

Political Aspects of the Development of Eurasian Transit Corridors: International Relations, Transport Policy, and Geopolitics

Aida YUSIFZADE

Abstract: *The development of transit corridors across Eurasia constitutes a sophisticated and multi-dimensional political strategy that transcends mere logistical considerations, encompassing international diplomacy, economic rivalry, regional integration, and complex geopolitical maneuvering. Key initiatives—namely China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the India–Iran–Russia-led International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC), and the European Union’s TRACECA project—represent competing paradigms for shaping the evolving global order and spheres of influence. Strategically positioned countries at critical transit junctions, particularly Azerbaijan and Turkey, adeptly leverage their geographic advantages through comprehensive infrastructure investments and agile, multi-vector diplomatic engagements, thereby converting transit potential into potent political and economic capital. The imposition of sanctions on Russia and Iran has acted as a catalyst for significant reconfiguration in logistical flows, expediting the diversification of transit routes and precipitating a broader geopolitical realignment throughout Eurasia. The future viability and expansion of these corridors depend fundamentally on states’ abilities to institutionalize effective governance frameworks, enhance transport security, diversify transit pathways, and harmonize national sovereignty with the demands of regional and global integration. Within this dynamic landscape, logistics emerges not only as a vital economic facilitator but also as a pivotal instrument of state resilience, geopolitical contestation, and strategic influence—both mirroring and actively shaping the transformative contours of 21st-century global affairs.*

Keywords: *logistics, transit, geopolitics, infrastructure, corridors, institutions, sovereignty, security, integration, competition, sanctions, routes.*

Introduction

The development of transit corridors in Eurasia is not merely a logistical necessity but a multifaceted political strategy with far-reaching geoeconomic and geopolitical consequences. Amid the rapid transformation of global political and economic structures, transport routes have become critical components of global and regional interactions through which not

only trade but also capital, information, technology, and political influence circulate. Modern supply chains are inextricably linked with issues of security, energy, international law, and the struggle for market access and control over critical infrastructure.

Today, Eurasia is not just a geographic expanse between Europe and Asia but a dynamic geopolitical arena where global powers compete, region-

al cooperation is strengthened, and new configurations of influence emerge. Against the backdrop of global upheavals—from the COVID-19 pandemic to armed conflicts and energy crises—transit routes gain additional significance as instruments of resilience, adaptation, and political maneuvering. States with advantageous geographic positions seek to transform their transit status into strategic assets by investing in infrastructure, modernizing legal frameworks, and promoting initiatives for logistical integration.

Contemporary transit corridors connecting East Asia with the European Union serve not only as mechanisms of economic integration but also as levers of political pressure and strategic deterrence. Initiatives such as China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are aimed not merely at improving logistical connectivity but at constructing a new architecture of international relations centered in Beijing. At the same time, sanction regimes targeting Russia and Iran significantly affect the redistribution of trade flows, prompting the development of alternative routes, transforming political alliances, and altering the rules of engagement across the Eurasian landscape¹.

Countries situated at the crossroads of key routes play a particularly prominent role in this process. Turkey and Azerbaijan, owing to their strategic locations, are becoming important logistical nodes, advancing their own initiatives while simultaneously integrating into international projects.

Their participation in ventures such as the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route or the "Middle Corridor" enables them to not only enhance economic resilience but also elevate their political agency at both regional and global levels.

This article offers a comprehensive analysis of the political dimensions of developing Eurasian transit corridors, with a focus on international relations, transport and logistics policy, and the geopolitical transformations arising amid global and regional challenges. The study seeks to identify the key factors shaping the transformation of the transit environment and to assess the impact of political decisions on infrastructure and economic processes. Attention is devoted to both interstate strategies and the role of international organizations, sanctions mechanisms, and emerging configurations of cooperation, thus allowing Eurasian logistics to be viewed as a space of political competition and potential partnership.

