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Forging New Paths: The Impact of Türkiye's Development Road

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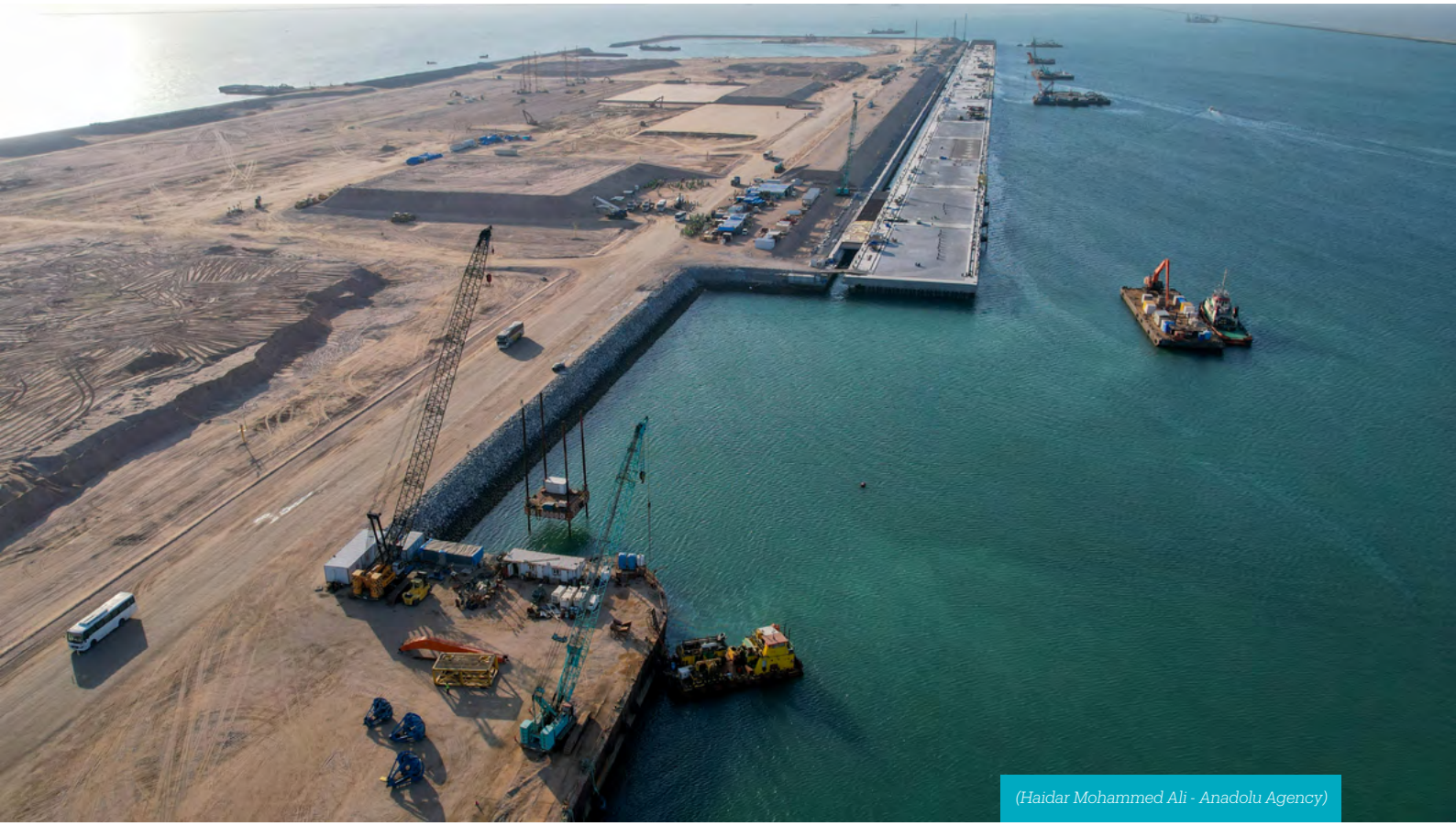


(Haidar Mohammed Ali - Anadolu Agency)

This policy paper outlines a series of internal and external strategies to maximise the benefits of the Türkiye-Iraq Development Road Project for the Turkish economy. Key internal strategies include infrastructure modernisation, a sector-specific approach, the establishment of Special Economic Zones, enhanced logistics and digitalisation, and the development of a skilled labour force. On the external front, strategies such as integrating the project with other trade corridors, attracting foreign direct investment, and organizing thematic symposiums and workshops are proposed. At a time when global and regional risks are disrupting commercial flows, the alternative trade routes proposed by the Development Road Project, in conjunction with these strategies, are expected to deliver substantial economic benefits for Türkiye.

