

DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TRANSIT TRANSPORT ROUTES AS A FACTOR OF WORLD ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT

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Transport is one of the most important sectors of the country's economic development. The developed transportation system is the basis for the development and competitiveness of all the sectors of the country's economy, the expansion of foreign economic ties and integration into the world economic system.

Under the current conditions, due to globalization processes, when the economic and trade relations between the states are continuously expanding, the integration of the transit transport routes of the country into the international transport system is of vital importance. For Armenia, which does not have direct access to the sea and whose cross-border transport communication channels do not operate with the 2 neighboring countries, Azerbaijan and Turkey, the development, expansion and effective management of transport routes is of strategic importance.

Today, the automobile transport has a large share in the RA transport system. The statistical data related to the transport sphere prove that more than 73% of cargo transportation and more than 97% of passenger transportation in the RA fall on automobile transport, and 16.7% and 0.4% fall on railway transport, respectively.

It is conditioned by the fact that currently the RA is in "railway isolation" from the outside world, Armenia-Turkey, Armenia-Azerbaijan cross-border transport routes are not operating, there are no railway communication routes with neighboring Iran.

And railway communication with Georgia is not very efficient, which is connected with the absence of Georgia-Abkhazia railway communication, which would also provide Armenia-Russian railway communication. Due to these issues, currently cargo transportation to the foreign markets is mainly carried out through the Georgian ports of Batumi and Poti or by automobile road, making it difficult to carry out international cargo transportation at competitive prices.

The integration of the international transport routes of the RA into the regional transport system will enable to increase the efficiency of cargo transportation from China, India and Southeast Asian countries to Europe, as the distance of transportation routes and expenses made for the purpose of cargo transportation will be reduced in this direction.

The construction of the "North-South" highway corridor (Agarak - Yerevan - Ashtarak - Gyumri - Bavra) is of strategic importance in terms of the development of the transit transport corridors of Armenia, which will give an opportunity to carry out cargo transportation in accordance with the international standards from the southern border of Armenia with Iran to the northern border with Georgia, to expand Armenia's access to foreign markets, to ensure the integration of the country's transport system into the regional transport system, will enable Armenia to become an important transit country in the "North-South", "South-West", "Persian Gulf-Black Sea", TRACEKA and other international transport programs. Despite the fact that the construction of the "North-South" highway was planned to be completed in 2019, only about 10% of Agarak - Yerevan - Ashtarak - Gyumri - Bavra highway corridor has been built up to now.

The integration of Armenia into the international transport programs is of great importance in terms of the general development of the RA economy. The "New Silk Road", which aims to create international transport corridors from China, India and the countries of the Southeast Asia to the European countries, is one of the biggest transport projects today.

Currently, more than 150 countries of the world and 30 international organizations have concluded cooperation documents with China within the framework of the "One Belt-One Road" project, several dozen states have already been involved in the given project. Within the framework of the transport program, investments at the amount of 1 trillion US dollars have been made in the member countries up to day, and more than 3000 cooperation projects have been formed.

Armenia is one of 16 prospective members of the latter.

The "South-West" transport corridor, which is an alternative way of cargo transportation between the Asian and European countries, is the most important transport direction within the framework of the "New Silk Road" transport project.

In 2022, the "South-West" transport corridor provided 214.6 million tons of cargo transportation, increasing by about 8% as compared to the previous year (indicators include all the goods exported and imported between these countries, whose transportation can be carried out by railway transport). Moreover, among the countries of the South and Southeast Asia, China is the main trade partner of the European countries both in terms of export and import. In 2022, 88.7 million tons of cargo was exported from China to the European countries, which is 59.4% of the total exports from the countries of the South and Southeast Asia, and 42.5 million tons of cargo was imported from the European countries to China, which is 65.2% of the total imports.

The alternative transport routes for cargo transportation in the "South-West" direction are the following:

- "China (India) - Iran - Armenia - Georgia - Bulgaria – the EU countries".

