
AZERBAIJAN EMBARKS ON CONSTRUCTION OF NAKHCHIVAN RAILWAY (PART TWO)

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The unblocking of the Zangezur corridor will have wide-ranging geopolitical reverberations for both the directly concerned states, Armenia and Azerbaijan, and surrounding countries. For Azerbaijan, the reopening of the corridor has geostrategic significance in multiple domains. This route was the most direct land passage between mainland Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan exclave soon after World War I, when the historical Zangezur (now Syunik) province was granted to Armenia and the autonomous Nakhchivan territory came under Azerbaijani protection under the Treaty of Kars (1921). The termination of the Zangezur land route connection with Nakhchivan following the breakout of the First Karabakh War of the early 1990s, however, seriously isolated the Azerbaijani exclave. Since then, Baku could physically reach Nakhchivan only by air or by circumventing Armenia to the south, via Iranian territory. The latter route came with myriads of security and geopolitical challenges to Azerbaijan, in addition to notable economic consequences.

Securing the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic (NAR) has been a particular concern for Azerbaijani leaders against the backdrop of irredentist claims from the Armenian side (see EDM, August 3, 2017; 1in.am, May 21, 2018). [...]

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