THE MIDDLE CORRIDOR: WHERE TRADE ROUTES MEET DIGITAL CONTROL

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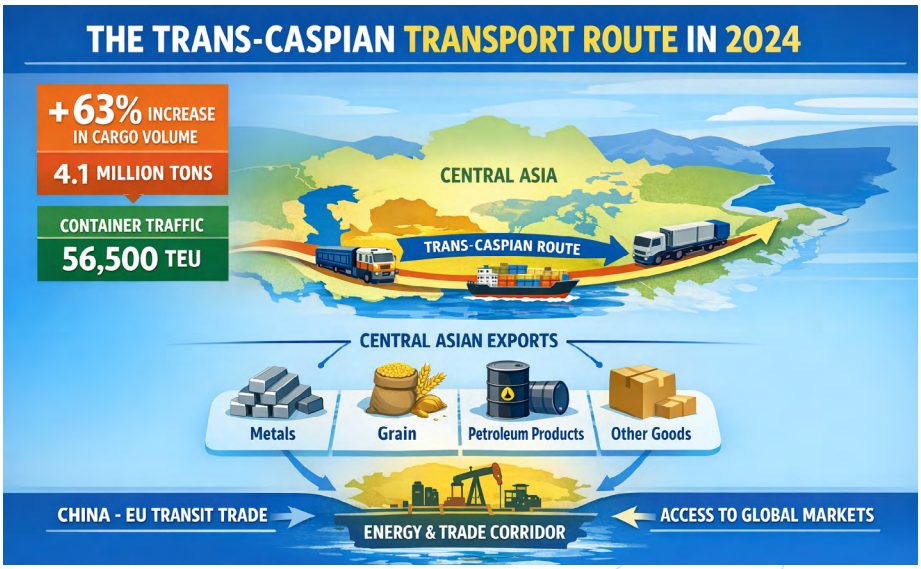
Introduction

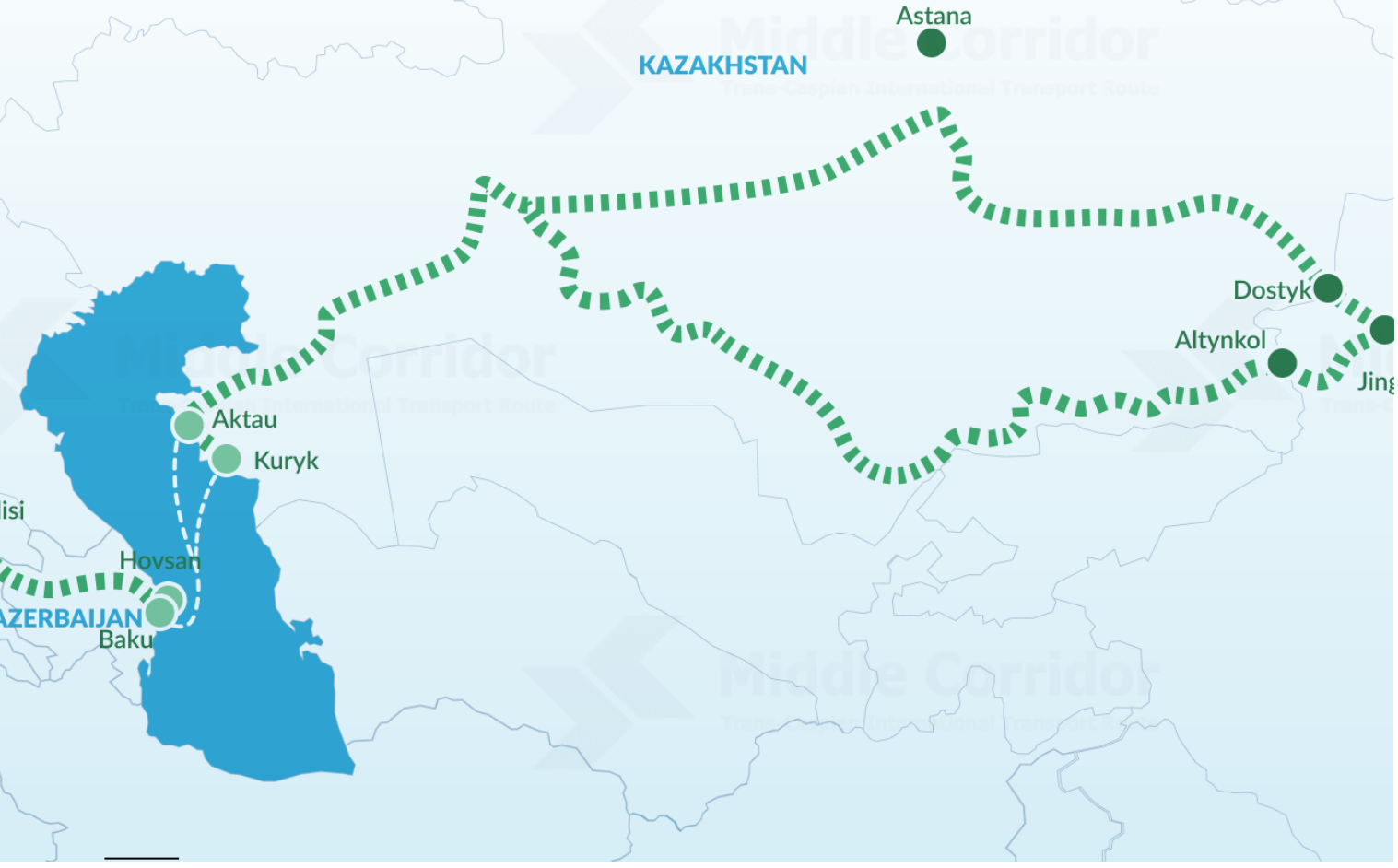
The Middle Corridor has evolved from an alternative route on a map into one of the key arteries of Eurasian trade - and simultaneously into a new arena of geopolitical competition. This transportation network connects Central Asia with the South Caucasus, Turkey, and the European Union through the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. What began as a logistics alternative has become a critical corridor whose control may determine the balance of power in Eurasia.

