

The TRIPP Corridor and the New Eurasian Connectivity Architecture: Strategic Implications for the West, the South Caucasus, Turkey, Iran, Russia and Central Asia

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Introduction

The Eurasian connectivity landscape is undergoing a fundamental transformation. Following the escalation of the war in Ukraine in 2022, the European Union and China accelerated investments in alternative trade and transit corridors outside of Russian territory. While Beijing continues to leverage its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to diversify land-based trade routes, Brussels has sought to establish a stronger presence in Eurasia with the Global Gateway¹ strategy, placing particular emphasis on the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR). Within this evolving infrastructure matrix, the TRIPP (Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity) corridor has

¹ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/international-partnerships/global-gateway_en

merged as more than just a regional transit initiative in the South Caucasus; it has become a pivotal axis of global geopolitical competition.

The TRIPP corridor's conceptual framework was formalized at the Washington Peace Summit² on August 8, 2025, when the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a joint declaration brokered by U.S. President Donald Trump. Designed to connect mainland Azerbaijan with the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, the corridor extends far beyond a localized transit solution. Strategically, it establishes a major east-west commercial artery that links Central Asia and the Caspian Basin directly to Europe via the South Caucasus, bypassing the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran entirely. The TRIPP corridor's physical architecture encompasses high-capacity rail lines, highways, energy pipelines, and digital telecommunication infrastructure. A joint Armenian-American entity³ is responsible for commercial management and logistics oversight.

A central yet often overlooked vector of this transit architecture is the Republic of Turkey. For Ankara, the implementation of TRIPP is a critical geoeconomic bridge that connects its domestic transport network directly to Azerbaijan and Central Asia, bypassing Iranian and Georgian bottlenecks. By integrating TRIPP with its existing rail and highway infrastructure, including the Kars–İğdır–Aralık–Dilucu line, Turkey is solidifying its ambition to serve as the primary western gateway for Eurasian trade entering the European Union. Consequently, Turkish strategic interests closely align with the corridor's success as it reinforces Ankara's role as an indispensable regional logistics and energy hub, linking the South Caucasus with Southeastern Europe.

As expected, the institutionalization of the TRIPP corridor has faced immediate [opposition from Moscow and Tehran](#). For Russia, the establishment of a fully operational, Western-backed southern transit route could permanently undermine its long-standing monopoly on Eurasian trade and logistics. For Iran, the permanent presence of U.S.-linked commercial and security management infrastructure along its northern border poses a significant challenge to its regional posture.

However, for the Transatlantic alliance, TRIPP represents a critical geopolitical opening. While the United States has played an active political role in brokering and structuring the initiative, the European Union cannot afford to remain passive. To secure its strategic autonomy, safeguard its supply chains, and retain long-term influence across the South Caucasus and Central Asia, Brussels must align its Global Gateway investments with the TRIPP framework. Compared to existing infrastructure, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway, TRIPP offers a more direct, lower-cost route that could permanently reshape

² <https://mei.edu/commentary/trumps-south-caucasus-peacemaking-is-his-most-successful-but-it-remains-unfinished/>

³ <https://www.caspianpolicy.org/research/middle-corridor/the-tripp-corridor-after-washingtonnext-steps-for-getting-down-to-business>

Eurasian geoeconomics

The Geopolitical Imperative of TRIPP

Until recently, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway was the only non-Russian and non-Iranian transit route through the South Caucasus. However, the long-term efficiency and competitiveness of the BTK line are increasingly questionable compared to the emerging TRIPP corridor architecture. [If the Kars–Gyumri–Baku route is restored, it will be significantly shorter than the traditional Georgian bypass](#), making it more cost-effective for international freight operators. Full unblocking of Armenian transit infrastructure introduces two potent alternatives along the Turkey-Armenia-Azerbaijan axis: the southern Zangezur/TRIPP alignment and the northern Gyumri-Kars route.

Both options directly challenge Georgia's historic position as an indispensable transit monopoly. Meanwhile, the BTK line has suffered from operational bottlenecks and severe delays. Critical Georgian rail segments, including the [152-kilometer \(94-mile\) Rustavi-Marabda and 32-kilometer \(20-mile\) Marabda-Kartsakhi sections, have experienced prolonged completion issues despite Azerbaijan's investments exceeding \\$900 million](#). These persistent logistics disruptions have damaged the BTK line's reliability, compelling shippers to consider the Armenian transit vector.

