

# NEWSLETTER+

September 2025



Special Edition

The Peace Agreement in South Caucasus

Academic Conferences

Perspectives

Tolerance Program

NO.3 2025.09



HK+ 국가전략사업단

HK+ NATIONAL STRATEGIES RESEARCH PROJECT AGENCY  
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL AREA STUDIES, Hufs

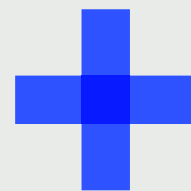


Special Edition

NO.3<sub>2025.09</sub>

—

CONTENTS



|

## Academic Conferences

HK+ National Strategies Research Project Agency & Foundation on Asia-Pacific Peace  
Studies Forum 2025 \_ 04

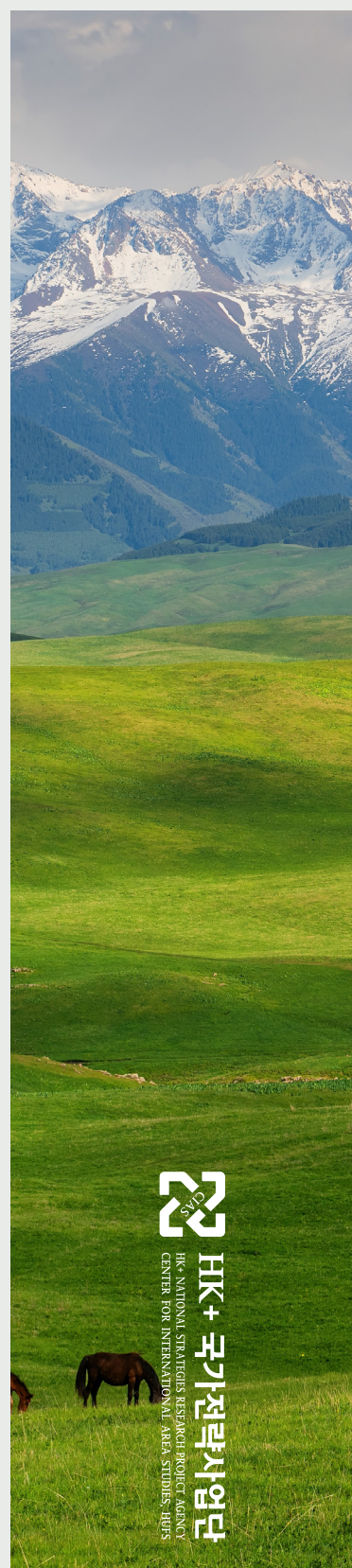
## Perspectives

The Peace Agreement in South Caucasus

1. Since the 2020 Karabakh War, the South Caucasus Changed Significantly – To the Better  
- Dr. Vasif Huseynov\_ 07
2. Washington Talks Mark Turning Point for Armenia–Azerbaijan Peace  
- Mr. Onnik James Krikorian\_ 15
3. The Azerbaijan–Armenia Peace Agreement: Greece’s Stance and Strategic Calculation  
- Dr. Joosong Lee\_ 20

## Tolerance Program

September\_ 29

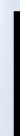


HK+ 국가전략사업단  
HK+ NATIONAL STRATEGIES RESEARCH PROJECT AGENCY  
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL AREA STUDIES, HIFES



# Academic Conferences

HK+ National Strategies Research Project Agency & Foundation on Asia-Pacific Peace Studies Forum 2025





# HK+ National Strategies Research Project Agency & Foundation on Asia-Pacific Peace Studies Forum 2025

Theme	U.S.-ROK-China Relations and the Policy Direction Following the Inauguration of the New ROK Government
Date	Friday, August 29, 2025
Venue	Conference Room (11th Floor), Main Building, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies
Organized by	HK+ National Strategies Research Project Agency
Co-hosted by	HK+ National Strategies Research Project Agency, Foundation on Asia-Pacific Peace Studies

The HK+ National Strategies Research Project Agency co-hosted the "HK+ National Strategies Research Project Agency & Foundation on Asia-Pacific Peace Studies Forum 2025" on August 29, 2025, at HUFs. The forum's theme was "U.S.-ROK-China Relations and the Policy Direction Following the Inauguration of the New ROK Government," and it brought together leading scholars and policy experts from Korea and Taiwan.