From Alternative Route to Strategic Artery

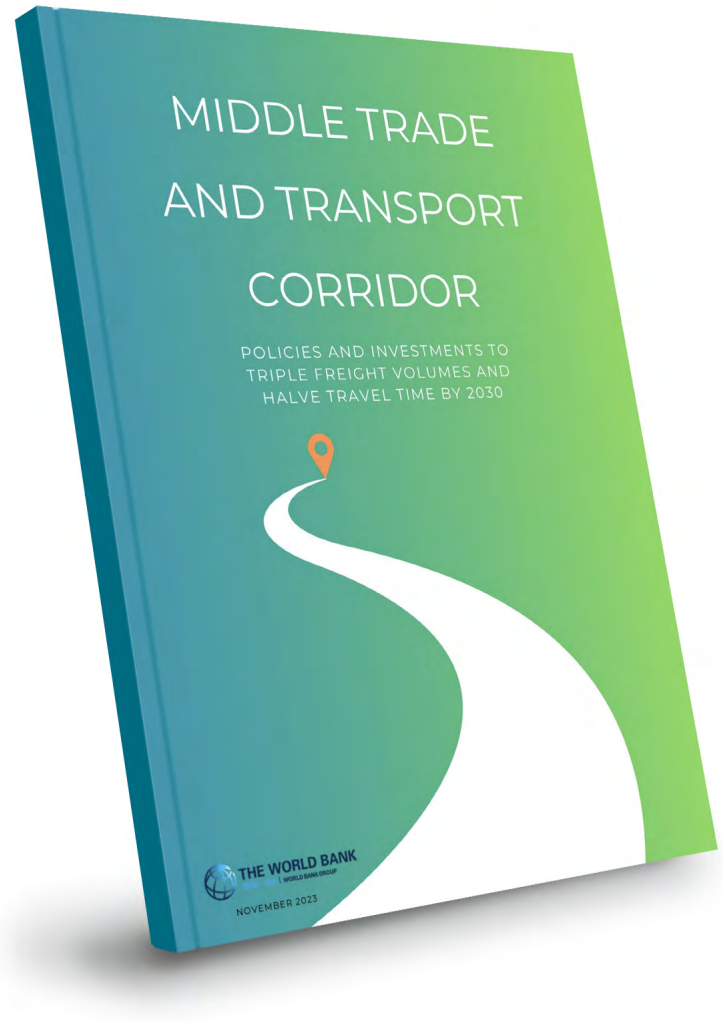


The corridor's infrastructure follows a clear pattern: rail to the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea (ports like Aktau and Kuryk in Kazakhstan), ferry crossing to the western shore (port of Alat near Baku in Azerbaijan), then rail through Georgia to either the Black Sea or overland into Turkey. The World Bank emphasizes that demand for this route has surged particularly since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, as countries seek to diversify trade and reduce dependence on northern transit routes.

The numbers tell a compelling story. In 2024, cargo volume through the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route grew by 63 percent to approximately 4.1 million tons, with container traffic reaching 56,500 TEU.[1] This matters for Central Asian exports - metals, grain, petroleum products, and other goods now flow through this corridor, complementing the region's energy routes and providing access to external markets.



1. Cargo Transport via Middle Corridor Surges to 4.1 Million Tons in 11 Months — https://astanatimes.com/2024/12/cargo-transport-via-middle-corridor-surges-to-4-1-million-tons-in-11-months/



The Digital Transformation of Transit

But the Middle Corridor is no longer just about rails, ports, and ferries. It's increasingly a digital system for managing transit: registries, electronic documentation systems, port community systems, digital customs procedures, and data exchange between carriers, agents, terminals, and regulators. This is where the corridor becomes most vulnerable - because speed and predictability today are determined less by kilometers of railway and more by how quickly and transparently the handoffs between transport modes, borders, and terminals occur.

A World Bank report on the Middle Corridor[2] notes that limited cargo tracking capabilities and delays often arise from operational controls and regulatory requirements precisely at the junctions between different transport modes and jurisdictions. The bank recommends maximum digitization of processes and a roadmap for implementing a unified digital management system that ensures operational compatibility and rapid data exchange between service providers and shippers.

Here, logistics becomes a battlefield for data control. Whoever defines the architecture of digital platforms, exchange standards, and access to transactional data gains leverage over the resilience of the entire supply chain - from commercial analysis to potential pressure scenarios in crisis situations.

2. Middle Trade and Transport Corridor. Report by the World Bank — https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/6248f697aed4be0f770d319dcaa4ca52-0080062023/original/Middle-Trade-and-Transport-Corridor-World-Bank-FINAL.pdf

China's Digital Offensive

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China operates in the region not only as a trading partner and investor in "concrete and steel," but also as a provider of digital governmental and quasi-governmental solutions - especially where states want to quickly "close the gap" in governance, logistics, and infrastructure. These projects often come packaged as technology plus financing plus service, making them extremely competitive for corridor countries.

The Lithuania Precedent: Digital Coercion in Action

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The implications for Western security become clear through a recent example of Chinese digital pressure. After Lithuania allowed Taiwan to open a representative office in Vilnius in 2021,[3] China applied an informal but highly effective "digital pressure" mechanism. Without announcing sanctions, Lithuanian goods stopped moving through Chinese trade and customs infrastructure because Lithuania was excluded from China's digital customs and certification systems - the country of origin could not be selected in electronic declarations, meaning cargo could not be processed, accepted at ports, or allowed transit. Moreover, Chinese regulators and companies began de facto blocking products from third countries containing Lithuanian components,[4] forcing European firms to exclude Lithuania from their supply chains.

This case demonstrated[5] how control over digital logistics and compliance systems allows China to cut off trade and logistics without physical blockades or formal legal decisions. It's a preview of what could happen if China gains similar control over the Middle Corridor's digital infrastructure.

3. China's Economic Coercion Lessons — https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-economic-coercion-lessons-lithuania
4. China blocking EU imports with Lithuanian components over Taiwan row, says Brussels — https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/02/09/china-blocking-eu-imports-with-lithuanian-components-over-taiwan-row-says-brussels
5. Resilience & Resolve: Lessons from Lithuania's Experience with Chinese Economic Coercion — https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/resilience-resolve-lessons-lithuanias-experience-chinese-economic-coercion

Armenia


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Armenia's telecommunications sector demonstrates a limited level of publicly documented Chinese government procurement; however, Chinese companies - most notably Huawei - have been actively operating in the country for more than a decade. Huawei Technologies has established a sustained presence in Armenia's trade and telecommunications sectors and is supported through Enterprise Armenia's Aftercare Services Program.

Over an extended period, Enterprise Armenia[6] has also been working closely with Huawei Technologies Research & Development's Belgian branch to facilitate the establishment of a research and development (R&D) center in Armenia, underscoring China's growing technological engagement in the country.

