



The Strategic Importance of the Anaklia Port in the Transportation Corridor of the Black Sea Basin

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Abstract

The Black Sea holds significant geopolitical importance, with its security being crucial for regional stability in Eurasia. Anaklia Port is positioned as a strategic hub within this context, linking Europe, Asia, and the Caucasus. Its development is expected to enhance connectivity across Eurasia, contributing to regional security and economic integration. This research assesses the port's potential to strengthen Black Sea infrastructure by analyzing key transportation corridors, economic prospects, and the political and strategic challenges it faces.

The study focuses on three main objectives: conducting a comparative analysis of the security of existing transport corridors, evaluating Anaklia Port's economic potential, and exploring the political challenges tied to its development. Amid shifting geopolitical dynamics in the Black Sea and Eurasian regions, the demand for stable and efficient maritime routes emphasizes the strategic significance of Anaklia Port.

In order to examine the research topic, two primary methods were employed: the systemic method, focusing on the structural and functional aspects of state foreign policies, and the comparative analysis method, examining inter-state relations. The findings indicate that Anaklia Port could significantly lower transportation costs and travel time between Europe and Asia, enhancing Georgia's role as a key player in regional trade.

Given the strategic significance of this study, it has the potential to invigorate discussions surrounding the future of Black Sea transportation infrastructure and regional geopolitics. This research will provide a comprehensive and data analysis of the potential of both Anaklia and the Black Sea as a vital transit route linking Europe and Asia.

Keywords: Anaklia Port, Black Sea region, regional trade, security policy, transit route

1. Introduction

The construction of the Anaklia Deep Sea Port is a pivotal project that will significantly enhance Georgia's infrastructure, positioning the country strategically within the global transportation network. The development is led by a Chinese consortium, with China Communications Construction Company Limited (CCCC) holding a 49% equity stake, while the Georgian state retains 51% ownership. This public-private partnership ensures a balanced integration of international investment with national governance (Executive, May 30, 2024).

Once completed in 2029, the port will serve as a crucial link in the transport corridor connecting Europe and Asia, thus bolstering Georgia's competitive standing within the Black Sea transport network. With an annual throughput capacity of 600,000 containers, it is poised to foster increased international competition, establishing Georgia as a key player in global logistics and trade.

The Anaklia Deep Sea Port is a historic project that will have a profound impact on Georgia's position in transport corridors and its role in regional and global security frameworks. Beyond being a transport and logistics hub, the port will be a critical element of Eurasian transport and energy corridors, positioning Anaklia as a strategic alternative that will significantly reshape contemporary geopolitical dynamics, particularly in relation to the Middle Corridor.

2. The Geopolitical Significance of the Black Sea Basin Transport Corridor and the Anaklia Port

In the era of globalization, international transport corridors are not just economic lifelines; they have become crucial instruments of geopolitical strategy. The Black Sea basin, with its central geographical location, has emerged as a critical transit hub where the strategic interests of the European Union, NATO, Russia, Turkey, and China converge. As Papava and Tcharaia note, "The Black Sea region represents a crucial component within the Eurasian transport corridor, serving as a bridge between Europe and Asia" (Papava, V 2010). This dynamic underlines the growing importance of the Black Sea, not only as a channel for trade but also as a region of increasing geopolitical significance.