Historical Context: From the Silk Road to Modern Corridors

Historically, Eurasia has always served as a bridge between civilizations, representing not only a geographical expanse but also a unique cultural and political tapestry that has shaped global connections for centuries. The ancient Silk Road, which dates back to antiquity, linked China, Central Asia, Persia, the Caucasus, and Europe, facilitating the circulation of goods—such as silk, spices, and

precious metals—as well as the spread of religions, scientific knowledge, cultural traditions, and political ideas. These ties laid the foundation for a trans-civilizational dialogue that, in a transformed form, continues into the 21st century².

In the medieval period, the Silk Road functioned as a network of trade and diplomatic channels that contributed to the emergence of international relations prior to the advent of modern nation-states. Routes passing through Samarkand, Bukhara, Tabriz, and Constantinople not only spurred economic development but also played a role in shaping political alliances and conflicts. The interdependence of regions created the need for diplomatic resolution, protection of merchants, and stability in transit zones—challenges that remain relevant today.

With the onset of the Age of Discovery, the importance of overland trade routes declined in favor of maritime pathways. However, in the 21st century, amid globalization, technological advances, and a revival of Eurasian integration, interest in land-based transit corridors has resurged. Modern transport networks—based on high-speed railways, highways, and multimodal infrastructure—essentially replicate and expand upon ancient routes, forming new geoeconomic spaces.

Unlike their historical counterparts, today's corridors are integrated into the global economy and the international political system. They operate under international agreements, WTO rules, customs and sanitary standards,

transport security protocols, and digital logistics platforms. This institutionalization transforms transport routes into political instruments—tools of influence, pressure, competitive positioning, and the promotion of national interests on the global stage. Logistics has become part of foreign policy agendas, and transit—an element of "soft power," enables states not only to generate revenue but also to manage flows and influence the behavior of neighbors and partners.

The historical continuity is especially evident in projects such as the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), also known as the Middle Corridor. This route connects China to Europe via Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. Its development reflects not only the technological and logistical modernization of the ancient Silk Road but also a revival of political interest in Eurasian integration. A key feature of TITR is its ability to bypass Russian territory, making it particularly attractive to countries seeking greater transport independence and political diversification.

In this historical context, the roles of regional actors such as Iran and Afghanistan are also noteworthy. Historically, both served as transit bridges between South Asia, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Today, their participation in new logistics configurations is limited by sanctions and internal instability, highlighting the degree to which political factors affect the implementation of transport projects in Eurasia³.

Thus, modern Eurasian transit routes are not merely economic phenomena but historical and political continuations of ancient pathways adapted to the realities of the 21st century. They link past and future, technological development and political ambition, and form a new axis of interdependence in which logistics becomes a central element of global politics.

Strategic Goals and Global Scope of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Launched in 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is far more than a transportation modernization project—it is an ambitious strategy aimed at redefining the architecture of global development with Chinese characteristics. At its core lies the vision of establishing an extensive network of infrastructure and logistical links encompassing over 150 countries. The initiative is focused on market integration, expansion of trade routes, and the deepening of political and economic ties between China and the rest of the world.

Initially, the BRI comprised two main components: the Silk Road Economic Belt (land-based) and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (sea-based). However, the geographic scope of the initiative has since significantly expanded, eventually reaching nearly all continents. This expansion has been accompanied by vigorous diplomatic efforts, including the signing of bilateral agreements, the estab-

lishment of financial institutions—most notably, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)—and the promotion of a new international discourse in which infrastructure becomes a foundation of political influence.

Thus, the BRI represents a synthesis of logistics strategy, and foreign policy doctrine, and is an instrument for shaping an alternative global order in which China aspires to become the political and economic center of gravity in Eurasia—and, potentially, globally. This leads to geopolitical restructuring, challenging traditional transatlantic governance models and creating new channels for political and economic interaction⁴.

China's politico-economic influence on Central Asia and the Caucasus—especially Kazakhstan—plays a crucial role in realizing the land-based component of the BRI. Kazakhstan provides territory for a strategically important route between China and Europe while also acting as an active participant in regional integration. The logistics hub of Khorgos on the Chinese border has become a symbol of the new Eurasian infrastructure, operating as an international center for transit and cross-border trade. Chinese investments extend beyond railways to include digital logistics, storage facilities, and customs and sanitary systems.