Azerbaijan

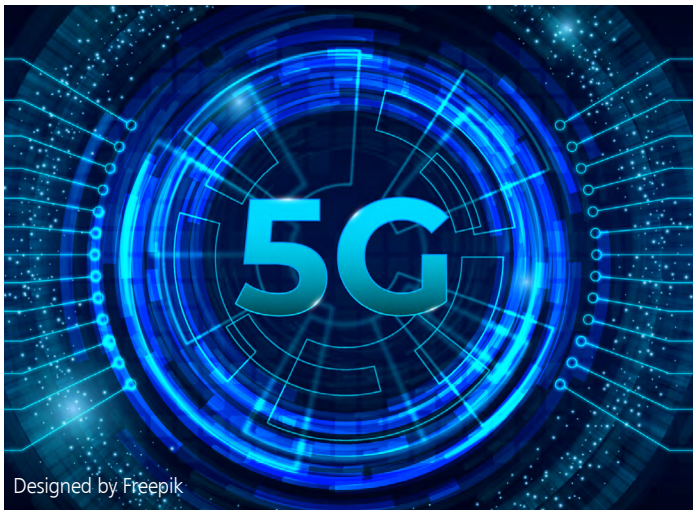
Azerbaijan's digital and telecommunications market is dominated by private operators which limits direct government procurement from Chinese suppliers. Nevertheless, Azerbaijani officials have been holding consultations with Chinese telecom companies for several years.

State Service 5G Technology Discussions

In November 2023, Azerbaijan's State Service of Special Communication and Information Security hosted a delegation[7] led by Liu Tong, Vice President of Huawei Central Asia and Caucasia Region. The meeting explored potential cooperation in 5G technologies and digital infrastructure development.

In 2024, Azerbaijan's Minister of Energy, Parviz Shahbazov announced[8] that Azerbaijan and the Chinese company Huawei are exploring the possibility of establishing a data centre powered by renewable energy sources.

Huawei is really interested in supporting the artificial intelligence and digital economy development strategies defined by Azerbaijan and building an ecosystem, Executive Editor-in-Chief of Huawei Gavin Allen said[9] on



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the sidelines of the International Collegiate Programming Contest (ICPC) World Finals 2025.

While no formal procurement contract was announced, this high-level government engagement signals potential future state-level partnerships beyond the current private operator deployments. Huawei's representative emphasized that 5G has reached its full potential and highlighted Azerbaijan's leadership in digital economy development in the region.

6. Armenia and Huawei: Strengthening Ties to Drive Foreign Investments — https://mediamax.am/am/news/business/55889/
7. Azerbaijan, Huawei discuss cooperation in 5G technologies and "cloud" services — https://azertac.az/en/xeber/azerbaijan_huawei_discuss_cooperation_in_5g_technologies_and_cloud_services
8. Azerbaijan, Huawei explore renewable energy data centre collaboration — https://caliber.az/en/post/azerbaijan-huawei-explore-renewable-energy-data-centre-collaboration
9. Huawei signals support for Azerbaijan's digital economy and AI progress — https://report.az/en/ict/huawei-signals-support-for-azerbaijans-digital-economy-and-ai-progress/

Huawei ICT Academy

In 2025, a memorandum of understanding was signed[10] between the Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC) and "Huawei Technologies Azerbaijan" LLC to establish a framework for mutual cooperation.

The primary objective of the memorandum is to foster collaboration and strategic partnership in areas of mutual interest. According to the agreement, the parties intend to establish a Huawei ICT Academy at UNEC, implement the Huawei HCIA certification program, organize summer camps for high-performing students, conduct ICT competitions, and explore the integration of Huawei's digital education solutions within the university.

Procuring Entity	**Azerbaijan State University of Economics**
Supplier	**Huawei Azerbaijan**
Year/Period	**June 2025**
Deal Value	**Not disclosed**
Source of Financing	**Potential government investment**
Object of Procurement	**ICT Academy establishment, Huawei certification program**

Georgia

Georgia's telecommunications market is primarily served by private operators (MagtiCom, Silknet/Geocell, Cellfie) without verified large-scale direct government procurement contracts with Chinese suppliers. At the same time, Chinese companies are active on the market and there are numerous meetings and ongoing contacts between the Government of Georgia and Chinese technology companies.

In 2023 Prime Minister of Georgia visited[11] Huawei's Executive Briefing Center in Beijing. The parties discussed how Georgia and Huawei can work together on ICT, industrial digital transformation, network coverage in remote areas, green energy, talent cultivation, and more.

In 2025, during a visit to Shenzhen, the Ambassador of Georgia visited[12] the headquarters of Huawei, where he held a meeting with Wang Ke, Vice President of Huawei's Global Givernment Affairs Department, and Angela Lin, Vice President of Huawei's Central Asia and Caucasus Region Department. At the meeting, the parties discussed current issues of cooperation and future prospects.

In 2025 Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, Mariam Kvrivishvili, met[13] with Gan Jianhua, President of Huawei for the Middle East and Central Asia region. Huawei representatives expressed strong interest in the Kutaisi tech hub initiative. The meeting also explored the potential use of Huawei technologies within Georgia's energy sector.

10. A memorandum of understanding signed between UNEC and "Huawei Technologies Azerbaijan" LLC — https://unec.edu.az/en/a-memorandum-of-understanding-signed-between-unec-and-huawei-technologies-azerbaijan-llc/
11. Georgian PM visits Huawei's Executive Briefing Center in Beijing — https://1tv.ge/en/news/georgian-pm-visits-huaweis-executive-briefing-center-in-beijing/
12. Georgian Ambassador Visits Huawei Headquarters — https://china.mfa.gov.ge/news/georgian-ambassador-visits-huawei-headquarters
13. Economy Minister meets with Huawei regional president — https://geoecohub.ge/en/2025/07/05/economy-minister-meets-with-huawei-regional-president/

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan provides a clear example of this digital integration. In December 2023, Kazakhstan launched the Tez Customs platform,[14] developed in collaboration with Global DTC (a PSA Group subsidiary) and designed specifically for China-Central Asia rail routes. The system automates paperless customs transit, reducing processing time from three hours to just 30 minutes. By late 2024, Tez Customs had processed over 54,000 transit declarations[15] on the China to Central Asia route.

The platform is explicitly designed to integrate with Chinese systems - as part of the broader DTC Digital Trade Corridor framework connecting China, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. While Global DTC is technically a Singapore-based subsidiary of PSA International, the system's architecture is built around compatibility with China's customs and logistics infrastructure, creating deep operational dependencies.

Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) Digital Transformation

Another example is the partnership[16] between Kazakhstan's national railway company (KTZ) and Huawei - a strategic digital transformation initiative[17] signed during President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's state visit to China in May 2023. The agreement encompasses comprehensive railway digitalization including SD-WAN network infrastructure, cloud computing platforms, and modern Wi-Fi 6 connectivity.

Furthermore, in December 2024, in a joint statement following the Fifth China Central Asia Foreign Ministers' meeting in Chengdu, all parties agreed to "strengthen cooperation in connectivity" including in "highways, railways, aviation, shipping, multimodal transport, logistics and transportation, port construction, data optical cables, etc." The joint statement,[18] signed by Kazakhstan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Murat Nurtleu, suggests that fiber-optic cables will be deployed alongside infrastructure projects supported by Beijing.