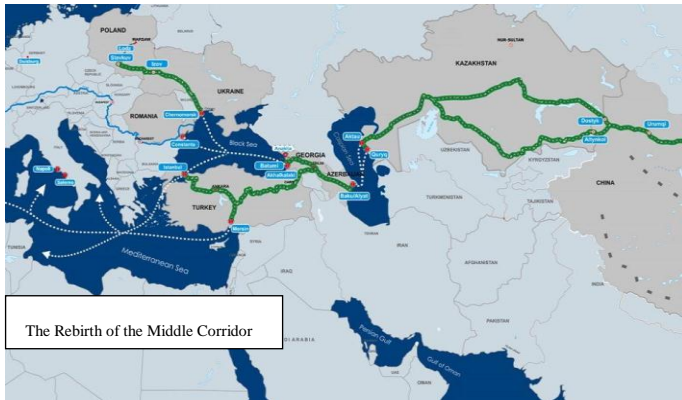
At the heart of this evolving framework stands Georgia, strategically positioned at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Georgia is striving to maximize its geographical advantages, focusing on improving its transit infrastructure. A key initiative in this strategy is the Anaklia deep-water port project, which is central to strengthening Georgia's role as a vital node in the Europe-Asia transport corridor. By developing Anaklia, Georgia aims to leverage its geographic position to become a regional economic powerhouse and to better integrate with global trade networks (Civil.ge, 2024).

This analysis seeks to explore the geopolitical significance of the Black Sea transport corridor, assessing Anaklia's position within this context, and comparing the port's potential with other regional transport routes. This comparison will be made within the modern "Silk Road" framework, which is increasingly shaping global trade and geopolitical dynamics.

Historically, the geopolitical importance of the Black Sea region has been defined by its position at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. In the modern era, this importance has only increased due to the intensification of global trade and the growing demand for energy transit. As King points out, "The Black Sea is not merely a body of water, but a crossroads of civilizations and a domain of power projection" (King, 2004). Furthermore, Halford Mackinder's theory on the "Heartland" posits that "Who rules Eastern Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; who rules the World-Island

commands the world.” According to this theory, control over the Black Sea region is paramount in any global geopolitical struggle, making Georgia’s efforts to develop Anaklia even more critical.

By reinforcing its transit role through projects like Anaklia, Georgia is positioning itself



not only as a regional transport hub but also as a key player in the broader geopolitical chessboard. The success of this initiative will have profound implications, not just for Georgia, but for the balance of power in the Black Sea region and beyond.

The Black Sea transport corridor serves as a critical link between Europe, Central Asia, and China, offering an alternative to both the

northern route through Russia and the southern route via the Suez Canal. This "Middle Corridor," which passes through the Black Sea, reduces cargo transit time from China to Europe to approximately 15–20 days, compared to 45–60 days via the southern maritime route (Yagubzade K, 2025). This speed advantage is essential not only for reducing logistics costs but also for enhancing regional connectivity and trade flows. In this context, the Black Sea acts as a gateway that is vital for both global commerce and the shifting geopolitical landscape.

Additionally, the Black Sea basin plays a pivotal role as an energy corridor, with pipelines transporting Caspian oil and gas to European markets. Georgia, strategically located at the crossroads of this vital energy and transport route, plays a key role in securing energy resources for the West. The country's positioning reinforces its importance in the broader geopolitical framework, particularly in light of the ongoing energy demands from Europe and the competitive pressures in global energy markets (Caspian - Alpine Team, 2025).

The geopolitical significance of the Black Sea is further heightened by the Russian factor. Since Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, the country has substantially enhanced its military and economic influence over the Black Sea, thereby changing the security dynamics in the region. Concurrently, both the European Union and NATO have increased efforts to solidify their positions in the area. As Zeitschrift (Zeitschrift, 2022) observes, the Black Sea is experiencing an escalating geopolitical rivalry, impacting both regional security and the development of transport and energy corridors. This rivalry complicates the development of infrastructure projects but also elevates their strategic value.

In this geopolitical context, the Anaklia deep-water port project stands out as a transformative initiative for Georgia. Often referred to as the "project of the century" for Georgia, this venture is not merely an infrastructure development but a geopolitical strategy with the potential to shift the regional balance of power. As Kiria (Kiria, 2019) states, “The development of the Anaklia port represents more than just an infrastructure initiative—it is a geopolitical move with the potential to reshape the regional balance of power.” The strategic development of this port is crucial for Georgia, as it aligns with broader regional initiatives and strengthens the country’s position in the global transport network.

