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Georgia's Transit Strategy: At the Crossroads of Opportunity and Geopolitics

Situated at the nexus of Europe and Asia, Georgia has long recognised its strategic potential as a vital transit corridor. Over the past two decades, the country has pursued a focused policy to capitalise on this geographic advantage by investing in transport and energy infrastructure that bridges East and West.

Early EU-backed initiatives such as TRACECA and INOGATE played a foundational role in promoting major hydrocarbon transit [projects](#)—including the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline, the Baku–Tbilisi–Erzurum (SCP) gas pipeline, and the Baku–Tbilisi–Supsa pipeline. These efforts laid the groundwork for Georgia's emergence as a regional energy hub.

More recently, the EU's push to extend its Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) to the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries has brought further investment into Georgia's road, rail, and aviation infrastructure. These initiatives not only enhance physical connectivity but also reinforce Georgia's alignment with the EU and NATO, strengthening its role as a geopolitical gateway for Western interests in the region.

However, as recent developments reveal, Georgia's transit strategy is shaped as much by geopolitical pressures and domestic political considerations as by economic logic. Key projects such as the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars (BTK) Railway, the Green Energy Corridor, the Anaklia Deep Sea Port, and the controversial Gazprom gas transit deal illustrate both the opportunities and the vulnerabilities inherent in Georgia's transit diplomacy.

BTK and the Green Energy Corridor: A Strategic Gamble

The Baku–Tbilisi–Kars (BTK) Railway, launched in 2017, links Azerbaijan to Turkey via Georgia, forming part of the Middle Corridor—a non-Russian trade route between China and Europe. Funded primarily by Azerbaijan, including a \$775 million soft loan to Georgia, the project was political from its inception. It intentionally bypassed Armenia and symbolised a [deepening trilateral alliance](#) between Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. While Georgia gained infrastructure and potential transit revenue, it also accepted geopolitical alignment and debt obligations, with limited public debate or transparency.

In parallel, the Green Energy Corridor, signed in 2022, proposes to transmit renewable electricity from the Caspian region to Europe via Georgia and an undersea Black Sea cable. It has received strong EU backing and could transform Georgia into a strategic energy hub. However, like BTK, the Corridor risks repeating governance pitfalls unless transparency and public accountability are improved. Azerbaijan's dominant role again raises concerns, particularly given past opaque practices.

Growing China's interest

China has also shown growing interest in Georgia's corridor potential, viewing the country as a useful transit node in its broader Belt & Road Initiative (BRI). The recent awarding of a major stake in the Anaklia Port project to a Chinese consortium underscores this trend. Beijing's involvement in Georgian infrastructure is likely to expand, including in logistics, energy, and digital connectivity sectors. For Tbilisi, this presents both opportunity and risk. Chinese investment could help modernise [aging infrastructure](#), but it may also increase Georgia's exposure to non-transparent capital and geopolitical ambiguity. Georgia must tread carefully to avoid dependence on authoritarian regimes while preserving its strategic sovereignty.

The Middle Corridor as a whole is receiving renewed attention due to the geopolitical shifts stemming from Russia's war in Ukraine and instability in the Suez Canal. As Europe seeks alternative trade routes that bypass Russian-controlled infrastructure, the trans-Caspian corridor has emerged as a promising option. If managed effectively, Georgia could become a critical link in this emerging supply chain, benefiting from increased freight traffic, logistics investment, and international relevance. However, this potential will only be realised through careful governance, regional cooperation, and alignment with broader Western infrastructure and regulatory standards.

The Anaklia Port Saga: A Geopolitical Litmus Test

The Anaklia Deep Sea Port project, initiated in 2016 by a Western-backed consortium, promised to turn Georgia into a logistics hub capable of receiving Panamax-class vessels. However, by 2020, the project was abruptly cancelled by the Georgian government, citing financial shortcomings. Critics alleged political interference aimed at weakening Western influence, especially given the simultaneous prosecution of Anaklia Development Consortium (ADC) co-founder Mamuka Khazaradze.

In 2023–2024, Anaklia was revived under new ownership: 51% Georgian state and 49% awarded to a Chinese-Singaporean consortium led by the controversial China Communications Construction Company (CCCC). The move provoked alarm in Western circles and among domestic civil society, who saw the pivot to China as part of Georgia's broader drift from Euro-Atlantic alignment, though the government framed the decision as pragmatic and economically necessary. Thus, Anaklia's evolution reflects a broader struggle over Georgia's geopolitical identity.

Gazprom: The Return of Russian Leverage

Nowhere is the tension between pragmatism and sovereignty more evident than in the Gazprom gas transit deal. In 2017, Georgia agreed to accept monetary compensation from Russia for the transit of gas to Armenia, replacing the previous system of in-kind gas deliveries. This shift sparked strong criticism from civil society and the opposition, who warned it reopened the door to Russian influence and abandoned hard-won energy independence achieved after the 2006 energy crisis.

Then Energy Minister led closed-door negotiations with Gazprom, bypassing public oversight. Although the government argued the deal ensured supply stability, it gave up hundreds of millions of cubic meters of free gas annually in exchange for modest cash payments. Azerbaijani company SOCAR continued to cover most of Georgia's domestic needs, limiting the deal's immediate impact. But symbolically, the decision marked a regression—a reminder of how quickly strategic sectors can be politicised in the absence of transparency.

Georgia's Foreign Policy Crossroads

For years, Georgia stood out as the most committed pro-Western state [in the South Caucasus](#). Integration with the European Union and NATO was declared a constitutional priority, and the 2014 Association Agreement with the EU laid the foundation for deeper [political and economic ties](#). Thanks to the efforts and dedication of Georgian civil servants and civil society, in 2024 the country became an EU Membership Candidate. However, in recent years, doubts have grown. The Anaklia cancellation, the Gazprom deal, and opaque infrastructure partnerships have raised questions about the ruling party's true strategic orientation. The government's 2024 law on "foreign agents," targeting NGOs, further strained relations with the EU. Despite receiving candidate status in 2023, Georgia risks falling behind Moldova and Ukraine, whose commitment to reforms has remained more consistent.

Yet Georgia's civil society remains robust and deeply pro-European. Public opinion consistently supports EU and NATO membership. Protests over Anaklia, the Gazprom deal, and recent anti-Western policies reveal a society unwilling to surrender sovereignty for short-term political gain or authoritarian drift.

Conclusion: Opportunity and Fragility

Georgia's international corridor policy is both a strategic asset and a source of vulnerability. The country sits at the heart of major transport and energy initiatives, with the potential to become a crucial node in East-West connectivity. But without transparency, public oversight, and a clear geopolitical vision, these projects risk turning into tools of foreign leverage.

As Georgia recently faces problems with potential EU accession milestones, its infrastructure choices will carry deeper meanings. Will Georgia continue to play all sides, courting Russia, China, and the West simultaneously? Or will it recommit to a values-based foreign policy anchored in democratic accountability and Western integration? The answer may determine not only the fate of ports, railways, and pipelines—but of Georgia's democratic trajectory itself

