

The Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Treaty: Obstacles and Prospects

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Recent developments between Armenia and Azerbaijan could mark a turning point in the regional dynamics of the South Caucasus. On March 13, 2025, both countries confirmed their readiness to sign a bilateral peace treaty, raising the possibility of a peaceful resolution to their decades-long conflict. This development is particularly significant, not only as an independent process within the South Caucasus, but also for its broader implications on the geopolitical landscape of the region. Furthermore, these events unfold against the backdrop of Russia's declining influence in Armenia-Azerbaijan relations due to its war in Ukraine, the EU's active efforts to strengthen cooperation along the so-called Middle Corridor - which would connect Europe and Asia via an alternative route - and Türkiye's ambitions to become a key player in the wider European region.

The potential normalization of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations comes at a time when the international community's attention is focused on several other conflict zones, from Ukraine to the Middle East. In this context, the South Caucasus stands as a strategic crossroads where the interests of regional powers—Russia, Türkiye, and Iran—intersect with those of the European Union and the United States. The proposed peace treaty could significantly shift the balance of power in the region, opening borders that have been closed for decades, creating new transport routes, and transforming economic ties.

Conditions of the Peace Treaty

On March 13, 2025, Armenia and Azerbaijan confirmed their readiness to sign a bilateral peace treaty aimed at transforming the long-standing conflict between the two countries into a peace-oriented framework. Discussions on this issue, including specific proposals, began in late 2021. In March 2022, Azerbaijan presented a 5-point peace plan to Armenia, which included the following key issues:²

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² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan (March 14, 2022). No:117/22, Head of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan Leyla Abdullayeva answers the media's question. Accessible at: <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no11722>

1. Mutual recognition of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, inviolability of internationally recognized borders and political independence of each other;
2. Mutual confirmation of the absence of territorial claims against each other and acceptance of legally binding obligations not to raise such a claim in future;
3. Obligation to refrain in their inter-State relations from undermining the security of each other, from threat or use of force both against political independence and territorial integrity, and in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the UN Charter;
4. Delimitation and demarcation of the state border, and establishment of the diplomatic relations;
5. Unblocking of the transportation and other communications, building other communications as appropriate, and establishment of cooperation in other fields of mutual interest.

In response to the above-mentioned proposal, the Armenian Foreign Ministry appealed to the OSCE Minsk Group,³ requesting the organization of negotiations to finalize the peace plan.⁴ However, despite the proposals put forward by Azerbaijan, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan emphasized that the peace plan was incomplete and needed to address several additional issues. According to him, in addition to the five points outlined, it is of fundamental importance for Armenia that the negotiations include "guarantees for the security of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, the protection of their rights and freedoms, as well as the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh."⁵ In response to these Armenian conditions, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev asserted that Armenia must recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan's territory, and that the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh would become citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan without being granted special status, independence, or privileges.⁶

From spring 2022 to September 2023, when Azerbaijan fully regained control over Nagorno-Karabakh, several rounds of negotiations were held under the mediation of the United States, the European Union,

³ The OSCE Minsk Group was established in 1992 with the aim of peacefully resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The group is co-chaired by Russia, France, and the United States. In addition, it includes Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland, and Türkiye, along with Armenia and Azerbaijan.

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia (March 14, 2022). Statement by the RA Foreign Ministry. Accessible at: https://www.mfa.am/hy/interviews-articles-and-comments/2022/03/14/Statement_MFA/11345

⁵ Armenpress (April 7, 2025). Pashinyan presents the principled issues that should become subject of negotiations with Azerbaijan. Accessible at: <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1080058>

⁶ Azertac (August 13, 2025). Azerbaijani President: Armenians living in Karabakh will have no status, no independence and no special privilege. Accessible at: https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Azerbaijani_President_Armenians_living_in_Karabakh_will_have_no_status_no_independence_and_no_special_privilege-2252000

and Russia. While some progress was made, no peace agreement was reached.⁷ After September 2023, negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan shifted to a more bilateral format. For example, in December 2023, the two sides agreed to a prisoner exchange based on a bilateral agreement. Armenia also supported Azerbaijan's hosting of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP29). However, Azerbaijan was more inclined than Armenia to move the negotiations to a bilateral format. From Baku's perspective, international mediators, especially amid Russian-Western competition, were seen as motivated more by their own geopolitical interests than by the goal of establishing peace in the Caucasus. For Armenia, engaging in negotiations alone with the much more powerful Azerbaijan,⁸ without guarantees, was less acceptable. Nevertheless, considering the possible risks perceived by the Armenian people after the loss of Nagorno-Karabakh, in the absence of a peace agreement, the Armenian government ultimately agreed to pursue a bilateral format.

