



**TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP PROGRAM  
FOR “LEADERSHIP ACADEMY” ALUMNI**

**UNARMED BUT NOT UNNOTICED: THE EU’S CIVILIAN MISSION TO ARMENIA.  
IMPLICATIONS AFTER THE WASHINGTON SUMMIT  
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**Introduction**

The deployment of the EU Monitoring Mission to Armenia (EUMA) in February 2023 represented more than simply a technical border observation. Rather, it marked a strategic innovation, signaling Europe’s intervention in a volatile environment in which Moscow’s credibility as Armenia’s traditional security guarantor was rapidly eroding. Following the 2020 War in Nagorno-Karabakh and its aftermath, Armenia’s confidence in its long-standing security ally, Russia, was significantly damaged. The Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), despite Armenia’s status as a founding member since 1992,<sup>1</sup> further discredited itself through its limited and ineffective response to Azerbaijani aggression and attacks against Armenia. This erosion of trust created space for the European Union to reconsider its role and expand its capacity in providing security within a region that has historically been dominated by other powers.

Despite being comprised of unarmed personnel with a non-combatant mandate, the EUMA mission conveys substantial political weight. More specifically, the deployment marks the *maturation* in the EU’s foreign policy, positioning the Union as a geopolitical actor capable of influencing security dynamics in its “*contested neighborhood*,”<sup>2</sup> in addition to being a normative power<sup>3</sup> advocating for peace, democracy, rule of law, and human rights.

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<sup>1</sup> Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Collective Security Treaty Organization.”  
<https://www.mfa.am/en/international-organisations/1>

<sup>2</sup> Ademmer, Esther, Laure Delcour, and Katarzyna Wolczuk. 2016. “Beyond Geopolitics: Exploring the Impact of the EU and Russia in the ‘Contested Neighborhood.’” *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 57 (1): 1–18.

<sup>3</sup> Ian Manners, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (2002): 235–258

Nevertheless, reality tempers ambition. The EU’s vulnerability is exposed by its narrow mandate and lack of enforcement authority, underscoring the gap between its operational capabilities and geopolitical aspirations. After an initial two-years deployment and an additional two-year extension,<sup>4</sup> the mission now coincides with the newly heightened diplomatic engagement of the United States in the region. It is symbolized by the August 2025 Washington Summit between the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan hosted by the American president that resulted in the initialing of the bilateral Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty and the signing of the new Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP). This raises a critical question, however: *will the American initiative complement the EU’s mission in Armenia or lead to its fragmentation?*

### **Legal and Political Foundations of the EUMA**

The European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMA) was established following Armenia’s formal invitation<sup>5</sup> to the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The initiative came in the wake of Azerbaijan’s offensive<sup>6</sup> against Armenia in September 2022 and was further anchored to the October 2022 *European Political Community* meeting<sup>7</sup> in Prague, where Armenia and Azerbaijan reiterated their commitment to mutually recognize each other’s “territorial integrity and sovereignty in line with the UN Charter and the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Council of the European Union. Decision (CFSP) 2025/319 of 11 February 2025, extending the mandate of the Head of Mission of the European Union Mission in Armenia (EUMA). OJ L 2025/319, February 12, 2025. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2025/319/oj/eng>

<sup>5</sup> Council of the European Union. Armenia: EU establishes a civilian mission to contribute to stability in border areas. Press release, January 23, 2023. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/01/23/armenia-eu-sets-up-a-civilian-mission-to-ensure-security-in-conflict-affected-and-border-areas/>

<sup>6</sup> Mirzoyan, Ararat, “Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia at the OSCE Ministerial Council,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, December 1, 2022, archived at [https://web.archive.org/web/20221201193945/https://www.mfa.am/en/speeches/2022/12/01/am\\_obse\\_sp/11753](https://web.archive.org/web/20221201193945/https://www.mfa.am/en/speeches/2022/12/01/am_obse_sp/11753)

<sup>7</sup> Council of the European Union. Meeting of the European Political Community, October 6, 2022. Press release, October 6, 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2022/10/06/>

<sup>8</sup> Council of the European Union. Statement following quadrilateral meeting between President Aliyev, Prime Minister Pashinyan, President Macron and President Michel, 6 October 2022. Press release, October 7, 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/10/07/statement-following-quadrilateral-meeting-between-president-aliyev-prime-minister-pashinyan-president-macron-and-president-michel-6-october-2022/>

Through the Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/162,<sup>9</sup> the European Union established a civilian mission in Armenia under the framework of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP).<sup>10</sup> Its mandate is to act as an “impartial and credible actor,”<sup>11</sup> helping to create a safe and stable environment in Armenia’s conflict-prone areas by strengthening “human security, reducing the number of incidents in border and conflict-affected areas,”<sup>12</sup> diminishing “risk levels for local populations,”<sup>13</sup> and eventually creating conditions conducive to the “normalization of Armenia and Azerbaijan relations,”<sup>14</sup> thereby paving the way for potential progress towards a lasting peace.

