

The main advantage of the OIC is energy resources and transport links

Brief Summary

The article is about the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit held in Khankendi, Azerbaijan. It discusses transport projects connecting OIC members, expansion of economic ties, and mutual trade and investment relations. The importance of holding the event in Khankendi is particularly emphasized. It is reported that Khankendi, which has been a den of Armenian bandits for many years, has today become the address of the Turkic Union with its new buildings and distinguished guests. The article comments on the formation and prospects of the Middle Corridor, Lapis Lazuli and North-South international transport projects. It is emphasized that the Zangezur corridor will further expand cargo transportation opportunities in the future and further strengthen connections between Turkic states.

Main text

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), established in 1985 on the joint initiative of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, currently includes 10 countries, including Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. It is safe to say that the ECO's POLITICAL ESSENCE AND INFLUENCE, which brings together 8-9% of the global economy and about 8% of the world's population, is MUCH GREATER THAN ITS ECONOMIC POWER. This is due to the fact that most of the member countries are participants in important international transport projects and have rich energy potential. As President Ilham Aliyev noted at the 17th ECO Summit held in Khankendi, "...East-West and North-South transport corridors pass through the territory of Azerbaijan, and most of the ECO member countries use these corridors." In other words, it is possible to increase the economic power and economic influence of the OIC by expanding transport projects, economic ties, and mutual trade and investment relations that unite the OIC members.

Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, etc. members have rich energy resources, oil and gas fields, and renewable energy sources. Today, the mentioned countries are in a leading position in Europe's energy security. The opportunities for delivering Azerbaijan's oil and gas reserves and the energy resources of other friendly countries to Europe via Azerbaijan should be specially noted. Also because the efficient and attractive routes of the OIC members to Europe pass through the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey-Europe line. Both energy resources, transport projects, and rich and diverse economic potential allow for further strengthening of relations between the OIC members, which ultimately increases the OIC's power and influence.

The documents signed between the governments of Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan also express the economic prospects of the member states. In the case of these two countries, cooperation in the areas of industry, agriculture, trade, digitalization of customs procedures, science and education, social sphere, shipping, etc. will be further intensified in the near future, which can be considered as an example of relations between the OIC members. As noted, the OIC members are so interconnected with energy and transport projects that further strengthening of this union has become a necessity in the future.

The states of Azerbaijan, Turkey, Georgia, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan have agreed to implement the Lapis Lazuli transport corridor. The Lapis Lazuli corridor, formed in accordance with the agreement signed in 2017, starts from the cities of Aqina (Faryab province) and Torgundi (Herat province), located near the Afghanistan-Turkmenistan border. These cities have a railway connection with neighboring Turkmenistan and are the main network that will connect Afghanistan with the Caspian Sea basin. Cargo transported by rail from Turkmenistan is planned to be transported first to the Turkmenbashi port, and from there to the Baku international port of Alat. From the Baku port, it is planned to be transported to European countries via Georgia and Turkey. Afghanistan and Turkmenistan plan to export 80% of their goods to the world market via this route, which promises long-term prospects for the Lapis Lazuli corridor, as well as for the economic relations of the states connected by the corridor. It should be noted that in 2018, a new corridor was opened in the city of Torgundi, and at the same time, a ceremony was held to send 9 TIRs loaded with dried fruits and spices to Europe.

Another important transport corridor connecting most of the OIC members is the Middle Corridor. The Trans-Caspian international transport corridor ensures the delivery of cargo from China, the world's manufacturing center, to Europe via Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. The Middle Corridor, with an annual throughput capacity of nearly 10 million tons, is the most relevant and attractive direction due to the political processes and military conflicts taking place in the region and the world. Considering that the construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway will lead to an increase in cargo flow in the Middle Corridor, especially in the southern branch. In general, the construction of this railway will also make a significant contribution to improving transport relations between the member states of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). The railway route passing through Kyrgyzstan will reduce the land distance from China to Europe by 900 kilometers and the delivery time by a full week. This railway connecting China with Europe will increase activity on the Trans-Caspian corridor, which will help to further expand the volume and scale of transit services, as well as contribute to closer relations between member states.

One of the important transport corridors in which the OIC members cooperate is the North-South transport corridor. The North-South transport corridor, formed in 2000 in St. Petersburg based on the agreement signed between Russia, Iran, and India, connects the OIC members Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The

main route along this corridor is the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan and then to Georgia-Turkey-Europe.

Thus, as can be seen, all OIC members are working together on one or another transport project. Considering that one of the main directions of competitiveness and advantage in the global environment is favorable transport and transit opportunities, we can consider the OIC superior in this respect as well. In other words, countries that have convenient access to international markets and extensive transport and transit opportunities develop faster, intensify their integration into the global space, and have a say in the international arena. Naturally, when the existing potential opportunities, favorable geo-strategic position, and implemented policies and decisions form a system and complexity, they become the locomotive of development. In this sense, the decisions made by President Ilham Aliyev with foresight and consistently, and the successfully implemented projects and programs have turned the potential opportunities arising from the favorable geo-strategic position of Azerbaijan into real advantages. It is precisely as a result of this that Azerbaijan, which looks like the beginning of Asia from Europe and Europe from Asia, is a leading state in the modern Eurasian space as an important transport and transit hub. The opening of the Zangezur corridor will further strengthen this position and add strength to our power.

Naturally, issues such as the construction of a modern road and transport complex, continuous reforms in this area, coordination of the activities of transport agencies, improvement of legislation and application of modern technologies further strengthen Azerbaijan's position as an important transport hub.

The construction of 3 international airports in the liberated territories in the shortest possible time, the successful implementation of dozens of projects in the areas of organizing the activities of various types of transport are vivid examples of the above.

The OIC Khankendi Summit makes every Azerbaijani and everyone who loves Azerbaijan proud, and the welcoming of guests from different countries at the Fuzuli, Lachin, and Zangilan international airports is just as joyful. All this creates significant advantages for our country in terms of transport and transit services, and also expresses the prestige of the Azerbaijani state.

Azerbaijan, with its far-sighted President and victorious Supreme Commander-in-Chief, CONQUERED another summit, the OIC KHANKENDI SUMMIT. Khankendi, which has been turned into a "devil's den" for many years, today rejoices as the address of the Turkic Union with its new buildings and distinguished guests.

Dr. Agil Asadov

Center for Analysis of Economic Reforms and Communication