One of the primary advantages of the Anaklia port project is its capacity to handle large vessels, a feature that Georgia’s current ports - Batumi and Poti cannot accommodate. According to the Romanian Shipping Agency, the Anaklia port will be capable of handling

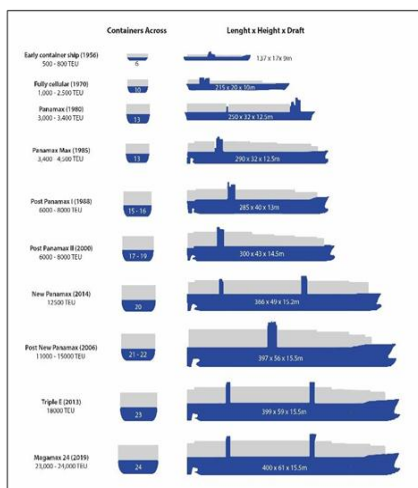
Panamax and Post-Panamax vessels, which can carry over 50,000 tons, compared to the existing ports, which are limited to vessels with capacities ranging from 10,000 to 20,000 tons. This capacity expansion would not only improve Georgia’s shipping capabilities but also increase its competitiveness in regional and global markets, positioning the country as a key transit hub.

Furthermore, the Anaklia port enhances Georgia’s role within the framework of China’s “Belt and Road Initiative.” As Fanmei and Vladimer (Fanmei, 2018) observe, Georgia is a significant link in China’s initiative, particularly in the context of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, known as the Middle Corridor. This strategic positioning provides Georgia with the opportunity to serve as a key intermediary between China, Central Asia, and Europe, offering a more direct, cost-effective route for trade between these regions.

The Anaklia port project, initially delayed, was resumed in 2023, albeit in a new format. The Georgian government announced that it would take the lead in the development, holding a 51% stake, while a private partner would control 49%. This shift towards state involvement can be interpreted as an attempt to mitigate international geopolitical pressure and maintain greater control over the project’s trajectory. This decision signals the Georgian government’s commitment to ensuring the port’s success while balancing the strategic and economic imperatives of the project.

3. The Anaklia Deep-Water Port in Regional Competition: A Comparative Analysis

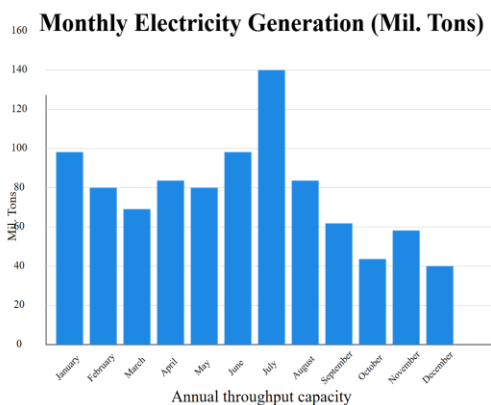
Several major seaports operate within the Black Sea basin, fulfilling both competitive and complementary roles. Among the most notable are Constanta (Romania) (Constanta, 2023), Varna (Bulgaria) (EAD, 2022), Odesa (Ukraine) (Ports, 2022), Novorossiysk (Russia) (Port technical data and capacity overview, 2023), Samsun and Trabzon (Turkey) (Turkey, 2023), as well as Batumi and Poti (Georgia) (APM Terminals Poti, 2024). These ports form a crucial part of the region’s transport infrastructure, each offering distinct advantages and facing unique challenges. An analysis based on official data reveals that the planned depth of the Anaklia port in its first phase (16 meters), with a potential extension to 20.5 meters in later phases, exceeds the current depths of Constanta (19 m), Novorossiysk (15.6 m), Odesa (13.5 m), Batumi (12.2 m), and Poti (8.5 m). This parameter is particularly critical for servicing the modern commercial fleet, which increasingly consists of larger vessels, necessitating ports with deeper drafts to accommodate their size and capacity. Anaklia’s capacity to accommodate large vessels provides it with a strategic edge, enhancing its competitive advantage in the region.