With five field stations in Armenia’s vulnerable border regions<sup>15</sup> and a liaison office in Yerevan, the mission has 225<sup>16</sup> staff members drawn from EU member states and third-country contributors like Canada<sup>17</sup> and is based in Yeghegnadzor in southeastern Armenia. To date, the EUMA has carried out 5000 patrol operations through its “routine patrolling and systematic reporting.”<sup>18</sup> Monitoring is only conducted on Armenian territory, with Azerbaijani authorities being notified, since Baku had consistently rejected and disapproved of any EU presence on its territory, despite the fact that the mission was initially intended to have a degree of parity, with a presence on both sides of the border. Simultaneously, the mission has been repeatedly targeted by Azerbaijani anti-narrative propaganda and Russian

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<sup>9</sup> Council of the European Union. Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/162 of 23 January 2023 on a European Union mission in Armenia (EUMA). Official Journal of the European Union, L 22, 24 January 2023, pp. 29–35. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2023/162/oj/eng>

<sup>10</sup> Andersson, Jan Joel and Malena Britz. 2025. “The European Union’s Role in European Defense Industry Policy.” *Defense Studies* 25 (2): 322–41.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> The border regions that have been affected by Azerbaijani aggression are Jermuk, Martuni, Kapan, Goris, and Ijevan

<sup>16</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), *About European Union Mission in Armenia*, accessed September 22, 2025. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/euma/about-european-union-mission-armenia\\_en?s=410283](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/euma/about-european-union-mission-armenia_en?s=410283)

<sup>17</sup> Council of the European Union, Political and Security Committee Decision (CFSP) 2023/1513 of 19 July 2023 on the Acceptance of a Third State’s Contribution to the European Union Mission in Armenia (EUMA) (EUMA/2/2023), Official Journal of the European Union, July 19, 2023. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2023/1513/oj>

<sup>18</sup> European Union Neighbours East. *European Union Mission in Armenia Reaches 5,000 Patrols Milestone*. Press release, April 9, 2025. <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/latest-news/european-union-mission-in-armenia-reaches-5000-patrols-milestone/>

disinformation campaigns<sup>19</sup> aimed at undermining its importance, intentions, and credibility. However, despite Baku’s objections, Armenia retains complete authority as the host state, allowing the mission to operate within its sovereign territory and reinforcing both deterrence and visibility.

### **Deterioration of relations with Russia**

Russia’s limited response to Armenia’s security concerns has been perceived in Yerevan as a “dereliction of duty”<sup>20</sup> towards a partner state during a time of critical crisis. This failure is particularly striking given Armenia’s extensive bilateral and multilateral relations with Moscow, which include membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Eurasian Economic Union, and the presence of Russia’s 102nd military base<sup>21</sup> in Armenia, among others.

Not only did Russia fail to uphold its commitments to defend Armenia from Azerbaijani aggression after the Nagorno-Karabakh war, but it also disregarded Yerevan’s repeated requests to invoke Article 4 of the CSTO agreement<sup>22</sup> when Azerbaijani forces invaded Armenia’s sovereign territory in 2022. This absence of support prompted<sup>23</sup> Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to suspend Armenia’s participation in CSTO, with the prospect of potential Armenian withdrawal from the security alliance in the future. This decision<sup>24</sup> not only underscored the bloc’s inability to honor its commitments and security obligations but also signaled Yerevan’s reorientation towards alternative partnerships and new security architects.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Pambukhchyan, Anna, “Russia and Azerbaijan Take Aim at EU’s Mission in Armenia,” *Euractiv*, September 26, 2024. <https://www.euractiv.com/news/russia-and-azerbaijan-take-aim-at-eus-mission-in-armenia/>

<sup>20</sup> de Waal, Thomas, *Armenia Navigates a Path Away From Russia*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 11, 2024. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/07/armenia-navigates-a-path-away-from-russia?lang=en>

