



GEOPOLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE BLACK SEA REGION AND GEORGIA'S SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

The Black Sea and South Caucasus regions are undergoing significant geopolitical transformation resulting from changes in the regional balance of power, the expansion of transportation and energy connectivity, and the growing involvement of global and regional actors. These developments have direct implications for Georgia, whose strategic geographical position between Europe and Asia makes it an important component of regional transportation, energy, and security architecture.

This article examines the impact of geopolitical transformations in the Black Sea and South Caucasus regions on Georgia's regional significance and security environment. Particular attention is given to the changing roles of Russia, Turkey, the European Union, the United States, and China, as well as the development of the Middle Corridor, the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway, regional energy infrastructure, and the Black Sea submarine cable project. The article also examines the potential implications of emerging transportation routes through Armenia, including the Crossroads of Peace initiative and the proposed Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP).

The study argues that Georgia's established transportation infrastructure, strategic location, accumulated transit experience, and international partnerships provide significant advantages over emerging competing routes. However, increased geopolitical and economic importance does not automatically guarantee improved national security. Instead, it may increase Georgia's exposure to hybrid threats, infrastructure vulnerabilities, political pressure, and competition between external actors. The article concludes that Georgia should strengthen critical infrastructure resilience, diversify international partnerships, modernize transportation networks, and consolidate its role within the Middle Corridor in order to transform its geographical advantage into a sustainable strategic advantage.

Keywords: Black Sea Region; South Caucasus; Georgia; Geopolitical Transformation; National Security; Middle Corridor; Baku–Tbilisi–Kars Railway; Regional Connectivity; Armenia; Azerbaijan; Turkey.

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1. Introduction

The Black Sea region represents one of the most strategically important geopolitical spaces connecting Europe with the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Its geographical position has historically made it an area where military, political, economic, and energy interests intersect. In recent years, the strategic importance of the region has increased because of changes in the European security environment, the transformation of the South Caucasus, and the development of alternative transportation and energy corridors.

The South Caucasus is particularly important because of its position between Europe and Asia. Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan have increasingly become participants in regional connectivity projects linking the Caspian region with European markets. At the same time, Russia, Turkey, the European Union, the United States, and China are seeking to protect or expand their respective interests in the region.

The transformation of the regional balance following the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict has created a new geopolitical environment. Russia's traditional influence has been challenged by the growing role of Turkey and the increasing involvement of Western and Asian actors. Turkey has strengthened its strategic partnership with Azerbaijan, while Armenia has sought to diversify its foreign and security relations. China has expanded its economic engagement through connectivity and infrastructure projects (Giuashvili, 2025; Ivaniadze, 2024).

For Georgia, these developments represent both opportunities and challenges. The country's geographical location, Black Sea access, railway infrastructure, energy networks, and participation in the Middle Corridor provide opportunities for strengthening its regional position. At the same time, Georgia remains exposed to Russian military and political pressure and to increasing geopolitical competition.

The purpose of this article is to assess how contemporary geopolitical transformations affect Georgia's regional significance and security environment. Particular attention is paid to transportation connectivity and the possible emergence of competing routes through Armenia.

2. Geopolitical Transformation of the South Caucasus

The geopolitical structure of the South Caucasus is becoming increasingly multipolar. Russia remains an important actor, but its traditional predominance has been challenged by the growing involvement of Turkey, the European Union, the United States, and China.

Turkey has significantly strengthened its influence through its strategic partnership with Azerbaijan. Ankara's political, economic, and security cooperation with Baku has become one of the major factors shaping the regional balance.

At the same time, Armenia has increasingly attempted to diversify its foreign relations. Yerevan's growing engagement with Western partners demonstrates that the region is moving away from an exclusively Russia-centered security structure.

The United States remains interested in regional stability, energy diversification, and transportation routes connecting Europe with Central Asia. China approaches the region primarily through economic connectivity and infrastructure development. The South Caucasus is particularly relevant to China's broader connectivity strategy because it provides an alternative route toward European markets (Ivaniadze, 2024).