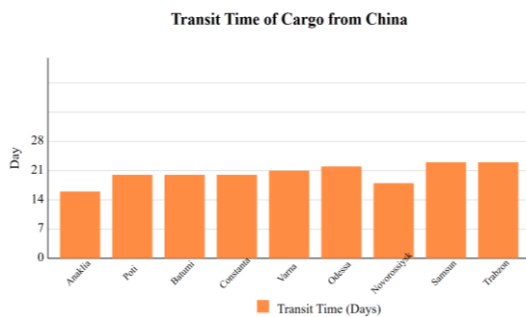
In terms of maximum vessel capacity, the Anaklia port demonstrates a remarkable advantage. Given the geopolitical context, Anaklia is the only deep-water alternative in Georgia capable of accommodating container ships with capacities exceeding 10,000 TEUs (Technical Specifications and Development Plan, 2024). In contrast to the port of Poti, which currently services vessels with a capacity of only up to 1,700 TEUs, Anaklia—with a planned depth of 16 meters in its first phase—will be able to receive Post-Panamax class ships. Upon full development, when the depth reaches 20.5 meters, the port will be capable of accommodating Neo-

Panamax and even Triple-E class vessels with capacities of up to 20,000 TEUs, placing it on par with major ports in the Middle East, such as Jebel Ali (22,000 TEUs) (APM Terminals Poti, 2024). This expansion of capacity would give Anaklia an unmatched role in regional container traffic, reinforcing Georgia’s strategic position as a transit hub between Europe, Asia, and beyond.

The projected cargo turnover of the Anaklia port, once operating at full capacity, is expected to reach 100 million tons annually, significantly surpassing the performance of other ports in the region (Technical Specifications and Development Plan, 2024). For comparison, the annual cargo turnover of the port of Constanta stands at 66.6 million tons, Novorossiysk at 154 million tons, while Batumi and Poti handle only 18.7 million and 6.5 million tons respectively. This projected turnover positions Anaklia as a central player in the Black Sea, capable of transforming regional shipping dynamics.



Data analysis indicates that even upon the completion of its first development phase—when Anaklia’s capacity is expected to reach 20 million tons annually—it will already surpass the combined throughput of the ports of Batumi and Poti (APM Terminals Poti, 2024; Technical Specifications and Development Plan, 2024). While Constanta currently has the highest container handling capacity in the region (1,600,000 TEUs), Anaklia possesses the potential to match this level (Constanta, 2023), and eventually outstrip it as its infrastructure expands.



It is particularly important to note that the Black Sea ports constitute one of the shortest transit routes from China and other Asian countries to Europe. The growing role of Romanian and Bulgarian ports in the regional transport system is noteworthy (Constanta, 2023). Their membership in the European Union offers additional advantages in terms of logistics and tariff policies. Among the regional ports, Anaklia offers the fastest transit time from China, estimated at 15–18 days. This rapid transit time, coupled with its deep-water capabilities, will make Anaklia a

prime candidate for global shipping companies seeking efficiency and competitive advantages.

4. Anaklia Port and Security Strategies: New Visions for Cooperation in the Black Sea Region

The construction of the Anaklia deep-sea port is a historic project for the region, poised to significantly enhance the competitiveness of Georgia’s transport corridors and serve as a vital guarantor of security in a geopolitically volatile space. Situated strategically on Georgia’s Black Sea coast, the Anaklia deep-sea port project represents not only a state-of-the-art transport and logistics facility but also a critical component of both regional and global security frameworks. It is important to emphasize that the Black Sea region constitutes a high-stakes zone of geopolitical tension and intersecting strategic interests, where economic, political, and security considerations are deeply interwoven.