<sup>21</sup> Lavrov, Sergey, “Russian Military Base Is an Important Component of Ensuring Armenia’s Security Interests,” *ARKA News Agency*, May 21, 2025. <https://arka.am/en/news/politics/lavrov-russian-military-base-is-an-important-component-of-ensuring-armenia-s-security-interests/>

<sup>22</sup> Collective Security Treaty Organization. *Collective Security Treaty*, May 15, 1992. Accessed September 22, 2025. [https://en.odkb-csto.org/documents/documents/dogovor\\_o\\_kollektivnoy\\_bezopasnosti/#loaded](https://en.odkb-csto.org/documents/documents/dogovor_o_kollektivnoy_bezopasnosti/#loaded)

<sup>23</sup> Armenpress. “Likely Armenia Will Withdraw from CSTO, Says Pashinyan.” *Armenpress*, July 16, 2025. <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1224984>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> EVN Report. “How Armenia Diversified Its Security Landscape in 2024.” December 26, 2024. <https://evnreport.com/politics/armenia-security-diversification-2024/>

This vacuum left by Russia in Armenia's security has, in turn, provided the EU with an opportunity to consolidate its influence in the region. Through the deployment of EUMA, the EU is offering not only normative support but also positioning itself as a geopolitical player capable of counterbalancing Russia's influence. Although the EUMA is largely responsible for monitoring rather than enforcement, its significance stems from its “representation of soft power”<sup>26</sup> and its presence as a deterrent to renewed hostilities or attacks from Azerbaijan.

It provides Armenia with a form of reassurance through its on-the-ground presence, leveraging political influence and deterrent implications. While the mission's authority does not allow direct intervention, it does supply Brussels with real-time, reliable data, thereby amplifying the Union's role in regional accountability and credibility. In this regard, the EUMA serves to enhance EU diplomacy by proving that, in the absence of military action, the EU can still function as a crisis-response instrument<sup>27</sup> and an operational model for future civilian missions.

### **Comparative Perspective: EUMA Armenia and EUMM Georgia**

A parallel can be drawn with the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM),<sup>28</sup> established in 2008 following the Russian invasion of Georgia. Prior to the establishment of the EU Civilian Mission in Armenia (EUMA), a two-month EU Monitoring Capacity in Armenia (EUMCAP)<sup>29</sup> was deployed, with 40 observers reassigned from the EUMM Georgia on a temporary basis.

While the EUMM Georgia was primarily tasked with post-war stabilization and confidence-building, the EUMA Armenia operates in an active conflict theater, facing ongoing Azerbaijani threats against Armenia's sovereign territory. Despite these contextual differences, both missions share a set of core objectives that include “monitoring, reporting, tension reduction,

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<sup>26</sup> Nielsen, Kristian, “EU Soft Power and the Capability-Expectations Gap,” *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 9, No. 5 (2013), Pp. 725–74.

[www.researchgate.net/publication/290557510\\_EU\\_Soft\\_Power\\_and\\_the\\_Capability-Expectations\\_Gap](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/290557510_EU_Soft_Power_and_the_Capability-Expectations_Gap)

<sup>27</sup> Tatikyan, Sossi, “The EU's Role in Preventing a New Conflict and Ensuring Sustainable Peace Between Armenia and Azerbaijan,” *European Policy Review* 6, no. 1 (July 2023):

<sup>28</sup> Council of the European Union. Council Joint Action 2008/736/CFSP of September 15, 2008 on the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM Georgia). Official Journal of the European Union, L 248, September 17, 2008. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/joint\\_action/2008/736/oj/eng](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/joint_action/2008/736/oj/eng)

<sup>29</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS). EU Monitoring Capacity to Armenia. Press release, October 20, 2022. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-monitoring-capacity-armenia\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-monitoring-capacity-armenia_en)

contributing to stabilization, supporting the normalization of relations.”<sup>30</sup> Neither mission is equipped with enforcement mechanisms, yet both hold considerable tactical importance while projecting the EU’s presence on the ground.

Notwithstanding the European Union’s broader commitment to “fostering democracy, good governance, and institutional strengthening as key drivers for security and stability”<sup>31</sup> within its Eastern Partnership periphery, the EU’s efforts in addressing the immediate security needs of states like Armenia and Georgia have historically been limited in scope.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, with the establishment of these missions, the EU demonstrated tangible progress in closing this gap, displaying an evolving strategy oriented toward crisis-responsive civilian missions for conflict management in the region.

