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## ევრაზიის რეგიონის სატრანსპორტო დერეფნების, გლობალური განვითარების სტრატეგიების ინიციატივებისა და ეკონომიკური გაერთიანების მიმოხილვა

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საქართველო ისტორიულად დაკავშირებულია „აბრეშუმის გზის“ სატრანსპორტო დერეფანთან, რომელიც თავისი გეოგრაფიული მდებარეობით აკავშირებდა ერთმანეთთან აზიისა და ევროპის ქვეყნებს.

„აბრეშუმის გზის“ სატრანსპორტო დერეფანმა ბოლო ათწლეულებშიც არ დაკარგა თავისი აქტუალობა. ამაზე მიანიშნებს ევრაზიის რეგიონში სხვადასხვა დროს და სხვადასხვა ქვეყნების მიერ განხორციელებული და დაგეგმილი სატრანსპორტო დერეფნების მცირე და მასშტაბური ფორმებით განვითარება და ურთიერთთანაშრომლობის ახალი შეთანხმებების გაფორმება და გაერთიანებების ჩამოყალიბება, რომლებიც ისტორიული „აბრეშუმის გზის“ მარშრუტის შემადგენელი ნაწილია.

მოცემულ ნაშრომში განხილულია კავკასიისა და ევრაზიის რეგიონებში წარმოდგენილი სატრანსპორტო დერეფნები, რომლებიც რეგიონის მსხვილი მოთამაშეების, როგორც არიან ევროკავშირი, ჩინეთი, რუსეთი და ირანი, ეკონომიკური ინტერესებისა და მათი გავლენების არეალის გაზრდის ერთ-ერთი მნიშვნელოვანი ბერკეტია ევრაზიის რეგიონში.

მოცემული ნაშრომის მიზანია საქართველოს, როგორც სატრანსპორტო დერეფანი ქვეყნის, მნიშვნელობისა და შესაძლებლობების განსაზღვრა იმ მოცემულობაში, რომ რეგიონში პარალელურად მიმდინარეობს ალტერნატიული სატრანსპორტო დერეფნების ფორმირება და ასევე დაკვირვება, თუ როგორ ვითარდება მოვლენები ამ პროცესებთან დაკავშირებით ევრაზიის რეგიონში. კვლევის მიზანია აღწეროს ევრაზიის რეგიონში არსებული გეოპოლიტიკური და ეკონომიკური მდგომარეობა და გამოკვეთოს საქართველოს, როგორც ევროკავშირისა და აზიის ქვეყნების დამაკავშირებელი სატრანსპორტო დერეფანი--ქვეყნის ძლიერი და სუსტი მხარეები.

აღნიშნული კვლევის ორიგინალურობა და ღირებულება მდგომარეობს საქართველოს, როგორც სატრანს-

პორტო დერეფანი-ქვეყნის მდგომარეობის შესწავლაში, რეგიონში სხვა ალტერნატიულ სატრანსპორტო დერეფნების განვითარებასთან მიმართებაში და ასევე არსებული და პოტენციური სუსტი პოზიციების გამოვლენასა და მათი დაძლევის გზების განსაზღვრაში.

კვლევის მიზნების მისაღწევად გამოყენებულ იქნა ინფორმაციის მოპოვების კომპლექსური მეთოდები. ბიბლიოგრაფიული კვლევით განხორციელდა მეორადი მონაცემების მოპოვება, დახარისხება და ანალიზი. კვლევის თეორიული საფუძველია მოცემულ საკითხზე არსებული ლიტერატურა: სამეცნიერო შრომები, კვლევები, პუბლიკაციები, პერიოდული ბეჭდვითი გამოცემების სტატიები, ინტერნეტით მოძიებული მონაცემები.

მოცემულ ნაშრომში განხილულია ევრაზიის რეგიონში არსებული გეოპოლიტიკური მდგომარეობისა და რეგიონის ზოგიერთი ქვეყნისათვის დაწესებული საქონლების გავლენა შუა დერეფნის ფუნქციონირებაზე, რაც დადებითად ისახება დერეფნის ფუნქციონირებაზე. ასევე განხილულია ის მიმდინარე ლოგისტიკური გამოწვევები, რომლის წინაშეც არის აღნიშნული დერეფნის მონაწილე ქვეყნები.

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## OVERVIEW OF THE EURASIAN TRANSPORT CORRIDORS, INITIATIVES OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND ECONOMIC ASSOCIATIONS

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Historically Georgia is associated with the “Silk Road” transport corridor, which connected the Asian and European countries by its geographical location.

“Silk Road” transport corridor did not lost its actuality even during the last decades. This is proved by development of small and large-scale transport corridors in the Eurasian region being implemented and planned by different countries at different times, signing new cooperation agreements and forming associations that are part of the historic “Silk Road” route.

