

America's Blueprint for Peace, Power, and Purpose in the South Caucasus

Peter Marko Tase

As Washington debates the implications of renewed U.S. leverage in the Western Hemisphere—where pressure, diplomacy, and energy interests are converging after years of stalemate—America's foreign policy effectiveness is increasingly being tested in other parts of the world.

From the Caribbean to the Caspian, Brussels to Beijing, Tel Aviv to Tehran, the question is the same: Can the United States still translate power into durable outcomes? In the South Caucasus, an affirmative answer has now fully taken shape.

Strategic Partnership

In a historic development, U.S. Vice President JD Vance is visiting Baku to enshrine a strategic partnership with Azerbaijan. The Charter that formalized this heightened level of ties that Vance signed heralded, he [said](#), the onset of a “stronger and even better relationship” between the two countries. Vance arrived in Azerbaijan from Armenia, where he held talks with the country’s leadership and even [endorsed](#) the prime minister’s reelection whilst signing agreements in areas such as the transfer of U.S. nuclear technology and the tech and connectivity sectors.

The South Caucasus rarely makes front-page news in America—until a president decides that “far away” does not mean “not our business.” That moment [came in August 2025](#), when U.S. President Donald Trump brought together Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev

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and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and helped move their long-simmering conflict toward a durable settlement. What followed was not symbolism, but substance: decisive American leadership replacing decades of diplomatic inertia.

The White House-brokered peace agreement signed last August marked a turning point. As IDD's Damjan Krnjević wrote in the pages of [The National Interest](#), "Trump succeeded where all previous U.S. administrations and other outside players had failed [...]. He and Steve Witkoff's team designed the deal to effectively combine conflict resolution, peacemaking, transport and energy connectivity, commercial opportunities, and respect for everyone's sovereignty. The latter was the secret ingredient Trump's diplomacy added—the piece that had always been missing in previous attempts by outsiders to broker peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan." In Baku, Vance [put it](#) this way: "The core of the President of the United States' mission and foreign policy is this recognition: that we can organize around shared interests and actually build something great with one another.

The result: After years of stalled negotiations, frozen processes, and outside manipulation, Armenia and Azerbaijan committed, in writing, to peace, full normalization, and the reopening of regional transport and connectivity routes. The result was not merely a ceasefire mindset, but a strategic framework for peace and stability that Vice President Vance in Yerevan characterized as "[visionary](#)." Since August last year, concrete progress has been steady, measurable, and increasingly irreversible. The outcomes of the Baku visit will surely be groundbreaking, as well.

Cornerstone of Regional "Peace Through Strength"

Enduring peace in the South Caucasus is not just a humanitarian aspiration. It's a strategic asset—not just for the United States, but for Armenia and Azerbaijan as well. It shrinks the space for Russian coercion, constrains Iranian influence, and unlocks new economic corridors linking Europe and Asia. This is "peace through strength" in practice—security dividends earned through American engagement, not abdication.

One of the clearest indicators that the White House peace agreement was more than a ceremonial moment is the sustained and structured diplomatic follow-through between Washington and Baku. After the U.S. and Azerbaijan signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) establishing a Strategic Working Group tasked with developing a Charter on Strategic Partnership, the first formal meeting of the working group was held in December 2025—underscoring that this process is governed by timelines, not platitudes. Its public unveiling in Baku last night demonstrates, like nothing before, America's commitment to its burgeoning ties to Azerbaijan.

Recent high-level engagement has reinforced that seriousness. Since last August, there have been at least four senior Azerbaijani delegations to Washington and multiple

American delegations to Baku. President Aliyev himself traveled to the U.S. twice—once to Washington, D.C., and again to New York for the U.N. General Assembly. Azerbaijani delegations included members of parliament; the Prosecutor General; the Ministers of Economy, Energy, Education, and Digital Development and Transport; as well as Sheikhulislam Allahshukur Pashazade, the spiritual leader of the region's Muslim communities. On the American side, U.S. Congressional delegations and business leaders have visited Azerbaijan, signaling bipartisan and commercial interest in deepening ties.

This diplomatic momentum is mirrored on the ground. In October 2025, Azerbaijan lifted restrictions on cargo transit to Armenia—an unthinkable move only a short time ago. Even more striking, Azerbaijan achieved a historic milestone with its first oil shipment to Armenia, followed by a [second shipment](#). More will surely follow. These are not symbolic gestures; they're tangible confidence-building measures that transform former adversaries into economic stakeholders in peace.