Some argue<sup>33</sup> that the EU’s intervention in Russia’s “*near-abroad*” yields limited outcomes. While such criticism is not without merit, it risks overlooking or downplaying important developments. The continued presence of Russian forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia since 2008 is structurally comparable to Armenia, where Russia maintains its 102nd Army Base.<sup>34</sup> Although the political context differs, whereas Russia’s 7th Military Base in Abkhazia is an outcome of “coercion,” while Armenia’s decision to host the 102nd base was voluntary, both cases of Russia’s military presence can potentially be used for Moscow’s force projection, thereby turning into a destabilizing factor in the region.

Yet, both cases demonstrate a common dynamic: despite the presence of a hard power actor, EU civilian missions have been successfully operating *alongside* the Russian military forces. These missions function within particularly fragile conflict-affected environments and,

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<sup>30</sup> Council of the European Union. Council Joint Action 2008/736/CFSP of September 15, 2008 on the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, EUMM Georgia. Official Journal of the European Union, L 248, 17 September 2008, 26–31. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/joint\\_action/2008/736/oj/eng](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/joint_action/2008/736/oj/eng)

<sup>31</sup> Ianciară, A. K., “Stability, Security, Democracy: Explaining Shifts in the Narrative of the European Neighbourhood Policy.” *Journal of European Integration* 39, no. 1 (2016): 49–62

<sup>32</sup> Deen, Bob and Wouter Zweers. *The EU in the South Caucasus: Navigating a Geopolitical Labyrinth in Turmoil*. The Hague: Clingendael Institute, March 30, 2023. <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/eu-south-caucasus>

<sup>33</sup> Kochinyan, Areg, “EU Mission in Armenia and Russia.” *Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom*, October 2, 2023. <https://www.freiheit.org/south-caucasus/eu-mission-armenia-and-russia>

<sup>34</sup> Araratyan, Aram, “Key: Russian Base in Armenia.” *Mediamax*, February 4, 2015. <https://mediamax.am/en/news/parzabanum/13078/#:~:text=%2DThe%20military%20base%20was%20established,Russia%20to%20Armenia%20Vladimir%20Stupishin>

oftentimes, under pressure from Moscow’s provocative rhetoric.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, this *coexistence* itself characterizes a major development: two opposing blocks operating simultaneously within the same territory.

Despite the challenges posed by Russia,<sup>36</sup> the missions’ presence illustrates the EU’s consistent willingness to continue acting in Russia-influenced regions in a heightened manner via its civilian interventions. Notably, the rapid secondment<sup>37</sup> of personnel from the EUMM Georgia to Armenia, ahead of the EUMA’s official launch, highlights the EU’s adaptability and speed in mission planning. Building on this precedent, one could argue that the EUMA holds the potential to evolve further, moving from a small-scale, temporary monitoring presence into a longer-term stabilization instrument,<sup>38</sup> thereby reinforcing the EU’s credibility as an effective security actor in the South Caucasus.

### Challenges and Implications

The EUMA is not exempt from challenges and limitations, however. One of the more commonly cited constraints is attributed to the EUMA’s lack of an enforcement mechanism. As a result, it relies on soft power to exert influence while attempting to strike a balance between its normative agenda<sup>39</sup> and its geopolitical ambitions, running the risk of losing credibility whenever expectations exceed its operational capacity. This raises the likelihood of unrealistic expectations within Armenian society. While the EUMA simply provides visibility and transparent reporting, it is often regarded as a *de facto* security guarantor. To avoid eroding trust in both the EU and the mission, it is essential to mitigate unrealistic expectations and clearly communicate the civilian and observational, rather than protective, nature of the mandate to the Armenian population.

