

## 2. CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS AND THEIR NEW TRANSPORT DEMANDS

The Central Asia subregion, which comprises all CAR: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is flanked by the Russian Federation in the North, China and Mongolia in the East, and Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan in the South. The whole subregion is land-locked, thus making all CA countries land (and/or air) transport dependent. The Caspian Sea at the subregion's western boundaries provides some water transport connections leading to Ukraine and further to Europe (possibly to the countries of the Mediterranean basin), and to the Russian Federation and the Baltic Republics in the North.

The existing land transport infrastructure within the Central Asia subregion is relatively well developed. Road and rail connections link all capitals and economically important areas, thus there are no major linkage problems. Crossing the borders by transports, particularly between the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) member countries reportedly presents no serious difficulty as there are appropriate agreements in place.

However, in terms of international transport needs, the transport infrastructure in the Central Asia Subregion has certain limitations. Firstly, its outlets have been developed (due to a prevailing orientation in the past) mostly to the North, and secondly roads as well as railways (despite servicing well the domestic transport needs) are to meet the new requirements which land transport is facing nowadays in connection with the new political and economical orientation of the all CAR manifested in their opening to the rest of the world.

This opening finds in turn its reflection in the tendency to rapidly establish the closest possible economic relations, first of all with the neighbouring countries.

There are also two decisive factors that condition and at the same time stimulate the development of the above new relations, in which land transport play a major role.

Those factors are as follows: a) all CAR need an overland access to the sea ports, and b) they themselves are located on the crossroads of the east - west (Far East to Europe) and south - north (Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf basins to northern Russia and the Baltics, also with branches to Europe) land routes.

Since the fast developing countries of the ESCAP region (China, Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan) are concerned both in the promotion of their trade with CAR as well as in transiting their goods via CAR to the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the Baltics, and Western Europe it becomes evident that CAR in general, and those of them which have an advantage of having major land transport routes on their territories in particular, are slowly emerging as key players on the land transportation scene in the mainland Asia region.

A good example could be Turkmenistan (one of the world's most remote countries with a closest seaport of Bandar Abbas in the Islamic Republic of Iran around 2,000 km away) which sees itself as a potentially important transport corridor for European and Russian eastbound freight to South and South-east Asia and focuses inter alia on serving an economically-competitive land transport corridor, or even entrepot for international trade.

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From	To	London			Rostock		
		By sea	By rail		By sea	By rail	
			Tran-Siberian	Euro-Asian		Tran-Siberian	Euro-Asian
China port:	- Tianjin	20,900	11,100	11,600	22,500	9,900	10,400
	- Lianyungang	20,200	11,900	11,400	21,800	10,700	10,200
	- Shanghai	19,600	12,300	11,800	21,200	11,100	10,600
Japan		21,200	14,500	13,900	22,800	13,300	12,700
Hong Kong		18,100	-	12,400	19,700	-	11,200

It is clear from the table that there is a considerable saving in distance on railway routes over sea routes. There are also different distances depending on what railways "corridor" is to be used. At present e.g. the distance from Chinese ports to Istanbul by northern (Trans-Siberian (TSR)) route is about 14,000 km. Once the Central Asian Railway route is completed (there is a missing link between Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkmenistan which is under construction), the distance to cover would be around 9,500 km, which means around 4,500 km saving in favour of the Central Asian Railway route.

The following table shows also the savings in transit times for land (TSR) and sea transports.

LANDBRIDGE: INDICATIVE TRANSIT TIMES			
Landbridge	Days	Conference Line*	Days
Japan-Nakhodka	3.5	Japan-Rotterdam	26
Consolidation and handling	7.5	Port/road loading	1.0
Rail transit	13.0	Road delivery	1.0
<b>TOTAL TRANSIT:</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>TOTAL TRANSIT:</b>	<b>28.0</b>
* For a non-conference carrier the sea-transit time could increase to 35 days. <b>Source:</b> Booz, Allen and Hamilton, Travers Morgan, 1992; Sealand.			

The advantage of developing new railway routes is becoming even more evident in the light of the present and forecasted volumes of a railway container traffic between Europe and Far Eastern Asia as illustrated by a table below.

