

Corridor Opened in Azeri-Armenia Ceasefire Might Strengthen Turkish-Chinese Relations

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OE Watch Commentary

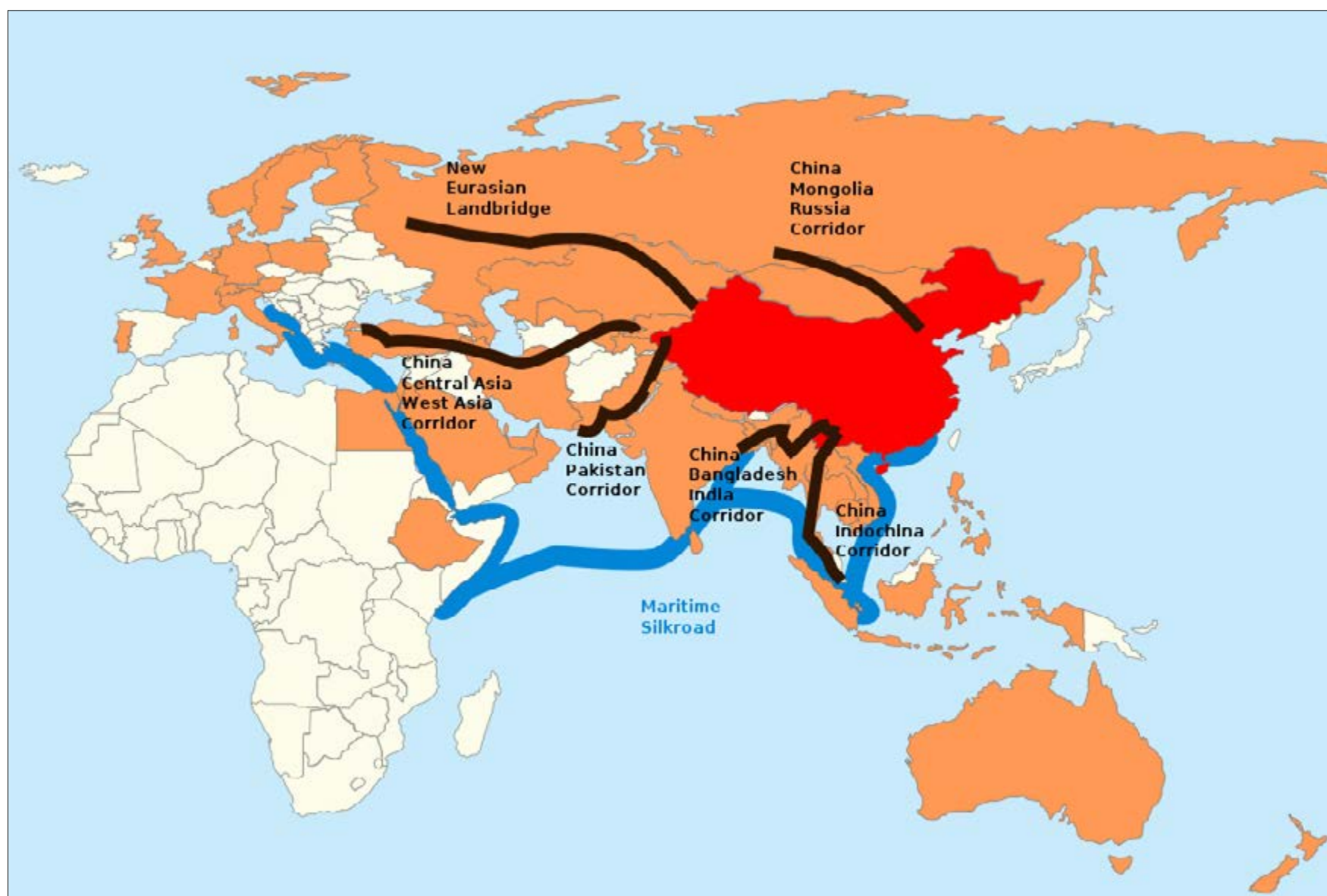
The ceasefire agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia in November 2020 has created new opportunities for regional and global cooperation: in particular, opportunities between Turkey and China. The ceasefire stipulates the reopening of all economic and transportation routes in the region and one of the routes that would be revived is the Zangezur corridor. This corridor will link Turkey directly to Azerbaijan and create an alternative route for the Middle Corridor, which begins in Turkey and passes through Central Asia to reach China. In 2015, Turkey and China signed a memorandum of agreement aligning the Middle Corridor with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The accompanying article from Turkey's state-run news agency *Anadolu Ajansı*, claims that Turkey will benefit significantly from the reopening of this trade and transportation route. According to the article it will increase Turkey's chances of becoming a safe and stable transportation hub for China and China's trading partners in Europe for a few reasons. First, reopening this route will shorten travel time

