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WASHINGTON DECLARATION OF AUGUST 8, 2025: TARGETS AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE FUTURE SCENARIO OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

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Abstract. The article first of all notes the importance of the South Caucasus from an economic and strategic point of view. However, it discusses the conflicts existing in the region and the mechanisms for their resolution. It also assesses the important aspects of the region for the United States. The US policy in the South Caucasus is reviewed and the policy it has implemented in resolving the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is studied. The analysis of the Washington Declaration, which plays an important role in the political life of the South Caucasus, constitutes the main thrust of the article. The article reflects the provisions mentioned in the declaration. It also analyzes the assessment of the declaration for regional and non-regional states. The importance of the Washington Peace Declaration for Azerbaijan and Armenia, which are the main subjects of the declaration, is comprehensively examined. The attitudes of Russia, Iran and Türkiye to this declaration are objectively assessed. However, the roles that the declaration will play in the future development of the South Caucasus, if implemented effectively, have also been clearly defined.

Key words: South Caucasus, Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, USA, regional security, Peace Declaration, integration.

Introduction. The South Caucasus traditionally occupies an important place in geopolitics and the global economy due to its strategic location and rich natural resources. From the point of view of the United States and other leading world powers, the stability of the region is of key importance for ensuring regional and global security. However, for many years the region remained a source of tension due to unfinished conflicts, in particular, the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, as well as a multitude of geopolitical interests intersecting between various world players, including Russia, Turkey and Iran. In this regard, the key issue in the South Caucasus is the search for sustainable mechanisms to resolve existing conflicts and create conditions for further political and economic development of the region.

In this context, the Washington Declaration, signed on August 8, 2025, attracts special attention. This document, which has become an important stage in the diplomatic efforts of the United States, not only establishes a new stage in the settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, but also has serious consequences for the future of the entire region. The article is aimed at analyzing this declaration in terms of its significance for the South Caucasus, assessing it both inside and outside the region, as well as examining its impact on the political and economic dynamics in Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as the reactions of Russia, Iran and Turkey.

The geostrategic position of the South Caucasus, its rich natural resources, and its location on transport corridors are factors that increase its role in contemporary world politics.

The purpose of this article is a comprehensive analysis of the Washington Declaration of August 8, 2025 and its significance for the future development of the South Caucasus. The article will examine the impact of the declaration on the political and economic processes in the region, as well as its role in the settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. Special attention is paid to the reaction of regional and extra-regional States to the declaration, as well as forecasting its possible consequences for the security and integration of the South Caucasus into the international system.

Results and discussion. The South Caucasus plays an important role in the East-West, North-South energy and transport corridors. Another reason for the geopolitical importance of the South

Caucasus is its richness in natural resources. For this reason, in addition to regional states, global actors also show great interest in the South Caucasus region.

It should be noted that the United States established diplomatic relations with Armenia in January 1992, with Azerbaijan in March 1992, and with Georgia in April 1992.

The United States was not sufficiently active in South Caucasus politics until 1994. The main reason for this was the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and the South Ossetia and Abkhazia conflicts in Georgia (Isayev).

One of the factors that influenced the growth of US interest in the region was the discovery of new oil fields in the Caspian Sea. This played an important role in the implementation of US economic and energy projects in the region. As a result, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan projects were implemented.

The South Caucasus and Central Asia region began to acquire special importance from a security point of view in US policy after the September 11 terrorist attack. Thus, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Georgia and Azerbaijan gave the US the right to use their territories for military operations.

The importance of the South Caucasus region for the United States is due to the following factors:

- Geopolitical. The South Caucasus is of vital geopolitical importance due to its proximity to Russia, Iran, and the Middle East, as well as in the fight against Iran's nuclear program.
- Access to Central Asia. The South Caucasus' access to Central Asia plays a special role for the United States in terms of its policy in Central Asia and Afghanistan.
- Energy. The energy resources of the Caspian Sea serve the economic interests of the United States (Cornell).

