

Azerbaijan's Expanding Role in Regional Mediation

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In the light of contemporary geopolitical shifts and rivalries between states that significantly constrain the capacity of the UN Secretariat and, more broadly, the UN System, to lead or coordinate mediation efforts, what was once regarded as the cornerstone of multilateral peacekeeping and mediation has largely fallen to the wayside.

In recent years, a clear trend has emerged: a growing number of states are adopting mediation as a strategic extension of their foreign policy, pursuing it both to elevate their international standing and to bolster national and regional security. By positioning themselves as credible intermediaries between rival powers, these countries aim to protect their interests and avoid being caught in the crossfire of great-power competition.

Several recent developments highlight the expanding role of individual countries in global conflict resolution. Türkiye has played a leading part in facilitating dialogue between Somalia and Ethiopia over the Somaliland issue. Qatar and Egypt (plus the United States) have been at the forefront of recent efforts to negotiate a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. Saudi Arabia has taken on a central role in efforts to end the civil war in Sudan, the United Arab Emirates has been instrumental in brokering a prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine, while the United States has positioned itself as the sole actor that can capably mediate the end of the war between Russia and Ukraine that began its present phase in February 2022.

Located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Azerbaijan has also effectively capitalized on its geographic position to serve as a bridge between competing political, economic, and cultural spheres. Azerbaijan advanced transportation infrastructure—including

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the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway, the Baku International Sea Trade Port, and the well-developed energy pipelines network—has solidified its role as an important transit and logistics hub linking the Silk Road region with global markets. Beyond infrastructure, Azerbaijan has successfully gained considerable geopolitical leverage by taking advantage of its oil and natural gas exports, allowing Baku to engage with a diverse range of partners across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.

The country’s diplomatic strategy and efforts have been equally important in expanding its international profile. By maintaining balanced relations with regional powers such as Türkiye, Russia, and Iran, while simultaneously deepening cooperation with Western institutions and Asian strategic partners like China, Azerbaijan has positioned itself as a reliable interlocutor capable of facilitating dialogue among states with divergent interests.

This balancing act has enabled Baku to host a growing number of high-level summits, international events such as COP29, and negotiation tracks, reinforcing its image as a neutral and pragmatic venue for conflict mediation and international cooperation.

In recent years, Azerbaijan has undergone a notable transformation in its international posture, evolving from a primarily regional actor into an increasingly influential mediator in both regional and global affairs. This shift reflects Baku’s deliberate pursuit of what can be described as “smart diplomacy”—a nuanced and pragmatic approach that leverages the country’s strategic geography, economic potential, and balanced foreign policy to enhance its global standing.

This IDD Analytical Policy Brief will discuss and analyze Baku’s recent mediation and facilitation efforts, and the resulting political and diplomatic implications for Azerbaijan and the region.

Mediation in the Conflict Over Ukraine

Baku’s initial attempts at mediation were expressed by President Ilham Aliyev back in December 2024, in an [interview](#) with a Russian television channel: “I hope things do not escalate to a direct confrontation between NATO and Russia. [...] As for Azerbaijan’s commitments, we take all our responsibilities as seriously as possible and will continue to do so. I believe Azerbaijan can contribute to the cause of détente—a somewhat forgotten term. I think this word is increasingly relevant in the international lexicon today, and I hope it will be used more frequently. Due to the unique nature of Azerbaijan’s foreign policy, and the fact that Azerbaijan is seen as an entirely independent player in both the West and the East, it is positioned to play a distinct role. Azerbaijan is the only country that is an ally of both Russia and Türkiye, a NATO member. No other nation holds such a position.” (The completion of a strategic partnership with the United States, negotiations on which are ongoing,

would further strengthen this argument.) In fact, Azerbaijan has previously served as a venue for meetings between the Chief of the Russian General Staff and the Chair of NATO's Military Committee.

Azerbaijan's diplomatic activism also extended to the realm of energy negotiations. According to [Reuters](#), the EU and Ukraine had approached Baku to help mediate discussions with Russia regarding the gas transit agreement set to expire at the end of 2024. Presidential Advisor Hikmet Hajiyev confirmed Azerbaijan's involvement, emphasizing that the country had acted as a facilitator in the process. This development further highlights Azerbaijan's capacity to balance competing interests while enhancing its strategic importance as both an energy partner and a diplomatic intermediary in the Silk Road region.