Introduction

The Development Road Project, conceptualised to foster mutual economic and geostrategic benefits for Türkiye-Iraq relations, is advancing rapidly on both fronts. The Al Faw Port in the Persian Gulf, alongside the road and rail connections traversing Iraqi territory and the infrastructural linkages within Türkiye, is progressing without delay. Integrating the project's primary route with requisite domestic connections unequivocally indicates that, if correctly evaluated, this initiative can serve as a substantial stimulus for the Turkish economy.

This mega connectivity project, valued at approximately $20 billion, offers a significant opportunity for the Middle Eastern region, characterised by widespread and enduring conflicts, and presents considerable advantages compared to its alternatives. Currently, the project is at a more advanced stage in terms of feasibility and tangible progress compared to the IMEC project positioned by the United States against China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The project is progressing rapidly with mutual efforts to resolve uncertainties regarding its future, shaped by security concerns, and is expected to bolster collaborative endeavours in both economic development and counter-terrorism. This policy outlook aims to provide an analysis of strategic approaches to maximise the benefits of the Development Road Project for the Turkish economy, delving into recommendations for transforming the project into a strategic advantage for regional connectivity and prosperity.

Türkiye-Iraq Development Road

The Development Road Project represents a significant regional connectivity initiative, stemming from the strategic cooperation between Türkiye and Iraq. Commencing at the Al Faw Port in the Persian Gulf, this extensive trade corridor traverses Iraqi territory via integrated road and rail networks, eventually extending from Ovaköy, a key border town in south-eastern Türkiye, towards Europe. The project is projected to require an investment of approximately 20 billion dollars.

The Development Road begins at Al Faw Port in the Persian Gulf and is progressing through a three-phase process. The first phase, focused on operationalising the port, is nearing completion and is expected to be fully operational by 2025. The second phase envisions the establishment of an industrial zone around the port. The final phase involves the construction of Al Faw city, which will commence following the earlier phases. The successful completion of the port's first phase will be a critical indicator of investor confidence in the broader Development Road project. At this juncture, the construction activities, infrastructure developments, and deals signed for the surrounding area point to a promising future for the initiative.

(Murat Kula - Anadolu Agency)

A Multifaceted Strategy for the Development Road

To accurately assess the potential impact of the Development Road Project on the Turkish economy, it is crucial to move beyond a simplistic view of trade routes as mere conduits for the movement of goods and services. A trade route can only act as an economic catalyst if it is guided by a comprehensive, multifaceted strategy that involves a detailed feasibility study, strategically grouping key regions and cities along its path, and applying sector-specific approaches for each area. In the case of the Development Road Project, it is vital to examine the regions along the main corridor, starting from South-eastern Anatolia, as distinct economic zones. Furthermore, the project's integration with other regional connectivity initiatives should be carefully planned and executed. The following diagram encapsulates this strategic framework.

The transformation of the Development Road Project into an opportunity that will maximise benefits for the Turkish economy can be achieved through a comprehensive formula that includes both inside and outside strategies.

Inside Strategies

1. Infrastructure Modernisation

For the Development Road Project to effectively achieve its objective of facilitating the swift and efficient movement of goods, it is imperative to enhance existing infrastructure while addressing current gaps through targeted construction efforts. Integrating these improvements with a modernised infrastructure network will ensure that the corridor, extending from Ovaköy to customs points within Türkiye, adheres to international standards.

As highlighted by the Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Abdulkadir Uraloğlu, 1,592 kilometres of the 1,923-kilometer highway corridor planned for the Development Road Project is already complete, with a 331 km highway between Şanlıurfa and Ovaköy also slated for development. Concurrently, the completion of the remaining segments of the 2,094-kilometer rail link between Türkiye and Europe is progressing.

In addition to road improvements and infrastructure modernisation along the main route of the Development Road, it is crucial to establish robust connections within the domestic transportation network, particularly with key industrial cities. For this purpose, the transportation capabilities of organised industrial zones in cities such as Kocaeli, Bursa, and Konya should be thoroughly assessed, and any deficiencies must be addressed. This approach will ensure that these pivotal industrial hubs are fully integrated into the broader transportation network, enhancing the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Development Road Project.