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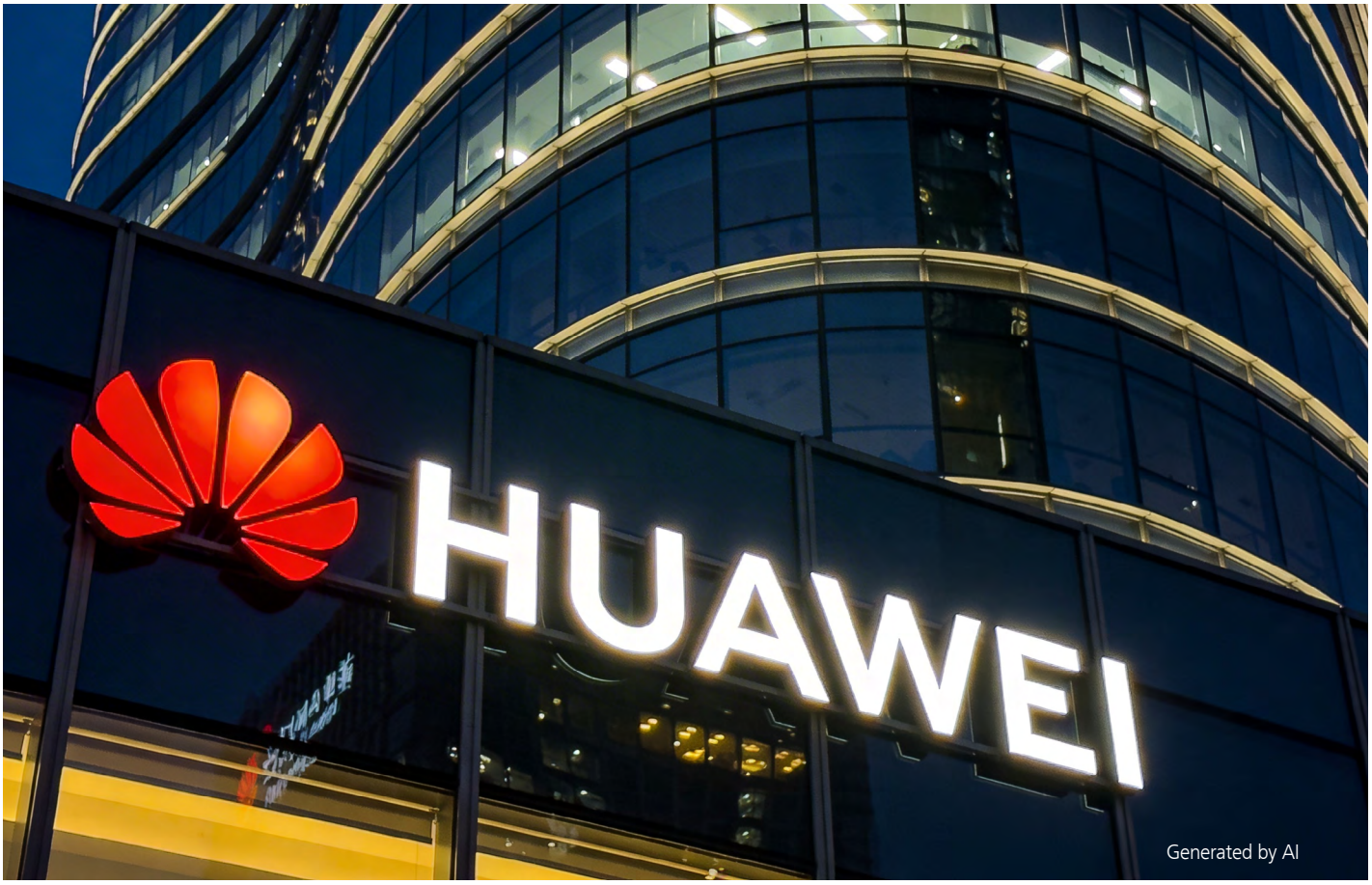
Procuring Entity	**Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) - National Railway Company**
Supplier	**Huawei Technologies**
Year/Period	**2023-2024**
Deal Value	**Not publicly disclosed**
Source of Financing	**Corporate investment / bilateral agreement**
Object of Procurement	**SD-WAN network connecting railway headquarters with 16 branches; cloud platform; Wi-Fi 6 stations across railway infrastructure**

14. Kazakhstan and China Digitalize Customs Procedures on Middle Corridor — https://www.timesca.com/kazakhstan-and-china-digitalize-customs-procedures-on-middle-corridor/
15. Cargo Transport via Middle Corridor Surges to 4.1 Million Tons in 11 Months — https://astanatimes.com/2024/12/cargo-transport-via-middle-corridor-surges-to-4-1-million-tons-in-11-months/
16. Kazakhstan Railways, Huawei Kazakhstan deepen cooperation — https://www.railwaypro.com/wp/kazakhstan-railways-huawei-kazakhstan-deepen-cooperation/
17. Kazakhstan's Railway Giant KTZ Accelerates Digital Transformation with Huawei — https://e.huawei.com/en/case-studies/solutions/enterprise-network/ktz
18. Joint Statement of the Fifth China-Central Asia Foreign Ministers' Meeting — https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/202304/t20230413_11059869.html



Ministry of Digital Development's strategic partnership with Huawei

In July 2025, Kazakhstan's Ministry of Digital Development signed[19] a significant Memorandum of Understanding with Huawei Technologies Kazakhstan to guide the country's digital infrastructure modernization through 2030. The agreement establishes a joint working group to analyze Kazakhstan's ICT sector and propose solutions for upgrading digital infrastructure.

This strategic partnership encompasses 5G deployment, cloud technologies, and artificial intelligence development. Huawei's solutions currently cover approximately 85% of Kazakhstan's population through over 15,000 mobile base stations. The MOU signals deepening state-level collaboration as Kazakhstan pursues its goal of completing 5G rollout by end of 2025, with over 450 billion tenge invested by mobile operators.

Procuring Entity	**Ministry of Digital Development, Innovation and Aerospace Industry of Kazakhstan**
Supplier	**Huawei Technologies Kazakhstan**
Year/Period	**July 2025**
Deal Value	**Not publicly disclosed**
Source of Financing	**Government strategic partnership**
Object of Procurement	**MOU for digital infrastructure modernization 2025-2030; joint working group for ICT sector analysis; 5G, cloud, and AI development roadmap**

19. How Kazakhstan Plans Partnership with Huawei — https://dknews.kz/en/articles-in-english/366184-partnership-with-huawei-how-kazakhstan-plans-to

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan exhibits one of the highest concentrations of Chinese telecommunications infrastructure in Central Asia. Notable projects include government surveillance systems provided free of charge by Chinese state enterprises.

Bishkek Facial Recognition System

In March 2019, the Bishkek facial recognition system was provided[20] free of charge by CEIEC, a Chinese state-owned defense and electronics contractor. The system was officially inaugurated on October 31, 2019, by President Sooronbay Jeenbekov. The project includes 60 CCTV cameras, with 20 equipped with facial recognition capabilities, and a centralized police command center.