As Azerbaijan is not aligned with any military-political alliances such as NATO or the CSTO and cultivated relations of mutual trust with both Moscow and Kyiv, Baku has been viewed as a potential intermediary in discussions over Russian gas supplies to Europe. During a meeting with President Aliyev in Munich in February of 2024, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky invited Baku to help mediate the gas issue. Subsequent consultations were held between Azerbaijani and Ukrainian experts. Although the matter remains unresolved, the important takeaway is that Azerbaijan assumed a mediating role—one that both parties have expressed confidence in.

On 26 July 2025, Hikmet Hajiyev [indicated](#) that Azerbaijan stands ready to serve as a venue for prospective peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, contingent upon mutual consent from both parties. His remarks highlighted Baku's evolving function as a regional diplomatic nexus, reinforced by its prior experience in hosting high-level engagements involving states and actors with divergent interests—including Türkiye, Israel, Syria, Russia, and NATO. This statement not only reflects Azerbaijan's intent to contribute constructively to conflict resolution efforts but also underscores its broader strategy of consolidating its status as a credible facilitator and mediator in complex geopolitical dialogues.

Mediation in the Middle East

The next round of rise in Azerbaijan's diplomatic engagements happened in May 2025, which included the announced visits of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (subsequently postponed), and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

It is worth noting that Azerbaijan has shown a remarkable ability to sustain stable and mutually advantageous relations with states that are in conflict with one another. Its partnership with Israel is consistent and extends beyond political engagement to encompass cooperation in the energy and defense sectors. As a continuation of deep

cooperation with Israel for years, especially in defense, intelligence, and technology, ties were strengthened even further after Israel's role in supporting Azerbaijan during the 2020 Second Karabagh War. At the same time, Baku has never taken a hostile stance toward Syria and was seeking to engage with the war-torn nation through energy projects and infrastructure assistance.

Another important visit took place on 12 July 2025, when Ahmad Al-Sharaa, the Transitional President of Syria, came to Baku for a two-day official visit, marking a notable step in Azerbaijan's expanding diplomatic outreach. The meeting focused on energy cooperation, particularly Azerbaijan's plan to supply natural gas to Syria via Türkiye and help rebuild its devastated energy infrastructure.

Before this visit, already in June 2025, Hajiyev had confirmed that Baku has hosted more than three rounds of talks between Türkiye and Israel, who are both operating militarily in Syria, to reduce what they see as security threats. "Azerbaijan is making diplomatic efforts for an agreement," Hajiyev [told](#) Turkish journalists in Baku on a visit organized by the Istanbul-based Global Journalism Council.

The planned visit of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Azerbaijan was postponed in light of escalating tensions in Gaza and Syria; however, the delay did not diminish the significance of the announced visit. It has acquired even greater strategic importance amid intensifying Iran-Israel tensions. According to [reports](#) in the Israeli media, the agenda for the Baku meeting was expected to include discussions on Azerbaijan's potential role as a mediator in the normalization of Turkish-Israeli relations, as well as the prospect of incorporating Azerbaijan into the framework of the *Abraham Accords*.

The Abraham Accords are a set of landmark diplomatic accords that the United States mediated in 2020, mostly under the Trump administration, with the aim of normalizing ties between Israel and a number of Arab states. These agreements, which were first signed by Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain and later joined by Morocco and Sudan, marked a significant change in the geopolitics of the Middle East. They essentially broke with the long-standing Arab agreement that a definitive resolution to the Palestinian problem should be a prerequisite for normalization with Israel. Israel agreed to halt its aspirations to annex portions of the West Bank in return for official diplomatic recognition and increased economic and security cooperation.

The Abraham Accords have reshaped regional alignments beyond their immediate diplomatic results by promoting practical alliances focused on counterbalancing Iran's influence and shared security. Given this newly reshaped environment, Azerbaijan is positioned as a possible interlocutor for its foreign policy course and developing reputation as a reliable mediator. Baku has a distinct diplomatic edge thanks to its close links to Israel and important Muslim-majority nations like Türkiye, as well as its interactions

with Western and Middle Eastern players. Thus, formal or informal, Azerbaijan would benefit from involvement as it would raise its profile internationally and support its larger plan to advance regional stability through energy-based diplomacy, multilateral collaboration, and constructive engagement.

According to multiple reports, Israeli and Syrian officials are expected to hold a security meeting in Baku in September 2025. Israel has already submitted to Syria a comprehensive proposal for a new security arrangement, which includes a map designating demilitarized zones extending from southwest Damascus to the Israeli border. This proposal is said to be inspired by the 1979 Israel–Egypt peace treaty, which divided the Sinai Peninsula into three zones with different levels of demilitarization based on their distance from Israel’s border.