Kazakhstan, in turn, leverages the BRI as a tool for diversifying foreign economic relations, reducing dependency on Russia, and gaining access to new markets. The initiative aligns

well with the national “Nurly Zhol” program, which complements and enhances BRI infrastructure projects within Kazakhstan.

Azerbaijan, owing to its position along the Trans-Caspian route, has also emerged as a major participant in the BRI. Development of the Port of Alat, modernization of railway connections, and expansion of multimodal capabilities have made the country a key node of the Middle Corridor, linking China to Europe while bypassing Russia. Baku is pursuing a multi-vector strategy, simultaneously strengthening ties with China, the EU, Turkey, and Central Asian states.

Furthermore, Azerbaijan is active in regional formats such as the Organization of Turkic States and GUAM, thereby contributing to the formation of new logistical alliances. For Azerbaijan, the BRI represents not only an economic opportunity but also a diplomatic resource, enabling it to enhance its political agency amid intensifying geopolitical competition.

Turkey, located at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, occupies a unique position within the BRI framework. Despite its NATO membership and formal Western orientation, Ankara is consistently advancing its own vision of logistical autonomy through the “Middle Corridor” concept, which seeks to unite Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Turkey into an alternative transport network linking China and Europe⁵.

The Baku–Tbilisi–Kars (BTK) railway, launched in 2017, is a central element of this strategy, providing a

direct transit route that bypasses both Russia and Iran. Amid increasing sanctions against Moscow and Tehran, Turkey’s significance as an alternative route has grown. Ankara has become not only a logistical but also a diplomatic bridge between East and West.

Turkey actively participates in Chinese logistics forums, develops digital infrastructure, builds multimodal terminals, and modernizes sea-ports—such as K           and Mersin—positioning itself as a regional transport hub. However, this active cooperation with China has raised concerns among Western allies, particularly the EU and the U.S., where the BRI is viewed as a vehicle for Chinese expansion. In this complex environment, Ankara demonstrates flexibility, maneuvering between Eastern pragmatism and Western commitments, thereby strengthening its regional standing.

Sanctions Policy as a Tool of Geopolitics

In the modern international context, sanctions have become a powerful instrument of geopolitical strategy aimed at isolating and transforming the political behavior of states. Sanctions against Russia, significantly tightened after 2022, along with continued pressure on Iran, have profoundly reshaped the configuration of logistical flows across Eurasia.

Russia, excluded from many European logistics chains, has begun actively reorienting toward the East. Particular attention is now being given

to the development of the Northern Sea Route, which, due to climate change, is becoming a viable alternative to the Suez Canal. At the same time, the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC), connecting the Baltic Sea with the Indian Ocean via Iran, has become a strategic priority. This route ensures stable connectivity with India and the Persian Gulf, reducing dependence on Western logistics networks.

Iran, long adapted to conditions of sanctions-induced isolation, is also striving to strengthen its logistical autonomy. The development of the Port of Chabahar with Indian support enables Iran to access Afghan and Central Asian markets while bypassing both Pakistan and the Suez Canal. Given the limited access to global ports, Iran is prioritizing multimodal routes that align with the transit interests of both Russia and China.

The synchronization of efforts by Moscow and Tehran—aimed at harmonizing customs procedures, modernizing infrastructure, and promoting settlements in national currencies—is contributing to the emergence of a new, resilient logistics space adapted to the realities of sanctions. In this configuration, transport becomes not just a means of moving goods but also an element of geopolitical sustainability that reflects the shifting balance of power across Eurasia.

Sanctions-driven transformations of the global order are exerting diverse effects on the logistical strategies of Eurasian states. Amid geopolitical turbulence, several countries are

striving to capitalize on the altered logistics landscape, leveraging their geography and political flexibility as strategic assets⁶.

