

The Washington Summit: Implications for Armenia and the Region

An APRI Armenia Analysis

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This APRI Armenia Analysis outlines the implications of this step forward for Armenia, Azerbaijan, their long-running peace process, and relations with their regional neighbors. While progress has been made toward a more stable South Caucasus, especially on the thorny issue of transit links, how the details will be interpreted and implemented, as well as how the regional powers will respond, will test the success of the renewed US involvement in the peace process.

On August 8, 2025, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the United States [signed](#) a Joint Declaration (hereafter the “Joint Declaration” or “Declaration”) during a summit in Washington, DC (hereafter the “Washington Summit”). The Declaration sets forth the establishment of “unimpeded connectivity between the main part of Azerbaijan and (...) Nakhijevan through the territory of (...) Armenia with reciprocal benefits for international and intra-state connectivity for Armenia” through Azerbaijan. It also states that Armenia “will work with the United States and mutually determined third parties to set forth a framework for the “Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity” (TRIPP) connectivity project” in its territory.

The US-led agreement offers a solution to a long-standing dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over how and under what circumstances they would initiate transit links between their two countries. A [ceasefire statement signed in November 2020](#) by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia, after 44 days of intense hostilities, stipulated that transit links between the two countries would be restored, with the Border Guard Service of the Russian Federal Security Service responsible for overseeing the transport connections, but with Armenia and Azerbaijan disagreeing over the management and control of the routes. The solution put forth in Washington could give American entities the responsibility for building and managing transit routes for travelers across southern Armenia, in collaboration with Armenian authorities. [According to Armenian officials](#), passport control and customs checks would be carried out by Armenian state institutions, with American support in building Armenia’s border and customs services’ capacities. Security, according to Prime Minister Pashinyan’s press interview, would be ensured by Armenia while American investment companies might have their own security providers in addition to the jurisdiction of the Armenian police, National Security Service, and legal system.

Alongside the Joint Declaration, the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan initialed [the text of an agreement](#) to establish peace and normalize relations between the two countries. The initialing signifies a commitment to finalize the peace deal in the future, although there has been no timeline yet announced.

Armenia and Azerbaijan also signed bilateral memoranda of understanding with the US. For Armenia, those [agreements](#) would bring increased US involvement in the fields of energy security, infrastructure development under the Armenian government’s Crossroads of Peace project, and technologies related to artificial intelligence and

semiconductors. For Azerbaijan, ties with the US would expand with the establishment of a [strategic partnership](#), which would include greater cooperation on defense, digital technologies, and energy.

What Are the Implications for Armenia?

The Joint Declaration significantly reduces the risk of military escalation between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the near term, allowing Yerevan to continue its efforts toward economic development and improving its defense capabilities.

Greater partnership with the US on energy security, infrastructure, artificial intelligence, and semiconductors, in addition to what is already envisaged in the umbrella [Strategic Partnership Charter](#), will likely boost those sectors of the Armenian economy. The Armenian government can publicly explain the benefits these deals would bring for Armenian businesses, as it did in the [announcement of the Firebird AI project](#). It is worth noting that economic relations with Russia, the number one trade partner of Armenia, and with Iran may be altered by the move toward closer cooperation with the US. The unblocking of trade and transit with Azerbaijan—particularly if it unlocks trade and unfreezes diplomatic relations with Turkey—would create new challenges and opportunities for Armenia's economy. Among other things, it may decrease exclusive dependencies, particularly on Russia.

Absent a common understanding of the specifics and ownership of how the Joint Declaration will materialize, some vulnerabilities exist such as the potential for differences in legal interpretations and disputes on the ground during the build-up of the TRIPP. The TRIPP concept needs an implementation framework that will include coordination mechanisms, clarity on the funding plans, and potential deconfliction and mediation mechanisms. Importantly, Armenia has consistently stressed, [including recently](#), that its border and connection with Iran should not be affected by any transit routes passing through Armenia. Should the proper functioning of their mutual border be negatively affected, this could jeopardize the new TRIPP.

For the overall proposal to gain greater support, there needs to be clarification around the reciprocal trade route across Azerbaijan. While the Joint Declaration mentions “reciprocal benefits,” which implies that Armenian citizens and goods would benefit from passage through Azerbaijan, the language on how this will work has been vague. If it were to occur, access across Azerbaijan would be managed by Azerbaijani authorities, with no involvement of third parties to provide security or guarantee greater safety for Armenian travelers. This would be perceived as an imbalanced outcome and a deep concession from the Armenian side.