First and foremost, the diversification of Caspian resource transit through Anaklia will play a crucial role in diminishing the European Union's energy dependence on Russian supplies—a necessity that holds not only economic but strategic significance in the context of Europe's geopolitical positioning (Gelashvili K, 2024). Empirical data confirms that, as of 2023, more than 40% of the EU's gas imports still originate from Russian sources, leaving the Union vulnerable to fluctuations in supply and geopolitical tensions (European Commission, 2023). The Eurasian transit routes—including the so-called “Middle Corridor,” which stretches from Central Asia to Europe—pass through Georgia, thereby positioning the Anaklia port as an indispensable node capable of transforming this corridor into a strategic alternative to current energy and trade routes, particularly those dependent on Russian control (Kobakhidze, 2024). In this regard, the port is not only a logistical asset but also a geopolitical game-changer for the region, potentially redefining Georgia's role in Eurasian transit and security.

Furthermore, in the context of maximizing the strategic potential of the Anaklia Deep Sea Port, Georgia stands poised to solidify its position as a key transport hub within the Black Sea and the wider Caucasus region. The “Middle Corridor,” coupled with the Anaklia Port, will serve as critical transportation nodes in the broader vision for Eurasian connectivity. These infrastructure projects are intrinsically linked to emerging security paradigms and new strategies for cooperation within the Black Sea region, which has historically been a theater of competing regional interests. Institutional analysis further suggests that the port is not just a transport gateway but a catalyst for regional cooperation, facilitating stronger economic ties between Georgia, Central Asia, and the European Union. From the lens of systemic security theory, the high levels of interdependence fostered by such infrastructure initiatives would naturally reduce the likelihood of conflict, promoting peaceful coexistence in a historically volatile area (Seskuria, 2022).

The construction of the Anaklia deep-sea port is a historic and transformative project for the region, poised not only to enhance the competitiveness of Georgia's transport corridors but also to serve as a crucial guarantor of regional and global security. Located strategically on Georgia's Black Sea coast, the Anaklia port is not just a transport and logistics facility, but a pivotal element in shaping the geopolitical landscape of the Black Sea and Eurasian regions. As a region characterized by intersecting geopolitical, economic, and security interests, the Black Sea is increasingly seen as a crucial strategic crossroads, where infrastructure developments like Anaklia are central to shifting the balance of power.

Within the framework of the “One Belt, One Road” initiative, in which the Anaklia Port occupies a central position, the project is viewed not only as a catalyst for the development of transport infrastructure, but also as a pivotal mechanism for enhancing regional security and geopolitical stability. A comparative analysis of the three major transport corridors—the Middle Corridor, the Northern Corridor, and the Southern Corridor—reveals distinct advantages and vulnerabilities associated with each. The Northern Corridor, which transits through Russian territory, covers approximately 11,000 kilometers from China to Europe. Despite its potential, this route faces considerable operational risks, notably due to Russia's political volatility and the ongoing international sanctions. Furthermore, harsh climatic conditions, particularly in the Russian hinterland, severely hamper logistical operations. According to the World Bank, the Logistics Efficiency Index (LEI) of the Northern Corridor is 3.7 on a 5-point scale; however, in light of the region's geopolitical instability, its Infrastructure Consistency Coefficient (ICC) drops to 2.3 (World Bank, 2022).

In contrast, the Southern Corridor, which connects China to Europe via the Indian Ocean, the Suez Canal, and the Mediterranean Sea, spans approximately 21,000 kilometers. Its

Logistics Efficiency Index (LEI) is relatively high at 3.8, owing to the well-developed maritime infrastructure. However, recent geopolitical shifts in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden have led to a notable decrease in its LEI to 3.2 (International Maritime Organization, 2023). Despite its capacity to handle large volumes of cargo, security risks and extended transit times make the Southern Corridor less attractive for time-sensitive goods (Global Maritime Forum, 2023).