The geopolitical environment has further amplified this urgency. Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, coupled with escalating military confrontations between the United States and Iran, has rendered transit routes through Russian and Iranian territories impassable. Consequently, the TRIPP corridor has acquired paramount strategic value for Western powers and China alike. As TRIPP is integrated into the broader Middle Corridor (TITR) framework, it will establish a highly resilient east-west trade bridge. Although operationalizing TRIPP requires substantial new capital investment, commercial and political momentum is already evident. One testament to this is the formation of a joint Armenian-American management entity designed to oversee corridor logistics.

The physical presence of U.S. operational control enhances institutional predictability and boosts the potential for foreign direct investment. Nevertheless, security risks persist. Tehran's long-standing opposition to a U.S. operational presence along its northern border is a sensitive geopolitical issue, especially amid broader regional security concerns.

Regional Impact: South Caucasus and Central Asia

The TRIPP corridor provides Azerbaijan with an uninterrupted physical connection to its Nakhchivan exclave and secures a direct, lower-cost commercial route to Turkey and Europe. For Armenia, the initiative signifies a historic paradigm shift. By ending decades of regional transport isolation, Yerevan establishes itself as a vital node in transcontinental logistics. This economic integration is expected to usher in a new era for the South Caucasus by

transforming the historically volatile region into an attractive destination for global investment.

Following his victory in the June 7 parliamentary elections, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has sought broader international support for the initiative. Pashinyan has explicitly emphasized that [Central Asian countries must be directly integrated into the TRIPP framework](#). According to Yerevan's strategic vision, TRIPP is not just a local Caucasus project but an integral part of the broader Middle Corridor infrastructure, which connects Central Asian resource exports directly with European consumers.

1. **Economic and Technical Benefits of TRIPP for the South Caucasus and Central Asia**

Quantitative projections by international financial institutions and regional transport authorities further underscore the transformative potential of the TRIPP corridor. According to the World Bank's baseline assessments and regional transport studies, the Zangezur/TRIPP alignment is expected to provide an initial freight [capacity of 15 million metric tons per year](#). This capacity can be scaled up to 20-25 million tons as the multimodal system is modernized.

For Central Asian economies, this capacity expansion addresses a long-standing structural deficit. Rather than relying exclusively on congested nodes, transcontinental transit times between East and Central Asian origin points and European [destinations are projected to fall to 13–15 days](#) by routing cargo through the high-capacity TRIPP link. This represents a nearly 50% reduction compared to maritime routes via the Suez Canal and significantly undercuts the delay-prone traditional Middle Corridor segments.

Furthermore, as containerized freight traffic along the Trans-Caspian route continues to increase—supported by a [€10 billion investment commitment from the European Union under the Global Gateway framework](#) for sustainable transport infrastructure in Central Asia—the TRIPP corridor will provide the necessary capacity to handle this growth. [The World Bank estimates that overall trade volumes across this central axis could triple by 2030](#), transforming the South Caucasus and Central Asia into a consolidated, high-velocity trade bloc rather than a collection of isolated transit states.

The Transatlantic Vector: EU and US Strategic Interests

While Beijing has systematically expanded its economic influence across Eurasia through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the United States has had fewer direct instruments for projecting power along Eurasian land routes. The TRIPP corridor provides Washington with a strategic mechanism to bridge this connectivity gap. Geopolitically, U.S. engagement serves several overlapping objectives: [mitigating](#)

[Iranian influence along its northern border, avoiding Russian transit monopolies, and securing oversight of a major Middle Corridor artery.](#)

Simultaneously, the U.S. under President [Donald Trump merges these geopolitical goals with commercial and domestic political considerations](#). The TRIPP corridor's institutional framework, evidenced by multi-billion-dollar commercial agreements and U.S. corporate involvement, reflects a doctrine that leverages American commercial capacity as an instrument of foreign policy. Furthermore, establishing a high-profile transit and peace architecture in the South Caucasus would provide the U.S. administration with a notable foreign policy achievement ahead of the November 2026 U.S. congressional midterm elections.

[For the European Union, which strives for strategic autonomy, participating in TRIPP is imperative.](#) Through its Global Gateway strategy, Brussels has allocated significant funds toward sustainable infrastructure, clean energy transitions, and regulatory integration. However, to remain strategically relevant in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, the EU must formally incorporate TRIPP into its transit portfolio.

Beyond general trade expansion, a vital motivation for Brussels is [unimpeded access to critical raw materials in Central Asia, such as lithium, rare earth elements, and copper](#), as well as diversified energy supplies that bypass Russian territory. To secure these supply chains, the EU cannot rely solely on soft power. It must coordinate with Washington to provide political guarantees and co-finance infrastructure development with U.S. capital.