The keynote presentation focused on Korea's new foreign policy outlook and the future of Korea-Taiwan relations. An open discussion on cross-strait dynamics and shifts in regional power followed this. Participants agreed on the importance of strengthening academic-policy linkages, developing practical regional strategies, and institutionalizing collaborative networks across the Asia-Pacific.

The forum underscored the role of the HK+ National Strategies Research Project Agency and its partners in promoting transnational dialogue and cooperation for peace and sustainable development on the Korean Peninsula and beyond.







# Perspectives

1. Since the 2020 Karabakh War, the South Caucasus Changed Significantly – To the Better - Dr. Vasif Huseynov
2. Washington Talks Mark Turning Point for Armenia–Azerbaijan Peace - Mr. Onnik James Krikorian
3. The Azerbaijan–Armenia Peace Agreement: Greece's Stance and Strategic Calculation - Dr. Joosong Lee





## Perspectives

# Letter from the Editor

Newsletter+ has created a special edition to illuminate one of the most complex and long-standing geopolitical conflicts in the South Caucasus: the dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which signed a Peace Agreement in August 2025. This conflict, deeply rooted in historical, ethnic, and political complexities, has significantly impacted the regional landscape and has drawn international attention over the years. Our primary objective is to present a balanced and informed perspective that not only educates our readers but also fosters understanding and encourages thoughtful dialogue.

To achieve this, we have invited three distinguished contributors: one from Azerbaijan, one from Armenia, and a neutral expert from Korea. The Azerbaijani and Armenian authors will provide insights grounded in their national and historical perspectives, reflecting the lived experiences and political narratives of their respective societies. Their contributions are vital for understanding the personal and national dimensions of the conflict.

Complementing these perspectives, the Korean expert provides an objective, third-party analysis informed by academic rigor and extensive experience in international relations. Given Korea's own history of division and conflict, it offers a unique lens through which to explore possibilities for dialogue, reconciliation, and peacebuilding. We are confident that this multifaceted approach will equip readers with a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the issues at stake. We also hope for peace and prosperity in the South Caucasus.



# Since the 2020 Karabakh War, the South Caucasus Changed Significantly – To the Better



Dr. Vasif Huseynov

*Dr. Vasif Huseynov, head of department at the AIR Center, focuses on the EU – Azerbaijan relations and the international security in the South Caucasus. He has previously worked for the Center for Strategic Studies (SAM), Khazar University and ADA University. He holds BA in International Relations from the Academy of Public Administration in Baku, MA in Global Political Economy from University of Kassel (Germany), and PhD in Political Science from University of Goettingen (Germany). His MA and PhD studies were supported by the full scholarships of German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). His book “Geopolitical Rivalries in the ‘Common Neighborhood’: Russia’s Conflict with the West, Soft Power, and Neoclassical Realism” was published in 2019.*

## Introduction

President Donald Trump frequently highlights that his administration has resolved seven conflicts since taking office in January. Among them, he includes the Armenia–Azerbaijan dispute. On August 8, the leaders of the two South Caucasus states signed a landmark declaration at the White House in the presence of President Trump.<sup>1)</sup> All three leaders hailed the event as a peace agreement that ended the decades-long confrontation. President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of Armenia initialed a peace treaty, pledged to sign it in the near future, and agreed to reopen transport links between their countries.

1) President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. (2025, August 9). Press statements by the Presidents of Azerbaijan and the United States, and the Prime Minister of Armenia at the White House. President.az. <https://president.az/en/articles/view/69577>



Although the Washington Summit formally concluded the conflict, this outcome would have been impossible without addressing its root causes years earlier. It was the Second Karabakh War – launched on September 27, 2020, and ending on November 10 of the same year – that brought an end to Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijani territories.<sup>2)</sup> That war created the historic opportunity for lasting peace between the neighbors and laid the groundwork for the present breakthrough.

Building on this foundation, this paper first analyzes how the Second Karabakh War reshaped the South Caucasus over the past five years. It then examines the recent Washington Summit, assessing the agreements reached in the presence of the U.S. President and considering whether they have indeed closed the conflict chapter once and for all.