### Container traffic Europe-Far Eastern Asia

Year	To Asia	From Asia	Total
1991	1,028	1,391	2,419
1996	1,327	1,990	3,317
2000 <sup>(1)</sup>	2,810 <sup>(1)</sup>	3,408 <sup>(1)</sup>	6,218 <sup>(1)</sup>

(Thousand TEUs)

(1) Includes empties

Since in the majority of cases the transportation of cargo takes place along routes stretched over thousands of kilometres, it is also evident that railway transport using containers (at present mostly 20' units and later changing to 40' units) is the most promising as well as economical and safe means of cargo transport between CAR and to neighbouring countries, and of transit transport from/to other countries in and outside the region.

Road transport in general, despite the fact that at present considerable volumes of cargo are moved by it due to its door-to-door convenience as well as due to temporary deficiencies of the railway transport infrastructure and operations (due to *inter alia* different gauges used), will in the future play apparently relatively complimentary role as compared to railway transport in view of distances involved.

While there are already overall positive indications and efforts made by countries to establish continued and efficient railway services which would definitely make the railways transport more competitive, the modal split has yet to be more precisely estimated or determined and considered.

It is also worth to mention that there are already a number of options for developing cross-continent (East-West and South-North) rail and road transport routes (corridors) via CIS and/or ECO subregions.

The Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are members of CIS as well as of ECO and ESCAP.

ECO, while being a relatively new organization in the present shape which include all CAR, has also proven that they are extremely well aware of the subregions's changed political and economic situation, as well as of the new emerging needs and targets, particularly in the transport sector.

This has clearly found its reflection in the ECO "Outline Plan for the Development of Transport in the ECO Region" adopted by the Meeting of Transport Ministers of the ECO Member Countries held in Almaty in October 1993.

It, first of all, clarifies the objectives keeping in mind the Quetta Plan of Action and the Long-Term Perspectives of the Istanbul Declaration and also sets up the target deadlines for completion of the particular activities.

The objectives, which apply in general to the all transport modes, are as follows:

1. Enable trucks to travel from one end of the region to the other in accordance with internationally accepted standards and by routes prescribed by Member States.
2. Expand and integrate national railway networks to permit transportation by rail from one end of the region to the other.
3. Expand air connections so as to provide air connection between the capitals and major cities of each of the ECO countries at least once a week.
4. Expand port facilities to handle the sea-borne trade of the region.
5. Conclude bilateral or multilateral agreements within or beyond the region that may be necessary to facilitate such transport including access through new border and custom posts that may be established.

Other related plans include the development of the second Euro-Asian landbridge with railway container routes from the Chinese sea ports to Europe as well as plans for the "silk railway" (China-Almaty (Kazakhstan)-Meshad (Islamic Republic of Iran), which would cut the travel distance by rail by some 4,500 km.

Having said the above it also becomes obvious why ESCAP, being aware of the emerging situation and new needs, has adopted in 1992 the ALTID project and the Resolution 48/11 on "Road and Rail Transport Modes in Relation to Facilitation Measures" which is intended to assist the ESCAP member countries, among them CAR, in the improvement of their international land transport infrastructure and land transport facilitation which is being considered at least equally important for the promotion of international trade as is the improvement or development of physical infrastructure and procurement of trucks and railway wagons or containers.

The above mentioned objectives have also served as guidelines to ESCAP while proceeding with the whole study.

As a result of desk studies and from information obtained (prior to fact-finding and data-collecting missions undertaken by ESCAP) from the countries covered by the study, it became clear that the coastal countries (China, Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan) being aware of the situation have already nominated their major sea ports to service the transport needs of CAR as follows:

**South:**

Islamic Republic of Iran: ports of Bandar Abbas and Chah Bahar

The Ports and Shipping Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran has allocated the port of Imam Khomeini as well as Shahid Rajaei Port Complex-Bandar Abbas, both in the South and Ports of Amirabad, Nowshasar and Anzali in the North for transit of goods to the newly independent countries such as the CAR.