Meanwhile, alignment between transatlantic partners is subject to structural risks. Although Washington and Brussels share core strategic objectives, such as enhancing regional security, bypassing hostile actors, and providing an alternative to China-centred connectivity initiatives, divergences in U.S. trade policy and transactional diplomacy introduce volatility. Unilateral U.S. actions or potential shifts in commitment pose risks, underscoring the need for the EU to establish an independent economic and institutional foundation within the TRIPP framework.

Key Challenges and Bottlenecks

Despite the compelling commercial and strategic rationale for the TRIPP corridor, several significant structural obstacles threaten its rapid deployment and long-term stability.

The Russian Infrastructure Ownership Dilemma

The most immediate bottleneck is Moscow's entrenched position within Armenia's national infrastructure. [The Armenian railway network, the indispensable physical foundation for the TRIPP alignment, remains under the operational concession of the](#)

[South Caucasus Railway \(SCR\), which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Russian Railways \(RZD\)](#). As Yerevan continues its strategic pivot toward Western institutions, [Moscow has increasingly used economic and infrastructural leverage to impede projects that bypass Russian jurisdiction](#). Operating an American-managed transit regime over assets legally managed by a Russian state entity creates an acute operational and legal paradox requiring a carefully negotiated solution involving legal clarification, asset restructuring, and internationally backed guarantees.

The Iranian Security Challenge

Tehran views the presence of Western and particularly ,the U.S.-backed, operational entities along its northern border with Armenia as an unacceptable strategic encroachment. [Iran’s opposition is further compounded by broader security escalations and regional military friction](#) involving the United States, Israel, and Iran. The threat of asymmetric disruption, kinetic border incidents, or hybrid pressure from Tehran poses a constant risk to international logistics operators and prospective investors considering the Syunik transit axis.

Capital Guarantees and Cross-Border

Trust Deficits Although diplomatic dialogue between Baku, Yerevan, and Ankara has gained significant momentum, transitioning from political intent to physical [infrastructure requires multi-billion-dollar capital commitments](#). Institutional investors remain cautious in the absence of hard security guarantees and standardized cross-border legal frameworks. Private capital flows will remain constrained without binding multilateral mechanisms to protect transit rights against sudden geopolitical shifts.

2. Policy Recommendations

The TRIPP corridor is much more than a localized infrastructure modernization project. It is a structural pillar of a reconfigured Eurasian trade architecture. By providing a high-throughput transit vector that bypasses both Russia and Iran, the corridor offers a historic opportunity to integrate the South Caucasus and Central Asia more directly into transatlantic supply chains. However, realizing this potential requires synchronized statecraft, institutional capital deployment, and robust risk-mitigation frameworks from all participating stakeholders.

1. To the European Union

Prioritize TRIPP formally via Global Gateway. Integrate the corridor into the EU Global Gateway Strategy’s flagship portfolio to unlock long-term concessional financing and technical assistance.

Support Armenia's economic diversification. Expand trade preferences, tariff reductions, and regulatory alignment for Armenian goods to reduce Yerevan's dependence on Russian markets and infrastructure.

Engage pragmatically with Turkey. Maintain structured dialogue with Ankara on transit and regional security. Turkey should remain included in relevant European discussions on infrastructure, connectivity, and regional security.

Explore joint commercial entities. Develop European–South Caucasian public-private partnerships and companies to support operational management, infrastructure integrity, and the application of European regulatory standards.

2. To the United States

Maintain transatlantic strategic alignment. Coordinate diplomatic and security policies closely with Brussels in response to pressure from Moscow and Tehran.

Mobilize private capital and risk insurance. [Deploy the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation \(DFC\)](#) to provide political risk insurance and loan guarantees to encourage institutional private investment.

Deepen the regional commercial footprint. Expand diplomatic and commercial engagement across the South Caucasus and Central Asia to prevent strategic vacuums.

3. To Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey

Deploy a unified digital customs regime. Harmonize customs procedures, electronic documentation, cargo tracking, and data-exchange standards through an integrated digital transit corridor.

Enact binding multilateral transit guarantees. Ratify a legally binding multilateral agreement that provides legal protection against arbitrary interruption of commercial transit.

Accelerate operational normalization. Speed up technical negotiations on border openings and rail connectivity to provide greater commercial predictability for international logistics firms.

4. To the Central Asian Republics

Proactively integrate into TRIPP frameworks. Join multilateral consultative mechanisms with South Caucasian partners, the EU, and the United States to ensure regional participation in the development of new trade routes.

Diversify infrastructure and logistics partnerships. Use TRIPP and the Middle Corridor as strategic tools to expand export options, diversify external financing, and reduce excessive dependence on any single infrastructure provider.