The complementary relationship between road, rail, and sea routes creates a significant opportunity for interconnectedness. For instance, the Karasu-Akçakoca-Ereğli Port-Çaycuma-Bartın Port rail link exemplifies this interconnectedness by providing seamless connections between railways and ports. A review of the road map prepared by the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure reveals the establishment of new connections that complement the main route of the Development Road Project, enhancing its internal linkages. These connections are essential in ensuring the infrastructure network operates as a cohesive and efficient system, facilitating smoother trade and transportation across various modes.

A vital component of this infrastructure modernisation involves establishing additional connections to the Black Sea, Mediterranean, and Aegean Sea ports along the Development Road's main route. For instance, the ongoing construction of the İyidere Logistics Port, designed to integrate with the Development Road, is projected to become a key hub for large-tonnage vessels in the Black Sea, boasting an annual capacity of 13 million tons. Similarly, the ports in the Mediterranean and Aegean regions must be incorporated into a broader strategy that ensures the Development Road encompasses road and rail transport and maritime trade flows. To this end, comprehensive connectivity strategies should be developed.

Furthermore, the capacity of existing airports should be evaluated to support air cargo operations, with neces-

sary upgrades implemented to meet modern standards. By undertaking these infrastructure enhancements, the Development Road has the potential to evolve from a singular route into an expansive national transportation and logistics network, significantly bolstering Türkiye's role in regional and global trade.

2. Sector-based Approach

When evaluating the Development Road Project as a significant economic opportunity for Türkiye, it is imperative to adopt a sector-specific approach. Trade routes—whether they are road networks, maritime connections linked to ports, or strategic waterways—do not inherently generate economic value, apart from the collection of customs duties and fees. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of the implications of each route and connection for regions and cities is essential when assessing the project's potential. Furthermore, it is crucial to consider each sector within the framework of emerging global risks and opportunities. To illustrate the application of a sector-focused approach, this part of the analysis will explore three distinct examples.

a. Agricultural Production

First, consider the Central Anatolia and Southeastern Anatolia regions, the latter of which encompasses Ovaköy, the initial point of contact for the Development Road within Türkiye. These regions, which serve as vital hubs of Turkish agriculture, present an opportunity to enhance the export potential of agricultural products, thereby enabling this sector to access new markets via the Development Road. Currently, the GCC countries, which import approximately 85% of their agricultural supplies, represent a significant market opportunity. This is particularly relevant for member states like the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar, who have shown close interest in the Development Road as they are among the two signatories of the Quadrilateral Memorandum on the project.

Türkiye, ranked 10th in grain imports, 8th in edible fruits and nuts imports, 9th in wheat and meslin imports, and 4th in sugar and confectionery imports, could effectively capitalise on the surplus production generated through advancements in agricultural technology, modernisation of irrigation systems, and the implementation of efficient fertilisation techniques. This surplus could be profitably directed toward the GCC market. Notably, the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) has already catalysed substantial agricultural development in the region.

The key to success lies in treating agriculture as a region-specific sector, with annual production plans that include predetermined export allocations based on these projections. Additionally, the focus on agriculture and agro-food sectors is particularly pertinent given the evolving geopolitical risks. The ongoing war in Ukraine, which has disrupted grain supplies, has underscored the indispensable nature of global food security. In response, the GCC market, aligned with its diversification objectives, is actively seeking new methods and reliable suppliers to mitigate such risks. Consequently, the establishment of secure trade routes and partnerships with high production potential will remain indispensable in safeguarding against future disruptions in agricultural production and food supply chains.

b. EV Sector

The second pertinent example within the sector-based model approach concerns electric vehicles (EVs). Currently, the global EV market, predominantly led by China with approximately 60% market share, is witnessing an increase in product and brand diversification as new players enter the field. Notably, Türkiye's domestic brand, TOGG, alongside China's BYD decision to invest $1 billion in Türkiye for its largest production facility outside of China, and the recent announcement by Reeder to enter the EV market, are all poised to bolster Türkiye's position within this sector. This development holds significant implications when viewed through the lens of the European Union's policies on low-emission vehicles. Furthermore, as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries transition towards renewable energy and sustainability, a parallel market opportunity for EVs emerges.