In October 2024, following US-mediated talks, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev reaffirmed Azerbaijan's opposition to the involvement of any third party, particularly the West, in the peace process. He accused the United States of bias and double standards towards Armenia and made similar accusations against France, which he claimed was a strong supporter of Armenia rather than acting as a neutral mediator.⁹ By this time, it was known that the potential peace treaty consisted of 17 articles, 13 of which had been agreed upon by both sides. Neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan made the full content of the agreement public, although Prime Minister Pashinyan generally indicated that it would address "recognition of each other's territorial integrity, as well as the renunciation of the use of force and interference in each other's internal affairs."¹⁰

⁷AP (November 1, 2022). No breakthrough in Armenia, Azerbaijan peace talks in Russia. Accessible at: https://apnews.com/article/putin-moscow-black-sea-azerbaijan-armeniaca5f66f4e7d99c95f98ea5fbd1c39b?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Panarmenianet (June 30, 2023). Armenia, Azerbaijan agree on more articles of peace treaty. Accessible at: <https://panarmenian.net/eng/news/30827>

European Parliament Think Tank (June 2, 2023). Armenia and Azerbaijan: Between war and peace. Accessible at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)747919](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2023)747919)

BBC (December 8, 2023). Armenia and Azerbaijan to work towards peace deal. Accessible at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67655940>

⁸ Joshua Kucera (February 8, 2024). As Peace Negotiations Advance, Armenia and Azerbaijan Are Going It Alone. Accessible at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/azerbaijan-armenia-peace-negotiations-one-on-one/32811181.html>

⁹ Ani Avetisyan (October 7, 2024). Armenian-Azerbaijani peace process hits a new speed bump. Accessible at: <https://eurasianet.org/armenian-azerbaijani-peace-process-hits-a-new-speed-bump>

¹⁰ Vasif Huseynov (October 1, 2024). The Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Treaty is 'Within Reach' but Out of Grasp. Accessible at: <https://jamestown.org/program/the-armenia-azerbaijan-peace-treaty-is-within-reach-but-out-of-grasp/>

By November 2024, Armenia reported that only two points remained to be resolved.¹¹ When Armenia and Azerbaijan unexpectedly announced their readiness to sign the treaty, the content of these two points became clear. One point involves withdrawal of legal cases filed by Armenia and Azerbaijan against each other in international courts, while the other prohibits the deployment of third-country forces on their shared border. This also applies to the European Union Monitoring Mission, whose mandate—despite opposition from Azerbaijan—was extended for another year and a half on the Armenian side of the border.¹²

Despite agreeing to a peace text, Azerbaijan has stated that it will only sign the treaty after Armenia (1) amends its constitution and legal acts that contradict Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and (2) dissolves the OSCE Minsk Group, which was involved in mediating the Nagorno-Karabakh wars and conflicts. Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov emphasized that the dissolution of the OSCE Minsk Group, described as a "remnants of the past conflict," is a pivotal factor.¹³

In response, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan called this an additional condition. Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Ayhan Hajizadeh countered, stating that the issues of constitutional amendments and the disbandment of the OSCE Minsk Group had already been part of the negotiations for the past two and a half years.¹⁴

In February, Nikol Pashinyan discussed the constitutional amendment, describing it as a necessary condition for a new Armenian patriotism and the ideology of a "real Armenia."¹⁵ He later suggested that the new constitution could also have regional significance. Armenian opposition leaders have interpreted this statement as an indication that Pashinyan intends to meet Azerbaijan's demands. However, the referendum on the constitutional changes will not take place until June 2026, coinciding with

¹¹ Armenpress (November 13, 2024). Armenia conveys to Azerbaijan new proposals on remaining two articles of peace treaty. Accessible at: <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1204841?ref=oc-media.org>