## Roots of the Conflict

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s was initially welcomed across the South Caucasus – a region situated between Russia and Iran and composed of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. After seven decades of Soviet rule, the three republics regained their independence with hopes of entering a more prosperous and peaceful era. Yet, the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse brought violent conflicts that killed thousands, displaced hundreds of thousands, and devastated the lives of millions. Georgia faced separatist wars, while Azerbaijan endured a large-scale invasion by Armenia, supported by Russia, which resulted in the occupation of 20 percent of Azerbaijani territory (the Karabakh region and surrounding districts). This conflict, remembered as the First Karabakh War (1992–1994), fundamentally shaped the region's trajectory.

Yerevan relied on the ethnic Armenian population of Karabakh to carry out the occupation and subsequently framed it as a struggle for self-determination. Four United Nations Security Council resolutions in 1993, along with numerous other international documents, demanded the withdrawal of Armenian forces from Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territories. However, Armenia ignored these calls. The occupation displaced around 700,000 Azerbaijanis through violent ethnic cleansing, which included the killing of thousands of civilians. Following the First Karabakh War, Armenia maintained control over the territories for nearly three decades, expecting that the international community – and eventually Azerbaijan itself – would reconcile with the “new realities” and threatening Baku with the occupation of new territories in the case of renewed war.<sup>3)</sup>

Some international actors sympathetic to Armenia did indeed accept these “realities” and urged Baku to follow suit.<sup>4)</sup> Yet, the Azerbaijani people never abandoned their claim to their ancestral lands. That opportunity finally came in 2020.

On September 27, 2020, frustrated by fruitless negotiations, Azerbaijan launched a military campaign to end the occupation. The 44-day Second Karabakh War, concluded by the November 10 trilateral statement signed by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia, resulted in the liberation of much of the occupied territory.<sup>5)</sup>

The remaining areas were placed under the joint control of Armenian separatists and Russian peacekeepers deployed under the ceasefire agreement. However, in September 2023, Azerbaijan dismantled the separatist regime through a one-day counterterrorism operation,<sup>6)</sup> and in May 2024, Russian peacekeeping forces withdrew from Karabakh.<sup>7)</sup>

2) Statement by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation. (2020, November 10). President.az. <https://president.az/en/articles/view/45923>

3) Asbarez. (2019, April 8). “New Territories In the Event of New War,” Says Defense Minister. Asbarez. <http://asbarez.com/new-territories-in-the-event-of-new-war-says-defense-minister/>

4) President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev. (2021, January 1). Address by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. President.az. <https://president.az/en/articles/view/49798>

5) Statement by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation. (2020, November 10). President.az. <https://president.az/en/articles/view/45923>

6) Jamestown Foundation. (2023, September 20). Azerbaijan moves to disarm Karabakh separatists (Part One). Eurasia Daily Monitor, 20(145). <https://jamestown.org/program/azerbaijan-moves-to-disarm-karabakh-separatists-part-one/>

7) Jamestown Foundation. (2024, April 22). Russia's peacekeeping contingent leaves Karabakh. Eurasia Daily Monitor, 21(61). <https://jamestown.org/program/russias-peacekeeping-contingent-leaves-karabakh/>



These developments profoundly altered the geopolitical landscape of the South Caucasus: they reduced Russia's influence, strengthened the independence of both Armenia and Azerbaijan from Moscow, and opened historic opportunities for peace and prosperity in the region.

### Implications of the 2020 War

The outcomes of the Second Karabakh War and the developments that followed reshaped the regional order in the South Caucasus. For Azerbaijan, the restoration of territorial integrity enabled the government to redirect national resources toward reconstruction, the return of displaced persons, and the consolidation of sovereignty. The war elevated Baku's standing on the international stage, demonstrating its ability to enforce international law through military and diplomatic means. It also enhanced Azerbaijan's role as a key player in regional connectivity projects, strengthening ties with Türkiye and positioning itself as an indispensable partner in East–West and North–South transport corridors.

For Armenia, the war was a national trauma that forced a reckoning with the limits of its foreign and security policy. The loss of the occupied territories undermined the long-standing reliance on Russia as the guarantor of Armenian interests and exposed the costs of Yerevan's confrontational approach toward its neighbors. At the same time, the defeat created space for new political thinking, with growing segments of Armenian society recognizing that durable security and prosperity cannot be achieved through isolationism or maximalist territorial claims. This has encouraged an unprecedented, though contested, reorientation of Armenia's foreign policy away from Russia and toward the West.