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<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. Press release, October 20, 2023. [https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/news/1849816/](https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1849816/)

<sup>36</sup> Teslova, Elena, “Exclusively Geopolitical Motives Behind New EU Mission in Armenia: Russia.” *Anadolu Agency*, February 21, 2023. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/exclusively-geopolitical-motives-behind-new-eu-mission-in-armenia-russia/2826576>

<sup>37</sup> Council of the European Union. *Armenia: EU Monitoring Capacity completes its mandate, new planning team launched*. Press release, December 19, 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/12/19/armenia-eu-monitoring-capacity-completes-its-mandate-new-planning-team-launched/>

<sup>38</sup> Calcara, A., “Short-term readiness, long-term innovation: the European defense market and the trade-off between demand and supply,” *Defense and Peace Economics* 34, no. 1 (2023): 1–20

<sup>39</sup> Deen, Bob, Wouter Zweers, and Camille Linder, *The EU in the South Caucasus: Navigating a Geopolitical Labyrinth in Turmoil* (The Hague: Clingendael Institute, March 2023)

Second, there is no access to Azerbaijani areas; the mission is geopolitically limited to Armenian territory.<sup>40</sup> This asymmetry can potentially undermine the mission’s credibility and stabilizing mechanisms by giving the impression of bias or partiality because of inadequate or limited information gathering and monitoring. And a third constraint stems from internal divisions and diverging interests within the EU itself. The lack of unity among EU member states, for example, continues to pose challenges to the efficacy and sustainability of EU engagement. This is most evident in the case of EU member state Hungary,<sup>41</sup> which has traditionally closer ties with Azerbaijan and has blocked the formation of the EUMA, illustrating how “interest-driven”<sup>42</sup> choices can influence and impede the necessity for consensus and agreement inside the European Union.

### **The Implications of the Washington Summit TRIPP Agreement for the EUMA Mission**

In August 2025, under the auspices of U.S. President Donald Trump, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev signed a joint declaration at the White House. The accords, widely referred to as the *Washington Summit*, were declared historic, marking the “closure of nearly four decades of enmity between two nations”<sup>43</sup> and “resolutely rejecting any attempt of revenge, now and in the future.”<sup>44</sup>

The declaration, which underscores a shared commitment to progressing a new era of reconciliation in the South Caucasus, places particular emphasis on regional integration through multi-dimensional connectivity. The initiative known as the Trump Corridor for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) envisions the “opening of communications in international transportation and trade routes,”<sup>45</sup> including “unimpeded connectivity”<sup>46</sup> between Azerbaijan and its exclave, Nakhichevan, via Armenian territory, a development that will have direct implications for Iran and Turkey, both of which share borders with Armenia.

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<sup>40</sup> Cutler, Robert, “What Europe Can Contribute to Armenia–Azerbaijan Peace,” *Strategy International*, September 3, 2025. <https://strategyinternational.org/2025/09/03/publication199/>

<sup>41</sup> Azatutyun, “Armenia Still Hopes for EU Military Aid,” May 14, 2024. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/32947028.html>

<sup>42</sup> Deen, Bob, Wouter Zweers, and Camille Linder, *The EU in the South Caucasus: Navigating a Geopolitical Labyrinth in Turmoil* (The Hague: Clingendael Institute, March 2023)

<sup>43</sup> Armenpress. “Full Text of US-Brokered Armenia-Azerbaijan Joint Declaration.” Armenian News Agency, August 9, 2025. <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1226785>

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

The provision leasing 43 km of Armenian land to the United States for the period of 99 years is arguably the most crucial aspect of the deal,<sup>47</sup> as it becomes a part of a larger commerce route and transit network linking Central Asia through Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Turkey to global markets.<sup>48</sup> If fully implemented, these arrangements have the potential to fundamentally alter the security and economic architecture of the South Caucasus, integrating Armenia into broader regional connectivity networks<sup>49</sup>.

The intended territory for the lease traverses Armenia’s southern Syunik region, a territory that holds exceptional strategic significance. Following the Nagorno-Karabakh war, Azerbaijan repeatedly challenged Armenia’s sovereignty, issuing multiple threats regarding possible military action in Syunik to force a direct connection to its Nakhichevan exclave via the so-called “Zangezur Corridor” - now called the TRIPP, without Armenian customs or security controls - directly compromising Armenia’s sovereignty.

For Armenia, Syunik not only serves as a major conduit to Iran but is also crucial to the country’s national security. The rhetoric used by Azerbaijan in relation to Syunik reveals ambitions that extend beyond the establishment of trade and connectivity routes; they seem to be driven by a more comprehensive strategic vision on the creation of the Pan-Turkic geopolitical objectives. The corridor project has been strongly backed by Azerbaijan’s long-standing partner, Turkey<sup>50</sup>, as well as Russia, which viewed the route as a potential means to bypass Western sanctions by putting it under its Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) forces, referencing the Armenia-Russia-Azerbaijan trilateral statement<sup>51</sup> of November 2020, which formally put an end to the Nagorno-Karabakh war and stationed so-called Russian peacekeepers in the region. In reality, the trilateral agreement does not imply