Equally important is the people-to-people dimension. Last October and November, Azerbaijani and Armenian civil society representatives conducted reciprocal visits to each other's countries, holding meetings and exchanges that would have been politically impossible in the past. These interactions lay the social groundwork that durable peace requires—trust built not only by governments, but by citizens.

Regional leaders have taken notice. In a recent interview, President Aliyev described 2025 as a historic year in U.S.-Azerbaijan relations, explicitly crediting President Trump's role in advancing normalization. He emphasized that Azerbaijan initiated the peace agenda and remains committed to seeing it through—an important rebuttal to claims that regional actors lack ownership of the process.

Strategically, stronger U.S.-Azerbaijan relations are long overdue. Azerbaijan sits at the crossroads of Europe and Asia—the only country to share a border with Iran, Russia, and Türkiye. Geography alone makes it indispensable to any serious American strategy for stability in the Silk Road region (core Eurasia). Add to that Azerbaijan's role as a major oil and natural gas supplier—and a cornerstone of the Southern Gas Corridor, designed to bring Caspian energy to Europe—and the strategic logic becomes unavoidable.

But Azerbaijan is not only an energy supplier. It has demonstrated itself to be a reliable and trustworthy partner on the international stage. For example, Azerbaijan became a founding member of President Trump's Board of Peace. Its pragmatic foreign policy, moderate Muslim-majority identity, and willingness to cooperate with Western institutions make it a stabilizing force in a volatile neighborhood. The [inauguration of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Azerbaijan](#) in November 2025 further highlighted the country's record of religious tolerance—an often-overlooked but strategically relevant asset.

Harbinger of Strategic Trade Relations

On 12 January 2026, Azerbaijan's Deputy Minister of Digital Development and Transport, Sameddin F. Asadov, welcomed to Baku a high-level U.S. Delegation led by Carl B. Kress, Regional Director of the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA).

This emblematic bilateral meeting was held at the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport where mutual trade, industrial and regional economic projects were discussed.

Deputy Minister Asadov expressed his satisfaction with the increasingly productive strategic cooperation between Azerbaijan and the United States. The delegations explored opportunities for cooperation in railway infrastructure, telecommunications, space technologies, and the construction of data centers for artificial intelligence applications. These and other areas had been enumerated during the historic meeting between presidents Aliyev and Trump at the White House on 8 August 2025.

Regional Director Kress held meetings with several other senior Azerbaijani officials, including Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Elnur Mammadov. The discussion covered areas such as energy, trade, regional connections (including the [TRIPP](#) route), economic investment, and efforts to promote information to U.S. private sector representatives with relevant infrastructure and logistics interests in Azerbaijan.

Furthermore, the role of Azerbaijan in the energy security of the region, was elevated as the nation is focused to developing renewable energy resources, the diversification of trade routes in the Middle Corridor, as well as the existing favorable business and investment environment in Azerbaijan, including the opportunities for establishing new relations.

The Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) was the centerpiece of these discussions, and Baku's diplomacy and economic policies are pivotal towards a more prosperous and peaceful South Caucasus and Eastern Europe.

The recent 60-member U.S. business delegation visit to Azerbaijan, led by Khush Choksi, Senior Vice President of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, speaks to this point. The delegation represents 31 U.S. companies in energy, technology, food production, and transportation, including Apple, Ericsson, ExxonMobil, Meta, Visa, Boeing Global, Honeywell, JPMorgan, Mastercard, Shell, bp, Motorola Solutions, and others. "The South Caucasus and Central Asia are in the focus of heightened interest for U.S. companies," Choksi told journalists in Baku.

Indispensable Azerbaijan

The Trump Administration recognizes Azerbaijan's immense geopolitical and geoeconomic potential at a time when the U.S. President is projecting and forging a new

balance of power in the Western Hemisphere, the Middle East, and South Asia. The Charter on Strategic Partnership signed on 10 February 2026 by President Aliyev and Vice President Vance is testimony of an exceptional and multifaceted political-economic partnership that will certainly flourish and help ensure durable peace in the South Caucasus.

The Trump-Vance Administration has made its decision: The South Caucasus is becoming a strategic bridge for commerce, energy, and stability. America's leaders clearly understand that the absence of sustained U.S. leadership in the region opens the door to it becoming a battleground for Russian intimidation and Iranian subversion. This is not in the American interest. And it's not in the national interests of Armenia and Azerbaijan, either.

Peace, when backed by power and purpose, isn't naïve. It's strategic. President Trump helped open the door to a more stable South Caucasus in August 2025. The diplomacy that has followed shows that the U.S. is prepared not only to open that door but also to walk through it—advancing American interests while helping to secure enduring peace, durable security, and lasting prosperity.