Consequently, the South Caucasus is developing into a more complex geopolitical environment in which several external actors simultaneously pursue their interests. This transformation provides Georgia with additional opportunities for international cooperation, but it also requires careful strategic balancing.

3. Georgia's Increasing Regional Significance

Georgia's strategic importance is primarily determined by its geographical position. The country serves as a bridge between the Black Sea, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Central Asia, and European markets.

One of the most important components of this role is the **Middle Corridor**, which provides a transportation connection between China and Europe through Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey.

Georgia and China have strengthened their cooperation in this area. In 2024, the two sides signed a memorandum concerning the joint development of the Middle Corridor, focusing on transportation, logistics, and infrastructure cooperation (Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, 2024).

Georgia also plays an important role in regional energy connectivity. The Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan oil pipeline and the South Caucasus Gas Pipeline have established Georgia as an important transit state for Caspian energy resources.

The Black Sea submarine cable project represents another strategically significant development. The project is intended to strengthen electricity connectivity between the South Caucasus and Europe and could increase Georgia's importance in regional energy security (Georgian State Electrosystem, 2024).

Therefore, Georgia's strategic value increasingly derives from the combination of geography and infrastructure. Its role as a transit state creates economic opportunities while simultaneously increasing its geopolitical significance.

4. Geopolitical Changes and Georgia's Security Environment

Georgia's increasing role in regional connectivity has direct implications for its security environment.

The European Union has become an important actor in supporting Georgia's security and connectivity. The European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) contributes to monitoring the security situation near the administrative boundary lines with Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

European involvement is also visible in transportation policy. Georgia's participation in the Common Transit Convention and its connection to European transportation initiatives support greater integration with European economic and logistics networks (Council of the European Union, 2024).

The United States also has strategic interests in the stability of the South Caucasus. Georgia's transportation and energy infrastructure provides alternative routes that reduce dependence on Russian-controlled networks.

China's role is primarily economic, but its infrastructure and connectivity projects also have strategic implications. Increased international investment in Georgia creates additional international interests in maintaining the country's stability.

Nevertheless, the assumption that economic connectivity automatically provides security guarantees should be treated cautiously. Strategic infrastructure can become a target of political pressure, cyberattacks, sabotage, disinformation, or other forms of hybrid activity.

Thus, Georgia's security strategy should treat critical infrastructure as an integral part of national security.

5. Emerging Armenian Transportation Routes

One of the most significant developments affecting Georgia's transit position is the emergence of alternative transportation routes through Armenia.

The Armenian government has promoted the **Crossroads of Peace** initiative, which seeks to develop transportation connections between Armenia and its neighboring countries. The initiative includes roads, railways, pipelines, and electricity infrastructure and aims to increase regional economic connectivity (Georgia Today, 2023).

Another important development is the proposed **Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP)**. The initiative envisages the development of transportation connectivity through southern Armenia and could potentially create a new connection between Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan and subsequently Turkey.

For Georgia, the development of such routes has both positive and negative implications.

On the positive side, increased regional connectivity could contribute to economic development, stability, and interdependence. Improved transportation links between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey could reduce the economic costs associated with regional isolation.

On the negative side, alternative routes could compete directly with Georgian transportation corridors. Some cargo flows currently passing through Georgia could potentially be redirected if Armenian routes become more efficient and commercially attractive.

Therefore, the development of Armenian transportation infrastructure should be understood as an emerging competitive factor rather than an immediate threat to Georgia's strategic position.

6. Georgian Railway and the Middle Corridor

Georgia possesses a significant comparative advantage in railway transportation because of its historical experience and established infrastructure.

The Baku–Tbilisi–Kars (BTK) railway is particularly important. The approximately 826-kilometer railway connects Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey and creates a direct transportation link between the Caspian region and Turkey and European markets (Center for Economic and Social Development, 2017).

Georgia is the central connecting state within this route. Its territory provides the physical link between Azerbaijan and Turkey and creates access to the Black Sea transportation system.