At the geopolitical level, the war and its aftermath significantly eroded Russia's influence in the South Caucasus. Moscow's inability to prevent Azerbaijan's military success, coupled with its subsequent withdrawal of peacekeepers in 2024, highlighted the limits of Russian power projection in its so-called near abroad. This vacuum created opportunities for other actors, particularly the United States and the European Union, to assume a more active role in facilitating peace and promoting regional connectivity. Meanwhile, Türkiye's alliance with Azerbaijan grew stronger, embedding the South Caucasus more firmly within Ankara's strategic orbit and further reducing Russian leverage.

Taken together, these shifts point to a historic transformation in the South Caucasus. The region, long seen as a theater of frozen conflicts and great-power rivalries, is now redefining itself as a space where sovereignty, connectivity, and multilateral engagement may take precedence over territorial disputes and external domination. The Second Karabakh War, while destructive, thus created the structural conditions for the peace process that culminated in the Washington agreements of 2025.

### Washington Summit: End of the Conflict?

Thus, while significant uncertainties, risks, and challenges persist in Armenian–Azerbaijani relations and the broader South Caucasus, the region is undoubtedly more peaceful and stable today than it was five years ago. The Washington Summit on August 8 served as the culmination of peace efforts over the past five years and holds the potential to cement this hard-won peace, making it lasting and sustainable.

The agreements signed by the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the United States were hailed by all three leaders as "historic." They were presented as a potential end to the decades-long territorial conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, formalizing mutual recognition of each country's territorial integrity and the inviolability of their borders. The leaders also reached a resolution on one of the most complex issues in recent Armenia–Azerbaijan peace talks: the key transportation corridor connecting mainland Azerbaijan with its Nakhchivan exclave through the southern territory of Armenia. While these agreements have the potential to close a long-standing chapter of the conflict and create opportunities for peace, stability, and security in the region, a range of threats and challenges could still undermine the implementation of these agreements and derail the process with overarching implications for the regional security.



## What Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed upon in Washington?

The Washington Summit held particular importance for the two South Caucasus countries for several reasons. Before their trilateral meeting with the U.S. President, the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders held separate bilateral talks with the United States, signing agreements on a range of strategic issues.

For Baku, a key outcome was the agreement with Washington to establish a Strategic Working Group tasked with preparing a Charter on Strategic Partnership between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United States of America. This document is expected to elevate bilateral relations to a higher level and open new opportunities for cooperation in priority sectors such as energy, connectivity, and artificial intelligence. The two sides also agreed to annul the 907th Amendment to the Freedom Support Act (1992), adopted under the influence of Armenian lobby groups, which prohibited direct U.S. aid to Azerbaijan as long as Azerbaijan maintained its “blockade” of Armenia – although it was Azerbaijan that was subject to the aggression of Armenia in the early 1990s.<sup>8)</sup>

Similarly, Armenia signed bilateral agreements with the United States to deepen cooperation in the same priority sectors – energy, connectivity, and artificial intelligence. However, Yerevan currently holds a slight advantage over Baku in terms of formal bilateral arrangements with Washington. In the final days of the Biden administration, whose leadership openly adopted a pro-Armenian stance on South Caucasus issues, Armenia signed its own Charter on Strategic Partnership with the United States.<sup>9)</sup>

Unlike the Biden administration, Trump holds more neutral and unbiased stance in the relations towards the two countries and seeks to pursue the relations in equal pace. This is primarily affected by the fact that the US geopolitical designs concerning the South Caucasus cannot be implemented without the involvement of Azerbaijan – which the late American statesman Zbigniew Brzezinski once described as “the cork in the bottle containing the riches of the Caspian Sea Basin and Central Asia”.<sup>10)</sup>

Without a doubt, the most consequential outcome of the Washington Summit for the people of the South Caucasus was the set of agreements reached between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The two countries initialed their long-awaited peace treaty, intended to bring a definitive end to their decades-long conflict. The founding principles of the treaty were first proposed by Azerbaijan in March 2022, and the two sides spent three years negotiating its provisions, finalizing the text in March of this year.