In recent months, Baku has increasingly become an important platform for indirect and direct talks between Syrian and Israeli representatives, with Azerbaijan actively mediating the process.

Subsequent discussions have centered on regional security dynamics, particularly in southern Syria—an area of strategic importance to both nations. The United States has reportedly supported these efforts, encouraged continued dialogue, and provided diplomatic assistance.

Azerbaijan’s involvement in facilitating discreet meetings and consultations between Syrian and Israeli representatives, as well as its contribution to establishing a communication “hotline” aimed at reducing tensions between Türkiye and Israel over the Syrian question, exemplifies its growing proficiency in the practice of quiet diplomacy. This approach underscores Baku’s capacity to mediate sensitive regional issues through behind-the-scenes engagement rather than overt political maneuvering, further consolidating its reputation as a pragmatic and balanced actor within the evolving geopolitical landscape of the Middle East and the Silk Road region.

A Way Forward

Political mediation provides states with notable benefits in terms of global reputation, security, and influence. Serving as a neutral intermediary in conflicts enhances a country’s image as a responsible and credible actor in international affairs, thereby strengthening its soft power and diplomatic standing. Mediation also grants access to high-level diplomatic discussions and decisionmaking forums, while increasing the mediator’s leverage with major powers and international organizations.

On 12 October 2025, Aliyev’s participation at the Peace Summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, where he had been invited by U.S. President Donald Trump and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, was a clear indicator of Baku’s emergence as a proactive contributor to

globally endorsed decisions and a significant actor in shaping the international agenda. His participation strengthened Azerbaijan's role in the Middle East.

Notably, Azerbaijan's emerging mediation role has opened the door to broader diplomatic opportunities, allowing Baku to position itself not only as a regional actor but as a constructive security partner on the international stage. As the negotiations on stabilizing the situation in Gaza through the composition of a peacekeeping force are currently ongoing, no country has yet made a formal commitment. However, various public reports have emerged that Azerbaijan is ready to provide a substantial contingent to the US-backed stabilization force, along with Indonesia, Pakistan, and Türkiye. The discussion of a potential Gaza deployment fits into this trajectory: it draws on Azerbaijan's track record of participating in international peacekeeping missions, particularly its longstanding contribution in Afghanistan, where Azerbaijani troops helped secure the Kabul airport for years, ultimately playing a dramatic role during the withdrawal of Western forces ordered by the Biden Administration.

At the regional level, mediation promotes stability by mitigating risks of conflict spillover—such as border tensions or economic disruptions—and positions the mediator as a force for stability rather than a potential flashpoint. Economically, acting as a mediator can attract foreign investment and stimulate development by projecting an image of reliability and calm, as well as by generating tangible benefits from hosting negotiations and international events.

For small and medium-sized states like Azerbaijan, mediation serves as a means of balancing the influence of larger powers and achieving greater visibility in global politics. Collectively, these advantages demonstrate that mediation functions both as a strategic instrument of diplomacy and a practical tool of statecraft, enabling countries to extend their international influence while safeguarding national and regional interests.

Azerbaijan's growing diplomatic prominence is far from accidental as its strategic partnerships and balanced relations with main powers have contributed its transformation into a reliable actor—a safe pair of hands, as the saying goes. Baku's involvement in diplomatic activity between states that are entangled in complex geopolitical disputes reflects its expanding position within the regional diplomatic landscape. Thanks to its longstanding adaptable approach to energy policy and regional security, Baku now seems poised to take on a mediating role between states in conflict.

Azerbaijan's participation in these processes, even in an advisory capacity, signals a shift in the regional balance of power—enhancing Baku's credibility as a mediator and deepening its engagement with partners, both Western and non-Western. This development is especially significant given the tense dynamics among Iran, Israel, and Türkiye. Through a combination of strategic transactionalism, economic connectivity, and diplomatic pragmatism, Azerbaijan is steadily carving out a distinct role in global

affairs. Its approach demonstrates how smaller states can transcend traditional power limitations by cultivating a multifaceted foreign policy rooted in mediation, cooperation, and regional stability. As global rivalries intensify and competition for influence deepens, Baku's model of adaptive, interest-based diplomacy underscores a broader trend toward diversified diplomatic engagement in the modern world.

Furthermore, Baku's recent mediating initiatives have solidified its image as a pragmatic actor seeking to promote stability through engagement and dialogue. By aligning its foreign policy with the principles of neutrality, flexibility, and mutual benefit, Baku continues to expand its geopolitical relevance and assert its role as a key mediator in an increasingly complex international system, replacing the much-vaunted "rules-based" liberal international order that arose in the wake of the end of the Cold War.