Azerbaijan, located between the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus, is seeking to utilize the newly opened “logistics window” to enhance its transit role. Baku is actively developing infrastructure: modernization of the Port of Alat, expansion of the throughput capacity of the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway, and participation in the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR) are all contributing to the formation of the country’s new transit potential. Azerbaijan adopts a pragmatic political stance, avoiding rigid alignment with either the West or the “sanctioned bloc,” which allows it to build flexible partnerships with the EU and Turkey as well as with Russia and China.

However, this strategy is not without vulnerabilities. Instability in relations with Armenia, tensions along the southern border with Iran, and potential technological constraints in working with sanctioned countries all create risks. Nevertheless, Baku is actively positioning itself as a “logistical and technological hub beyond conflicts,” enabling the country to increase transit volumes, re-exports, and its integration into global supply chains.

Turkey, in turn, is strengthening its role as a bridge between East and West. Sanctions against Russia and Iran have increased the strategic importance of Turkish territory as an alternative freight corridor. Ankara is

leveraging its unique position to develop multimodal logistics, modernize ports and railways, and participate in regional infrastructure initiatives. Turkey's policy of "strategic balance" allows it to maintain NATO ties, expand economic cooperation with Russia, and participate in China's OBOR projects.

A particular role is played by Turkey's so-called "transit diplomacy". Its support for the Middle Corridor concept, participation in summits of the Organization of Turkic States, and intensified cooperation with Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are all part of Ankara's multi-level logistics influence strategy. This brings not only economic benefits but also strengthens Turkey's political position across the post-Soviet space and Central Asia.

Thus, under the pressure of sanctions, Azerbaijan and Turkey are emerging not merely as transit states but as active architects of the new Eurasian logistics order. They act as intermediaries, moderators, and beneficiaries of geoeconomic shifts, using multi-vector foreign policy in an era of global restructuring.

Competition Between Transport Strategies: BRI, TRACECA, and INSTC

Amid the transformation of global logistics, competition among global and regional transport strategies is intensifying. The Eurasian space has become the arena of intersection for three key logistics visions: China's

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the European TRACECA project, and the India–Iran–Russia-led International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

Promoted since 2013, the BRI is the largest and most capital-intensive of these initiatives. China seeks to build an extensive network of infrastructure, energy, and digital connectivity linking Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America. BRI projects include railways, seaports, logistics centers, and high-tech hubs. These infrastructure investments are accompanied by the creation of financial institutions—such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)—that facilitate the formation of a Chinese sphere of political and economic influence.

TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe–Caucasus–Asia), initiated by the EU in the 1990s, is an attempt to establish a transportation corridor linking Europe with the Caucasus and Central Asia independently of Russia. Although more limited in scale and financing than BRI, TRACECA remains an important instrument of the European Union's "soft power." It supports regulatory harmonization, technical compatibility, and institutional integration of participating countries with the EU market.

INSTC offers an alternative to east–west routes by aligning the interests of India, Iran, and Russia. The project aims to reduce the time and distance required for delivering cargo from India to Europe by passing through Iranian ports (such as Chaba-

har), across the Caspian Sea, through Azerbaijan, and into Russia. INSTC serves not only as an economic alternative to Chinese routes but also as a component of India's broader strategy to reduce dependence on Chinese logistics.

These three strategies—BRI, TRACECA, and INSTC—are not only competing but also intersecting in practice. For example, Iran participates in both Chinese and Indo-Russian logistics frameworks. This overlap leads to route redundancy, infrastructure duplication, and tariff competition. A similar situation is evident in Central Asia, where countries like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan attempt to balance participation across Chinese, European, and Russian-Iranian initiatives in order to maximize benefits and minimize dependence on any single power center⁷.

Competition among transport strategies is escalating in the context of sanctions, trade wars, and overall global supply chain instability. This compels countries to enhance institutional flexibility, adapt legal frameworks, and modernize infrastructure to meet the standards of multiple transit platforms simultaneously. In this environment, countries located at the crossroads of major routes—such as Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Kazakhstan—enjoy the greatest strategic advantages. These states serve not only as arenas of rivalry but also as potential centers of regional logistics integration.

