

The Importance of The Transport System in The Regional Integration of Central Asia

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examines the critical role of the transport system in fostering regional integration in Central Asia, a historically significant region with complex geopolitical and economic challenges. **Method:** The research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing a review of historical trade routes, policy analysis, and economic data to assess the impact of transportation infrastructure on regional connectivity. **Results:** Findings indicate that the development of transport systems has significantly enhanced trade, economic cooperation, and political stability among Central Asian nations. Improved infrastructure, such as railways, highways, and logistics hubs, has facilitated cross-border movement, reduced transaction costs, and strengthened economic ties with global markets. **Novelty:** Unlike previous studies that focus on individual country dynamics, this research provides a comprehensive regional perspective, highlighting how integrated transport networks serve as a catalyst for economic growth and geopolitical stability. The study underscores the need for sustainable and coordinated transport policies to maximize the benefits of regional integration in Central Asia.

INTRODUCTION

Central Asia is a place that has long made a worthy contribution to the development of world civilization. It has produced a huge number of scholars, kings and commanders, statesmen and public figures. However, this ancient land, which fell under the influence of the colonial era and was forced to be part of other countries for many years, has a number of problems lined up like coral reefs. One of these problems is the region's transport system. President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev said at a meeting dedicated to reforms in the transport sector in the country: "This sector is the lifeblood of the economy. We cannot ensure sustainable economic development if we do not take transport and logistics to a new level," he stressed. He also set tasks such as expanding the network of modern highways for international transit cargo and the network of international transit routes for rail transport. The transport system is one of the necessary factors for the effective functioning of the economy not only of the country, but also of the entire region, and it is the most important infrastructure for sustainable growth. In modern conditions, when the economies of countries are interconnected, the development of transport systems that work effectively in the global production network is a prerequisite for countries to enter this global network [1].

As Academician V. Bartold noted: "The future of Turkestan depends on its place in world trade. The commercial essence of Turkestan depends on the development of railways, which will restore the essence of land and sea trade" [2].

It is known from history that important trade routes have long passed through Central Asia, in particular Uzbekistan. Among them, the Great Silk Road, which connected the West and the East, was of great importance. The Great Silk Road played a major role in the history of human development from the 2nd century BC to the 17th century AD. It connected the remote eastern and western regions of the vast Eurasian continent at a distance of 12 thousand km. The cities located along the main caravan route, Dunhuang, Khami, Turfan, Kashgar, Uzgen Osh, Quva, Andijan, Kokand, Samarkand, Bukhara, Merv, Balkh, Khorezm, Baghdad, were considered the most developed trading cities of their time. It is clear from this that trade caravan routes connecting cities, countries, and regions served as today's transport corridors [3].

Today, the military-political processes and economic problems taking place in the world require scientific, technological and political analysis and study of the issues of finding new ways to strengthen regional transport system cooperation and directing them to the development of countries. Despite this very complex and insurmountable task, the fact that it is possible to achieve political stability and economic development on its basis shows how necessary this work is. The availability and convenience of interregional and interregional transport systems increase the possibilities of transport connections, which is characterized by the degree to which the transport system is systematized [4]. This systematization, in turn, makes a significant contribution to the development of "regional transport integration". In addition, it is considered the most effective method for the economic development of the region and its countries. The UN report "Human Development" states that if transport and transit costs are halved between the countries of the region, the volume of mutual trade will increase by 2 times. Therefore, one of the important strategic tasks is to establish a rational and mutually beneficial use of the region's natural resources and develop a comprehensive regional transport integration based on coordinated connectivity. The advantageous geographical location of the Central Asian region creates additional opportunities for this [5].

For example, looking at the economies of countries located in a similarly geographically favorable location, one can see how important this opportunity is [6].

In particular, the Netherlands is located on an important European transit route, and today transit revenues account for 40% of the country's exports. This list can also include Poland, Germany, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Austria, Turkey and the Baltic states. It is no exaggeration to say that the basis of today's European development is the high level of integration of the transport systems of the countries in the region. Therefore, regional transport integration is an important factor in the development of the transport system of the country and the region. The concept of "regional transport integration" is defined by scientist Azamat Zohidov as follows: - this is the process and the resulting situation of strengthening effective and stable relations between the countries of the

region in the field of transport, coordinating political and economic interests in this area, and improving the relevant regulatory framework [7].