This route will operate in case of restoration and reoperation of the railway "Yeraskh - Julfa - Ordubad - Meghri - Horadiz" (340 km). The distance between Iran and Bulgaria on this transport route is 4508.2 km.

- "China (India) - Iran - Armenia - Georgia - Bulgaria – the EU countries".

This route can operate only in the case of the construction of the Armenian-Iranian railway, as well as in the case of the construction of the 32-km long "Fioletovo-Vanadzor" railway in the RA territory. The distance between Iran and Bulgaria on this transport route is 4336.5 km.

- "China (India) - Iran - Azerbaijan - Georgia - Bulgaria – the EU countries".

In the case of this route cargo transportation will be carried out through the "Bandar-Abbas - Tehran - Qazvin - Resht - Astara (Iran) - Astara (Azerbaijan) - Baku - Tbilisi" railway corridor, from where to Bulgaria via the Black Sea ports, and then to the European countries. The distance between Iran and Bulgaria on this transport route is 4504.8 km.

- "China (India) - Iran - Azerbaijan - Georgia - Turkey - Bulgaria – the EU countries".

In the case of this route, cargo transportation will be carried out through the "Bandar-Abbas - Tehran - Qazvin - Resht - Astara - Baku - Tbilisi - Kars - Istanbul" railway corridor, from where to the European countries. The distance between Iran and Bulgaria on this transport route is 5856.8 km.

- "China (India) - Iran - Turkey - Bulgaria – the EU countries".

On this route cargo is transported via the "Bandar-Abbas - Tehran - Van - Istanbul" railway corridor to Bulgaria, and from there to the European countries. The distance between Iran and Bulgaria on this transport route is 5220.9 km.

In case of unblocking and re-opening of the "Armenia-Azerbaijan", "Armenia-Turkey" transport corridors, the alternative ways of cargo transportation in the "South-East" direction can be the following: transport routes "China (India) - Iran - Azerbaijan - Armenia - Georgia - Bulgaria – the EU countries" (Iran-Bulgaria distance is 4653.1 km), "China (India) - Iran - Armenia - Turkey - Bulgaria – the EU countries" (Iran-Bulgaria distance is 5368.2 km), "China (India) - Iran - Azerbaijan - Armenia - Turkey - Bulgaria – the EU countries" (Iran-Bulgaria distance is 5726.1 km), but they are less applicable for other economic reasons.

Since the routes in the "South-West" direction to Iran are mainly formed, the comparative analysis and evaluation of the economic expediency of the latter's main and alternative transport routes passing through the Caucasus region has been conducted on the "Iran-Bulgaria" section, which proves that the "Iran-Armenia-Georgia-Bulgaria" transport corridor passing through the territory of Armenia (4336.5 km) is the shortest and the most effective route for cargo transportation in this direction, which can operate in the case of the construction of the

Armenian-Iranian railway. It is shorter than the "Iran-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Bulgaria" transport corridor passing through the territory of Azerbaijan (4504.8 km).

In addition, it would be economically expedient that the routes passing through the neighboring countries and bypassing the territory of Armenia should include Armenia. Thus, the "Iran-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey-Bulgaria" transport corridor (5856.8 km) bypassing the territory of Armenia, which includes the "Baku-Tbilisi-Kars" railway built during the recent years, is longer than the "Iran-Armenia-Turkey-Bulgaria" (5368.2 km) and "Iran-Azerbaijan-Armenia-Turkey-Bulgaria" (5726.1 km) transport routes passing through Armenia, which also proves the economic expediency of Armenia's integration into the international transport system.

Thus, as a result of the development of the RA transport and logistics infrastructures, the construction of the Armenian-Iranian railway and the "North-South" highway, the unblocking and reoperation of transport communication routes with the neighboring countries, the Republic of Armenia can become an important transit country for "One Belt-One Road", "The Persian Gulf-Black Sea" and other international transport projects. The integration of the RA into the international transport routes will contribute to the increase in the volume of cargo delivered from China, India and the Southeast Asian countries to Europe, as the distance of the transport routes in this direction and the expenses incurred for the purpose of cargo transportation will be reduced.