Thus, modern sanctions and geopolitical challenges not only narrow

the external economic options available to individual countries but also trigger processes of rethinking logistics strategies at regional and macro-regional levels. Logistics is increasingly becoming an integral part of international politics—a field of competition, a platform for diplomatic maneuvering, and an instrument for enhancing state sovereignty. The rivalry among BRI, TRACECA, and INSTC is transforming Eurasia into a critical arena for the formation of a new logistical and geopolitical order in the 21st century.

Institutional Mechanisms and National Strategies

Against the backdrop of accelerating geopolitical turbulence and mounting sanctions pressure—both of which are reshaping global supply chains—attention is increasingly turning to the institutional mechanisms that determine the resilience and competitiveness of transit routes. The Eurasian space, which encompasses key land and maritime corridors, is not only a theater of infrastructure development but also one of regulatory, political, and organizational competition. In this context, the role of regional organizations and national transport strategies becomes central to the emerging logistics architecture.

Coordinating the interests of dozens of countries intersecting in a complex transit matrix is impossible without stable platforms for political and economic harmonization. This function is fulfilled by international and

regional organizations, which act as intermediaries, coordinators, and regulatory moderators. Among the most active players in shaping the Eurasian logistics environment are the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and the Organization of Turkic States (OTS).

The SCO, which includes China, Russia, India, Iran, and Central Asian republics, considers transport connectivity a priority on its agenda. It promotes not only the construction of routes but also institutional integration—standardization of procedures, ensuring security, and harmonization of regulations. Special attention is paid to aligning the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative with national transport strategies of SCO member states.

The EAEU, in turn, focuses on deepening economic integration within the post-Soviet space. The Union is developing digital and legal mechanisms for logistics cooperation: unified technical regulations, simplified customs procedures, and electronic document platforms are being introduced. This is particularly important under sanctions, when the need for logistical autonomy and resilience of internal routes becomes critical.

The OTS, which has grown more active in recent years, serves as an integration platform for Turkic-speaking countries, including Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. The organization aims to establish a cohesive infrastructure for the “Middle Corridor” as an alternative to routes via Russia and Iran. Turkey, playing the role of the infor-

mal leader of the OTS, views the organization as a tool for political and logistical consolidation, aimed at fostering ties both with China and the European Union.

Despite the shared aspiration for coordination, these organizations maintain latent competition—for standards, investments, and political influence. For instance, the EAEU’s approach to regulatory unification may clash with the “flexible compatibility” principles promoted within the SCO or OTS. Moreover, each entity seeks to enhance its own institutional autonomy, which manifests in attempts to create “closed” logistics spaces with privileges for their own members.

In this sense, the institutional landscape of Eurasian logistics increasingly resembles a multilayered chessboard, where each organization and state attempts to secure a favorable position at the strategic nodes of the continent’s transport map.

At the same time, the role of national transport strategies is growing stronger. These strategies are increasingly seen not merely as sectoral policy documents but as instruments of foreign policy. In the context of sanctions, trade restrictions, and intensified competition for transit, states are betting on logistics as a means of expanding political influence and increasing geoeconomic agency.

In practice, this is reflected in a wide range of policies, including:

- the conclusion of bilateral and multilateral free trade and customs harmonization agreements;

- the development of special economic zones near logistics hubs;
- the institutionalization of route security measures;
- the digitalization of logistics procedures and implementation of platforms based on international standards.

One example of successful transport policy implementation is Azerbaijan's "smart logistics" strategy. The development of the Port of Alat as a multimodal hub, participation in the Trans-Caspian route, and active integration into digital corridors make Azerbaijan a key player in Eurasian logistics. Seeking to maintain geopolitical neutrality, the country positions itself as a secure and technologically advanced hub outside of confrontational blocs.