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<sup>47</sup> Yildiz, Guney. “America’s High Stakes Bet on Zangezur: How a US-Led Corridor Could Slash Europe’s Energy Costs and Counter Russia.” *Forbes*, July 18, 2025. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/guneyyildiz/2025/07/18/americas-high-stakes-bet-on-zangezur-how-a-us-led-corridor-could-slash-europes-energy-costs-and-counter-russia/>

<sup>48</sup> O’Brien, Jim, “Peace in the Caucasus: Ensuring Europe Plays a Role After Trump’s Ceremony,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, August 14, 2025. <https://ecfr.eu/article/peace-in-the-caucasus-ensuring-europe-plays-a-role-after-trumps-ceremony/>

<sup>49</sup> Valansi, Karel, “Why the Middle Corridor Matters Amid a Geopolitical Resorting.” *Atlantic Council*, June 2, 2025. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/ac-turkey-defense-journal/why-the-middle-corridor-matters-amid-a-geopolitical-resorting/>

<sup>50</sup> Giragosian, Richard, “Armenia ‘Talks Türkiye’ in New Diplomatic Offensive.” *Agos*, June 24, 2025. <https://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/34002/armenia-talks-turkiye-in-new-diplomatic-offensive>

<sup>51</sup> Republic of Armenia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Initialed Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Agreement Text*. Press release, August 11, 2025. <https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2025/08/11/Initialed%20Arm-Az%20Peace%20Agreement%20text/13394>

any authority to FSB forces over transit operations in Armenia, contrary to Moscow’s interpretations.<sup>52</sup>

The Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) emerging from the Washington Summit is argued to differ from the so-called “Zangezur Corridor” not only in *nomenclature* but also in its legal and operational guarantees. The Washington Declaration clearly states that the TRIPP shall operate on the “basis of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and jurisdiction of the States,”<sup>53</sup> providing Armenia “full sovereign control over the road passing through its territory, including transit fees and border checks,”<sup>54</sup> without any sacrifice of sovereignty to Azerbaijan. By contrast, the earlier concept of the “Zangezur Corridor” did not provide the abovementioned security guarantees and was leveraged by Azerbaijan pushing for an “extraterritorial corridor”<sup>55</sup> at Armenia’s expense.

Nevertheless, the Washington Summit marks a significant step forward in formalizing the peace agreement and securing transit routes, yet its full implementation remains premature, with multiple challenges ahead. The operationalization of the route largely depends on the normalization of relations with Turkey; hence, there could be “no business without it”<sup>56</sup> if the border between Armenia and Turkey remains closed. Uncertainties also remain concerning constitutional changes in Armenia demanded by Azerbaijan as a key precondition, as well as operational matters<sup>57</sup> in managing the corridor and the involvement of regional actors such

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<sup>52</sup> Armenpress. “November 9 Document Does Not Imply That Russia’s FSB Must Be Present on the Ground: Pashinyan on Clause 9.” *Armenpress*, September 11, 2024. <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1199623>

<sup>53</sup> Armenpress. “Full Text of US-Brokered Armenia-Azerbaijan Joint Declaration.” Armenian News Agency, August 9, 2025. <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1226785>

<sup>54</sup> Vartanyan, Olesya, “A Month After Historic Armenia-Azerbaijan Summit, Has Trump Secured a Lasting Peace?” *Carnegie Politika*, September 11, 2025. <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia- Eurasia/politika/2025/09/azerbaijan-armenia-trump-deal?lang=en>

<sup>55</sup> Giragosian, Richard, “A Trump-Brokered Peace Deal in the South Caucasus Is Hopeful but Incomplete,” *Foreign Policy*, August 29, 2025. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/08/29/armenia-azerbaijan-trump-russia-turkey-peace/>

<sup>56</sup> O’Brien, Jim, “Peace in the Caucasus: Ensuring Europe Plays a Role after Trump’s Ceremony,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, August 14, 2025. <https://ecfr.eu/article/peace-in-the-caucasus-ensuring-europe-plays-a-role-after-trumps-ceremony/>

<sup>57</sup> Hess, Maximilian, “Armenian Transit Corridor Gets Initial Financial Infusion.” *Eurasianet*, September 12, 2025. <https://eurasianet.org/armenian-transit-corridor-gets-initial-financial-infusion>

as Iran<sup>58</sup> and Russia<sup>59</sup> that cast a shadow over the TRIPP due to their long-standing interests in the region.