Given this new impetus toward the EV sector, the Development Road initiative could harness this potential, fostering an export dynamism that capitalises on the burgeoning market. To achieve this objective, the intra-connectivity facilitated by the Development Road within the country represents a vital opportunity. Existing transportation networks can be strategically assessed based on their proximity to production facilities and optimised to align with export strategies, directing goods both to domestic distributors and the aforementioned EU and Gulf markets. Consequently, the Development Road holds significant potential to serve as a catalyst for trade, both domestically and internationally.

c. Tourism Sector

Within the framework of the Development Road project, a sector-based approach can be effectively applied to the tourism sector as well. Research conducted under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has demonstrated a positive correlation between establishing mega projects—focused on infrastructure and trade route networks—and enhancing tourism potential. It is feasible to achieve similar outcomes within the Development Road's scope through strategic planning.

In this context, the modernisation and enrichment of railway networks initially designed for freight transport, through the introduction of passenger trains, presents a significant opportunity. Given the current visa liberalisation between Iraq and Türkiye, this initiative could poten-

tially transform passenger flows into a dynamic force that boosts tourism potential. Furthermore, seasonal tourism activities could be strategically planned for adjacent regions, particularly in Southeastern Anatolia and the Mediterranean. The exploration of similar strategies for railway tourism initiatives, such as the increasingly popular Eastern Express, is warranted.

The sector-based approach's fundamental principle emphasises the identification of each region's inherent potential and its subsequent integration into the Development Road through tailored strategic planning. In particular, the development of strategies in cultural and winter tourism, aligned with the Development Road route and regional proximities, is likely to generate substantial increases in tourism revenue.

3. Special Economic Zones (SEZs)

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) can play a pivotal role in harnessing the potential of large-scale infrastructure initiatives like the Development Road Project by serving as hubs for economic activity, attracting investment, and fostering industrial growth. By strategically planning and developing SEZs in conjunction with the Development Road Project, Türkiye can maximise the economic benefits of the project, ensuring long-term sustainable growth and regional development. In this context, an incentive structure, including tax reductions and subsidies, can be planned to increase the potential of SEZs to attract foreign investment. On the other hand, export-oriented growth with sophisticated production strategies should be the main priority of these zones.

In rethinking and redesigning Special Economic Zones (SEZs) within the framework of the Development Road, limiting the focus to market proximity and existing production areas will yield only constrained progress. A more comprehensive approach is required, one that considers the diversification of production strategies at national, regional, and global levels. This approach should also analyse the measures countries are taking to achieve economic diversification, assess potential enhancements to existing SEZs, and explore the specific production areas to which new SEZs in Türkiye can be tailored.

Consequently, the strategy of concentrating on Gulf and EU markets based on existing sectoral potentials should be expanded. Economic projections must be recalibrated in accordance with this broader perspective to formulate a more effective SEZ policy. In this context, the Product Space theory, a pivotal theoretical framework for economic diversification and export modelling, should be examined and applied to guide the regional distribution of industrial planning and the strategic design of SEZs. For instance, if Product A, which is a major export component of a country has proximity to Product B in the product space network, this country should focus on the R&D of Product B and work to develop the necessary facilities for its serial production in a specially designed SEZ. Some of the sectoral recommendations are as follows.

Türkiye has a strong manufacturing base, especially in the machinery and automotive industries, which are adjacent in the Product Space to renewable energy technologies like wind turbines and solar panels. Establishing SEZs focused on green technology in regions with high renewable energy potential, such as the Aegean and Marmara regions, could help Türkiye transition into a global hub for renewable energy equipment manufacturing. For example, a SEZ in Izmir could focus on wind turbine production, leveraging the existing industrial capabilities and proximity to European markets.

Türkiye's established automotive industry, centred in cities like Bursa and Kocaeli, is well-positioned to shift towards electric vehicles (EVs) and related technologies. By developing SEZs dedicated to EV production, battery manufacturing, and charging infrastructure, Türkiye can evolve this sector, benefiting from its existing automotive expertise. For instance, a SEZ in Bursa where TOGG is produced could focus on the production of the relevant backward and forward linkages (battery or charging components) that have proximity to EV export in the Product Space.