Another illustrative case is Turkey, which employs public-private partnerships (PPP) to attract infrastructure investment. As part of its Middle Corridor development strategy, Ankara is modernizing its railway network, expanding port capacities, and actively promoting its logistics interests in both Europe and Central Asia. Turkey deliberately maneuvers among various alliances—NATO, SCO, and OTS—leveraging the multipolarity of the modern world⁸.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan demonstrate a different type of integration strategy: flexible alignment with multiple logistics projects (BRI, EAEU, INSTC). This approach enables them to diversify cargo flows, minimize dependency risks, and

strengthen their positions as transit hubs.

Even under sanctions-induced isolation, Iran and Russia are committed to building alternative logistics routes. The INSTC, linking India to Europe via Iranian and Russian territory, serves not only as an economic alternative but also as a political response to Western restrictions. In this context, logistics takes on a strategic dimension—as an instrument for infrastructure sovereignty and economic survival.

The development of Eurasian transit corridors increasingly depends not only on the construction of railways and ports but also on the ability to establish sustainable institutional frameworks for cooperation. Regional organizations play a decisive role in creating regulatory standards, ensuring security, and managing competition among routes.

Simultaneously, national transport strategies are evolving into tools of geopolitical self-identification, while logistics itself becomes a space where foreign policy, sovereignty, and global positioning converge. In an increasingly fragmented world, the capacity for coordination, regulatory flexibility, and institutional balance becomes as vital as the physical infrastructure of ports and roads. Eurasia is emerging more clearly as a space where political geography is defined by logistics.

Militarization and Strategic Vulnerabilities of Logistics

Amid growing geopolitical instability, transport and logistics systems are increasingly transforming from purely economic arteries into strategic assets vulnerable to military, cyber, and sanctions-related threats. Their susceptibility is exacerbated by hybrid conflicts, cross-border crises, and the breakdown of the previous global governance system.

In recent years, the following threats have become especially pronounced:

- Blockades of key maritime routes (the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal, the Red and Black Seas) due to armed conflicts and attacks on vessels;
- Cyberattacks on logistics platforms and traffic management systems, which have become components of hybrid warfare;
- Direct strikes on infrastructure—railways, ports, and energy facilities—as observed in Ukraine, Yemen, and the Baltic Sea region.

In response, states are adopting comprehensive measures:

- Investing in alternative routes aimed at duplication and diversification (e.g., INSTC or the Middle Corridor);
- Strengthening the military protection of logistics, including convoy escorts, satellite monitoring, and enhanced cybersecurity;
- Developing dual-use infrastructure, suitable for both civilian and military purposes.

As a result, logistics is increasingly integrated into strategic planning. Control over transport hubs and routes is becoming an element of geopolitical dominance, while the corridors

themselves serve not only commerce but also deterrence.

Between Integration and Polarization

Eurasian transport corridors play a dual role: they simultaneously bring states closer together and reinforce divisions between them. While ostensibly aimed at economic convergence, in practice they are increasingly becoming tools of political competition and strategic exclusion.

On the one hand, logistics contributes to:

- Deepening economic interdependence;
- Developing joint infrastructure projects;
- Simplifying procedures and harmonizing rules within initiatives such as TRACECA, BRI, or INSTC.

On the other hand, the formation of ideological and geopolitical alliances creates the preconditions for fragmentation. For instance, axes such as China–Russia–Iran and the U.S.–EU–India coalition are constructing self-contained logistics zones that result in:

- Politicized barriers to access;
- Competition in tariffs, standards, and routing;
- Strategic duplication of corridors with the aim of excluding rivals.

These contradictions are exemplified by India's refusal to participate in the BRI due to territorial disputes in Kashmir, the EU's cautious stance toward Chinese infrastructure invest-

ments, and Russia's reorientation toward the south and east in response to sanctions-induced isolation.

As a result, a paradox emerges: logistics, which is intended to connect, can in practice reinforce lines of geopolitical division.

Projects like BRI, TRACECA, and INSTC reflect not only different economic logics but also the geopolitical preferences of states. They intersect in both space and time, leading to overlapping infrastructure, competition for transit flows, and the stratification of political alliances.

