

**On another attempt to resuscitate the case of
so-called “Zangezur Corridor”
ARVAK Center comment, 06.04.2025¹**

On April 4, 2025 the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen [stated](#) at the *EU–Central Asia Summit* held in Samarkand that “...*the opening of the borders of Armenia with Turkey and Azerbaijan is going to be a game changer. And it will bring Europe and Central Asia closer together like never before*”. Von der Leyen voiced the necessity of this condition for the effective functioning of the “*Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor*”, which is designed to provide overland logistics connections between Europe and Central Asia, and in a broad sense, to establish the productive operation of transcontinental trade routes in Eurasia along the East–West axis.

At first glance, von der Leyen’s statement is standard and fits into the logic of the actions of the international circle of beneficiaries, who are seeking to jointly implement the mega-project of trade and logistics integration of dozens of countries from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. The President of the European Commission noted in her speech that the “*Trans-Caspian Corridor*” is a key link in the entire program, to which special attention should be paid in connection with the problems in the Armenian-Azerbaijani and Armenian-Turkish relations. The argument is logical, but von der Leyen’s formulation regarding the way out of the situation raises questions. She declares the necessity of “*opening the borders of Armenia with Turkey and Azerbaijan*”, thereby, in fact, supporting the false Azerbaijani narrative that it is allegedly Yerevan that keeps its borders locked, violating one of the key points of the Agreement of November 09, 2020 on the opening of all communications between the Republic of Armenia and Azerbaijan. The openly accentuated wording of the top EU official thereby distorts the essence of the state of affairs and the alignment of positions in the negotiation process, during which Yerevan is striving, without preconditions and in a short time, to get Turkey to open the border at the initial stage at the “Margara” checkpoint , and also expresses readiness “*literally in a matter of days*” to ensure the free movement of Azerbaijani citizens and cargo across Armenian territory towards Nakhijevan. Moreover, without demands for mirror actions from the Azerbaijani side, which, by the way, is prescribed in the agreement of November 2020.

It is difficult to imagine that Ursula von der Leyen’s posing of the issue is the result of a misunderstanding or discrepancy, and, therefore, the European High Commissioner deliberately echoes the narratives of Baku and Ankara on the issue under consideration. That is, the EU believes that the issue of opening communications should be resolved in the formats and on the conditions put forward by the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem and implying the creation of an extraterritorial corridor towards the NAR at the expense of the sovereign territory of Armenia. According to von der Leyen’s logic, if Yerevan until recently resisted the conditions and demands of Baku, then it is the only culprit for the delay in the implementation of the “*Trans-Caspian Corridor*” project, of which the so-called “*Zangezur Corridor*” should become a part. Thus, the high-ranking official actually blames the Republic

¹ The original (in Rus.) was posted on our website on 04.04.2025.

of Armenia even for the fact that Ankara keeps the Turkish-Armenian border closed, since, as is known, Turkey links the issue of unblocking the border with the Republic of Armenia and, in general, the normalization of relations with Yerevan to the results of the Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations. This means – with Yerevan’s complete surrender to Baku’s demands.

Thus, there is a manifestation of political pressure on Armenia from the EU, which highly values AzR as a key partner in ensuring European energy security, but until recently did not particularly advertise its interest in solving the problems of the *“Trans-Caspian Corridor”* at the expense of the Republic of Armenia, its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Highly likely that during the *“historical”* summit in Uzbek Samarkand Azerbaijan and Turkey continued forming *“One Belt–One Road”* megaproject’s “beneficiaries front” against Yerevan in order to gain consensus regarding the revision of the Armenian sovereignty over Meghri. Obviously Baku and Ankara really counted on the inclusion of China in the political and propaganda campaign to put pressure on Yerevan, but the results of this work turned out to be ambiguous. This is evidenced by the information disseminated by the Azerbaijani media that two days prior to the Samarkand summit, a high-ranking Chinese official Liu Jian Chao, who arrived at the invitation of Baku as the head of the delegation of the Communist Party of China’s (CPC) Central Committee, allegedly stated that Beijing was interested in the creation of *“Zangezur Corridor”*. Meanwhile, just one day later, China’s Charge d’Affaires to Armenia Chen Ming said that the Chinese delegation in Baku never mentioned the term *“Zangezur Corridor”* since Beijing *“adheres to the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Armenia”*. Chen Ming qualified the Baku media information as *“false”*, and made it clear that it was a political provocation.

Thus, the Chinese official representative once again confirmed China’s position expressed a month earlier (March 4, 2025) at a meeting in Beijing between Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Liu Bing and his Armenian counterpart Mnatsakan Safaryan. Liu Bing then stated that Armenia and Azerbaijan are important partners for the PRC, and that Beijing is interested in establishing a fair peace between the neighbors based on mutual recognition of each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, which will serve as a guarantee for their effective integration into the *“One Belt – One Road”* project.

The above review demonstrates the specific configuration of attitudes of the regional and extra-regional actors to the problem of Syunik and the format of its integration into international trade and logistics projects. China, which is the main beneficiary of the *“One Belt – One Road”* project clearly stands for the sovereignty of Yerevan over Syunik, with the condition of creating universal mechanisms for simplified transit and fiscal benefits on the Armenian territory. Iran, as can be concluded from many statements by Iranian officials, holds a similar opinion and threatens military intervention in the case of a threat to the territorial integrity of Armenia. The Russian Federation and the United States are silent for now, being entirely focused on the Ukrainian issues. The only party building its rhetoric in the wake of the approaches of the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem remains the EU, which, in the person of the High Commissioner von der Leyen, demands that Yerevan fulfill Baku’s maximalist conditions. This is dissonant with the narrative that has been spreading in

Armenian society in recent years that it is the Russian Federation and China that are interested in capturing the so-called “*Zangezur Corridor*” in favor of Azerbaijan. According to this logic Moscow and Beijing are the main beneficiaries of the liquidation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. This logic implies that both Moscow and Beijing benefited the most from the dissolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. Meanwhile, the statements by Ursula von der Leyen and the signals coming from the EU openly challenge this popular thesis.