The release of Armenian prisoners held in Baku, and the right of return and other protections for ethnic Armenians displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh, were not mentioned in the documents signed in Washington. Some reference to the latter could have been expected, given that President Trump [had stated during the 2024 electoral campaign](#) that he would support ending the persecution of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians. The joint appeal by Armenia and Azerbaijan to dissolve the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group (a negotiation platform created in 1992 to generate a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict) will limit opportunities to raise issues related to the rights of that population or the circumstances of [their forced](#)

[removal by Azerbaijan](#) in 2023. Moreover, since the peace agreement includes an article on withdrawing legal cases from international courts, Armenians will have few opportunities for the redress of human rights violations. This will anger segments of the Armenian population at home and abroad.

The improvement in Armenia–Azerbaijan relations and how its benefits are relayed to Armenian citizens will be a central focus of the June 7 2026 elections. [Public opinion in Armenia](#) favors peace with Azerbaijan and views establishing peace as a priority for this government. As such, the signing ceremony held in Washington can be seen as a strong success, likely to increase the government's popularity ahead of elections. Armenians also [anticipate a referendum](#) on a new Armenian constitution in a context where changes to the constitution [continue to be a prerequisite](#) for Azerbaijan to finalize the peace agreement. In parallel, given the highly-polarized political environment in Armenia, any grievances or dissatisfaction with the US-led deal, or potential tensions with traditional partners, will likely be magnified by political opponents.

Another issue left out of the Joint Declaration concerns the current occupation of Armenian territory by Azerbaijani forces. During the offensives of May 2021, November 2021, and September 2022, Azerbaijan's military seized approximately [200 square kilometers](#) of strategically placed Armenian territory. Armenia and Azerbaijan have repeatedly said, including in [Prague](#) in 2022 and most recently in Washington, DC, that they commit to the 1991 Almaty Declaration, which recognizes the territorial integrity of their states according to their administrative borders during the existence of the Soviet Union. However, the withdrawal of Azerbaijani troops from Armenia has not been addressed. The process of official border delimitation and demarcation, which is one track of the peace process, could take years or even decades and might surface new disagreements along the way.

What Are the Implications for Azerbaijan?

As and when the TRIPP infrastructure is implemented, Azerbaijan's clearest win will be direct land-based transit to its exclave of Nakhijevan, and beyond it to its ally Turkey. The deal also signals broader realignment opportunities for the country. As a result of the Washington Summit, Azerbaijan [started the process](#) of establishing a strategic partnership with the US. This can have a negative effect on its relations with Russia, which have been deteriorating since December 2024 (and possibly with Turkey), while deepening economic cooperation with the US in energy and other sectors. Azerbaijan also has an opportunity to engage with the US more strongly on defense, after Trump announced lifting all restrictions on defense cooperation between Azerbaijan and the US. This followed Trump's ceremonial waiver of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, which banned US assistance—in practice, military aid—to the Azerbaijani government (the Section, adopted in 1992 after intense Armenian lobbying, had been waived by every subsequent administration since George W. Bush until 2023).

In a concession to Baku (for the last two years, [Yerevan's position](#) was that a document calling for the dissolution of the OSCE Minsk Group would be signed on the same day as the signature of the peace agreement), Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a joint appeal to the OSCE to effectively dissolve the OSCE Minsk Group.

As the peace agreement moves toward a final signature, the government in Baku will have to take significant steps to prepare its population for orderly relations with Armenia. This will require a reorientation of Azerbaijani society and the narratives shared by its leadership, which have long [depicted](#) Armenia as the collective enemy while also [glorifying the use of force](#) against its neighbor. This would be a dramatic pivot that would cost the Aliyev government one of its most frequent talking points, ones that have served as a distraction from domestic discontent.

What Will Russia Do in Response?

The Joint Declaration will increase US influence and involvement in the South Caucasus, a region that Russia [views](#) as its sphere of influence.

Under the November 2020 trilateral [statement](#) between Russia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, Russian authorities were expected to take on the role of managing and patrolling the eventual road across Southern Armenia. Now, under the TRIPP paradigm, the primary operating role will go to US and Armenian entities, with the concomitant prestige going to Washington. It is both a strategic and tactical blow to Russia, as it establishes a new US footprint in an area Moscow had previously dominated without much contest.