Türkiye has strong agricultural production, particularly in regions like the Mediterranean and Southeastern Anatolia. SEZs focused on food processing and agribusiness in these regions could help Türkiye add value to its agricultural exports. For instance, an SEZ in Adana could specialise in processing citrus fruits, olives, and nuts into packaged products for export, tapping into global demand for high-quality, processed food products. The GAP region, with its extensive irrigation projects, can benefit from SEZs focused on agritech and food processing. These SEZs could introduce advanced agricultural technologies and create value-added products from the region's agricultural output, reducing regional disparities and contributing to national food security. For example, a SEZ in Şanlıurfa, close to the point where Development Road starts to enter into Turkish territories could specialise in the development and production of smart irrigation systems and precision farming technologies, leveraging the GAP infrastructure.

Türkiye is rich in minerals like boron, marble, and rare earth elements. SEZs dedicated to the processing and refinement of these minerals, particularly in regions like Central Anatolia, could increase Türkiye's export of value-added products rather than raw materials. For example, a SEZ in Eskişehir could focus on producing advanced boron-based products, which have high global demand in industries like glass, ceramics, and detergents.

Türkiye could also establish SEZs that focus on sustainable industries and green technologies, particularly in response to global climate change concerns that turned into a vital place in the EU policy-making for industrial planning. For example, a SEZ in the Marmara region could be dedicat-

ed to the development of green building materials and energy-efficient technologies, aligning with Türkiye's environmental goals and attracting investment in sustainable development. It should also be noted that both sustainable industry components and renewable energy technologies are the ones whose markets are predominated by Chinese companies and the current global geopolitics is pushing the West towards gradually decoupling from China. In other words, the EU has a bold aim to re-strategise its trade policies regarding China, necessitating viable potential alternatives like Türkiye. In these areas, although it is hard to gain a fast-track advantage over China at the moment, these sectors should be taken into account as some alternative areas for Türkiye to progress.

4. Logistics and Digitalisation

Logistic hubs and digitalisation of the processes can be integrated into the Development Road framework, particularly when considering their role in enhancing economic connectivity, trade efficiency, and regional development. The integration of road and rail freight transportation within the Development Road, alongside the incorporation of these goods with ports and other logistical networks, represents a highly complex transportation process. To illustrate, consider the example of 10 tons of cereals produced in the Southeastern Anatolia region intended for export to the Gulf markets. These goods would be stored near Ovaköy, then transferred to trucks and freight trains, and subsequently routed to Faw Port via the Development Road corridor. Upon arrival, the goods would be shipped to a port in the United Arab Emirates or Qatar, and finally, transported to their final destinations through the local distribution network. Each stage of this trade and logistics network must be recorded and monitored through a robust digital infrastructure. This is essential for promptly addressing any disruptions related to supply chains or logistics that may arise throughout the process.

Within this context, it is imperative that digitisation, encompassing a suite of programs powered by advanced software, becomes an integral component of the goods flow processes within the Development Road Project. This would enable a sophisticated level of optimisation, providing real-time data on warehouse stock levels, the allocation of goods for export and domestic trade, the establishment of secure communication channels with export partners, and the monitoring of intermediate stops, road conditions, traffic congestion near border crossings, and alternative routes, thus ensuring precise timing and overall efficiency.

In the context of trade with the European Union, the optimisation facilitated by these digitisation processes would also play an essential role in ensuring that carbon emissions remain within permissible levels, based on pre-established calculations, thereby addressing environmental concerns. A logistics network enhanced through digitisation is therefore instrumental in enabling the accurate projection of trade processes well in advance.

To achieve this, it is essential to continuously monitor the current applications, software, and technologies employed in the implementation of digitisation within connectivity projects, and to make advancements by staying aligned with the latest trends. A pertinent example of the impact of digitisation on the flow of goods within trade corridors can be observed in the Israeli logistics start-up, Trucknet. This company has developed a software solution aimed at sustaining trade flows disrupted by the Houthi blockade in the Red Sea, which arose from the most recent escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict and its ripple effects on the region. Through this software, an alternative route was established for the transportation of goods from India to the UAE's Port of Jebel Ali and Bahrain's Port Mina Salman by sea, followed by truck transportation through Saudi Arabia to Jordan, and onward to Israel's Haifa and Egypt's Port Said via road networks. This software has effectively optimised the entire process, projecting time and cost calculations, and thus serves as a model for road transportation logistics. The comparative advantage provided by digitisation in addressing security risks encountered in connectivity projects offers valuable insights that can be leveraged within the Development Road.

