

**Kukeyeva F.<sup>1</sup>, Zhekenov D.<sup>2</sup>, Dyussebayev D.<sup>3</sup>,  
Ordabayev A.<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>professor, International Relations and the World Economy Department, e-mail: fturar@mail.ru

<sup>2</sup>PhD, associate professor, Chair of International Relations and World Economy,  
Department of International Relations, e-mail: duman.zhekenov@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup>PhD student, e-mail: ddk74@mail.ru

<sup>4</sup>PhD student, e-mail: assetorda@gmail.com

al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan, Almaty

**CENTRAL ASIAN TRANSPORT CORRIDORS ISSUE  
IN THE SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE**

The article describes the main views of domestic and foreign experts on the development of transport corridors in Central Asia. The relevance of the problem is explained by the expansion of transport infrastructure in the Central Asian region within the framework of both national and international programs. The participation of Central Asian countries allows to solve a number of problems through the realization of the country's transit potential. However, in the process of implementing infrastructure projects, regional states face risks that require a correlation of transport policies with the national interests of the countries. This explains the wide scientific interest in this issue. The expert community is increasingly focusing on issues of transport policy of states and international cooperation on transport projects. Despite the large number of works on various aspects of international and regional transport corridors, in the scientific literature there are no works of a complex nature, studying the transport corridors of Central Asia. This also applies to historiographic research.

**Key words:** transport corridors, Central Asia, transit potential, expert community, national interests, risks.

Кукеева Ф.<sup>1</sup>, Жекенов Д.<sup>2</sup>, Дюсебаев Д.<sup>3</sup>, Ордабаев Ә.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>профессор, халықаралық қатынастар және әлемдік экономика кафедрасы, e-mail: fturar@mail.ru

<sup>2</sup>PhD докторы, халықаралық қатынастар және әлемдік экономика кафедрасының  
доцент м.а., e-mail: duman.zhekenov@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup>PhD студенті, e-mail: ddk74@mail.ru

<sup>4</sup>PhD студент, e-mail: assetorda@gmail.com

әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті, Қазақстан, Алматы қ.

**Қазіргі ғылыми зерттеулердегі Орталық Азия көлік дәлізі мәселелері**

Мақалада Орталық Азияның транспорттық дәліз дамуына отандық және шетел сарапшылардың негізгі көзқарастары қарастырылған. Орталық Азияның көлік дәлізі мәселесі шетелдік зерттеушілердің еңбектерінде белсенді түрде, жан-жақты қарастырыла бастады. Қаралатын мәселенің өзектілігі ұлттық және де халықаралық бағдарламалар шеңберінде Орталық Азия аймағындағы транспорттық инфрақұрылымның кеңеюімен түсіндіріледі. Орталық Азия мемлекеттерінің қатысуы мемлекеттің транзиттік потенциалын жүзеге асыру арқылы бірқатар мәселелерді шешуге мүмкіндік береді. Алайда инфрақұрылымды жобаларды жүзеге асыру барысында аймақтық мемлекеттерде ұлттық мүдденің транспорттық саясатпен өзара байланысты қажет ететін тәуекелмен түйісіп қалу қаупі бар. Бұл дәл осы мәселеге деген ғылыми қызығушылықты түсіндіреді. Сарапшылар қауымдастығы транспорттық жобалардағы халықаралық ынтымақтастыққа және мемлекеттің транспорттық саясатына көбірек көңіл бөлуде. Халықаралық және аймақтық деңгейдегі транспорттық коридорлар бойынша әр түрлі аспектілер жағынан жұмыстардың үлкен санына қарамастан, ғылыми әдебиетте Орталық Азияның

транспорттық коридоры саяси ғылымға тым шектеулі ғылыми қызығушылықты білдіреді. Қазіргі ғалымдардың ғылыми еңбектері көтеріліп отырған мәселенің көлеңкелі тұстарын ашуға кешенді көмектер бере алады.

**Түйін сөздер:** транспорттық коридор, Орталық Азия, транзиттік потенциал, сарапшылар қауымдастығы, ұлттық мүдде, қауіп-қатер.