¹² Onnik James Krikorian (March 24, 2025). Azerbaijan-Armenia Peace Deal Faces Hurdles. Accessible at: <https://jamestown.org/program/azerbaijan-armenia-peace-deal-faces-hurdles/>

¹³ Azertac (March 13, 2025). FM Bayramov: Negotiations on draft peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan completed. Accessible at: https://azertag.az/en/xeber/fm_bayramov_negotiations_on_draft_peace_agreement_between_armenia_and_azerbaijan_completed-3461439

¹⁴ Netgazeti. (March 26, 2025). Azerbaijan says if Armenia wants peace, it must change the constitution. Accessible at: <https://netgazeti.ge/news/768869/>

¹⁵ The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia (February 2, 2025). The ideology of the Real Armenia: the statement of the Prime Minister in address to the nation. Accessible at: <https://www.primeminister.am/en/statements-andmessages/item/2025/02/19/Nikol-Pashinyan-Speech/>

parliamentary elections, which makes the signing of a peace treaty in the near future unlikely.¹⁶ An alternative proposal for resolving the issue was put forward by the Speaker of the Armenian Parliament, Alen Simonyan. According to this initiative, Armenia and Azerbaijan should submit their constitutions to the Council of Europe, specifically the Venice Commission, and ask it to verify whether either constitution undermines the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the other country.¹⁷ This proposal has yet to receive a response from either side.

Although the events of March 2025 represent significant progress toward stabilizing relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan's demands to amend the Armenian constitution and dissolve the OSCE Minsk Group suggest that the process of signing a peace treaty will be further prolonged.

Accusations on Ceasefire Violations

Although the proclamation of readiness for a peace treaty was a positive step toward restoring relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, accusations and mutual criticism soon followed. On March 16, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry issued a statement claiming that Armenian armed forces deployed in the Goris region (Syunik province) had opened fire on Azerbaijani forces.¹⁸ The Armenian Defense Ministry denied the accusation, and the Prime Minister's Office proposed the creation of an Armenian-Azerbaijani investigative mechanism to look into ceasefire violations, a proposal to which Azerbaijan has not responded. From March 16 to March 21, Azerbaijan accused Armenia of violating the ceasefire agreement 13 times, each of which Armenia denied. Since March 21, Armenian media have reported multiple instances of Azerbaijani forces opening fire on Armenian villages in Gegharkunik province.¹⁹ The Armenian Defense Ministry called reports of a gross violation of the ceasefire agreement incorrect and urged the public to trust only official information published by the ministry.²⁰ A week later, the Azerbaijani Defense

¹⁶ Radio Free Europe (March 13, 2025). Latest Azeri Proposals on Peace Deal Accepted by Yerevan (UPDATED). Accessible at: <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33346747.html>

¹⁷ Radio Free Europe (March 17, 2025). Yerevan Suggests Another Way to Address Key Azeri Demand. Accessible at: <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33350677.html>

¹⁸ Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Azerbaijan (March 16, 2025). Azerbaijan Army positions were subjected to fire. Accessible at: <https://mod.gov.az/en/news/azerbaijan-army-positions-were-subjected-to-fire-54185.html>

¹⁹ Arshaluys Barseghyan (March 26, 2025). Shootings heard in the Armenian villages bordering Azerbaijan. Accessible at: <https://oc-media.org/shootings-heard-in-the-armenian-villages-bordering-azerbaijan/>

²⁰ Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia (March 21, 2025). The Ministry of Defense urges to refrain from publishing inaccurate information related to the army and the border situation. Accessible at: <https://www.mil.am/hy/news/12679?ref=oc-media.org>

Ministry issued another statement, claiming that on March 30-31, Armenian armed forces opened fire on Azerbaijani positions in the eastern and southeastern sectors of the border. The Armenian Defense Ministry denied this accusation as well, instead accusing Azerbaijani forces of opening fire in the direction of the village of Khnatsakh in Syunik province, causing damage to housing.²¹