Furthermore, the objective of transforming the Development Road into a digital corridor through strategic digitisation is not merely confined to the control of trade flow stages. It also encompasses significant enhancements in payment systems, such as accelerating and simplifying transactions, digitising the management and transmission of invoices, and providing real-time feedback on logistics processes. A notable parallel can be drawn with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which is integrated with a digital payment system established through the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS). This integration enables a streamlined foreign currency exchange process within the system and facilitates direct payment flows between the central banks of trade partners, eliminating the need for intermediary financial institutions like private banks. Such a digitisation initiative could inspire the formulation of framework agreements between the central banks of trade partners regarding national currency usage and convertibility, thereby advancing economic cooperation on a more secure and efficient footing.

5. Qualified Workforce

To ensure that the Development Road achieves its maximum economic potential, it is of paramount importance to integrate human capital with a qualified labour force in the implementation of the internal strategies outlined above, as well as in ensuring their long-term sustainability. The detailed elaboration of sector-specific models and the transformation of the Development Road into a prosperity corridor through digitisation and innovation is contingent upon the presence of a well-educated workforce. Empowerment of the project with a qualified labour force is also a practical way to generate new jobs to boost employment in the youth.

In the context of Türkiye, when developing sector-based strategies for each region, this approach can be effectively pursued under the guiding principle of "regional development from within." For instance, consider the strategy of channelling the surplus agricultural production from the Southeastern Anatolia region towards exports. In this scenario, it would be highly advantageous to provide targeted training at the provincial and district levels through agricultural chambers, equipping local farmers with knowledge of modern irrigation, fertilisation, and seed production techniques to maximise agricultural efficiency. By transitioning from traditional farming methods to more modern and efficient practices enabled by the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP), significant advancements can be achieved. Agricultural engineering students could be engaged in programs that offer technical training to farmers in Southeastern and Central Anatolia, thereby translating the resources of higher education institutions into actionable, field-based outcomes.

Similarly, in the realm of R&D and the start-up ecosystem, students from engineering faculties could be involved in internships within Special Economic Zones (SEZs) that are either newly designed or established under the Development Road. Incorporating discussions into curricula on potential outcomes of this project, creating platforms for the exchange of ideas and knowledge, and ensuring that university students acquire specialised knowledge relevant to this process will contribute to building the qualified human resources essential for maximising the benefits of the Development Road. Furthermore, this strategy could be extended beyond Türkiye to include project partner countries such as Iraq, the UAE, and Qatar. Activities such as student visits, collaborative meetings, idea-sharing platforms, symposiums, and workshops could be organised to foster a collaborative environment that supports the project's long-term goals of sustainability on a broader scale.

Outside Strategies

1.Enhanced Integration with Other Trade Routes

To maximise the benefits of the Development Road for the Turkish economy and bolster Türkiye's geopolitical influence in the region, a series of outside strategies must be considered. Chief among these is the integration with other trade corridors. This suggests that, in light of the current geopolitical challenges, global connectivity projects may adopt complementary, rather than exclusive, approaches.

The Development Road, originating from Faw Port in the Persian Gulf and traversing Iraqi territory via road and rail to reach Türkiye, before continuing toward Europe through an integrated network of road, rail, air, and port connections, forms a crucial segment of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, commonly referred to as the Middle Corridor. Given the disruptions to the northern route caused by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, integrating this route with the Development Road is vital for ensuring its effective operation. The Turkish segment, functioning as a joint hub, has the potential to generate customs revenue from the flow of trade between China and Europe. Furthermore, this integration would address logistical concerns, such as transportation costs and infrastructure challenges, thereby enhancing economic cooperation within the Organisation of Turkic States framework.

The logistical synergy between the Middle Corridor and the Development Road becomes even more pronounced when analysed against the security risks faced by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The significant anti-China sentiment and acts of sabotage encountered by China during the construction of the Gwadar Port in Balochistan—a key component of the infrastructure and connectivity project announced in 2015— indicate a low probability of China completing the project in the near future. As a result, China may seek to strengthen its orientation toward the Middle Corridor as a more viable route for accessing Middle Eastern and Western markets. This necessity would likely prompt China to consider the Development Road's existing logistics network as a serious alternative. Additionally, the challenges posed by sanctions against Iran, which impede the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) from becoming a global connectivity network, and the difficulties associated with the Northern Corridor due to Russia's ongoing conflict with Ukraine, further underscore the strategic importance of the Development Road.