Кукеева Ф.<sup>1</sup>, Жекенов Д.<sup>2</sup>, Дюсебаев Д.<sup>3</sup>, Ордабаев А.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>профессор, кафедра международных отношений и мировой экономики, e-mail: fturar@mail.ru

<sup>2</sup>PhD доктор, и.о. доцента кафедры международных отношений и мировой экономики факультета международных отношений, e-mail: duman.zhekenov@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup>PhD студент, e-mail: ddk74@mail.ru

<sup>4</sup>PhD студент, e-mail: assetorda@gmail.com

Казахский национальный университет им. аль-Фараби, Казахстан, г. Алматы

### **Проблемы транспортных коридоров Центральной Азии в современных исследованиях**

В статье рассмотрены основные взгляды отечественных и зарубежных экспертов на развитие транспортных коридоров Центральной Азии. Актуальность рассматриваемой проблематики объясняется расширением транспортной инфраструктуры в центральноазиатском регионе в рамках как национальных, так и международных программ. Участие стран Центральной Азии позволяет решать целый ряд проблем через реализацию транзитного потенциала страны. Однако в процессе реализации инфраструктурных проектов региональные государства сталкиваются с рисками, которые требуют корреляции транспортных политик с национальными интересами страны. Это объясняет широкий научный интерес к данной проблематике. Экспертное сообщество все больше внимание уделяет вопросам транспортной политики государств и международному сотрудничеству в транспортных проектах. Несмотря на большое количество работ по различным аспектам транспортных коридоров международного и регионального масштаба, в научной литературе транспортные коридоры Центральной Азии представляли собой весьма ограниченное поле научного интереса для политических наук. Работы аналитиков чаще носят описательный характер. Они описывают состояние современной транспортной сети в Центральной Азии, проекты, предлагаемые зарубежными партнерами, и проблемы, с которыми сталкивается регион при реализации этих проектов. Однако в работах нет перспективных сценариев и анализа ситуации, которая может возникнуть в ближайшем будущем на основе существующих фактов.

**Ключевые слова:** транспортные коридоры, Центральная Азия, транзитный потенциал, экспертное сообщество, национальный интерес, риски.

### **Introduction**

Expansion and improvement of the transport infrastructure in the Central Asian region has a number of positive aspects for the sustainable development of the region and for attraction non-regional economic partners.

In Central Asia, there is an extensive infrastructure network, and the region is located at the crossroads of several international highways and rail routes. However, the infrastructure network cannot fully satisfy all the transit needs of the region. In Central Asia there is being implemented a number of foreign concepts, promoting the development of transport corridors, such as, for example, the «New Silk Road» and «Economic Belt of the Silk Road.» In turn, the Central Asian states apply their own efforts for the development of transport infrastructure. Currently, each of the five republics of the region has adopted the state program aimed at the development of the transport sector, which should allow them to get an

access to the international trade routes. However, the implementation of these plans can be hindered by a whole range of internal and external factors. On the one hand, there is a lack of the necessary infrastructure and legislation in this area, on the other hand – there appear escalated contradictions between the external forces. However, despite all the contradictions, the Central Asian countries follow accepted programs, aimed at the development of transport.

In foreign and domestic political science, more and more attention is paid to the transport policy of states and international cooperation in transport projects. At the same time, the development of international transport corridors in the global economy, their role as a «circulatory system» of the emerging in the world integration partnership spaces, have not yet been adequately considered in scientific circles. In the scientific literature, the role of international transport corridors is studied by various sciences, the problem itself is at the interface:

political, economic and sociological disciplines. At the same time, the subject matter of this research is political science, although data from adjacent fields of knowledge were used.

### Methods

*The purpose of the article* is the analysis of the scientific literature about the development of transport corridors and transit potential of the Central Asian countries in order to identify the influence of external players on this development.

*Methods and theoretical approaches in study the public diplomacy.* An analysis of the literature on the stated topic shows that there is still no unified theoretical and methodological approach to the problem of the transport corridors formation and functioning. The neo-functional approach allows to analyze the possibilities to achieve peace and security through cooperation and rapprochement in all geographic regions of the world through the development of transport infrastructure. Proponents of this approach international argue that technical cooperation can be beneficial to states without any violation of the national sovereignty of states (Philippe, Schmitter, Ernst, Haas, 2008).