The goals of the United States in the South Caucasus are as follows:

- 1) Ensuring the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the states of the region,
- 2) Developing the transport potential of the states of the South Caucasus for the effective transportation of the energy resources of the Caspian Sea,
- 3) Strengthening the economic development of the South Caucasus and developing relations between the states of the region and the transatlantic states,
- 4) Preventing the conflicts that exist in the South Caucasus,
- 5) Removing the region from the sphere of influence of Russia (Kuchins, Mankoff, 2016).

US President B. Clinton used the principle of “soft power” in his South Caucasus policy and was based on Kant’s “democratic peace theory”. The basis of this concept was the idea that democratic states should not go to war with each other. As a result, the US used institutions such as the National Democratic Institute, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, and the International Republican Institute in its policy (Khelashvili, Macfarlane, 2010).

In the policy of J. Bush, the principle of “hard power” was the main one. Thus, new oil and natural gas projects were discussed, and after the September 11 terrorist attack, the importance of the South Caucasus for the United States increased significantly.

B. Obama, on the other hand, used “smart power” during his term.

D. Trump did not pay special attention to the South Caucasus region during his term in office in 2017–2021. As a result, Russia’s influence in the region increased.

During the presidency of J. Biden, the South Caucasus was one of the important points in US foreign policy. Thus, efforts were made to sign a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan within the framework of the Washington format.

However, D. Trump, who was re-elected as President of the United States in 2025, made new changes in foreign policy towards the South Caucasus.

Usually, geopolitical interests and processes in the South Caucasus were determined by 3 main factors:

- 1) Unresolved conflicts;

- 2) Caspian energy resources and their transportation;
- 3) Post-Soviet transformation, Western strategy to weaken Russia's influence.

An important turning point in the South Caucasus was the 2020 II Karabakh war.

The South Caucasus is characterized by a large number of conflicts. Various means, as well as the institution of mediation, were used to resolve existing conflicts in the South Caucasus. However, it was not possible to resolve the problems. One of the main problems was the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

With Armenia's attack on Azerbaijani territory in the 1990s, 20% of our lands were occupied. Institutional means were used to resolve the conflict. In 1992, the OSCE Minsk Group was established. However, it was obvious that the Minsk Group could not solve the problem. Despite the organization of numerous meetings and the adoption of various documents, it was not possible to resolve the conflict. Thus, this group was not organized by neutral states. France always supported Armenia. Russia was interested in preserving the status quo and ensuring its leadership in the region. After the 2020 Patriotic War and the 2023 anti-terrorist operation, Azerbaijan ensured its territorial integrity.

On November 8, 2020, a trilateral peace declaration was signed between Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. The declaration stated the following:

- 1) Military operations should be stopped and the parties should stand by their positions.
- 2) Agdam should be returned to the Republic of Azerbaijan by November 20, 2020.
- 3) Peacekeeping forces of the Russian Federation should be deployed along the Lachin corridor.
- 4) In parallel with the deployment of peacekeeping forces, Armenian armed forces should be withdrawn.
- 5) A peacekeeping center should be established to monitor the ceasefire in the region.
- 6) The Kalbajar region should be returned to the Republic of Azerbaijan by November 15, 2020, and the Lachin region by December 1, 2020. Also, Russian peacekeeping forces should monitor the Lachin corridor (5 km wide).
- 7) Refugees and internally displaced persons should return to their homeland.
- 8) The process of mutual exchange of prisoners of war, hostages, and bodies should be carried out.
- 9) A transport and communication system should be established in the region. Also, the Republic of Armenia should guarantee the provision of secure connections with Nakhchivan and other western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan. At the same time, a joint monitoring center was established by Russia and Türkiye to monitor peace in the region. Despite this, it has not been possible to fully establish peace in the region. Certain problems, namely the restoration of diplomatic relations, delimitation and demarcation of borders, have not been resolved.

Various solutions have been put forward in this direction, especially in the Moscow, Brussels and Washington formats.