Russia's immediate [reaction](#) has been cautious, welcoming the Declaration. But it also raised two issues that Moscow might put on the Armenia–Russia agenda that could affect the implementation of the US deal in line with its interests—Armenia's membership of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) as a key factor for transit and transportation and the presence of Russian border guards on the Armenian–Iranian border. In the medium term, Moscow is highly likely to seek to influence the change process to safeguard its interests, particularly when it comes to transportation links. At the same time, however, despite holding significant economic and energy levers affecting Armenia and Azerbaijan, Moscow should consider the risk of the two neighbors further distancing themselves from Russia.

The involvement of US entities in the process of customs controls and transit through a member state of the Eurasian Economic Union could be a major concern for Russia. Russia has leverage through the bloc's trade and transit rules to put pressure on Armenia to slow the momentum of its dealmaking with Washington. Notably, [Article 29.1 of the EAEU Treaty](#) could be put forward by Russia to argue that the involvement of entities that are not officials from a Member State infringes the Treaty.

Russia could also put pressure on Azerbaijan—considering [their intertwined economic interests](#) in connectivity projects—to claim some involvement in the TRIPP. Interestingly, Russian commentators [regularly highlight](#) that the DC deal is also a threat to Iran, seeking once again to bring Tehran closer to Moscow's position. The railroad section of the TRIPP will pass in the immediate vicinity of the Armenia–Iran border, where Russian border troops are deployed. Russia may anticipate that eventually Armenia will ask for the withdrawal of Russian border troops from the Armenia–Iran border, which will be another step in reducing Russian military presence in Armenia. On the other hand, if the Crossroads of Peace is implemented as it is currently laid out, Moscow [would benefit from](#) rail access from Armenia to Russia via Azerbaijan.

In addition to the above-mentioned points, Moscow can seek to participate in the implementation of the connectivity project, for example by integrating the TRIPP into the

CJSC South Caucasus Railway. This would help Moscow balance out the changes and secure its continued presence in the region.

As Russia continues to focus on the war in Ukraine and its confrontation with the West, Russia lacks the capacity and capability to take immediate actions to counter the US-led agreement. Moreover, given the importance for Russia of reaching agreements with the US, Russian President Vladimir Putin is not ready to straightforwardly undermine the authority of US President Donald Trump. The situation may change if Russia and the US are able to stop the war in Ukraine by the end of 2025. Finally, given the developments and their geographical proximity, Russia and Armenia must work toward redefining their relationship for lasting peace in the region.

What Are the Implications for Iran?

Tehran's Janus-faced response has highlighted two issues: the imperative of preserving communications between Armenia and Iran, which had influenced Iran's position against the "Zangezur Corridor," and the US's presence near its borders.

The "unimpeded access" from Azerbaijan to Nakhijevan and Turkey via Armenia as sketched out in the Joint Declaration could be a concern for Iran if it considers that the TRIPP blocks the Iranian-Armenian border and jeopardizes Armenia's sovereignty.

Ali Akbar Velayati, senior advisor to Iran's Supreme Leader, [told](#) Tasnim News Agency that "Tehran would block the US-backed Caucasus corridor with or without Russia, claiming that passage would become a graveyard for Trump's mercenaries." In a less menacing statement, [Iran's foreign minister conveyed](#) that Tehran was satisfied that the transit route would be built under the sovereignty and jurisdiction of Armenia, although the potential participation of an American company remains worrisome. During his phone conversation with Prime Minister Pashinyan, the Iranian President [emphasized](#) the need for noninterference by military or security forces in the implementation of the TRIPP. The [forthcoming visit of President Pezeshkian](#) to Armenia should shed light on the strength of Armenian-Iranian relations and the Islamic Republic's position on this new configuration.

As Iran seeks to restore its capabilities after the 12-day Iran-Israel War, Tehran is not likely to take immediate action. A US presence along the Armenia-Iran border, which would be practically inevitable with the implementation of the TRIPP plan, could be seen as a security threat for Iran, especially in light of a possible new military escalation between Israel and Iran with potential US involvement.

Should Tehran want to undermine the implementation of the TRIPP project, the Islamic Republic could obstruct the flow of crucial defense equipment from India and other international partners or complicate import/export operations (roughly [30%](#) of Armenia's trade transits goes to or through Iran).