The theory of geopolitics as a scientific direction uses both different methodological approaches and specific methods and research techniques. Among them are the methods of geographical, political and related sciences. The choice is dictated by research objectives.

The stated issues will be analyzed within the framework of the realism neoclassical theory. As part of its key thesis that the main system variable is the distribution of material capabilities between states. This variable determines both their place in the system and the strategy of behavior towards each other. In the case of China, this is the use of the periphery for the implementation of its geo-economic plans. For Central Asian states this is an opportunity to develop transit potential by forming an alliance with a stronger economic partner.

### Foreign and domestic studies on transport corridors of Central Asia

*Transport corridors in the context of globalization.* Contemporary world politics is under the constant influence of two processes: globalization and regionalization. Economies are being combined within the globalization processes and protect their interests through regional associations. The control over markets and ways of goods and raw materials

delivery becomes a cause of political confrontations between great regional and non-regional powers, as well as various integration associations. In this situation transport begins to take increasing importance.

Transport is one of the major components of the monetary base of the economy of each country. It has long been considered to be the engine of progress. Man used any means at hand for the purpose of transportation of goods and people. In the modern world transport services provide the increase of the efficiency of social production, the normal functioning of the economy. They create the conditions for a rational distribution of the productive forces of the country, considering the most suitable approach to the areas of production and consumption of sources of raw materials enterprises in different sectors of the economy, which allows people to develop such industries as agriculture, trade and others. Important role is played by transport in the resolution of social problems, in providing cultural, business and tourist trips of the population, as well as in the development of cultural exchange in the country and abroad. The role of transportation in the modern world is so enormous that the state puts its development on one of the priority places.

The basic idea of any transport corridor – is the concentration of transport, cargo and passenger traffic on the highways, which have the maximum bandwidth and a high level of arrangement. The principle of the creating a transport corridor itself is known for a long time. However, the modern systems of transport corridors have been actively established on all continents since the 1970-s, as a tool for trade and development in the era of the globalization of the economy. The main purpose of any transit corridor – is to ensure the conditions for the unimpeded and cost-effective movement of vehicles in a certain direction. In this case there are solved, mainly transport and technological problems connected with the construction and modernization of the means of communication, terminals, information systems and so on.

Central Asia, located at the junction of two continents, is a historical bridge between Europe and Asia. Historically, Central Asia has been considered to be a region, located at the crossroads between East and West, North and South. Constantly it is recognized the fact that this region is an important participant of trade and economic processes that take place between the countries of Europe and Asia. A huge influence on the development of the region has made the Great Silk Road, which runs

through Central Asia, because for centuries it has brought various goods and culture to the region. Today Central Asia is once again engaged in the development of the strategy for the improvement of transport infrastructure. Unimpeded movement from one point to another is necessary for the development and improvement of regional trade. The construction of highways and railways in the countries of the region and between them is a priority of the foreign policy. For this purposes in the countries of Central Asia there are being issued special national strategies and government programs aimed at the development of transport and communications. The states of the region recognize the increasing role of transport in the modern system of international relations and the importance of international transport corridors for the further sustainable development.

In order to assist national strategies of the Central Asian countries there are developed various international programs with the support of foreign countries. In the framework of these projects there is provided an expert support in the field of transport and trade. It promotes the facilitation of trade, the integration of the international transport corridors between countries, as well as solving problems in the transport and trading systems in the region. The projects also attract funding from international financial institutions, partners and private investors. Providing financial, scientific and technical support for the implementation of transport projects, regional and non-regional players are also seeking to obtain certain benefits, which include profits from the future operation of the international transport corridors; geopolitical interests in the region; the creation of stronger ties with the countries of Central Asia and so on.

The development of transport corridors in Central Asia corresponds to the Ninth Goal of the United Nations in the field of Sustainable Development. With the establishment and operation of routs in this region there will be created flexible infrastructure; transport corridors will contribute to inclusive and sustainable industrialization, encourage innovations and develop high-quality, reliable, stable and robust infrastructure, including regional and cross-border infrastructure. International transport corridors are created in order to support economic development and human well-being, with special emphasis on the real and equal access for all people.

*Expert opinion.* Various aspects of the development of transport corridors in Central Asia are the subject of research of historians, political scientists, economists and analysts worldwide. During the consideration of the degree of scientific

elaboration of the problem, the authors used the country- problembased approach.