However, initialing the treaty does not mean it has been formally signed. Armenia is expected to amend its constitution to remove territorial claims against Azerbaijan before the treaty can be concluded. This process is likely to take at least a year, as Armenia must first hold parliamentary elections.

In Washington, Armenia and Azerbaijan also jointly called for the dissolution of the OSCE Minsk Group – the mediation format established in the early 1990s to address their conflict. The decision to disband this body removed yet another obstacle on the path toward signing the peace treaty.<sup>11)</sup>

8) U.S. Congress. Senate. (1992). Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets Support Act of 1992, S. 2532, 102nd Cong. (Public Law No. 102-511, 106 Stat. 3320). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/102nd-congress/senate-bill/2532/text>

9) U.S. Embassy in Armenia. (2025, January 15). Charter on Strategic Partnership Between the United States of America and the Republic of Armenia. U.S. Embassy in Armenia. <https://am.usembassy.gov/charter-on-strategic-partnership-between-the-united-states-of-america-and-the-republic-of-armenia/>

10) Brzezinski, Z. K. (1997). The grand chessboard: American primacy and its geostrategic imperatives. Basic Books.

11) Azatutyun. (2025, September 1). OSCE Minsk Group on Karabakh Dissolved. Azatutyun. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33518888.html>

However, perhaps the most debated agreement reached in Washington was the one concerning the transportation link between mainland Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan exclave – until recently known as the Zangezur corridor. First proposed in the Russia–Armenia–Azerbaijan trilateral statement signed after the Second Karabakh War on November 10, 2020, the corridor was originally intended to provide unimpeded passage between the two parts of Azerbaijan and to be operated under the control of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) Border Guards.<sup>12)</sup> For Moscow, this arrangement carried immense geopolitical significance, as it would have cemented Russia's presence in the region and placed it in a pivotal position to oversee transport links not only between Azerbaijan and Türkiye, but also between Europe, Central Asia, and China. Since 2020, Russia has consistently emphasized the trilateral statement as the indispensable foundation for any agreement on the Zangezur corridor<sup>13)</sup>

Today, however, the reality looks very different. The corridor will open, but the trilateral statement has virtually vanished from public discourse. Moreover, it will now bear the name of the U.S. President – officially designated the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) – and will be placed under U.S. control for at least 99 years.<sup>14)</sup> The specific arrangements for the route, including its operational modalities and security provisions, remain to be negotiated and are likely to remain confidential until the final agreement is reached. What is clear, however, is that the third-party guarantor of its security and oversight will be the United States, not Russia, as originally envisaged.

The implementation of these agreements – particularly the one on the Trump Route – will fundamentally reshape relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and, more broadly, the geopolitical landscape of the South Caucasus. In an ideal scenario, this would create a favorable environment for lasting peace between the two countries, open avenues for regional economic integration, and strengthen economic ties both within the South Caucasus and with the wider region stretching from Central Asia to Europe.

Moreover, under the TRIPP project, the United States would serve as the guarantor of these agreements, helping to prevent the “divide and rule” strategies of other powers. Yet, despite these promising prospects, a range of challenges could hinder or complicate the implementation of the Washington agreements.

### **An uncertain future lies ahead for the South Caucasus**

The challenges to implementing the Washington agreements stem from both local and geopolitical factors. At the local level, they are closely tied to Armenia's domestic political situation. The signing of the peace treaty depends on a constitutional amendment in Armenia, a process likely to be complicated by the fateful parliamentary elections scheduled for June 2026. Russia-backed opposition parties, clerical circles, and diaspora groups fiercely oppose the Western-backed peace agenda, portraying it as a capitulation.<sup>15)</sup>

12) Statement by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation. (2020, November 10). President.az. <https://president.az/en/articles/view/45923>

13) Zakharova, M. (2025, August 9). Comment by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on the talks between Azerbaijani and Armenian leaders in Washington (United States). Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. [https://mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/news/2040852/](https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/2040852/)

14) Avdaliani, E. (2025, August 13). Trump's Road TRIPP delivers a deal. Center for European Policy Analysis. <https://cepa.org/article/trumps-road-tripp-delivers-a-peace-deal/>