In sum, while TRIPP represents a legally and politically acceptable framework for Armenia and Azerbaijan compared to previous concepts, much of its success will largely depend on several critical factors. For Armenia, this entails the capacity to uphold the agreed terms, the strengthening of diplomatic relations with regional and international stakeholders, and the careful management of regional hard power influences. For Azerbaijan, respecting the agreement, adhering to its terms and conditions, and refraining from damaging rhetoric towards Armenia and Armenians still remain valid points. Without these measures, the implementation of the Washington Accords would be highly uncertain; hence, there are no guarantors or enforcing mechanisms to ensure compliance.<sup>60</sup>

### **The EU’s strategic role in the wake of Washington’s South Caucasus Diplomacy**

While EU leaders have repeatedly welcomed<sup>61</sup> the Washington Agreements, the U.S.-brokered deal presents both challenges and opportunities for further EU engagement in the South Caucasus. Foremost, it is important to distinguish between the EUMA Mission and the TRIPP framework. The EUMA represents a civilian mission - a normative mandate - to “provide human security, conduct routine patrolling, reporting, and contribute to the normalization of the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.” In contrast, TRIPP is transactional, centered on creating trade routes, fostering economic advantages, and reopening channels of communication. Its *Trans-Atlantic* nature and economic focus risk marginalizing the EU’s influence, despite its active role<sup>62</sup> in mediation efforts since the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War. At a time when the EUMA has earned trust through its sustained

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<sup>58</sup> Wintour, Patrick, “Iran and Russia Stand to Lose from US Deal with Azerbaijan and Armenia.” *The Guardian*, August 9, 2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/aug/09/iran-and-russia-stand-to-lose-from-us-deal-with-azerbaijan-and-armenia>

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Giragosian, Richard, “A Trump-Brokered Peace Deal in the South Caucasus Is Hopeful but Incomplete,” *Foreign Policy*, August 29, 2025. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/08/29/armenia-azerbaijan-trump-russia-turkey-peace/>

<sup>61</sup> Council of the European Union. *Armenia/Azerbaijan: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the initialing of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Treaty*. Press release, August 8, 2025. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/08/08/armeniaazerbaijan-statement-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-initialing-of-the-armenia-azerbaijan-peace-treaty/>

<sup>62</sup> *Caucasus Watch*. “EU Mediation between Armenia and Azerbaijan: Prospects and Challenges.” Last modified December 24, 2023. <https://caucasuswatch.de/en/insights/eu-mediation-between-armenia-and-azerbaijan-prospects-and-challenges.html>

physical presence, its long-standing EU-Armenia partnership<sup>63</sup> and the use of various soft power mechanisms, the Washington deal may be perceived as imposed, particularly given the arguments that Armenia’s gains remain limited.<sup>64</sup> Due to these contradictions, Europe is faced with asserting its relevance while preserving its reputation and mandate on the ground.

Furthermore, geopolitical tensions are likely to intensify, as both Russia and Iran regard the suggestion of a U.S. presence as an intrusion<sup>65</sup> and threat to their traditional sphere of influence. Meanwhile, the European Union, on the other hand, is likely to be perceived as less confrontational due to its civilian status and non-combatant mandate. This distinction enables the EU to operate in a more “accepted” and positive environment, exercising influence through normative and confidence-building processes<sup>66</sup> rather than Russia’s traditional reliance on pressure and coercion.

However, as noted, the EUMA faces its own set of challenges: Azerbaijan’s resistance to the mission, Russia’s persistent disinformation efforts, the potential alteration of the mandate in light of the Washington Summit, and a possible exclusion from third-party engagement,<sup>67</sup> all threatening to undermine the purpose of the EU mission.

On the other hand, the prospects for strategic constructive collaboration do exist. TRIPP creates new avenues where the EU can offer its technical expertise,<sup>68</sup> extend legitimacy, and provide civilian oversight. For example, the EUMA may adopt a neutral role by monitoring the transit route, assuring safe and transparent operations, and implementing confidence-building measures. It can function via civilian security lenses, allowing the mission to

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<sup>63</sup> Anastasyan, Mariam, *What’s Next for Armenia After the Launch of the Visa Liberalisation Dialogue*. Regional Studies Center, January 25, 2025.