A major role in the analysis and review of the problems and prospects of the development of transport corridors is given to American academia. The particular interest in the study of Central Asia appeared in the US expert community with the creation by the Director of the Institute of Central Asia and the Caucasus, Professor Frederick Starr, «Greater Central Asia» project (Frederick Starr, 2005). F. Starr in his work proposed a scenario that should be directed to the military-strategic and geopolitical union of Central Asia and Afghanistan. In the framework of the geopolitical unification there has been envisaged the development of the region's transport network which would link Afghanistan with other republics of Central Asia. Thus, the work of Starr had practical and recommendation character. On the diplomatic level, US officials began discussing the project with the Heads of the Central Asian states, which is a proof that the Central Asian region is in the scope of US geopolitical interests. This fact is indicated in the work of another American political scientist – Zbigniew Brzezinski's «The Grand Chessboard» (Brzezinski, 1998).

It can be concluded that in most cases, the problem of transport corridors is considered by the US researchers in terms of geopolitical interests in the region, with the establishment of concrete and practical programs and projects. However, some analysts are paying great attention to the analysis and review of the state of the road network of post-Soviet countries and the problems associated with its reconstruction and maintenance. For example, an economist at the US Department of Justice, Director of Economic Research of the antimonopoly control of the Ministry of Justice of the United States, Russell Pittman in his work «Railway reform in the former Soviet space: not quick progress,» considered the current state of the road network in Central Asia, inherited from the Soviet Union (Pittman, 2013). He points to the problems faced by countries in the region and the reasons for the slow development of transport infrastructure. Thus, it can be concluded that the works of American researchers and analysts are diverse in nature – on the one hand, they include theoretical consideration and analysis of Central Asian transport infrastructure. On the other hand – they carry practical plans and projects for the modernization and development of the region's transport network with the further creation of transport corridors.

The issues of the development of transport corridors are also analyzed in other countries. In

the foreign historiography there is a certain number of works devoted to the subject, among them the work of Ali ResulUsul, Director of the Center for Strategic Studies of the Turkish Republic, «Eurasian transport corridors – a new way of cooperation: the geopolitical and economic benefits» (Ali ResulUsul, 2015: 26-29). In this paper, he analyses a variety of international initiatives in the field of transport development in Eurasia, such as the American strategy of «New Silk Road», the Chinese program «One Belt – one way» and so on. At the same time the analyst provides a detailed evaluation of these strategies, and shows the attitude of the Turkish Republic to the projects. This work is of interest in terms of the analysis of foreign policies.

The research of problems and issues of the development of transport corridors in Central Asia is currently becoming popular in the academic environment of China, because the country has a major interest in the creation of stronger ties with the region by highways and railways. One of the researchers in this field is Sun Li – deputy director of the Institute of Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Professor, with his work «The Economic Belt of the Great Silk Road – together to build a bright future» (Sun Li, 2015: 5-12).

In this work, a lot of attention is paid to the analysis of the Chinese initiative for the construction of transport corridors in Central Asia. Additionally the researcher noted the characteristics of China's foreign policy in the field of transport cooperation. In this paper was indicated the fact that the Chinese initiative is extremely beneficial not only for the Chinese partners, but especially for the countries of Central Asia. Another hallmark of the work of Sun Li is the emphasis on the interface between the Chinese initiative and internal policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan. This fact demonstrates an active policy of China to develop closer ties with the region. Thus, the Chinese historiography is analytical in nature, aimed at demonstrating the current Chinese policy on rapprochement with the countries of Central Asia in the context of the development of transport and communications.

The issues of the development of transport corridors in Central Asia are also studied by Iranian analyst. For example, the Director of the Central Asia and Caucasus Institute for Political and International Studies at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran Eradzh Elahi in his work «Transport corridors of Iran as a factor of the economic integration of the region» pays a lot of attention to the development

of Iran's relations with the republics of the region in the field of the development of transport corridors (Eradzh Elahi, 2015). In addition, the researcher pays attention to the current state of the region's road network and the fact that Iran's ties with Central Asia are at a low level due to the lack of high-quality roads. Based on these facts, the analyst provides a detailed description and describes future uses of the new road Kazakhstan – Turkmenistan – Iran. In addition Eradzh Elahi in his work refers to the specific advantages that get Iran and the Central Asian countries from the exploitation of the international corridor, focusing on the fact that through Iran it can be provided an access to seaports. Thus, the author, referring to the advantageous position of Iran, tries to prove that the operation of the international transport corridors on this route will be the most profitable and perspective.