For example, the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC) offers a strategic alternative to east–west routes by aligning the interests of India, Iran, and Russia. Its main goal is to shorten the logistics chain between India and Europe, bypassing Chinese routes and passing through Chabahar, the Caspian Sea, and Azerbaijani territory. INSTC is therefore both an infrastructure initiative and a geopolitical project embedded within India's diversification strategy.

Iran, for its part, participates in both INSTC and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), positioning itself as a universal transit hub. This leads to infrastructure duplication, tariff competition, and balancing efforts by Central Asian countries—such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan—which seek to extract maximum benefit while minimizing dependence on a single power center⁹.

The militarization of logistics, politicization of routes, and overlapping

infrastructure projects are transforming Eurasia's transit architecture into a theater of strategic competition. Instead of a unified model of integration, a mosaic of alternative routes is emerging, each serving its own geopolitical agenda. In this context, transport is no longer a neutral channel of commerce but an expression of new models of interaction—ranging from partnership to containment.

For states with transit potential, the key challenge is not simply to participate in logistics initiatives but to develop a multi-vector strategy capable of adapting to conflicting trends without forfeiting economic and political advantages. This adaptability will determine their future influence within the transforming Eurasian space.

Conclusion

The development of transit corridors in Eurasia represents far more than a logistical necessity. It is a complex and multi-layered political strategy that encompasses international diplomacy, economic competition, regional integration, and geopolitical positioning. In the 21st century, transport has ceased to be a purely infrastructural issue—it has become a geoeconomic asset, and the corridors themselves have turned into arenas for the implementation of foreign policy doctrines, competition for influence, and the establishment of new forms of dependence and cooperation.

The Eurasian continent, as a connective bridge between East and West, North and South, serves as a

crossroads for the strategic interests of the world's major powers—China, Russia, the European Union, the United States, Turkey, Iran, India, and many others. Each of these actors seeks to advance its own logistics concepts and shape transport axes that reflect its strategic priorities. In this context, initiatives such as BRI, INSTC, and TRACECA are not merely infrastructure projects, but embodiments of competing models of the global order.

Countries with transit potential located at the intersection of key routes acquire particular significance. States like Azerbaijan and Turkey exemplify how well-designed logistics and foreign policy strategies can transform geographical location into a tangible political and economic advantage. Through infrastructure investments, flexible diplomacy, and participation in various alliances, they are becoming not only transport nodes but also centers of influence that play a mediating role between competing blocs.

However, the future of the Eurasian transit architecture depends on a wide range of factors. Chief among them is the ability of states to adapt to rapidly changing global political con-

ditions, respond to security challenges, sanctions pressure, climate change, and technological shifts. The most critical priorities include:

- Diversification of routes to avoid over-reliance on a limited number of directions or politically unstable regions;
- Institutionalization of logistics processes through international agreements, digital platforms, and harmonization of regulatory procedures;
- Strengthening transport security, including protection from cyber threats, terrorist attacks, and blockades;
- Balancing global and regional interests in a way that allows countries to preserve sovereignty without rejecting integration.

In this light, transport and logistics are becoming not only drivers of economic growth, but also factors of state resilience, catalysts for international dialogue, and tools of political positioning. Those countries that manage to adapt in time, build stable partnerships, and maintain strategic flexibility will not merely use the routes—they will shape them. Eurasian logistics, in this sense, becomes both a mirror of global transformations and a means of shaping them.

Notes

- ¹ Emil Avdaliani, „The Middle Corridor Remains Supplementary to Major Trade Routes between the EU and China”, *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13-864-the-middle-corridor-remains-sup->