Armenia has adopted a relatively less confrontational stance in the dispute, emphasizing that signing the treaty as soon as possible is its priority. While denying the allegations, Prime Minister Pashinyan reiterated that his government's agenda is focused on peacemaking and once again called on Azerbaijan to agree on a date and venue for the signing.²² In response, the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry accused Yerevan of distorting reality by denying the border firing incident. It also pointed out that Armenia's extensive militarization, including the mobilization of offensive weapons—particularly along the border—contradicts its claim that the government's agenda is focused on peace.²³ A clear expression of the lack of trust between the two sides came from Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, who, on the same day the signing of the treaty was announced, stated that he did not trust the Armenian government and that their word had "zero meaning" until the document was finalized.²⁴

The ongoing mutual accusations and deep lack of trust underscore the fragile nature of the peace process, indicating that the underlying foundations of the conflict have not yet been resolved.

Prospects of Border Opening and Positions of Key Stakeholders

Territorial disputes play a significant role in the process of negotiating the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty. Azerbaijan continually demands that Armenia open a transport corridor linking it with the Nakhchivan exclave, a request Armenia refuses. Prime Minister Pashinyan has expressed concern that

²¹ Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia (March 31, 2025). Units of the Azerbaijani armed forces opened fire toward the Khnatsakh. Accessible at: <https://www.mil.am/en/news/12696>

²² The government of the Republic of Armenia (March 18, 2025). Statement by Prime Minister's Office, Republic of Armenia. Accessible at: <https://www.gov.am/en/news/item/10630/>

²³ Azertac (March 18, 2025). Azerbaijan's MFA: We firmly reject statement by Armenian Prime Minister's Office that distorts the facts of border area shootings. Accessible at: https://azertag.az/en/xeber/azerbaijans_mfa_we_firmly_reject_statement_by_armenian_prime_ministers_office_that_distorts_the_facts_of_border_area_shootings-3469035

²⁴ President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (March 13, 2025). 12th Global Baku Forum on "Rethinking World Order: Turning Challenges into Opportunities" gets underway. Accessible at: <https://president.az/en/articles/view/68323?ref=ocmedia.org>

Azerbaijan's recent statements about opening the corridor might be a precursor to preparing for an attack on Armenia.²⁵

Azerbaijan refers to the territory connecting it with Nakhchivan as the "Zangezur Corridor," while Armenia opposes the use of the term "corridor." According to Armenia,²⁶ labeling the area as a corridor puts the country's sovereignty into question.²⁷ In November 2020, under the mediation of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a trilateral agreement that ended the Nagorno-Karabakh war. Article 9 of the document states: "All economic and transport links in the region shall be restored. The Republic of Armenia guarantees the safety of transport links between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic in order to organize unhindered movement of citizens, vehicles and goods in both directions. Control over transport shall be exercised by the bodies of the Border Guard Service of the Federal Security Service (FSB) of Russia."²⁸ This provision has been contested by both sides. Armenia views the restoration of the transport link as contingent upon the establishment of border control on its side and argues that the agreement does not imply the free movement of people and goods without Armenian border checks. Azerbaijan, however, rejects this argument, insisting that border control is not a necessary condition for reopening transport links and that Armenia must fulfill the terms of the signed document without delay.²⁹ Despite Azerbaijan's repeated demands since 2020, the opening of the transport corridor is not included in the provisions of the current peace treaty,³⁰ which is based on a bilateral deal. To date, Azerbaijan has not presented the corridor as a prerequisite for signing the peace agreement.

²⁵ Radio Free Europe (March 13, 2025). Latest Azeri Proposals on Peace Deal Accepted by Yerevan (UPDATED). Accessible at: <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33346747.html>

²⁶ NEWS.am (March 13, 2025). Pashinyan: "Zangezur Corridor" is unacceptable to us. Accessible at: <https://news.am/eng/news/871540.html> News.am (May 28, 2021). Armenia 2nd President Kocharyan on "Meghri corridor" plan: Not beneficial to us now to discuss it as "corridor". Accessible at: <https://news.am/eng/news/645984.html>

²⁷ The term "Zangezur Corridor" does not appear in international agreements. The area in question is officially referred to as "the transport connection between the western regions of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic." However, Armenian sources sometimes refer to the area as the "Meghri Corridor."