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan have repeatedly stated their intention to sign a peace agreement. In fact, Armenia has recognized 86.6 thousand square kilometers of Azerbaijan's territory, and Azerbaijan has recognized 29.8 thousand square kilometers of Armenia's territory.

In this case, a question arises. What are the obstacles to the signing of a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan? The main obstacle has been the Armenian opposition, which lives with the fantasy of a great Armenia, and Russia. Because Russia knows that the signing of a peace agreement between the parties will undermine Russia's presence in the South Caucasus. Russia's main weapon has always been "divide and rule". With the signing of a peace agreement, there will be no conflict between the parties, and the status quo desired by Russia will be abolished, ending its mediation mission. Even though the US and the EU have repeatedly taken steps to sign a peace agreement between the parties in 2023, Russia has obstructed this process.

One of the important achievements of the United States in the South Caucasus region was the Declaration of Peace signed in Washington on August 8, 2025. US President D. Trump, President

of the Republic of Azerbaijan I. Aliyev, and Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia N. Pashinyan signed the Declaration of Peace. The document noted the normalization of relations between the two states, the opening of transport routes, as well as the establishment of a direct connection between the territory of Armenia and Azerbaijan with Nakhchivan. The opening of the TRIPP (Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity) corridor was reflected in the declaration (Goreck, 2025). In addition, the parties agreed to abolish the OSCE Minsk Group. Also, in accordance with the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration, good-neighborly relations should be developed and mutual trust should be strengthened for peace in the region (Joint Declaration, 2025).

In addition, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the United States and Azerbaijan. The memorandum included the following:

- 1) Increasing economic investment;
- 2) Combating terrorism in terms of security cooperation;
- 3) Developing economic and trade relations;
- 4) Strengthening cooperation in the energy sector (Memorandum of understanding between the USA and Azerbaijan, 2025).

A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed between the United States and Armenia. The following points were reflected in the memorandum:

- 1) Increasing investment in the private sector;
- 2) Cooperation in the field of customs control and border security and the fight against smuggling;
- 3) Strengthening the exchange of experience between the US Security and the Armenian Border Guard;
- 4) Developing cooperation in the field of civil nuclear energy;
- 5) Strengthening cybersecurity (Memorandum of understanding between the USA and Armenia, 2025).

The Peace Declaration was welcomed by the Republic of Türkiye and the European Union. However, it was not well received by Russia and Iran.

The European Union should support the project and create effective conditions for peace. For this, the following steps should be taken:

- 1) The signing of the peace treaty should be facilitated;
- 2) The US participation in the fields of trade, energy, technology, and defense should be encouraged;
- 3) The influence of Russia should be reduced;
- 4) The normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations should be accelerated (Essen, 2025).

The important points of the Peace Declaration for the US are as follows:

- 1) The role of the US in the South Caucasus region is increasing.
- 2) Relations with Azerbaijan and Armenia are strengthening.

As we know, the Caucasus is of great importance for Russia.

1) The Caucasus is of great strategic importance. It connects Europe with the Middle East, and the Black Sea with the Caspian Sea.

2) The South Caucasus is rich in conflicts. The Armenia-Azerbaijan, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia conflicts have actually contributed to the strengthening of Russia's influence over the states of the region.

3) The South Caucasus is viewed by Moscow as a place of competition between Russia and the West.

4) The Caucasus is an ethnically diverse region. Russia believes that, according to the domino theory, the rise of any ethnic group in the South Caucasus will have an impact on the North Caucasus, so it is necessary to constantly monitor the region.

When approaching the Peace Declaration from the Russian context, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1) Russia has lost. According to the 2020 declaration, the Zangezur corridor would be controlled by Russian security forces. However, this could not be implemented. According to the 2025 declaration, the US will control TRIPP.

2) Armenia is moving away from Russia. Against the backdrop of the tension between Azerbaijan and Russia, Azerbaijan is also leaning towards the West.

The importance of the Caucasus for Iran is based on 4 main factors.

1) Cultural-historical, ethnic factors. Iran has deep historical and cultural ties with ethnic groups living in the Caucasus. Although these ties were not developed during the USSR, after the collapse of the USSR, these ties have taken an important place in Iran's foreign policy.