2. Attracting Foreign Investment

When evaluating the Development Road Project, which extends from the Gulf to Europe, it is imperative to recognise it not merely as a conduit for existing trade flows but also as a strategic opportunity for Türkiye to establish itself as a significant production hub. This potential requires a comprehensive approach that integrates both inside and outside strategies to maximise the project's economic impact by attracting foreign direct investment.

Internally, the sector-based model and the redesign of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), as previously discussed, are vital components. However, equally critical is the attraction of foreign investment to support and accelerate these initiatives. A strategic focus on attracting FDI must be accompanied by a nuanced approach that prioritises specific regions and sectors. This approach should align with competitive principles while ensuring that domestic enterprises are not disadvantaged in the process.

To achieve this, a balanced model is needed—one that encourages competition while safeguarding the inter-

ests of domestic businesses. Investment incentives must be carefully calibrated to be both attractive to foreign investors and conducive to job creation in areas where the unemployed youth is prone to internal migration to the metropoles like Istanbul, Ankara, and Bursa. Therefore, the FDI attractiveness approach should be transactional, ensuring that the benefits of investment are directly linked to measurable economic outcomes, such as employment.

In addition to the job creation potential, Türkiye's FDI attraction strategy should focus on some key sectors that have the potential to grow in the future and also have a high value-added feature. Particularly in the renewable energy sector, Türkiye must focus on acquiring the necessary know-how and advancing research and development (R&D) capabilities to position itself as a leader in green technology, sustainability, modern agricultural techniques, and the chip/battery industry as a key backward linkage of the EV market. This requires targeted investments in renewable energy infrastructure and the semiconductor industry supported by partnerships with leading global firms that can provide the expertise and technology needed for Türkiye to make significant strides in this area.

In addition to renewable energy, other high-tech sectors, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and automation, must be prioritised for investment. These sectors are not only critical for the modernisation of Türkiye's industrial base but also for enhancing its competitiveness in the global market. Developing investment opportunities in these areas will require the creation of specialised zones and incentives designed to attract leading technology firms and encourage innovation.

In conclusion, the Development Road Project represents a unique opportunity for Türkiye to transform its economic landscape. By leveraging both internal strategies and external investments, Türkiye can establish itself as a major production and innovation hub, driving sustainable economic growth and enhancing its strategic significance on the global stage. This requires a well-coordinated effort across various sectors, with a clear focus on competitiveness, technological advancement, and regional integration.

3. Organising Special Forums

It is of paramount importance to introduce and promote the Development Road Project to a broad audience that includes both domestic and international investors, as well as relevant researchers in different fields from administrative sciences to engineering faculties. To achieve this, a series of general and topic-specific forums should be organised, fostering an environment for the exchange of ideas and collaboration. Beginning with key partners such as Iraq, the UAE, and Qatar, these forums should include general sessions that address what the Development Road stands for, its geopolitical implications and the strategic benefits of the project. Additionally, various events should be organised under sub-themes, such as the Development Road's impact on tourism, the automotive industry or EV, agriculture and food production, modern infrastructure and transportation, logistics, and digitalisation. These initiatives are essential to raising awareness of this massive infrastructure and connectivity project.

In tandem with these efforts, it is crucial to ensure the project receives significant media coverage. Both national and international media should be encouraged to feature content that provides constructive commentary on the Development Road. This media strategy should aim to inform a wide range of audiences, from university students in the Gulf to European or Chinese investors, ensuring that they are informed about the project's scope and significance.

To effectively promote the Development Road Project, a multi-faceted communication strategy is required. This strategy should not only emphasise the project's strategic importance but also highlight the specific opportunities it offers across various sectors. For instance, in the tourism sector, the Development Road could be portrayed as a gateway to unlocking new travel routes and cultural exchanges between the Gulf and Europe. In the automotive industry, the project could be presented as a catalyst for the establishment of new manufacturing hubs, with enhanced access to key markets. Similarly, in agriculture and food production, the Development Road could be positioned as a vital corridor for the efficient transportation of goods, thereby reducing costs and increasing competitiveness.

Moreover, the project's implications for modern infrastructure, transportation, and logistics should be emphasised, particularly in the context of creating a seamless trade route that connects Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. The digitalisation aspect of the Development Road also deserves special attention, as it presents opportunities for innovation in supply chain management, smart infrastructure, and e-commerce.

To further enhance the visibility and appeal of the Development Road Project, targeted outreach efforts should be made to engage academic institutions, industry associations, and investment forums. By building a network of informed stakeholders, Türkiye can position itself as a thought leader in the realm of global connectivity and trade. This approach will not only attract investment but also foster a deeper understanding of the project's long-term benefits among a diverse range of stakeholders.