CEIEC's involvement is particularly significant given the company's track record of providing similar surveillance systems to authoritarian governments in Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Angola. Human Rights Watch raised concerns[21] about the system's potential for rights violations, particularly given the absence of data protection legislation in Kyrgyzstan and the lack of transparency regarding data sharing arrangements with China.

Procuring Entity	**Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kyrgyzstan**
Supplier	**China National Electronics Import & Export Corporation (CEIEC)**
Year/Period	**2019**
Deal Value	**US$60 million**
Source of Financing	**Chinese government grant / in-kind provision**
Object of Procurement	**60 CCTV cameras (20 with facial recognition); police command center; monitoring infrastructure**

China-Kyrgyzstan AI Cooperation Center

During the Second China-Central Asia Summit in 2024, China and Kyrgyzstan signed[22] an agreement to establish a cooperation center in the field of artificial intelligence. This follows the pattern of similar initiatives announced with Tajikistan during the same summit.

The AI cooperation center aims to develop human capital with transferable AI-related skills applicable across government, academia, and industry. This approach demonstrates Kyrgyzstan deepening technological ties with China.

Procuring Entity	**Government of Kyrgyzstan**
Supplier	**Chinese government / technology partners**
Year/Period	**2024 (Second China-Central Asia Summit)**
Deal Value	**Not publicly disclosed**
Source of Financing	**Bilateral government agreement**
Object of Procurement	**Establishment of AI cooperation center; capacity building and training initiatives; technology transfer framework**

20. Interior Ministry of Kyrgyzstan Cooperates with Chinese Company — https://24.kg/english/127757_Interior_Ministry_of_Kyrgyzstan_cooperates_with_Chinese_company_CEIEC/
21. Sadyr Japarov Holds Talks with Xi Jinping on Sidelines of Summit in Astana — https://24.kg/english/333034_Sadyr_Japarov_holds_talks_with_Xi_Jinping_on_sidelines_of_summit_in_Astana/
22. Facial Recognition Deal in Kyrgyzstan Poses Risks to Rights — https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/11/15/facial-recognition-deal-kyrgyzstan-poses-risks-rights

Tajikistan

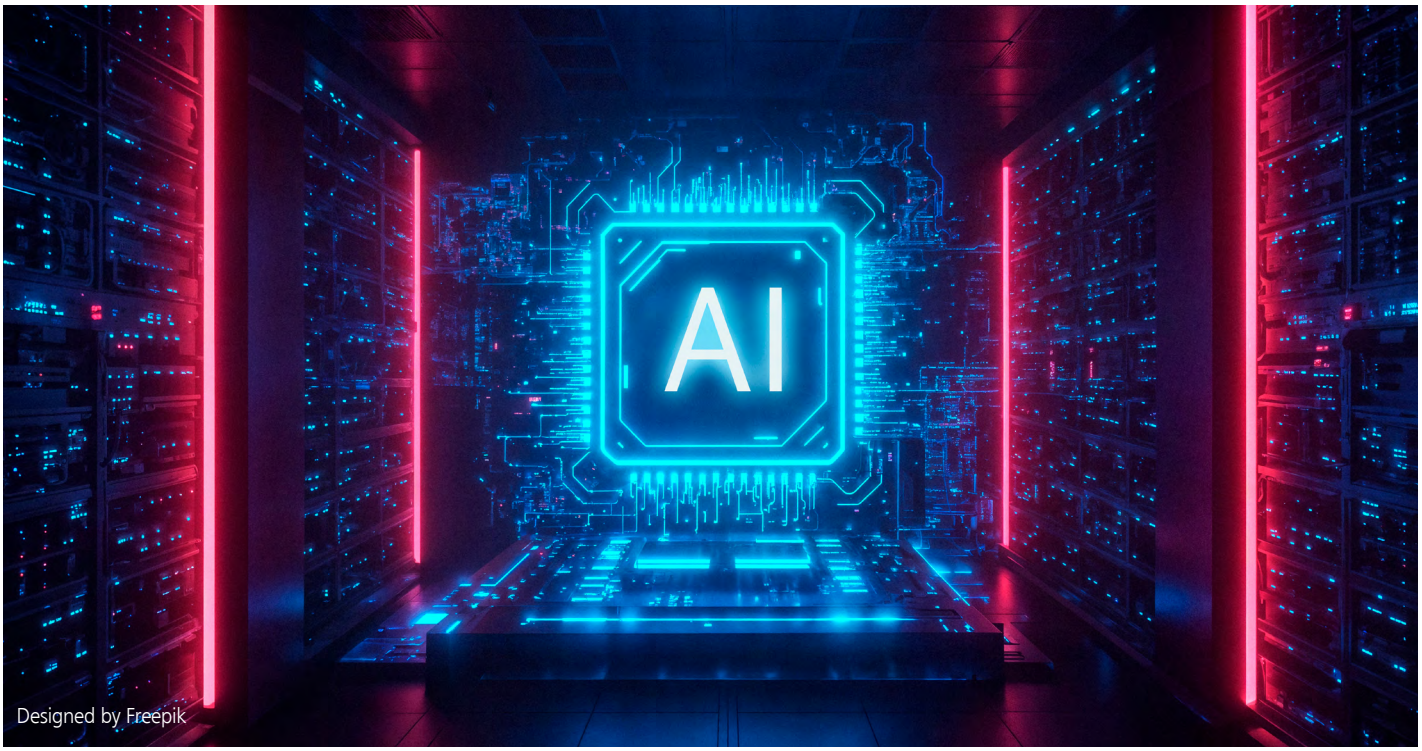
Tajikistan represents one of the earliest and most comprehensive deployments of Chinese digital infrastructure in Central Asia, with projects dating back to the early 2000s.

Strategic Cooperation with China

In December 2025, Tajikistan and China signed a memorandum[23] of understanding on cooperation in the development of informatization.

The agreement was concluded between the Communications Service under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and Jinda Anbang (Beijing) Technology Development Co., Ltd of the People's Republic of China. The memorandum is intended to serve as a foundation for mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of information and communication technologies. It focuses on modernizing digital infrastructure and supporting the development of the digital economy in the Republic of Tajikistan.

The MoU was signed within the framework of the comprehensive strategic partnership between Tajikistan and China at a new stage of development. It aligns with the objectives of Tajikistan's National Development Strategy through 2030, as well as China's international One Belt, One Road initiative.



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China-Tajikistan AI Cooperation Initiative

At the Second China-Central Asia Summit in 2024, China and Tajikistan announced[24] an initiative comparable to the AI cooperation center established with Kyrgyzstan. This capacity-building agreement aims to develop local AI expertise and reduce dependency on external technology providers.