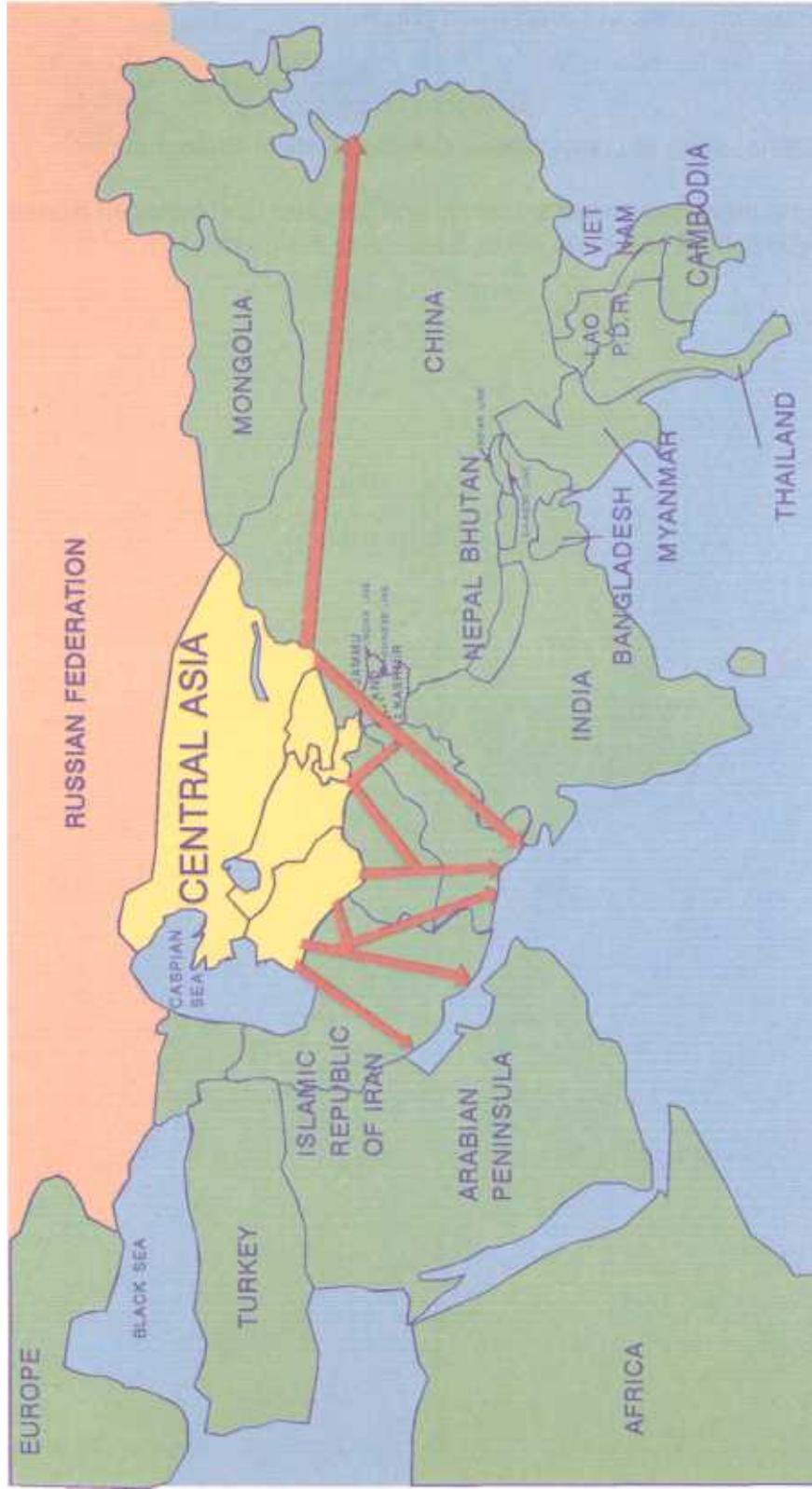
Pakistan: ports of Karachi and Qasim

**East:**

China: ports of Lianyungang, Qindao, Tianjin, Shanghai

There is therefore a need to identify and consider land transport routes from Central Asia to the above indicated sea ports in the South and the East.

FIGURE 3.1. POTENTIAL CORRIDORS FROM CENTRAL ASIA TO SEA PORTS IN THE SOUTH AND EAST ASIA



THE BOUNDARIES SHOWN AND DESIGNATIONS USED ON THIS MAP DO NOT IMPLY OFFICIAL ENDORSEMENT OR ACCEPTANCE BY THE UNITED NATIONS.

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