The development of transport corridors in Central Asia is analyzed by Russian political scientists, historians, economists and analysts. The analysis of certain works allowed finding out and giving the definition of «transit potential of the country» and the criteria by which the country's transit potential is assessed. Some authors have quite different points of view on this issue and give their own definition and derive their laws related to the level of development of transport. So, A.M. Kudryavtsev – Employee of OJSC «Sberbank of Russia» and A.A. Tarasenko – the Head of training and retraining of personnel, Director of the Institute of training and retraining at Tyumen State Oil and Gas University in their joint work «The methodical approach to the evaluation of transport infrastructure of region» used a scientific approach (Kudryavtsev, Tarasenko, 2014). The authors derived a special mathematical formula by which it can be determined the level of the development of transport infrastructure in the region. In their approach, they used mostly the density of the transport network in the 1000 sq. km. At the same time, using the derived formula, it can be calculated not only the level of the development of transport infrastructure, but also the level of the development of other types of infrastructure.

Another approach to this issue was used in the work of analyst from the Group of experts, updating the Russian «Strategy – 2020» V.A. Veremeyev «Macroeconomic assessment of the railway infrastructure» (Veremeyev, 2011). In his work the author examines the pattern of the relationship between the development of infrastructure, public railway transport and macroeconomic indicator – GDP per capita. And according to the results of

his analysis it can be determined the level of the development and the use of transport infrastructure of the country depending on the level of GDP and the density of roads in the country.

At the same time, another Russian analyst, associate professor of Murmansk Technical University Y.V. Zadvorny in his work «The criteria for assessment of the development of transport infrastructure in the region» brings his own evaluation criteria (Zadvorny, 2011). However, they do not match the criteria that have been identified by other analysts, mentioned above, because Y.V. Zadvorny divides them into two categories: the criteria showing the characteristics of the transport (cost, the time of cargo transportation and so on); criteria, reflecting the activities of the transport complex, or a single economic entity as a whole (the share of service products in this market segment, quality performance indicators and so on).

According to the works of Russian political scientists and historians it can be analyzed the state of the transport infrastructure in Central Asia and considered foreign initiatives on transport development in the region, using an independent point of view and the statistical data of Russian universities and think tanks. In this context, particular value has the work of a leading researcher of the Sector of the Eurasian Regionalism of the Center for Post-Soviet Studies at the Institute of the Russian Academy of Economics, Doctor of Economics M.O. Turaeva «Transport infrastructure of Central Asia in the conditions of modern regionalization» (Turaeva, 2014). In her report there are examined regional trends of transport infrastructure development in the region, analyzed the major transport projects in the region with the help of various sources of funding and with the participation of foreign states. The data contained in the report, were used to analyze the current state of the transport network in Central Asia and for the analysis of projects of regional and non-regional powers in the development of transport corridors in the region.

The most Russian studies analyze the possibility of a politically and economically efficient conjunction of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Chinese initiative of the Silk Road Economic Belt. The EAEU and the SREB can successfully dock, despite the fact that their initial goals differ significantly. However, analysts do not exclude that Beijing's ambitious plans may conflict with Russia's integration projects. The effective conjunction of the Eurasian project and the Chinese global initiative BRI is hindered by «national egoism» and the lack of coordination between the members of the EAEU,

in particular, between the founding states of the integration association, Kazakhstan and Russia (Kazantseva, 2015).

Russian historiography includes work with completely different analytical point of views. Consideration of these points of view allowed the authors of the article to reveal the differences and similarities, and based on these indicators to highlight the definition of «transit potential» and to find out the criteria for the country's transit potential. In addition, based on the Russian historiography there were analyzed transport projects in the region with the participation of foreign states.