Given that Huawei already serves over 85% of Tajikistan's population through its telecommunications infrastructure, the AI cooperation initiative represents an expansion of China's digital footprint from hardware infrastructure into software capabilities and human capital development.

23. Tajikistan signs MoU with China on Cooperation in Informatization Development — https://eng.khovar.tj/2025/12/tajikistan-china-signs-mou-on-cooperation-in-informatization-development/
24. AI Council Tajikistan Presents National AI Strategy and Common AI Grid Initiative at SCO Forum in Tianjin — https://aic.tj/en/news/china

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan's highly restricted information environment limits verifiable documentation of Chinese digital infrastructure projects. Available evidence indicates significant Huawei involvement in mobile telecommunications and railway communications.

Railway Telecommunications System

Huawei's first contracts[25] with the Turkmenistan MRT date back to 2012. Chinese system integrator Jiangsu Guotai chose Huawei as the sole supplier of GSM-R, Synchronous Digital Hierarchy (SDH) fiber optic network, data communications, and telephone systems for the 590-km Ashgabat-Bereket-Turkmenbashi line. The fifth contract with Turkmenistan was awarded to Huawei by the Turkmenistan Ministry of Railway Transport (MRT) to deploy its digital Global System for Mobile Communications-Railway (GSM-R) solution. Huawei assisted in the construction of a modern digital ground-to-train railway communication network for the Bereket-Gudrolum railway project. It included a Multi-Service Transport Platform (MSTP) transmission backbone, telepresence facilities for station offices, a high-end data storage solution, station public address systems, and telephony exchanges.

In addition, Huawei secured[26] a contract to deploy GSM-R (railway-specific GSM) telecommunications for a strategic 288-kilometer section of Turkmenistan's north-south rail corridor linking Kazakhstan to Iran. The project covers the Chilmammet-Buzhun section, implemented in partnership with ASPMK-519 and KEC International.

This railway represents critical infrastructure for Belt and Road Initiative connectivity between Central Asia, Iran, and beyond. Huawei's provision of railway telecommunications positions Chinese technology at the heart of trans-regional logistics infrastructure.

Procuring Entity	**Turkmenistan Railways / ASPMK-519**
Supplier	**Huawei Technologies (with KEC International)**
Year/Period	**Contract awarded (implementation ongoing)**
Deal Value	**Not publicly disclosed**
Source of Financing	**State railway infrastructure investment**
Object of Procurement	**GSM-R network for 288km Chilmammet-Buzhun section of north-south rail corridor (Kazakhstan-Iran link)**

Fixed Telephone Network Expansion

In 2022, Huawei signed a contract[27] with Turkmenistan to improve the country's fixed-line network coverage. It envisioned purchase of equipment, software, licenses, transportation, installation, commissioning, and technical support to improve the fixed-line network coverage in the country's regions and city of Ashgabat.

Procuring Entity	**Transport and Communications Agency under Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan**
Supplier	**Huawei Technologies**
Year/Period	**2022**
Deal Value	**Not publicly disclosed**
Source of Financing	**State budget**
Object of Procurement	**Equipment, software, and licenses for fixed telephone network expansion; transportation, installation, and commissioning; technical support; digital telephone exchanges in Velayats and Ashgabat**

25. Huawei wins fifth Turkmenistan contract — https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=8e068093155f7e6857a338a0f8eaa2eaaf00207029267305d87834d38ed6c35eJmltdHM9MTc2ODUyMTYwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=032cc07c-c16f-6479-2d6b-d4e0c027659e&psq=Huawei+Chilmammet+-+Buzhun+turkmenistan&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly9lLWZpbGUuaHVhd2VpLmNvbS9-L21lZGlhL0VCRy9Eb3dubG9hZF9GaWxlcy9QdWJsaWNhdGlvbnMvZ-W4vSUNUMTYvSHVhd2VpJTIwV2lucyUyMEZpZnRoJTIwVHVya21lbmlzdGFuJTIwQ29udHJhY3QucGRm

26. Huawei wins Turkmenistan Railways telecoms contract — https://www.railwaygazette.com/technology/huawei-wins-turkmenistan-railways-telecoms-contract/46853.article

27. Huawei won large network contract from Turkmenistan — https://www.huaweicentral.com/huawei-won-large-network-contract-from-turkmenistan/

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan illustrates the comprehensive nature of China's digital infrastructure approach in Central Asia. At the June 2025 China-Central Asia summit in Astana, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev announced[28] Uzbekistan's support for constructing a "Digital Highway" - fiber-optic communication infrastructure along major energy and transport routes within the Central Asia-China corridor. According to Mirziyoyev, this infrastructure "will lay the groundwork for expanding online commerce, smart logistics, cloud technologies, and artificial intelligence."

The Digital Highway concept extends beyond simple internet connectivity. Mirziyoyev proposed launching a multilateral trade platform titled the "Electronic Silk Road" under China's Digital Belt and Road initiative, establishing a Regional Center for Industrial Standardization and Certification in Tashkent, and adopting a roadmap for technology transfer. These initiatives would effectively make Chinese digital standards and systems the default framework for regional trade infrastructure.

Huawei explicitly markets its Smart Customs Solution[29] as achieving "comprehensive digital supervision capability" over goods, vehicles, enterprises, and places - integrating AI, big data, and cloud computing into what Huawei calls a "digital foundation for cloud-network-edge-device integration."

The significance becomes clear when considering Uzbekistan's position as Central Asia's most populous country and a critical node for overland trade routes. If Uzbekistan's customs, logistics platforms, and telecommunications infrastructure all operate on Chinese-designed systems following Chinese standards, it creates a template that other Central Asian states may adopt - particularly when packaged with Chinese financing that makes these comprehensive solutions affordable for governments seeking rapid modernization.

Notably, while US Government completed training for 287 Uzbek customs employees in IT skills in 2025, the Western approach focuses on capacity building rather than providing the integrated technology-financing-implementation-standards packages that characterize Chinese offers.

National Data Center and Government Cloud

Huawei plays a significant role in shaping the country's government systems: Uzbekistan's National Data Center, launched[30] in August 2022, is built on Huawei Cloud Stack technology and serves as the backbone of the national e-government infrastructure. The TIER III certified facility runs all electronic government services across the country, with 725 public services accessed by 4 million users nationwide.

The Huawei Cloud Stack provides[31] on-premises deployment keeping data within Uzbekistan, multi-level virtual data centers matching government organizational structure, and automated operations requiring only 2-3 engineers to maintain the 600-node platform. At the Huawei Technology Carnival in May 2025, Huawei presented its RASTM framework for AI-powered data centers to support Uzbekistan's $1.5 billion AI Development Strategy 2030, signed in October 2024.