<https://www.kas.de/documents/269781/0/Publications.pdf/863b8dc2-e9db-52f8-0cea-846400f3d782?version=1.0&t=1743073791431>

<sup>64</sup> Cutler, Robert, “What Europe Can Contribute to Armenia–Azerbaijan Peace,” *Strategy International*, September 3, 2025. <https://strategyinternational.org/2025/09/03/publication199/>

<sup>65</sup> Azatutyun. “Russia’s Lavrov Cites ‘Skepticism’ Over Armenian Azeri Agreements.” September 8, 2025. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33524794.html>

<sup>66</sup> International Crisis Group. *Armenia and Azerbaijan: Getting the Peace Agreement across the Finish Line*. Report, May 22, 2025. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/armenian-azerbaijani-conflict/armenia-and-azerbaijan-getting-peace-agreement-across-finish-line>

<sup>67</sup> Joint Declaration by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, and the President of the United States of America on the outcomes of their meeting in Washington

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

complement the route’s socio-economic and environmental consequences that U.S frameworks may overlook or underestimate. As noted by the US Ambassador to Armenia,

*“As Europe continues to deepen its ties with Armenia, we look forward to partnering to advance the multiple lines of effort that will make the vision of a Middle Corridor from Central Asia to Western Europe a reality.”*<sup>69</sup>

Last, but not least, the EU has already invested in the region through the ongoing resilience Syunik project,<sup>70</sup> which aims to improve local infrastructure and promote socio-economic stability. Given the provision for “third-party engagement”<sup>71</sup> in the Armenia-Azerbaijan joint declaration, the EU is well positioned to act as an “implementing arm,”<sup>72</sup> thus bridging Washington’s leverage with Brussels’ institutional presence.

## Conclusion

The European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMA) underscores Europe’s growing political engagement in Armenia, despite its limited civilian mandate and the inherent operational challenges. To strengthen its operational effectiveness and strategic impact, the EU should consider revising the EUMA mandate by introducing frameworks for possible technical assistance, integrated border management, and clearly defined mechanisms for security cooperation with Armenia.

At the same time, the TRIPP framework presents a strategic opportunity for Armenia to address its longstanding bottlenecks and regional isolation by directly engaging in

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<sup>69</sup> U.S. Embassy in Armenia. “Ambassador *Kviens*” Remarks at the 108th NATO Rose-Roth Seminar (Transcript).” U.S. Embassy in Armenia press release/transcript, September 23, .2025.

<sup>70</sup> European Investment Bank. *Armenia - Resilient Syunik Program*. Project number 20220193. Last modified July 16, 2025. <https://www.eib.org/en/projects/pipelines/all/20220193>

<sup>71</sup> Joint Declaration by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, and the President of the United States of America on the outcomes of their meeting in Washington D.C., United States of America. Press release, August 9, 2025. <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/08/09/Nikol-Pashinyan-visit-US-declaration/>

<sup>72</sup> International Crisis Group. *Armenia and Azerbaijan: Getting the Peace Agreement across the Finish Line*. Report, May 22, 2025. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/armenian-azerbaijani-conflict/armenia-and-azerbaijan-getting-peace-agreement-across-finish-line>

connectivity projects in transport, rail, and infrastructure. While implementation terms and roadmaps remain pending and many details are yet to be clarified, close coordination between the EU and the United States on a complementary basis has the potential to advance shared objectives of regional stability and connectivity. Furthermore, the European Union’s considerable expertise in the financial, technical, and administrative domains is likely to play an even more crucial role in the initiative’s success, particularly given its alignment with the EU’s Global Gateway strategy and its overarching vision of sustainable connectivity.

On a broader level, since Russia invaded Ukraine, the security dimension has become an integral part of the EU’s Eastern Partnership (EaP) program. Connectivity schemes have also emerged not only as prospects for cooperation but also as new battlegrounds for security. In response to these shifting realities, the EU may need to look past its traditional reliance on soft power and economic incentives and instead transform into a credible security actor. Such a transition holds significance not only for regional stability and resilience but also for reinforcing the EU’s credibility as a proactive proponent of democratic principles and promoter of a rules-based international order.

The EU’s presence - unarmed but not unnoticed - represents its consistent graduation from a mere monitoring mission into a strategically engaged actor in the South Caucasus. As the dynamics in the region continue to evolve, maintaining this role will require sustained political will, institutional alignment, and, above all, agile engagement - one that complements rather than fragments the American initiative.



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