15) Huseynov, V. (2025, September 8). Peace in South Caucasus closer after the Washington summit, but uncertainties loom. Jamestown Foundation. <https://jamestown.org/program/peace-in-south-caucasus-closer-after-the-washington-summit-but-uncertainties-loom/>



Prime Minister Pashinyan's government will need to mount an effective election campaign to overcome these forces – an uphill task given his low approval ratings. The standoff between the government and opposition could turn violent, particularly if externally supported elements intervene. Pashinyan's defeat in the elections and the rise of a pro-Russian political group would likely derail the Washington agreements, especially the Trump Route and the constitutional amendment. However, it is reasonable to expect that many Armenians, weary of the long-standing conflict, will reject the appeals of radical forces advocating hostility toward neighbors over peace and reconciliation. The choices the people of Armenia make in the coming year will therefore be decisive for the smooth implementation of the peace agenda.

On the geopolitical front, the process faces further headwinds. While Türkiye and Georgia – the South Caucasus' immediate neighbors – along with the European Union and nearly all other countries worldwide, have welcomed the Washington agreements, two critical players have not: Russia and Iran. Both have traditionally opposed Western involvement in South Caucasus affairs, promoting instead the formula of "regional solutions to regional problems."<sup>16)</sup> The events in Washington on 8 August went well beyond the red lines they have implicitly drawn in the region.

In a telephone call with his Armenian counterpart, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned against any geopolitical changes in the South Caucasus resulting from the Washington agreements.<sup>17)</sup> While President Ebrahim Raisi's administration maintained a cautious official tone, radical circles in Iran did not mince words, openly threatening the countries involved in the Trump Route with military action. "This passage will not become a gateway for Trump's mercenaries — it will become their graveyard," declared Ali Akbar Velayati, senior advisor to the Supreme Leader. Ali Bagheri-Kani, a member of the Foreign Ministry's Strategic Council, told state television that Iran would respond "regardless of whether Russia participated or not."<sup>18)</sup> Meanwhile, Iranian state-controlled media denounced the corridor agreement as an act of betrayal and urged the government to take countermeasures.

However, Iran is unlikely to be able to stop it on its own without Russia's involvement. In a similar vein to Iran's reaction, Russian media, along with political and expert circles, characterized the corridor deal as a "betrayal" and a "stab in the back." While the official response was more measured, calling for respect for the interests and concerns of neighboring countries, semi-official groups urged the government to take all possible measures to prevent what they described as the United States' "encroachment" into Russia's "sphere of influence."<sup>19)</sup>

This situation poses serious risks to peace and security in the South Caucasus. Disrupting the regional balance of power and antagonizing Russia and Iran could jeopardize the sustainable implementation of the agreements reached at the White House. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan are clearly aware of these dangers. In particular, the government of Armenia, on whose territory the Trump corridor will operate, has reached out to both Tehran and Moscow, seeking to assure them that the opening of the Trump Corridor will not threaten their interests.

Yerevan has previously rejected Russia's involvement in the corridor, arguing that the trilateral statement of November 2020 has lost its relevance.<sup>20)</sup> This stance, coupled with Armenia's broader drift toward the West under Prime Minister Pashinyan, stands in clear contradiction to the country's commitments within the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

16) Shoigu, S. (2025, August 9). Sergey Shoigu: Regional problems require regional solutions. Collective Security Treaty Organization Parliamentary Assembly. <https://pacsto.org/events/sergey-shoigu-regionalnym-problemam-neobhodimy-regionalnye-resheniya>

17) Araghchi, S. (2025, August 11). Iran says 'corridor' off the table, Armenian transit road planned. PanARMENIAN.Net. <https://panarmenian.net/eng/news/325311>

18) Iran International. (2025, August 9). Iran vows to block Trump-brokered Caucasus corridor 'with or without Russia'. <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202508093340>

19) Huseynov, V. (2025, August 12). The Washington summit reshapes the regional order in the South Caucasus. CommonSpace.eu. <https://www.commonspace.eu/index.php/opinion/washington-summit-reshapes-regional-order-south-caucasus>

20) Pashinyan, N. (2024, October 12). Unacceptable to single out one article when others are unfulfilled, PM Pashinyan says on 2020 trilateral statement. Armenpress. <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1202121>

As a result, the verbal assurances offered by the Armenian government to Iran and Russia are unlikely to fully assuage their concerns or resentment. Nevertheless, they at least indicate that these concerns are not being ignored. Such diplomatic outreach is essential; without it, the Washington agreements could precipitate a greater security crisis in the South Caucasus instead of ending regional conflicts and fostering lasting peace.