In the present paper is discussed the represented transport corridors in the Caucasus and Eurasia regions, which are one of the important levers in the Eurasian region to increase the economic interests and the spheres of their influence of the major players in the region, such as the European Union, China, Russia and Iran.

The goal of the present work is to determine the importance and opportunities of Georgia as the transport corridor country in the context, that in parallel, alternative transport corridors are being formed in the region, as well as observation is made how developments are related to these processes in the Eurasian region. The aim of the study is to describe the geopolitical and economic situation in the Eurasian region and to line out the strengths and weaknesses of Georgia - as a transport corridor country connecting the EU and Asian countries.

Originality and value of the given research lies in studying the state of Georgia as a country of a transport corridor in relation to the development of other alternative transport corridors in the region, as well as identifying existing and potential weak positions and determining ways to overcome the weaknesses.

To achieve the objectives of the study were used complex methods of obtaining information. By bibliographic research was implemented extraction, sorting and analyzing the secondary data. The theoretical basis of the research is the

existed literature on the subject: scientific papers, studies, publications, articles from periodicals, data retrieved from the Internet.

This thesis discusses the existing geopolitical situation in the Eurasian region and the impact of sanctions imposed on some countries in the region on the functioning of the middle corridor, which has a positive impact on the functioning of the corridor. The current logistical challenges faced by the countries involved in the corridor are also discussed.

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For the present period of time, there are various international transport corridors, economic unions and routes on the Eurasian continent, which are aimed to support development of transport corridors and at the same time to promote economic development of the countries, however, in this paper we will touch upon only a few of them, namely:

- “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI), which is initiated by China as a global development strategy (formerly known as OBOR - One Belt One Road[1]);
- “Eurasian Economic Union” (EAUE)[2];
- “International North-South Transport Corridor” (INSTC)[3];
- “Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia” (TRACECA)[4], which also comprises the “Trans-Caspian International Route” (TITR)[5] also known by the name “Middle Corridor” and is an extension of TRACECA, which means an attempt for mutual agreement on tariffs within the frame of TITR between the representatives of the Georgian, Azerbaijan and Kazakh railways and the ports.

Precisely the latter corridor – “Middle Corridor” will be the main topic of our discussion in this paper, and in relation to the given project we will touch upon the other above-mentioned corridors as well, which may have a significant impact on the success implementation and failure of the “Middle corridor”.

“Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI) - which is initiated by China as a global development strategy on its initial stage considered several economic corridors, namely: 1) the “New Eurasia Land Bridge”, 2) “China-Mongolia-Russia”, 3) “China-Central Asia-West Asia”, 4) “China-Indochina Peninsula”, 5) “China-Pakistan” and 6) “Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar” economic corridors[6]. None of the initially

presented economic corridors and routes have a route passing through the Caucasus, which has not hindered Georgian-Chinese future economic cooperation.

From the Geographical and economical point of view, the “Belt and Road Initiative” is significantly wider than the historic Silk Road, which was limited by a land route only. The New Silk Road envisages the construction of transport infrastructure and industrial corridors and new seaports connecting Asia, including China, Europe and Africa, causing to significant changes in the Eurasian logistics sector. Two financial institutions were established in 2014 to finance these economic corridors: the “Silk Road Fund”[7] and the “Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank” (AIIB)[8], and in 2015 Georgia became a member country of the latter[9] and joined the “Belt and Road Initiative”[10].

Despite of the fact, that the given initiative envisages development of six rather broad economic corridors, China continues to discuss possible prospects for the development of additional corridors, a clear example of which is the recent interest in the Arctic route, also known as the “Polar Silk Road”[11] and which aims to create a transport corridor with the EU by the North Sea Route.

As it is evident from the above description China is planning to develop economical corridors to all the directions which aims to develop any complementary and alternative corridors, allowing for diversification of various risks for China.

“Eurasian Economic Union” (EAUE) - In contrast to the “Belt and Road Initiative”, in 2016 Russia launched the Initiative for “Greater Eurasian Partnership”, a larger-scale link between the Russian-Kazakh project of Eurasian Economic Union, which has been acted since 2015. It currently unites five countries of Eastern

Europe, Central Asia and West Asia, namely Belorussia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia. The “Great Eurasian Partnership” initiative has two main economic goals. The first is to link Russia and the “Eurasian Economic Union” to China’s “Belt and Road Initiative”, and the second, smaller goal is to link the “Eurasian Economic Union” to the countries of Iran, India, and Southeast Asia.