- plementary-to-major-trade-routes-between-the-eu-and-china.html, (n.d.).
- ² Tristan Kenderdine, Péter Bucsky, „Middle Corridor: Policy Development and Trade Potential of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route. ADBI Working Paper”, <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/238625/1/adbi-wp1268.pdf>, 2021.
 - ³ OECD, *Realising the Potential of the Middle Corridor*, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/realising-the-potential-of-the-middle-corridor_635ad854-en.html, 13 December 2023.
 - ⁴ Hasim Turker, „Charting a Decade of Change: Achievements and Challenges of the Belt and Road Initiative at Ten”, *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, 2023, <https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/10.1142/S2377740023500033>.
 - ⁵ Bruce Pannier, „The Middle Corridor Is Opening”, *Caspian Policy Center*, 22.01.2024, <https://www.caspianpolicy.org/research/economy/the-middle-corridor-is-opening>.
 - ⁶ Lim Yun Suk, Darrelle Ng, „A decade on, has China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative benefitted Central Asia?”, *Channel News Asia*, 17 oct. 2023, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/china-belt-road-initiative-bri-central-asia-uzbekistan-kazakhstan-3851781>.
 - ⁷ A. Sajjanhar, „India-Central Asia Connectivity and the Role of International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)”, *Chanakya Forum*, 16 March, <https://chanakyaforum.com/india-central-asia-connectivity-and-the-role-of-international-north-south-transport-corridor-instc/>.
 - ⁸ ***, „Геополитика логистики: Будущее транспортных коридоров Центральной Азии и их роль в мировой системе, *STEM-Lab*, 2025, <https://stem-lab.az/article/qeopolitika-loqistiki-budushchee-transportnyx-koridorov-tsentralnoi-azii-i-ix-rol-v-mirovoi-sisteme-1602>.
 - ⁹ Bob Savic, *GIS Reports, Sanctions and the geopolitics of trade*, 4 March 2025, <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/sanctions-trade-routes/>.

Bibliography

Online resources

***, „Геополитика логистики: Будущее транспортных коридоров Центральной Азии и их роль в мировой системе, *STEM-Lab*, 2025, <https://stem-lab.az/article/qeopolitika-loqistiki-budushchee-transportnyx-koridorov-tsentralnoi-azii-i-ix-rol-v-mirovoi-sisteme-1602>.

AVDALIANI, Emil, „The Middle Corridor Remains Supplementary to Major Trade Routes between the EU and China”, *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publication/s/analytical-articles/item/13864-the-middle-corridor-remains-supplementary-to-major-trade-routes-between-the-eu-and-china.html>, (n.d.).

***, „Геополитика логистики: Будущее транспортных коридоров Центральной Азии и их роль в мировой системе, *STEM-Lab*, 2025, <https://stem-lab.az/article/qeopolitika-loqistiki-budushchee-transportnyx-koridorov-tsentralnoi-azii-i-ix-rol-v-mirovoi-sisteme-1602>.

KENDERDINE, Tristan, Bucsky, Péter, „Middle Corridor: Policy Development and Trade Potential of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route. ADBI Working Paper”, <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/238625/1/adbi-wp1268.pdf>, 2021.

OECD, *Realising the Potential of the Middle Corridor*, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/realising-the-potential-of-the-middle-corridor_635ad854-en.html, 13 December 2023.

- PANNIER, Bruce, „The Middle Corridor Is Opening”, *Caspian Policy Center*, 22.01. 2024, <https://www.caspianpolicy.org/research/economy/the-middle-corridor-is-opening>.
- SAJJANHAR, A., „India-Central Asia Connectivity and the Role of International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)”, *Chanakya Forum*, 16 March. <https://chanakyaforum.com/india-central-asia-connectivity-and-the-role-of-international-north-south-transport-corridor-inetc/>.
- SAVIC, Bob, *GIS Reports, Sanctions and the geopolitics of trade*, 4 March 2025, <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/sanctions-trade-routes/>.
- SUK, Lim Yun, Ng, Darrelle, „A decade on, has China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative benefitted Central Asia?”, *Channel News Asia*, 17 oct. 2023, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/china-belt-road-initiative-bri-central-asia-uzbekistan-kazakhstan-3851781>.
- TURKER, Hasim, „Charting a Decade of Change: Achievements and Challenges of the Belt and Road Initiative at Ten”, *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, 2023, <https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/10.1142/S2377740023500033>.