for transporting goods between China and Europe through the Middle Corridor. Second, the Zangezur corridor will create another route for the Middle Corridor in addition to the one via Georgia, making it more stable and reliable for supply chain security compared to the Northern and the Southern Corridors.

With the added route, the Middle Corridor will reduce China's reliance on Russia as an alternative to the Northern Corridor. The Northern Corridor is less reliable and secure for transporting Chinese goods to Europe due to the tension between European countries and Russia. The Southern Corridor is unreliable because it passes through Iran, and due to terrorism-related issues. In addition, utilizing this new route as part of the Middle Corridor will mitigate the risk associated with political instability in the region, especially in Georgia. In a nutshell, a functional Zangezur corridor will likely lead to stronger Turkish-Chinese economic cooperation and mutual dependence on trade routes.

“The Zangezur corridor can have a positive effect on the political and economic development of China-Turkey relations and the strengthening of mutual dependence between the two countries.”



One Belt One Road.

Source: Lommes, via Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:One-belt-one-road.svg>, CC-BY-SA-4.0

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Source: Araz Aslanlı and Yunis Şerifli, “Zengezur koridoru, Pekin-Londra hattı ve Türkiye’nin artan önemi (The Zangezur corridor, the Beijing-London line and the increasing importance of Turkey),” *Anadolu Ajansı* (Turkey’s state-owned news agency), 26 May 2021. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/zengezur-koridoru-pekini-londra-hatti-ve-turkiye-nin-artan-onemi/2254505#>

...First of all, transporting Chinese goods to Europe via the Middle Corridor is easier and more advantageous compared to the Northern Corridor passing through Russia. Goods transported via the Trans-Siberian route reach Europe in 20 days while goods transported through the Middle Corridor can reach the same destination in 12 days. In addition, the fact that the roads and railways in the Northern Corridor are not up to modern standards while the roads and railways of the Middle Corridor countries are of higher standards make the Middle Corridor more strategic and profitable than the Northern Corridor. In addition, the Middle Corridor offers China new opportunities in terms of reducing its dependence on Russia in terms of transportation. Finally, the fact that European countries have problems with Russia, especially Russia’s serious security problems with its Western neighbors, makes the security of the Northern Corridor questionable.

...Secondly, the Middle Corridor also has many advantages over the Southern Corridor that runs through Iran. Goods sent from China to Europe via the Southern Corridor reach their destination in 14 days, while goods sent from the Central Corridor arrive at the same destination in 12 days. As in the Northern Corridor, the infrastructure problems of the Southern Corridor, the tension in US-Iranian relations, and the sanctions against Iran devalue this corridor. In addition, frequent problems at the Iran-Turkey border cause delays in the shipment of goods and the existence of a terrorist problem on this route can be disadvantages. On the other hand, the fact that the Middle Corridor passes through politically stable countries and that there are no security problems in the countries located on this corridor makes the Middle Corridor stand out for China compared to other corridors.

Finally, the Middle Corridor has advantages over sea routes [as well since] goods sent from China to Europe by sea can reach their destination in 36 days.

...As stated above, one of the most striking issues in the Tripartite Declaration signed between Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia was the revitalization of the Zangezur corridor. The Zangezur corridor can have a positive effect on the political and economic development of China-Turkey relations and the strengthening of mutual dependence between the two countries. In addition, the new corridor can play an important role in terms of transporting China’s goods to Europe faster and strengthening Turkey’s strategic position in China, the Middle East and European countries...

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Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars
1994-2009

Dodge Billingsley
with Lester Grau

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