At present, the North-South International Transport Corridor (INSTC) operates through the international transport corridors passing the territory of the “Eurasian Economic Union”, which envisages connecting incoming cargo from India via Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia to EU countries, and the “East-West Corridor”, which includes the “Trans-Siberian Highway” being stretched on 11,000 km from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok. The mentioned railway highway has east access to the railways of Kazakhstan, China, Mongolia, and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The railway has east access to the railways of Kazakhstan, China, Mongolia, and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The “Trans-Siberian Highway” can be used to transport cargo by train from eastern China to the Russian and EU borders for 14 days, which is significantly less time than shipping, which takes an average of 45-60 days. The capacity of this highway currently makes up in amount of 100 million tons of cargo, which has already reached the upper limit of its capacity and needs to be further modernized. By 2024, the Russian government plans to increase the capacity of the highway to 180 million tons of cargo. One of the strengths of this highway is that it is possible to deliver cargo from China to the EU borders in record terms, as well as the fact that the entire route is not difficult for transportation (meaning of mountainous landscape and crosswalks), it does not require intermodal transport operations.

Border crossing and customs procedures between the participating countries within the “Eurasian Economic Union” have been significantly simplified[12].

Despite its various priorities, the “Trans-Siberian Highway”, as one of the most important transport corridors within the “Eurasian Economic Union”, has its weaknesses, namely, significantly higher prices compared to maritime transport, incompatibility/differences of the railway system in the section of China and the EU countries, the limited usage of bandwidth and, most importantly, the economic sanctions imposed in 2014 against the Russian Federation, which is the author and main driving force behind the creation of the “Eurasian Economic Union”. Precisely, it is the country that determines the cautious and measured involvement of the member states in joint projects, hence it follows, that each of them has developed certain relations and interests with the US and EU countries during the years and threat of which is not considered by any of them, which is clearly evidenced by the circumstances, that no member of the “Eurasian Economic Union” has joined the resolution of the counter-sanctions adopted by Russia in 2014, which in turn indicates that already in 2015, for the moment of creation of the “Eurasian Economic Union”, the trade policy within the Union was not mutually agreed and coordinated between the countries[13].

“North-South International Transport Corridor”- (INSTC) - This transport corridor was established in 2002 on the basis of a tripartite agreement between the Russian Federation, India and Iran. Later, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Belarus, Ukraine, Oman and Syria joined it.

The length of the given corridor achieves about 7,000 km and it stretches from St. Petersburg to the Indian port of Mumbai and

which will connect Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran and India. This corridor significantly reduces transportation time and costs. According to various estimates, it will be possible to deliver the cargo using the above route within 14-20 days. The corridor allows cargo to be transported across the Indian Ocean to the Iranian seaport of Bandar Abbas in the Persian Gulf, which accounts for 85% of Iran's maritime cargo, then by automobile or railway transport to move the cargo to the Iranian Caspian port of Amir-e-Abad. Further to Azerbaijan (Alat port of Baku) and / or Russian Caspian Sea ports (Astrakhan, Makhachkala and Olia), then by passing the land highway to Russia (road or rail) to the Baltic Sea port of St. Petersburg, from where it is finally possible to send cargo by sea to EU countries.

The given transportation corridor has faced a significant problem since the US imposed an almost total economic embargo on Iran, which also includes sanctions on companies operating their commercial activities in Iran. This has significantly hampered development of the transport corridor. At present, the US Presidential Administration has removed these sanctions on only one Iranian port, Chabahar, located in the Persian Gulf, because India was involved in the investment project for the development of this deep-water port, which aims only to develop economic relations between India and Afghanistan and the only important opportunity for development of the latter and does not consider the use of this port for other economic relations and activities[14].

The "Europe-Caucasus-Asia Transport Corridor" (TRACECA) - this program was launched still in 1993 with the aim of establishing a transport

corridor using EU resources. The project aimed to support the political and economic independence of the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus by bypassing Russia and allowing European and world markets to access and use alternative routes.

Currently, TRACECA member countries are: Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Turkey, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Moldova and 27 EU countries[15].