That said, the Washington agreements mark a significant step toward resolving the decades-long conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, addressing both the peace treaty and the establishment of the Trump Route connecting mainland Azerbaijan with Nakhchivan. While welcomed by many regional and global actors, the agreements face considerable obstacles. Domestically, Armenia's constitutional amendment process and the upcoming 2026 parliamentary elections create uncertainty, with strong opposition from pro-Russian political forces, clerical circles, and parts of the diaspora.

Geopolitically, Russia and Iran view the agreements – particularly U.S. oversight of the corridor – as a challenge to their influence in the South Caucasus, prompting harsh rhetoric and threats. Armenia has sought to reassure both powers, but its pivot toward the West and rejection of Russian involvement have created deep distrust and sparked tensions. Whether the Washington agreements bring lasting peace or trigger new instability will depend on how these local and geopolitical challenges unfold in the coming years.

## Conclusion

The developments since the Second Karabakh War in 2020 have transformed the South Caucasus more profoundly than at any other time since the collapse of the Soviet Union. What once seemed an intractable conflict has, for the first time in three decades, entered a stage where peace is not only conceivable but institutionally anchored in agreements reached by the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan with the active mediation of the United States. The Washington Summit of August 8, 2025, represents the culmination of years of painful struggle, military confrontation, and difficult diplomacy, making it a true watershed in the modern history of the region.

The end of Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijani territories fundamentally altered the balance of power, removing the central obstacle to peace. The liberation of Karabakh, followed by the dismantling of the separatist regime and the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers, opened the way for new opportunities and allowed both Armenia and Azerbaijan to reorient their foreign and domestic priorities. For Azerbaijan, it meant the restoration of sovereignty, the start of massive reconstruction efforts, and the promise of return for hundreds of thousands of displaced citizens. For Armenia, it brought painful but necessary recognition that its long-term security and prosperity could only be achieved within internationally recognized borders, not through territorial expansion dependent on Russia's patronage.

The geopolitical reverberations of this transformation are equally significant. Russia's retreat from Karabakh marked a decisive weakening of its leverage in the South Caucasus, while the entry of the United States as guarantor of the Trump Route reshaped the external power dynamics of the region. Although Moscow and Tehran have voiced opposition, the reality is that the South Caucasus is no longer locked in their sphere of influence. Instead, it has become a stage for competing visions: one based on peace, connectivity, and integration with the wider world, and another rooted in outdated notions of geopolitical dominance. Which of these visions prevails will define the region's trajectory for decades to come.

Yet, while much has been achieved, the path forward is fraught with uncertainty. Armenia's domestic political environment remains fragile, with pro-Russian opposition forces seeking to reverse the peace agenda. The constitutional amendment necessary for the treaty's ratification will be a litmus test of Armenian society's readiness to embrace reconciliation. Similarly, Azerbaijan faces the immense challenge of rebuilding the war-torn territories, ensuring the safe return of displaced populations, and managing relations with external powers in a volatile geopolitical environment.



Despite these challenges, the broader picture suggests that the South Caucasus has never been closer to genuine stability. The symbolic and practical significance of the Washington agreements cannot be overstated. They promise not only the end of one of the post-Soviet space's bloodiest conflicts but also the beginning of a new era of cooperation, connectivity, and economic integration stretching from the Caspian to the Mediterranean. If successfully implemented, they can transform the region from a zone of recurring wars into a corridor of peace and prosperity.

In conclusion, the Second Karabakh War, painful though it was, created the preconditions for an enduring peace that diplomacy alone had failed to achieve for decades. The Washington Summit has now formalized these gains and charted a path toward reconciliation. Much will depend on the political will of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the resilience of their societies, and the ability of external actors to support – rather than undermine – the process. Five years after the war, the South Caucasus is undeniably in a better place. Whether this moment becomes a lasting turning point or a missed opportunity will be determined in the critical years ahead.