In summary, the promotion of the Development Road Project requires a comprehensive strategy that combines targeted forums, media engagement, and sector-specific outreach. By doing so, the project can attract a wide audience and secure the support needed to realise its full potential as a transformative infrastructure and connectivity initiative.

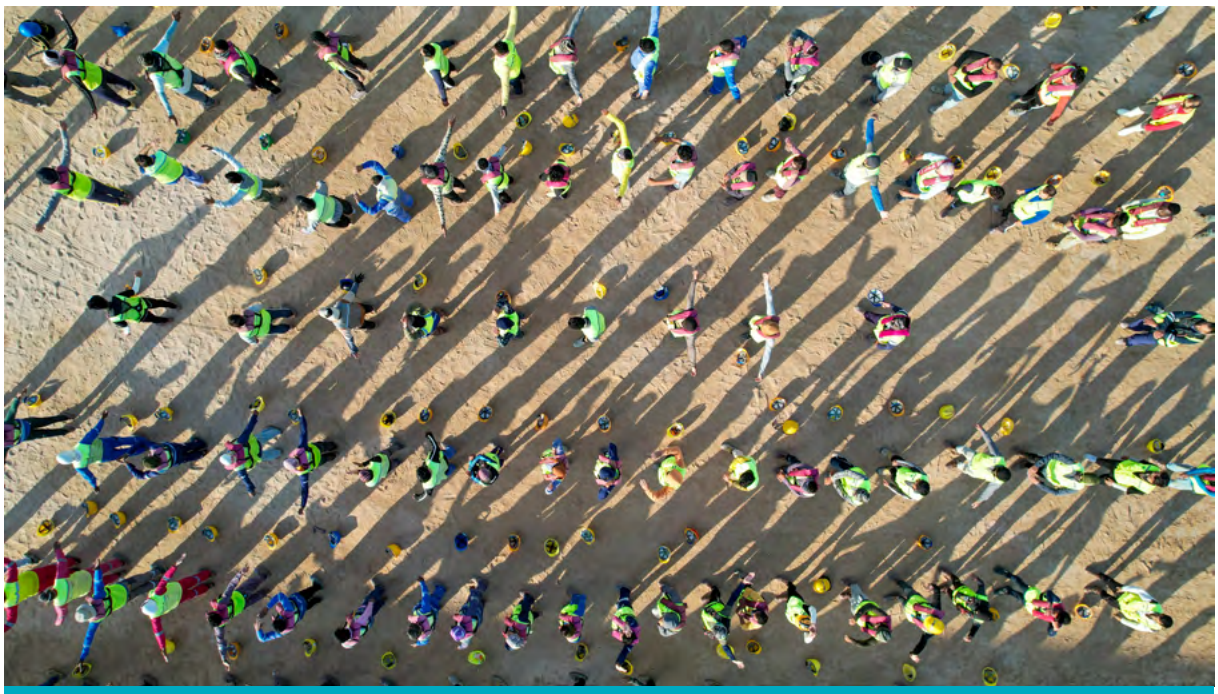
Conclusion

The Development Road offers a compelling alternative for international investors amid rising global and regional risks, given its extensive route from the Persian Gulf to European markets. With ongoing conflicts like Israel's war on Gaza, Iran's regional activities, the intensifying US-China rivalry, and other geopolitical challenges, this route emerges as a crucial and efficient option.

For Türkiye, the project presents a unique economic opportunity. This paper outlines preliminary internal and external strategies to leverage this potential. Domestically, these include infrastructure modernisation, sector-specific approaches, redesigning Special Economic Zones (SEZs), advancements in logistics and digitalisation, and developing a skilled labour force. Each of these strategies can be refined to maximise their impact within the country.

Externally, the focus is on boosting integration with other trade routes, attracting foreign investment, and enhancing the project's global visibility. By promoting regional and global collaboration, the Development Road can raise its international profile and attract significant investment.

Together, these strategies illustrate that the Development Road Project is far more than a transportation initiative. It holds the potential to stimulate Türkiye's economy, transform the country into a major production hub, and drive progress in critical areas like sustainability, artificial intelligence (AI), and digitalisation. This project could position Türkiye as a leader in these fields, strengthening its standing in the global economic landscape.



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