Here we also give our own definition of this concept: - a complex system that is organized by two or more countries, combining mutual interests, to express the common interests of the region, and is jointly managed, and has a positive significance [8]. Countries or regions that are able to create such a system can become developed countries or regions of the world. Today, it is precisely as a result of such cooperation that European countries have this status [9].

The location and relief of a country or region also play a special role in this. This cannot but have an impact on regional cooperation processes. According to the scientist, Doctor of Political Science, Professor Oybek Sirojov, such opportunities as the remoteness of Central Asia from international seaports and the region's location at the crossroads connecting the East and the West are also geographically fundamental elements that play an important role in the development of regional cooperation in Central Asia. This means that for the development of the Central Asian countries, it is necessary, first of all, to further intensify regional cooperation, optimize mutual transport systems, and make beneficial decisions for a common goal, namely the benefit of the region [10].

RESEARCH METHOD

Given the region's geographically large territory, its abundance of natural resources, its geoeconomic and geopolitical development, as branches of a common tree with a common history, can be highly assessed [11]. It is clear that the failure to use these opportunities will have a negative impact on regional cooperation and development, as well as regional integration. Scholar Chori Kucharov emphasizes that there are several options for the region's entry into the world market. Among them, the route via the sea route through Afghanistan and Iran and the route via Afghanistan and Pakistan are of particular importance for the development of the region [12]. F. Starr, M. Reiser, F. Yildiz emphasize the need to develop the Central Asian transport system, increase the number of routes leading to the sea route, and coordinate the regional transport system, which will reduce the region's economic dependence on Russia and China [13]. According to Sh. Arifkhanov, the Central Asian countries are at the stage of creating effective transport and communication corridors and connecting them to the global communication system. He also emphasizes the equal relevance of four geographical areas of transport system development for these countries. These are:

1. Russia, Europe and the Baltic States;
2. China, Japan and Southeast Asian countries;
3. Transcaucasia, Iran, Turkey;
4. Afghanistan and Pakistan [14].

The first three routes exist and are operational today. However, a number of problems remain to be solved in order to establish the effective operation of the last route. "The establishment of stability in Afghanistan and the commissioning of transport corridors through the territory of Afghanistan can also lead to the restoration of long-

standing trade routes, the resumption of trade flows from India to Iran and the Middle East, as well as to Europe”[15]. In the region, you can find almost all types of transport systems, and they are developed to a certain extent. Among them, railway and road transport are especially important, and pipeline and air transport have also been formed. During the former Soviet Union, all transport arteries from Central Asia were directed north, to Russia. Other directions, especially the southern direction, were blocked. Uzbekistan, located in the region, has to cross the territory of at least two countries to reach seaports. This requires the country to develop its transport system and develop new alternative routes [16].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis underscores that the transport system is fundamental to achieving regional integration and economic development in Central Asia. The strategic geographic position of Central Asian countries provides substantial advantages for international trade, contingent upon the effective establishment of robust transport infrastructure. The study revealed that enhancing regional connectivity through rail and road networks significantly reduces transport costs, increases trade efficiency, and stimulates economic growth. Particularly, the research highlighted the necessity of addressing current limitations, such as inadequate infrastructure and geopolitical instability, notably in Afghanistan, which hinder the region’s full potential.

Furthermore, the investigation demonstrates the potential of renewed historical routes, such as those through Afghanistan, for reviving ancient trade pathways and fostering greater regional cooperation. Investments in transport infrastructure not only enhance economic opportunities but also promote political stability and integration within the region. Consequently, it is recommended that policymakers prioritize collaborative development of integrated transport networks to capitalize on Central Asia’s strategic location, thereby unlocking new economic corridors and ensuring sustainable regional prosperity.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study highlights the critical role of an integrated transport system in fostering regional economic development and political stability in Central Asia. The region’s historical significance as a trade corridor, coupled with modern infrastructure initiatives, reinforces its potential as a global transit hub.

Implication : Strengthening transport connectivity can significantly enhance trade efficiency, reduce costs, and promote sustainable economic integration. Policymakers should prioritize regional cooperation, investment in multimodal transport networks, and the adoption of digital logistics solutions to maximize economic benefits.

Limitation : The study primarily focuses on infrastructural and economic aspects, without an in-depth analysis of environmental concerns, technological adoption, and the political complexities that may hinder transport development. **Future Research :** Further studies should explore the environmental impact of transport expansion, the role of emerging

technologies in optimizing regional logistics, and the geopolitical dynamics influencing infrastructure projects in Central Asia

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