Having said that, Iran needs to ensure that the relations of its neighbors with adversarial states are not directed against Iranian interests. A clear demonstration of this objective is the active development of Armenian-Iranian bilateral relations. [According to Iranian officials](#), Yerevan and Tehran are working on a strategic partnership agreement that will uplift the cooperation between the two neighbors.

What Is Turkey's View and How Might This Impact Normalization with Armenia?

Turkey's foreign ministry [welcomed](#) the progress toward lasting peace reached in Washington. It stated that “a historic opportunity had emerged for the South Caucasus to attain peace and prosperity, and that Türkiye would continue to support the dedicated endeavors of brotherly Azerbaijan,” reinforcing its partiality toward Baku and its interests. During a phone conversation between Azerbaijani and Turkish leaders on August 9, 2025, President Aliyev [paid tribute to](#) the role played by President Erdoğan and Turkey in the normalization process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, although their involvement in the Washington Summit is unclear.

The establishment of “unimpeded access” from Azerbaijan to Nakhijevan and Turkey through Armenia is in Ankara's interests, as it will increase Turkish influence in the South Caucasus and will open additional trade routes to Central Asia. The potential decrease of Russian and Iranian influence in the South Caucasus is also beneficial for Turkey. Nonetheless, a long-term US presence in Armenia would hinder Turkey's plans for becoming a regional hegemon independent of US priorities. It also interrupts the competition–collaboration cycle by which Turkey and Russia had come to jointly manage issues in the region.

The effects of the Washington Summit on the Turkey-Armenia normalization process will become apparent in the months ahead. Pressure is on Turkey to move toward realizing the [agreements](#) it reached with Armenia in July 2022, which would partially open the border between the two countries. Alternatively, Turkey could continue to use the normalization process as a means of forcing Yerevan to accede to additional demands. [Turkey's statement](#) following the August 11 call between President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Pashinyan could be interpreted in that way. By contrast, during the same call, Prime Minister Pashinyan [noted](#) that the improved relations mean the opportunity for implementing previously reached agreements between Armenia and Turkey is more favorable than ever.

In any case, opening the border with Turkey (and Azerbaijan) will lead to trade policy issues for Armenia, considering the countries' economic disparity and that Yerevan, as an EAEU member, cannot set or add to its own trade and tariffs regulation. The border openings should be carefully assessed in advance to ensure it benefits without harming local businesses.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The Washington Summit can be considered a significant milestone in the Armenia–Azerbaijan negotiation process, not least because this brought Azerbaijan to Washington, DC, when Baku had repeatedly [called for exclusive bilateral negotiations](#). It has reduced the likelihood of escalation at least until the 2026 elections, if not for longer and solidified the role of the US as the key facilitator, sidelining Russia and bypassing the European Union, which had been actively engaged in the region. The Joint Declaration has effectively replaced the multiple Armenia–Azerbaijan–Russia trilateral statements signed in 2020–2022, when it comes to the provision of the control by Russian border troops over the routes connecting Azerbaijan with Nakhijevan via Syunik. The financing of the TRIPP project and the connected bilateral Memorandum of Understanding on the Crossroads of Peace remains up in the air for now. The EU might be a potential funding source, considering its lasting assistance and involvement in Armenian infrastructure projects in the south of the country. Other countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, are interested in strategic investments, too.

Changes in Russia’s and Iran’s long-term regional calculus in light of the increased US presence in the South Caucasus could affect the plans put forward in the Joint Declaration. The potential US–Russia deal on Ukraine is also likely to impact the process, as mutual accommodation may cover not only Ukraine but also other areas of former Soviet-space, including the South Caucasus.

The Washington Summit is a step forward but not the end of this decades-long conflict. Azerbaijan continues to have clear military and resource superiority over Armenia, which can be wielded in case of disagreements. Baku also continues to push [several demands](#), including the controversial changes to the Armenian constitution and, in the absence of explicit renunciation, the revisionist claims around “Western Azerbaijan.” Other unresolved—and substantial—issues include demarcation and delimitation, the enclaves, the fate of prisoners held in Baku and the right of return and other protections for displaced Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh.

To help the Washington Summit succeed on the Armenian side, it will be important for Yerevan to nail concrete benefits and balanced outcomes, with a functioning and secure reciprocal route through Azerbaijan. In this Analysis, we have repeatedly insisted on the importance of this Joint Declaration’s terms of execution; how what is likely to be a public–private partnership takes shape and benefits Armenia alongside the US will help bring the desired success of this project. The US must deliver strong and continued facilitation to ensure that the process remains on track.



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