²⁸ Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Azerbaijan (November 10, 2020). President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation. Accessible at: <https://mod.gov.az/en/news/president-ilham-aliyev-addressed-the-nation-33795.html>

²⁹ Radio Free Europe (March 4, 2025). Pashinian Complains About Azeri Stance on Transport Links (UPDATED). Accessible at: <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33335882.html>

³⁰ Radio Free Europe (August 8, 2024). Armenia Confirms Removal of Transport Links Provision from Draft Peace Agreement with Azerbaijan. Accessible at: <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33070066.html>

Nevertheless, it is important to consider the role the connecting territory between the western regions of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic currently plays in the South Caucasus, the positions of the interested parties, and the potential changes the opening of the corridor could bring to the region.

As previously mentioned, Armenia is considering opening the corridor only under Armenian border control, a condition Azerbaijan does not accept. Additionally, opening the corridor is not in Iran's interests. Currently, the road connecting another region of Azerbaijan to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic passes through Iran. If the transport link is restored, Iran fears that Armenia will lose control over its southern border, which could jeopardize the Iranian-Armenian border. Tehran also believes this development would exclude Iran from the Asia-Europe transport network, as Azerbaijan could connect to the West without transiting through Iran. Moreover, Nakhchivan receives gas from Azerbaijan via Iran, and this arrangement may be questioned if the western regions of Azerbaijan are directly connected to Nakhchivan.³¹ Iran also perceives the opening of the corridor as aligning with NATO and Türkiye's strategy to strengthen their positions in the region, which contradicts Iran's national interests.³² On March 25, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, during a visit to Yerevan, reiterated Iran's opposition to opening a corridor that could sever direct transport links with Armenia. However, he expressed strong support for the signing of a peace treaty between the two countries as soon as possible, which would guarantee peace and economic stability in the region.³³

As for Türkiye, a strategic ally of Azerbaijan, it supports both the peace treaty and the opening of the transport network connecting the western regions of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasized in September 2023 the importance of opening the "Zangezur Corridor"³⁴ as soon as possible, so that road and rail communications with

³¹ Gunay Hajiyeva (March 3, 2025). Türkiye to Start Natural Gas Supply to Nakhchivan via New Pipeline. Accessible at: <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/turkiye-to-start-natural-gas-supply-to-nakhchivan-via-new-pipeline-2025-3-3-25/>

³² Umud Shokri (September 28, 2022). Why Iran Opposes Azerbaijan's Zangezur Corridor Project. Accessible at: <https://gulfif.org/why-iran-opposes-azerbaijans-zangezur-corridor-project/>