The Middle Corridor, which directly links Georgia, represents a more balanced and promising alternative. With a length ranging from approximately 7,000 to 10,500 kilometers, it is one of the most efficient and accessible options. Its geopolitical risks are moderate, and the climatic conditions do not present major obstacles (Hasan H., 2010). In the context of ongoing geopolitical tensions, the Northern and Southern corridors are increasingly unstable. Comparative analysis suggests that the Middle Corridor is the optimal alternative, especially with the full operationalization of the Anaklia Port. According to econometric forecasts, the share of the Middle Corridor in Eurasian transit shipments is expected to increase from the current 6% to 23% by 2030 (Eurasian Development Bank, 2024).

The Middle Corridor is a strategically vital transport route that directly connects China and Europe. As a critical node in this corridor, the Anaklia deep-water port will play a central role in determining the efficiency, reliability, and long-term sustainability of this vital link. However, the successful implementation of this project requires not only substantial economic investments but also robust security frameworks in the region. Georgia will need to navigate the complexities of regional geopolitics, balancing diverse interests, and ensuring that both the Anaklia Port and the Middle Corridor foster cooperation and integration rather than division and conflict. The project's success hinges on Georgia's ability to position itself as a stabilizing force in an increasingly volatile geopolitical landscape, ensuring that Anaklia becomes a symbol of collaboration and shared prosperity.

5. Conclusion

The Anaklia Deep Sea Port Project is one of the most significant and large-scale investments in the region. Its scope extends far beyond the development of transportation and logistics infrastructure, playing a crucial role in enhancing both regional and global security. Anaklia Port has the potential to drive regional integration, mitigate conflict risks, and facilitate broader Eurasian connectivity. By focusing on cooperation, infrastructure investment, sustainability, and security, Georgia has an opportunity to position the Anaklia Port as a strategic asset that will foster long-term regional stability and economic growth.

Within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, the Anaklia Port holds an even more pivotal role. It is recognized as a key transportation hub, vital for boosting political and economic stability. Its strategic importance, especially in the development of the Trans-Caspian Corridor, cannot be overstated—not only for Georgia but for the entire region. This importance is further amplified given the current geopolitical conflicts and energy security challenges that define the region's dynamics.

The progress of this project has brought Russia's concerns to the forefront, as it perceives Anaklia as both a military and political threat. The port is viewed as a potential NATO foothold on the Black Sea, as well as an alternative transit corridor that could reduce reliance on Russia-controlled routes.

The comparative analysis of the Middle Corridor, which highlights its advantages over other transit routes, underscores the Anaklia Port's immense potential. The project could establish Georgia as a central hub for Eurasian trade and transportation. However, the success

of the Anaklia Port is heavily dependent on ensuring geopolitical stability and the establishment of robust security frameworks to protect it from external threats.

5.1 Recommendations

The Anaklia Deep Sea Port Project presents a strategic opportunity for the region, enhancing transportation connectivity and reshaping geopolitical dynamics. To fully realize its potential, Georgia must deepen regional cooperation, particularly with key partners along the Middle Corridor, such as Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

In light of the volatile and unpredictable nature of the current geopolitical landscape, Georgia must pursue a carefully balanced diplomatic strategy. It is crucial to strengthen relations with both the European Union and China, while simultaneously keeping open channels of communication with Russia. This approach will be vital for de-escalating tensions and ensuring long-term stability in the region. Anaklia Port should not only act as a key transportation hub but also serve as a platform for fostering international collaboration, thereby contributing to regional stability and lasting peace.

Considering the volatility of the geopolitical environment, it is imperative for Georgia and its international partners to devise a comprehensive risk management framework. This should include detailed contingency plans to address potential disruptions in transport routes, security threats, and economic instability, ensuring that the port can operate seamlessly despite external challenges.

It is essential that the project generates benefits not only on a global scale but also at the local level, delivering concrete advantages to the population. The active participation of local communities in job creation, educational opportunities, and economic development will be a critical determinant in ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of the project.

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