Problems of the transport development and the construction of transport corridors are also highlighted in the works of analysts from the republics of Central Asia. Experts from Kyrgyzstan Murat Suyunbaev in his work «Geopolitical peculiarities of Kyrgyzstan: internal and external aspects» (Suyunbaev, 2004) and A.K. Dolotbakova in the work «Improvement of logistics – the way to expand the scope of the Kyrgyz Republic tourism» (Dolotbakova, 2015) wrote that Kyrgyzstan and throughout the Central Asian region need to modernize and develop the transport system, as transport – is a basis of development of any country in the today world. Analysts generally focus attention on the problems of transport development in Kyrgyzstan, as in the mountainous country, where the terrain is a deterrent. However, during the analysis of the works it can be traced a common idea that the country seeks to overcome this problem and develops the transport network. Thus, the authors seek to demonstrate the fact that the entire region needs to develop transport and logistics network for further effective development of the economy and address the various global challenges.

The scientific work of T.I. Tohirov, the Tajik analyst at the Polytechnic Institute of Tajik Technical University named after Academician M. S. Osimi «The concept of the transit potential of the road transport system in the region» considers a transit capacity of the road transport system in the region, provides a brief description of some projects and a description of the strategy of Tajikistan in the field of development auto transport (Tohirov, 2014). In general, the work is more descriptive.

Specific attention to the problem of development of transport corridors is given in the works of analysts from Turkmenistan. For example, the employee of the Institute of Strategic Planning and Economic Development of Turkmenistan Natalia Ovezova in her works «Golden link» of the international North – South corridor» (Ovezova, 2014) and «Transport

route of North-South: the economic aspect of transit» (Ovezova, 2016) describes the prospective use of the transport corridor North – South, which passes through the territory of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Much attention is paid to the advantages that can be benefited by the countries of Central Asia during the operation of this route.

The Republic of Uzbekistan, as one of the main actors in transport corridors in Central Asia is also interested in this issue. The work of the employee of the Center for Geopolitical Expertise Ivan Alexandrov «Uzbekistan in the system of the Central Asian regional geopolitics» partially pays attention to Uzbekistan's participation in the development of the region's transport network (Alexandrov, 2003). In the work, the great attention is paid to the relations of the Republic with other countries of the region and geopolitical interests of Uzbekistan. Thus, basing on some aspects of this work, it is possible to draw conclusions about the role of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the development of transport corridors in Central Asia.

The works of analysts from Central Asia also describe the problems that are constraining factor for the development of transport corridors. For example, an independent expert from Tajikistan BakhtiyorSanginov in his work «The Ferghana factor and security in Central Asia» dwells on the geopolitical threats and internal problems of the region (Sanginov, 2013). Analysis of these factors leads to the conclusion that the existence of intra-regional conflict has a negative impact on transport corridors. In addition, there are questions about benefits from the operation of international routes. It is also a limiting factor in the development of highways. This issue is covered in the work of the correspondent of the German newspaper Deutsche Welle in Dushanbe GalimFaskhutdinov «Railways in Central Asia: which route is more profitable?»(Faskhutdinov, 2013).

Kazakh politicians, political scientists, historians and analysts also analyze the issue of transport corridors. Kazakhstan historiography is of great value in the study of the issues of development of transport corridors and regional transport infrastructure, as conceptualization of the problem first occurred in the State Program of infrastructure development «NurlyZhol» on 2015 – 2019 years, which was announced by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N. A. Nazarbayev in his Message to the people of Kazakhstan in November 2014 (State Program of infrastructure development «NurlyZhol», 2015). The first item of this program is the development of transport and logistics complex

in the country, since, under the terms of the strategy, on the basis of the transport complex will be based the economic development of Kazakhstan. Thus, the problem of transport was highlighted as a particularly urgent and requires special attention.

The conceptualization of the transport and transport infrastructure development issue has also been made in the Program of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan «Plan of Nation – 100 concrete steps, 5 institutional reforms» (Plan of Nation – 100 concrete steps, 5 institutional reforms, 2015). This program is the result of the analytical work aimed at studying the basic perspective directions of the development of the state, and is a set of specific transformations of various spheres of activity. The development of transport and communications is one of the most perspective and necessary steps for the future of industrialization and economic growth of the whole country.