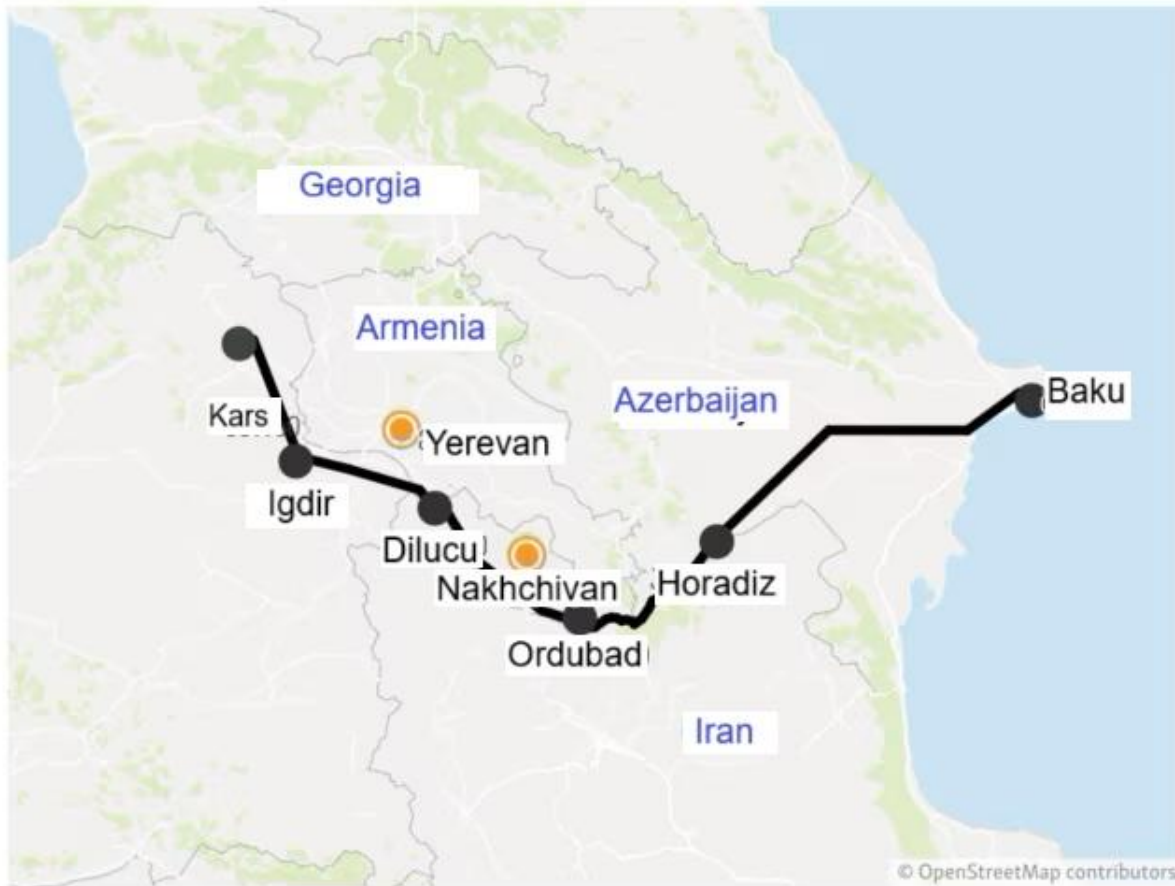
³³ Radio Free Europe (March 25, 2025). Iran Urges Quick Signing of Armenian-Azeri Peace Deal. Accessible at: <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33358662.html>

³⁴ Türkiye, like Azerbaijan, employs the term "Zangezur Corridor".

Azerbaijan can be smoothly restored via Nakhchivan. Erdoğan considers the opening of the corridor a strategic issue for Türkiye, as it would provide a direct transport link to the entire territory of Azerbaijan.³⁵

"Zangezur Corridor"

Potential Configuration of Türkiye-Azerbaijan Railway via Nakhchivan
(based on Turkish sources)



Map: Radio Liberty. Source: Anadolu/TRT



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³⁵ Diyar Güldoğan (September 26, 2023). President Erdogan says Türkiye wants to realize Zangezur corridor 'as soon as possible'. Accessible at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/president-erdogan-says-turkiye-wants-to-realize-zengezurcorridor-as-soon-as-possible/3001633>

³⁶ Radio Liberty (26 October 2023). "Crossroads of Peace" – What does Pashinyan offer the neighbors. Accessible at: https://gdb.rferl.org/08550000-0a00-0242-f733-08db0470d59d_w650_r0_s.png

On March 13, Turkish President's Advisor on Foreign Policy and Security Affairs, Akif Çağatay Kılıç, was asked whether the restoration of diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Armenia was on the agenda. He responded by saying that the current situation did not make discussions on this issue necessary, but emphasized that a peace treaty would resolve many issues.³⁷ Based on this statement, it is likely that once the agreement is signed, the reopening of the Turkish-Armenian border will also be considered. Pashinyan's recent comments on the issue of recognizing the genocide further indicate that normalizing relations with Türkiye is a priority for Armenia. In an interview with a Turkish journalist in March, he stated that, according to Armenia's official position, international recognition of the Armenian Genocide is not a foreign policy priority and, in fact, it creates tensions in the immediate neighborhood.³⁸

The restoration of Armenian-Turkish relations would be beneficial for both countries. For Armenia, reopening the border would end decades of isolation from its neighboring country. With Türkiye, Armenia would gain a new trading partner, positively impacting its economic situation and providing access to transport networks to the West that were previously closed off. Moreover, normalizing relations with Türkiye would reduce Armenia's energy and economic dependence on Russia, allowing the country more political flexibility in the long run. For Türkiye, opening the border with Armenia would also be advantageous, as it would serve as a key step toward political stability in the South Caucasus. This, in turn, would enable Türkiye to further advance its regional interests and diminish Russia's influence in regional politics. Additionally, potential transport routes passing through Armenia to Türkiye could have a positive impact on Türkiye's economic interests. Pashinyan discussed these potential transport routes at the Silk Road Forum in Tbilisi in 2023. The regional cooperation initiative "Crossroads of Peace" reflects this vision.