The modernization of Georgian railway infrastructure is intended to increase capacity, improve efficiency, and strengthen the country's position in the Middle Corridor. The modernization process also includes the development of logistics facilities and improvements to operational efficiency (Gventsadze, 2025).

Georgia's participation in TRACECA, BTK, and the Middle Corridor has also created accumulated institutional and operational experience.

This experience represents an important advantage over newly emerging transportation routes. Armenia's railway infrastructure requires substantial investment and modernization before it can achieve comparable regional transit capacity.

The comparison therefore suggests that Georgia currently possesses an important first-mover and infrastructure advantage. However, maintaining this advantage requires continuous modernization and adaptation to changing regional transportation patterns.

7. Strategic Implications for Georgia

The emergence of competing transportation corridors demonstrates that Georgia cannot rely exclusively on its geographical location.

The first strategic priority should be continued modernization of railway, port, road, and logistics infrastructure. Transit competitiveness increasingly depends on speed, reliability, digitalization, customs efficiency, and cost.

The second priority should be the protection of critical infrastructure. Railways, ports, pipelines, electricity systems, telecommunications networks, and logistics centers should be protected against physical, cyber, and hybrid threats.

Third, Georgia should maintain diversified international partnerships. Cooperation with the European Union, United States, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Central Asian states, and China provides opportunities for economic development and reduces excessive dependence on a single external actor.

Fourth, Georgia should strengthen its role within the Middle Corridor. Improved coordination with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and other participating states would increase the efficiency and attractiveness of the route.

Finally, Georgia should approach Armenian connectivity projects pragmatically. The emergence of alternative routes does not necessarily eliminate Georgia's strategic importance. Instead, it may encourage Georgia to increase competitiveness and become part of a broader interconnected South Caucasus transportation network.

8. Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that geopolitical transformation in the Black Sea and South Caucasus regions has increased Georgia's strategic importance.

Georgia benefits from a combination of geographical location, established infrastructure, international partnerships, and accumulated transit experience. These advantages make the country an important component of transportation and energy routes connecting Europe with Asia.

However, strategic importance creates both opportunities and vulnerabilities. The greater the international dependence on Georgian infrastructure, the greater the potential consequences of disruption.

Another important factor is regional multipolarity. The increasing involvement of Turkey, the European Union, the United States, and China provides Georgia with opportunities to diversify partnerships. At the same time, competition among these actors may increase pressure on Georgian foreign and security policy.

The development of Armenian transportation routes should therefore not be interpreted exclusively as a threat. Regional connectivity could contribute to economic development and long-term stability. Nevertheless, Georgia must prepare for increased competition in the transit sector.

The most sustainable strategy is therefore to transform Georgia's geographical advantage into a broader institutional, infrastructural, and technological advantage.

9. Conclusion

Geopolitical transformations in the Black Sea and South Caucasus regions are changing Georgia's strategic environment. The emergence of a more multipolar regional structure, Turkey's growing influence, increased Western engagement, China's economic expansion, and changes in Russia's regional position have created a new geopolitical context.

Georgia's strategic geographical location, transportation infrastructure, participation in the Middle Corridor, energy networks, and Black Sea connectivity projects provide significant opportunities to strengthen its regional role.

The Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway remains a particularly important component of this strategy. Georgia's accumulated transit experience and existing infrastructure provide significant advantages over emerging competing routes.

Nevertheless, these advantages cannot be considered permanent. The development of transportation infrastructure through Armenia, including the Crossroads of Peace and TRIPP initiatives, may create additional competition for regional transit flows.

The central conclusion of this study is that Georgia's growing regional importance can contribute to national security, but economic connectivity alone cannot substitute for comprehensive security policy.

Georgia should therefore focus on four interconnected priorities: **infrastructure modernization, critical infrastructure resilience, international partnership diversification, and consolidation of its role in the Middle Corridor.**

If effectively implemented, these policies could enable Georgia to transform its geographical position into a sustainable strategic advantage and strengthen its role as a transportation, energy, logistics, and connectivity hub between Europe and Asia.

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