Procuring Entity	**Digital Government Project Management Center / Ministry of Digital Technologies of Uzbekistan**
Supplier	**Huawei Cloud Stack**
Year/Period	**2022 (launched), ongoing expansion through 2025**
Deal Value	**Part of broader digital infrastructure investment**
Source of Financing	**State budget / bilateral cooperation**
Object of Procurement	**National Data Center (2.1 MW, TIER III certified); Huawei Cloud Stack for e-government; 725 public services for 4 million users; automated O&M for 600-node cloud platform**

28. Uzbekistan supports China–Central Asia connectivity with new energy and tech initiatives — https://kun.uz/en/news/2025/06/17/uzbekistan-supports-china-central-asia-connectivity-with-new-energy-and-tech-initiatives
29. Huawei Smart Customs Solution: Making Cross-Border Trade Easier and Secured — https://e.huawei.com/en/news/ebg/2021/huawei-smart-customs-solution
30. Uzbekistan Government Cloud. The Uzbekistan Government Leveraged Huawei Cloud Stack to establish a Secure Reliable National Government Cloud — https://www.huaweicloud.com/intl/en-us/cases/uzbekistangovernmentcloud.html
31. Huawei Outlines Vision for AI-Powered Data Centers to Support Uzbekistan's Digital Transformation — https://e.huawei.com/en/news/2025/solutions/data-center/ai-powered-data-centers

Mobius state-owned mobile operator network modernization

In September 2025, ZTE announced[32] that it had completed the initial phase of network modernization for state-owned mobile operator Mobiuz in the Karakalpakstan and Khorezm regions. The project deployed advanced equipment creating future-proof network infrastructure serving these underserved western regions of Uzbekistan.

According to ZTE Uzbekistan CEO Wang Guangdong, the partnership will continue with subsequent phases to further enhance connectivity across the country. Mobiuz CEO Sobir Aripov emphasized the project's developmental impact on education, healthcare, and business access to new markets.

Procuring Entity	**Mobiuz (State-owned mobile operator)**
Supplier	**ZTE Corporation**
Year/Period	**2024-2025 (Phase 1 completed)**
Deal Value	**Part of multi-phase modernization program**
Source of Financing	**State telecommunications investment**
Object of Procurement	**Network infrastructure modernization in Karakalpakstan and Khorezm regions; future-proof network infrastructure deployment**

Building a Modular Intelligent Computing Center (MICC)

In 2025, A Chinese AI firm LinkWise has partnered[33] with Uzbekistan's Ministry of Digital Technologies and two Chinese tech companies to build a Modular Intelligent Computing Center (MICC) in Central Asia.

The initiative is a collaboration between LinkWise, the Uzbek government, China Electronic Technology Development Co, and Shanghai Oriental Credits Industrial Development Co.

It is intended to be a deployable and flexible "AI brain," providing crucial processing power to assist Uzbekistan's objectives in digital government, smart cities, and industrial modernization.

Procuring Entity	**Ministry of Digital Technologies of Uzbekistan**
Supplier	**LinkWise/, China Electronic Technology Development Co/ Shanghai Oriental Credits Industrial Development Co.**
Year/Period	**July 2025 (ongoing)**
Deal Value	**Not publicly disclosed**
Source of Financing	**Government-corporate collaboration**
Object of Procurement	**2 large-scale data centers, each with a capacity of 300 megawatts, in Uzbekistan's Bukhara and Surkhandarya regions; Modular Intelligent Computing Center**

32. Mobiuz and ZTE drive digital transformation in Uzbekistan with successful network modernization project — https://www.zte.com.cn/global/about/news/Mobiuz-and-ZTE-drive-digital-transformation-in-Uzbekistan-with-successful-network-modernization-project.html
33. Shanghai AI firm to build 'digital brains' in Uzbekistan — https://www.citynewsservice.cn/articles/shanghaidaily/news/shanghai-ai-firm-to-build-digital-brains-in-uzbekistan-pk8aglen

Western Strategy: Trusted Technologies for Corridor Countries


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Western countries cannot afford to cede the digital component of the Middle Corridor to a geopolitical rival. If the West wants to compete rather than simply prohibit, it needs offers on par with Chinese package deals: technology plus financing plus implementation plus training plus cybersecurity standards.

Here, an analogy with Clean Network - the U.S. State Department initiative from Trump's first administration led by Keith Krach, U.S. Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment, aimed at forming a trusted digital ecosystem and displacing "untrusted" suppliers from critical segments - is appropriate. The mechanics apply to the Middle Corridor: not slogans, but a set of practical tools - from credit lines to certification and solution compatibility.

The West shouldn't start from scratch. Raw material and industrial agreements are already emerging that logically connect with the corridor as an export route. The EU and Kazakhstan signed a memorandum on strategic partnership[34] for sustainable raw materials, batteries, and hydrogen chains, followed by a 2023-2024 roadmap. This directly acknowledges that Kazakhstan is a node in future critical mineral supply chains for Europe.