2) Economic factors. The Caucasus is of great importance in terms of connecting Iran to Russia and Europe. After the collapse of the USSR, energy issues and the strengthening of Iran's economic cooperation with the countries of the South Caucasus have come to the fore.

3) Political and security factors. Iran is a neighboring state of the Caucasus and cannot remain indifferent to the processes taking place there. Because the processes taking place in the region also affect Iran's security.

4) Legal status of the Caspian Sea. The Caspian Sea is within the interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran in terms of both economic and political-security. It is from this perspective that Iran does not accept foreign actors in the Caspian Sea.

Therefore, the negative aspects of this declaration for Iran are as follows:

1) Azerbaijan's connection with Nakhchivan through the territory of Armenia reduces Azerbaijan's dependence on Iranian territory.

2) The role of the West is strengthening in the region.

If we evaluate this declaration from the Georgian position, we can come to the following conclusions:

1) The pro-Russian ruling party Georgian Dream does not want the West to strengthen in the region.

2) Georgia's transit importance is decreasing.

How important is this declaration for Azerbaijan and Armenia?

For Armenia:

1) It is of great importance in terms of establishing peace in the region.

2) The TRIPP project, normalization of relations with Türkiye and an end to isolationism are being put in place.

3) Dependence on Russia is weakening, relations with the West are developing.

For Azerbaijan:

1) Relations with Türkiye are developing through the transit route. Also, the role of Azerbaijan as a trade center between Türkiye, Central Asia and China is being strengthened.

2) Economic and political relations with the US are being strengthened (Essen, 2025). Amendment 907 is being abolished.

Azerbaijani President I. Aliyev stated that naming the Zangezur corridor after D. Trump will accelerate its implementation and this project will be successful for the entire region. Armenia will also receive transit income. This declaration is very important against the background of the processes taking place in the world today. Thus, the Ukrainian war, Iran-Israeli conflicts and other problems create obstacles in the northern route and Red Sea communication lines. In such circumstances, stability in the South Caucasus plays a special role in ensuring effective connections between the European and Central Asian markets (The Washington Summit as a historic turning point for the South Caucasus, 2025).

The successes of the Peace Declaration are as follows:

1) It was a significant contribution to peace in the region. It is a necessary step towards the development of relations.

- 2) An agreement was reached on the dissolution of the OSCE Minsk Group.
- 3) It seriously damaged Russia's role in the South Caucasus.

However, certain problems remain. Thus,

1) This declaration is not a peace agreement. Diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia have not been restored.

2) The claims to Karabakh in the Constitution of Armenia have not been eliminated.

3) No specific provisions were made regarding the EU mission on the Armenian border line in terms of the absence of a third party along the border.

In general, the future benefits of the Peace Declaration signed in Washington on August 8, 2025 for the region can be assessed as follows:

1) It will put an end to interstate hostilities.

2) It will accelerate humanitarian assistance and reconstruction work.

3) It will create conditions for strengthening regional economic integration.

4) It will be an important mechanism for ensuring the environment and infrastructure.

5) It will play a necessary role as a means of diplomatic pluralism.

Conclusions. The Washington Declaration of August 8, 2025 represents an important step towards stabilizing the situation in the South Caucasus. It outlines key principles and mechanisms for resolving long-term conflicts, especially the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, which opens up prospects for regional integration and economic growth. Nevertheless, the successful implementation of the declaration will require an integrated approach, including the active participation of international organizations, as well as flexible and far-sighted policies from both regional and non-regional actors.

The reactions of Russia, Iran, and Turkey show that the impact of the declaration will depend not only on its political and economic effectiveness, but also on the ability of the South Caucasus countries and external actors to forge a consensus conducive to lasting peace and stability. In the future, if the commitments are effectively fulfilled, the declaration can become the basis for creating solid foundations for peace and security in the South Caucasus, as well as serve as a catalyst for deeper integration of the region into international structures.

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