³⁷ APA. (March 12, 2025). Turkish President's Senior Advisor: Azerbaijan-Armenia peace agreement will be key to resolving many issues -INTERVIEW. Accessible at: <https://en.apa.az/foreign-policy/turkish-presidents-senior-advisorazerbaijan-armenia-peace-agreement-will-be-key-to-resolving-many-issues-interview-462806>

³⁸ Radio Free Europe (March 14, 2025). Armenian Genocide Recognition 'No Priority' For Pashinian. Accessible at: <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33347915.html>



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Russia's role in Armenian-Azerbaijani relations has been weakened by the war in Ukraine. In the spring of 2024, Russia fully withdrew its so-called peacekeeping troops from Nagorno-Karabakh. Russia had deployed around 2,000 soldiers to the region as part of the 2020 ceasefire agreement,⁴⁰ which was viewed as Russia's only success in the conflict. Their withdrawal was seen as one of Russia's failures in the South Caucasus.⁴¹ The fact that the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty is now bilateral, with Russia no longer acting as a mediator, further underscores the weakening of Russia's influence. However, the "Declaration on Allied interaction" signed between Russia and Azerbaijan in February 2022 is noteworthy. It is considered a significant step towards deepening their bilateral relations, focusing on strengthening

³⁹ World Economic Forum (January 14, 2024). Crossroads of Peace: Armenia's call for global cooperation in an evolving world. Accessible at: <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/01/armenia-crossroads-of-peace-global-cooperation/>

⁴⁰ Politico (April 17, 2024). Russia announces total withdrawal of troops from Nagorno-Karabakh. Accessible at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-withdrawal-troops-nagorno-karabakh-azerbaijan-armenia/>

⁴¹ ABCNews (April 20, 2024). Russia quietly exits Nagorno-Karabakh seven months after Azerbaijani offensive, ceding its clout 'for good'. Accessible at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-04-20/russia-quietly-exits-karabakh-ceding-its-clout-for-good-/103749418>

cooperation in the political, economic, energy, and transport sectors.⁴² The declaration can be interpreted as Baku's attempt to ensure Russia's neutrality in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. By strengthening ties with Moscow, Azerbaijan likely sought to prevent Russia from intervening or supporting Armenia in future conflicts, thereby shifting the balance of power in Baku's favor.

In general, the prospect of establishing peace in the South Caucasus does not align with Moscow's interests. Specifically, Russia finds it unacceptable for Armenia and Türkiye to open their borders and normalize relations. Such a move would provide Armenia with economic and energy diversification, reducing its dependence on Russia. At the same time, it would increase Türkiye's influence in the South Caucasus, shifting the balance of power away from Russia's interests. The statement made by Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on March 27 highlights Russia's desire to maintain a role in Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations, in order to safeguard its interests. According to Zakharova, the parties should return to the trilateral agreement format for restoring transport networks in the South Caucasus, which she argues would benefit Armenia and the entire region. She claimed that this format has been undermined by the destructive actions of Western countries.⁴³ It is likely that if the peace treaty's conclusion is delayed, and Russia and Ukraine reach a ceasefire agreement, Moscow will refocus its attention on the South Caucasus. In this scenario, Russia may attempt to disrupt the peace process or accept the treaty only on terms that reflect its own interests.

The West has actively supported the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty. EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Kaja Kallas, called the treaty a decisive step toward lasting peace and security in the region, emphasizing that the EU is ready to support regional stability. Following the EU-Central Asia Summit on April 4, 2025, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen highlighted the importance of the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor (Middle Corridor). She noted that the reopening of Armenia's borders, after being closed to Türkiye and Azerbaijan for three decades, would be a pivotal moment in connecting Europe and Central Asia.⁴⁴ Similarly, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio welcomed the conclusion of the peace talks, describing it as a "historic peace treaty." He urged both countries to

⁴² President of Russia (August 19, 2024). Meeting with President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. Accessible at: <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/74884>

