development of the North-South International Transport Corridor, which has an advantage over alternative corridors. According to this project, cargo transportation to Eastern and Northern European countries, as well as from the Persian Gulf to Russia, have become more efficient. The North-South International Transport Corridor has great political and economic importance, which allows for a significant increase in passenger and cargo traffic. China's "One Belt, One Road" project is of great importance for the country in terms of realizing the transit potential of our country. Azerbaijan is one of the first countries to support this strategy. During the official visit of President Ilham Aliyev to China in 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding on the joint organization of the Silk Road Economic. The belt was signed. The countries through which this road passes will receive a large amount of income, which will stimulate their development. In this regard, the countries of the world have started a very serious political and economic struggle for the acquisition of that route [2].

As a result of President Ilham Aliyev's visionary policy and necessary measures were taken in time. We have a huge fleet of cargo ships in the Caspian Sea. Our fleet has enough ferry ships to transport cargo from the east coast to the left coast of the Caspian Sea. All conditions have been created for the loading and unloading of huge ships at the Alat International Trade Port, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway has been built to transport these cargoes to Europe. It will be possible to send

more cargo through the Zangezur corridor. By moving from Azerbaijan to Turkey through the Zangezur corridor, it will be possible to quickly deliver cargo to European and Middle Eastern countries. The Zangezur Corridor will further expand Azerbaijan's transit opportunities. Azerbaijan has the most powerful navy in the Caspian Sea. The fleet of 260+300 ships plays a special role in the organization of cargo transportation in the Caspian Sea. Along with the restoration of railways in the liberated areas, work began on the construction of the Zangazur corridor. Strengthening the country's transit position in the region and further strengthening its geo-economic position is the main feature of Azerbaijan's regional trade policy. All these will contribute to the expansion of trade relations, the formation of a long-term reliable market for sea and railway transport, and the further development of infrastructure areas related to cargo transportation. Efficient use of the potential of transport corridors would in turn affect increasing the specific weight of this area in the non-oil sector. After liberating its lands from occupation, Azerbaijan continues to make a positive contribution to the East-West Corridor. President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan inaugurated Fizuli International Airport on October 26.

The airport opened in Fuzuli is very important in terms of expansion of the export opportunities for the region in Karabakh and the export of industrial products to the world market. It is not the only project implemented in the field of building modern communications in our liberated territories. The airports built in Lachin and Zangilan are very important strategic projects that are considered important for the Great Return to the historical lands of Azerbaijan, and at the same time, they will make a positive contribution to the East-West corridor [3].

### **Conclusion**

The implemented transport projects bring significant dividends to our country in various directions. This infrastructure plays an important role in the full realization of Azerbaijan's export potential.

The growing role of Azerbaijan in the international transport corridor brings political dividends to our country - joint projects strengthen alliance relations, the number of our partners increases, and these projects become a guarantee of security on a global scale, as well as in the region. Military threats disappear, and dialogue and understanding deepen. This brings prosperity to all participants [3].

The Zangezur transport corridor project also became relevant after the victory in the Patriotic War. By passing through the territory of Azerbaijan, the Zangezur transport corridor will become a part of the East-West corridor connecting Asia and Europe, Azerbaijan is a new point connecting the European economic ring with East Asia. Transport and communication projects for the actualization of the Zangezur corridor are being reviewed and active works are being carried out. Turkey will use this corridor to create a direct land route to Azerbaijan. This, in turn, will create conditions for faster development of bilateral tourism and economic relations. The Zangezur Corridor will also serve as a trade gateway for Turkey to Central Asia and allow the country to strengthen its economic ties with the Turkic world.

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