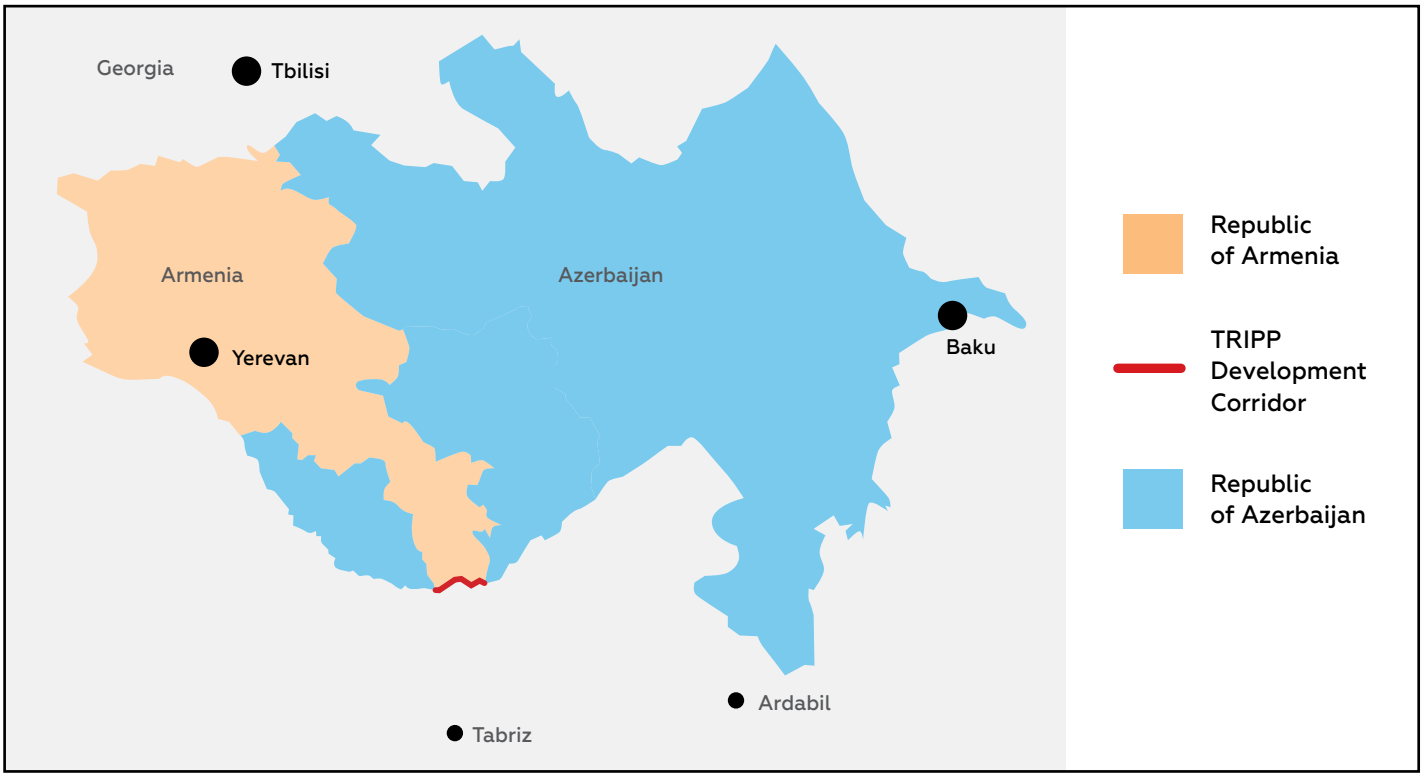
In September 2024, the United States and Uzbekistan signed a memorandum on critical minerals partnership[35] aimed at diversifying global supply chains and stimulating investment. The agreement focuses on developing Uzbekistan's substantial reserves[36] of rare earth elements, uranium, and other strategic minerals essential for clean energy technologies and advanced manufacturing.

At the C5+1 summit in Washington in 2025, an additional U.S.-Kazakhstan memorandum on critical minerals was signed, underscoring the strategic significance of Central Asian mineral resources for the United States. These agreements are not merely about securing raw materials - they represent Washington's recognition that stable, secure transportation routes are essential to make these partnerships viable.

Extending the Clean Network logic: if United States and Europe want to receive Central Asian critical resources reliably and predictably, they need to care not only about raw material contracts but also about the security and transparency of the transport-digital framework through which these flows move - and the Middle Corridor is one of the most politically acceptable diversification routes. This digital supply resilience must be established now, before China builds its "digital fortress" in the Middle Corridor.

34. Strategic Partnership between the European Union and Kazakhstan on sustainable raw materials, batteries and renewable hydrogen value chains — https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/news/strategic-partnership-between-european-union-and-kazakhstan-sustainable-raw-materials-batteries-and-2022-11-08_en
35. United States and Uzbekistan Sign MOU on Critical Minerals Partnership — https://uz.usembassy.gov/mou-to-strengthen-cooperation-on-critical-minerals/
36. Uzbekistan, US companies ink minerals deals — https://www.mining.com/uzbekistan-us-companies-ink-minerals-deals/

The TRIPP Alternative: Bypassing Georgia



The corridor landscape became more complex in August 2025 when the United States brokered a landmark agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan.[37] The deal established the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity - known as TRIPP - granting the U.S. exclusive 99-year development rights to operate a transit corridor through Armenia's southern Syunik province. This 43-kilometer route would connect Azerbaijan proper with its Nakhchivan exclave and then Turkey, creating a second land link to the Caspian Sea and Central Asia that bypasses Georgia entirely.

The TRIPP agreement represents a significant geopolitical shift. For Turkey, it offers an alternative to the sole existing route through Georgia - the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, which has underperformed expectations due to Georgia's mountainous terrain and aging rail infrastructure. For the United States, it establishes direct presence in the South Caucasus and aims to counter Russian, Iranian, and Chinese influence[38] in the region. The U.S. would sublease the land to a consortium developing rail, oil and gas pipelines, fiber optic lines, and possibly electricity transmission along the corridor.

However, TRIPP faces substantial implementation challenges. Russia and Iran view the American presence as an encroachment[39] on their spheres of influence, and both can be expected to resist its success. Questions remain about customs procedures, ground-level security, and whether Washington will maintain commitment over the 99-year term. The existing Georgia route, despite its limitations, remains operational while TRIPP exists primarily on paper - Turkey only broke ground on its connection segment in late 2025, with a construction timeline of four to five years.

The emergence of TRIPP illustrates how corridor competition extends beyond digital infrastructure into physical geography. Multiple routes create resilience but also fragmentation. For the West's critical minerals strategy, this means hedging: supporting both the proven Georgia route and the potential TRIPP alternative, while ensuring that digital systems across all routes remain interoperable and secure.

37. Trump clinches Armenia-Azerbaijan deal — along with some personal branding and more Nobel Peace Prize talk — https://edition.cnn.com/2025/08/08/politics/strategic-armenia-azerbaijan-corridor-named-after-trump
38. Trump's Road TRIPP Delivers a Deal — https://cepa.org/article/trumps-road-tripp-delivers-a-peace-deal/
39. Iran rejects planned transit corridor outlined in Armenia-Azerbaijan pact — https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/22/iran-rejects-planned-transit-corridor-outlined-in-armenia-azerbaijan-pact

Policy Recommendations: Four Practical Directions

1. **Financial package:** Credit lines through development banks (EBRD, EIB, DFC, World Bank), grants for implementing trusted government technology solutions in customs, ports, and railways - following the principle of "solution purchase plus service plus training plus cyber certification."

2. **Unified compatibility standards:** Common protocols for APIs, data formats, eCMR/eTIR systems, and port community system integrations - so corridor countries can change suppliers without falling into a "digital trap" – trusted cybersecurity solutions deployment and critical data storage in trusted clouds and datacenters

3. **Regional digitization roadmap:** Following World Bank recommendations for end-to-end tracking, unified management systems, and real-time data exchange across the corridor.

4. **Political trust framework:** A diplomatic structure along the lines of a "Trusted Digital Middle Corridor" - essentially adapting Clean Network for transport-customs infrastructure and data.

Conclusion: The New Fault Line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The Middle Corridor has already become a strategic route. The question now is whether it will also become a digital system controlled by trusted standards, or transform into a digital dependency that can be monetized into Chinese political influence. This is a new fault line in Eurasian great power competition - one where the battle is fought not with armies but with APIs, data standards, and digital platforms. The West's response will determine whether the corridor becomes a bridge or a chokepoint.

StrategEast
1900 K Street, NW
Washington, D. C., 20006
U.S.
office@strategeast.org
www.StrategEast.org