⁴³ Arminfo (March 27, 2025). Zakharova: The issue of unblocking transport communications in the South Caucasus is not overseen by the speaker of the Armenian parliament. Accessible at: https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=90180

⁴⁴ European Commission (April 4, 2025). Speech by President von der Leyen at the plenary session of the first EU-Central Asia Summit. Accessible at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_25_976

remain committed to peace and sign the treaty, marking the beginning of a new era of prosperity in the South Caucasus region.⁴⁵ NATO spokesperson Allison Hart also stated that the conclusion of the talks was an important step toward normalizing regional security.⁴⁶ The peace treaty holds significant importance for the West for several reasons. Stability in the South Caucasus ensures a secure energy corridor from the Caspian Sea to European markets. Additionally, the treaty weakens Russian influence in the region and opens the door for new economic and political ties with Europe.

For Georgia, a peace treaty between its neighboring countries is an important development in terms of regional security. In the long term, greater peace and stability in the region will positively impact Georgia's economic growth and attract more investment. In the short term, however, both the restoration of transport links between the western regions of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, as well as the opening of the Türkiye-Armenia border, may prove economically unprofitable for Georgia, as its role as a transit corridor could be diminished. Nevertheless, a complete replacement of transport connections passing through Georgia seems unlikely. Currently, Ufuk Yalçın, Director General of the Turkish State Railways, does not view the "Zangezur Corridor" as an alternative to the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway. Azerbaijan shares a similar stance; according to President İlham Aliyev, the potential launch of the "Zangezur Corridor," alongside the existing railway route, would provide an additional opportunity to increase freight traffic, while also emphasizing the importance of transporting goods through Azerbaijani seaports in Georgia. However, despite these statements, if the political situation in Georgia becomes more unstable and its Black Sea ports remain underutilized, Georgia could risk being partially excluded from the transport networks connecting Europe and Asia.

Summary

The Armenian-Azerbaijani peace talks represent a significant step toward stability in the South Caucasus, but numerous obstacles remain before full normalization of relations.

⁴⁵ Daily News (March 14, 2025). EU hails finalization of Armenia-Azerbaijan peace talks. Accessible at: https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/eu-hails-finalization-of-armenia-azerbaijan-peace-talks206894?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁴⁶ Caucasus Watch (March 17, 2025). Global Powers Welcome Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Treaty Finalization. Accessible at: https://caucasuswatch.de/en/news/global-powers-welcome-armenia-azerbaijan-peace-treatyfinalization.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Azerbaijan's demands for Armenia to amend its constitution and dissolve the OSCE Minsk Group are delaying the signing process. Both sides continue to accuse each other of violating the ceasefire, highlighting the fragility of the peace process and the deep distrust between them. The potential for opening borders and transport routes, particularly the transport link between Western Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan via Armenia, remains a contentious issue. Other regional powers also hold differing views on this link's opening. Türkiye actively supports the corridor, seeing it as a strategic opportunity to strengthen ties with Azerbaijan and Central Asia, while Iran opposes it, fearing it could lose its role in the regional transport network and alter its border with Armenia.

Russia's weakening influence in the South Caucasus, demonstrated by its withdrawal of peacekeeping forces from Nagorno-Karabakh and its exclusion from bilateral negotiations, signals a shift in regional dynamics. Russia is likely to view the peace process as contrary to its interests and may attempt to obstruct it, especially if the Russia-Ukraine war concludes with a ceasefire, allowing the Kremlin to refocus on the region.

Western actors, including the European Union and the United States, are strongly supporting a peace treaty, as it could improve energy security, diminish Russian influence, and create new economic opportunities in the region. For Georgia, while a peace treaty promoting regional stability is beneficial in the long term, the short-term impact could be less favorable, as the opening of direct routes between Türkiye and Armenia, and between Azerbaijan's western regions and Nakhchivan, may diminish its transit importance.

The success of a peace treaty will ultimately depend on both countries' willingness to overcome historical animosities and address complex territorial issues. If successfully implemented, the South Caucasus could become a more interconnected region, with improved economic prospects and reduced dependence on Russia. However, if the talks fail, the region risks falling back into a cycle of tension and potential conflict, with far-reaching consequences for both regional stability and international security.