Kazakh political scientists and analysts in their work often turn to the issue of the development of the region transport network and Kazakhstan in particular, as major issues of foreign policy that require careful consideration. For example, much attention is paid to this issue in the works of Sultan Akimbekov, especially in scientific articles «Choice of the year» (Akimbekov, 2015: 8), «Hard Times» (Akimbekov, 2015: 7-8) andsoon. In his paper «Anewtwistin Kazakhpolitics» (Akimbekov, 2014: 9) there is reviewed and analyzed the new economic policy of Kazakhstan «NurlyZhol» and foreign initiatives that are carried out under this program. S. Akimbekov in this paper emphasizes on the fact that the development of infrastructure, namely transport infrastructure is the long-term Investment in the development of any country. In this work there is determined the need for the development of transport and communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan expert Aset Ordabayev in his work «Geopolitics of transport corridors in Central Asia» (Ordabayev, 2015) detailed analysis of the current state of the Central Asian transport infrastructure. In addition it highlights and analyzes the projects of regional and non-regional powers for the development of transport corridors in the region. The author highlights the geopolitical interests of these powers, which they pursue in the construction of certain corridors. However, there is no definition of the transit potential and specified criteria of transit potential. Accordingly, during the analysis it is impossible to say which of the countries of Central Asia has the highest transit potential, the most committed to its development and is of particular

interest for foreign projects.

Kazakhstan historiography includes works of political scientists, who pay attention to the problems that have a negative impact on the development of transport corridors, not only in Kazakhstan but also in the whole region. So, the Kazakh political analyst Dosym Satpayev in his analytical work «Tinderbox of Central Asia» (Satpayev, 2013) focuses on the inter-state confrontations, as the primary source of all conflicts and problems within the region. Analysis of this work allowed to associate the problems of development of transport corridors with the unresolved inter-state issues in Central Asia.

Kazakhstani analysts' works make it possible to reveal the value of foreign projects for the development of transport and communications in the region and to analyze the geopolitical interests of foreign players in Central Asia. For example, in the work of the employee of the Institute of World Economics and Politics under the Foundation of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan A. S. Kaukenov «Features of Chinese diplomacy in Central Asia» (Kaukenov, 2008) there is given an overview of the Chinese projects in the region.

Konstantin Syroezhkin, the well-known expert of the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of Kazakhstan, considers that by implementing the SREB project, China is expanding its list of investments into Kazakhstan's economy. Apart from the oil and gas sector, Chinese money will go towards infrastructure, industry, agriculture, tourism, among others.

Apart from economic problems, Kazakhstani experts have also discussed cultural differences and how they may hinder successful realization of SREB. Fatima Kukeyeva, professor of al-Farabi University argues: «Apart from the possibilities, the implementation of the SREB contains risks that the Kazakhstani side needs to manage. The main risks are in the economical, as well as the ideological and civilizational spheres» (Kukeyeva, Duysrbayev, 2018).

In the Republic of Kazakhstan there are held a variety of conferences devoted to the development of

transport and communications in Central Asia. They are organized with the support of the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies, Institute of World Economics and Politics under the Foundation of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, think tanks, various universities and other educational institutions. During the conference, experts from different countries present their research works and the results of research and analysis. This demonstrates the fact that the development of transport corridors are particularly relevant in today's world.

### Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that the development of transport corridors in Central Asia is being discussed in the works of analysts, historians and political scientists from different countries – the United States, Iran, Turkey, Russia, and Central Asian countries. However, the problem falls into the category of contemporary urgent problems that are poorly researched and understood. The works of analysts are mostly descriptive – they describe the state of modern transport network in Central Asia, projects that are offered by foreign partners and the challenges, faced by the region in the implementation of these projects. However, the works does not have any forward-looking scenarios and analysis of the situation which may arise in the near future on the basis of the existing facts. In addition, most studies doesn't emphasize on the geo-political interests of foreign actors in the development of transport corridors in Central Asia. Due to the fact that this issue relatively recently has received conceptualization and is particularly relevant for the study, the whole historiography has a relatively small set of information. Therefore, this issue requires constant monitoring and research, as is relevant and is currently being studied.

The analytical community studying transport corridors in Central Asia is still forming, which is largely associated with the implementation of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative in the region and

its component Silk Road Economic Belt.

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