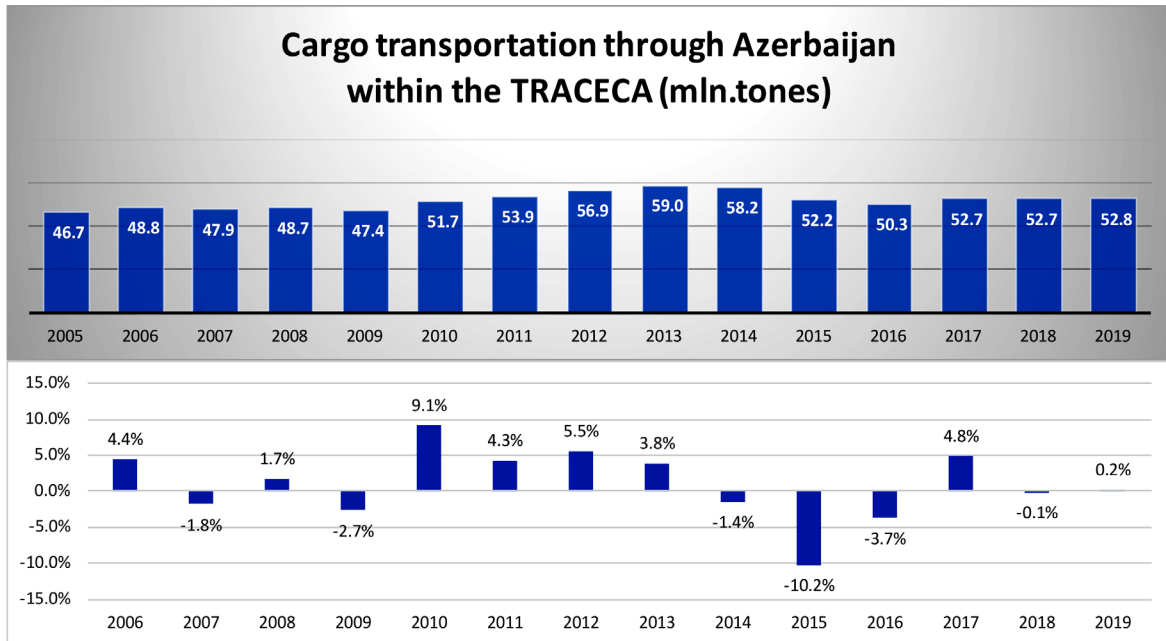
Unfortunately, this corridor does not function at full capacity, which is due to a number of reasons, namely:

- By unstable political regimes of some countries;
- By a large number of multimodal operations, including the most problematic part, related to the unstable and unplanned traffic of ferry vessels in the Caspian Sea section;
- Crossing the borders of up to 12 member countries with different transport infrastructure, customs and transport rules;

All of the above mentioned has led to the usage of non-full loading of the transport corridor and the reduced traffic cargo turnover in recent years under the given program, although, at the same time, it should be noted that in 2015-2016, when Russian-Ukrainian and Russian-Turkish relations deteriorated, the project gained new impulse, namely, Ukraine was interested in importing various goods through this corridor and exporting iron ore to China[16], which slightly increased the cargo turnover under this program (see Diagram N1), which shows the number of handled cargoes on the example of Azerbaijan in 2005-2019[17].



Diagram N1



Source: Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia

**Conclusion:**

Despite the circumstances, that since the establishment of the “Europe-Caucasus-Asia Transport Corridor”, the member states have not been able to use the transport corridor at full capacity under the present project, it has not still lost its importance and has great potential for the future. Clear examples of this are a lot of successful projects being implemented within this corridor, such as the “Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan” (BTC) oil pipeline, the “Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum” (BTE) gas pipeline and the “Baku-Tbilisi-Kars” (BTK) railway highway, which significantly increases the geopolitical importance of Georgia within the corridor in general and within the given corridor. In addition to the geopolitical importance of the above-mentioned projects, they guarantee the security of the region, which is one of the main components of economic development.

No less significant and noteworthy is also the circumstance that the initiative of creation this

corridor belongs to the European Union, with the support of which have been implemented the above-mentioned projects within the corridor, which is a rather successful step towards their energy independence from Russia, and in this context, the “Europe-Caucasus-Asia Transport Corridor” will not lose its function and significance.

It is also noteworthy that the tense interrelations between Russia and Ukraine is working in favor of this transport corridor, as well as the sanctions imposed by the West on Russia and Iran, which significantly increased the cargo turnover in the “Middle Corridor”, which is expressed as a tendency of cargo growth since 2016.

In order to make the TRACECA corridor more attractive for the participating countries and also to make this corridor a significant section of the historic Silk Road, it is necessary to reach an agreement between the member states on harmonization of customs legislation,



which will significantly reduce the waiting time for checking customs documents, Inspection and control procedures as well.

It is also quite important to implement modernization of the obsolete infrastructure, especially, concerning the railway, which is of soviet standard and is expressed in the 1520 mm gauge (which is found only in post-soviet countries and Finland), which is not compatible

with Chinese and European standards where standard is set at 1435 mm[18]. Due to this inadequacy among the standards, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars project is currently reloading cargo from one train to another in Akhalkalaki in order to transport the cargo to the Turkish section, which also significantly reduces the efficiency of cargo transportation and at the same time increases the cost and time of transportation.

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