

## TRIPP project: geopolitical risks and new regional realities

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Annotation

ARVAK analyzes the viability of the “Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity” (TRIPP) strategic initiative amidst the massive escalation surrounding Iran and the internal political crisis in the United States. The comment examines the positions of key regional actors, security risks to infrastructure in Syunik, and the likelihood of the Washington Declaration’s denunciation in the event of a change of power in Yerevan. The author explores the contradictions between the official optimism of the signatory parties and the objective determinants hindering the project’s realization. The conclusion is drawn that TRIPP is transforming into a destabilizing factor, devoid of independent economic profitability and dependent on the outcome of the U.S.–Iran confrontation.

**Keywords:** geopolitics, TRIPP, “Trump Route”, South Caucasus, Iranian war, Syunik, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, USA, regional security, transport corridors.

### 1. Preparation dynamics and expert skepticism

The situation surrounding Iran has actualized the discussion regarding the degree of realizability of the *Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity* (TRIPP) under new conditions. According to a number of experts monitoring this issue since the signing of the Washington Declaration on August 8, 2025, the project is of fundamental importance for U.S. policy in the region; consequently, its implementation is viewed as having no alternative, although the possibility of a temporary postponement of practical steps in light of recent events around Iran is not ruled out.

Skeptics, in turn, insist on a cardinal shift in the regional balance of power, which will inevitably affect the prospects of TRIPP – at the very least in terms of revising the configuration of its geopolitical and financial-economic beneficiaries. At most, the project will remain on paper or be terminated by one of the signatory parties due to its futility and inconsistency with current realities.

According to open sources, the project participants are currently continuing preparatory work: expert working groups from the USA regularly visit Armenia, construction assessments and design work are being carried out, and legal issues and a wide range of technical details are being coordinated. Simultaneously, Azerbaijan is nearly completing the complex laying of communications to the Armenian border. Turkey is also actively conducting construction and repair work on the Kars–İğdir–Aralık–Dilucu railway route. Formally, Ankara is not a party to the TRIPP project; however, amid the financial and economic crisis in Turkey, significant expenditures on laying the railway path to Nakhichevan indicate that Ankara has received certain guarantees from Washington regarding the “*Trump Route*” having no alternative.

By external appearances, the preparation process is proceeding at its usual pace, but several factors exist that, in combination, could lead to the collapse of this initiative in the near future.

### 2. The Iranian war factor: nullification of security guarantees

The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), at the level of high-ranking officials from the conservative wing (including Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in a U.S.–Israeli attack),

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<sup>1</sup> The original (in Rus.) was posted on our website on 18.04.2026.

has repeatedly stated that the TRIPP project represents a threat to Tehran's interests and its implementation near Iranian borders would be unacceptable. Iranian authorities view TRIPP as a platform for establishing a U.S. military and intelligence presence directly on their northern frontiers and perceive a potential threat related to the strengthening of the Turkic factor in the region, which could have negative consequences both for external pressure and internal national-separatist tendencies.

Tehran also expresses concerns regarding the potential for the United States to block Iranian access to Armenia and Georgia in the Syunik region, which ensures the IRI's trade and logistical link with the Black Sea basin countries and Europe. Finally, another motive for rejecting TRIPP is the threat of losing a significant lever of influence over Baku – the connection between Azerbaijan and its Nakhijevan exclave through Iranian territory. Tehran has repeatedly proposed that Baku focus on investing in and expanding the infrastructure of this specific route as the most optimal for communication between Turkic countries, guaranteeing its security from their side. In light of the trend toward Turkic integration, Iran viewed this transport-energy corridor as a potential tool for control over the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) and a source of significant transit revenue.

Nevertheless, Iranian concerns and initiatives were ignored during the signing of the TRIPP declaration at the White House. Tehran's threats were perceived with skepticism in Washington, Baku, Ankara, and Yerevan, based on the conviction that the Iranian authorities, despite their harsh rhetoric, would not resort to radical forceful measures against the "*Trump Road*".

To a certain extent, the categorical tone of the Iranian authorities did indeed dissonate with their actual readiness for forceful steps aimed at disrupting the project. Iran feared a new clash with the USA after the "12-day" July war of 2025, and the TRIPP agreement was hardly viewed by Iranian elites then as a *casus belli* requiring immediate radical actions against the USA, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. Moreover, at a certain point, the moderate reformist wing in the Iranian political leadership even began to promote the thesis that the "*Trump Route*", provided certain Tehran requirements were met, would not pose a threat. This was evidenced by President Masoud Pezeshkian's August statement, in which he expressed the opinion that talk of TRIPP's threats to Iran was "*greatly exaggerated*".

Iranian conservatives, apparently, used the reformists' arguments to remove the issue of their promised opposition to the American initiative from the agenda and avoid new reasons for a resumption of U.S.–Iranian confrontation. Objectively, Iran was not ready for forceful intervention in the construction of a regional route under U.S. auspices, to which it formally has no direct relation. Consequently, Tehran preferred to leave TRIPP beyond the "red line" drawn before the USA to save face and avoid creating new grounds for military conflict.

However, the situation changed radically after the start of the new war against Iran on February 28, 2026, unleashed by the U.S.–Israeli coalition. The existential threat to the entire system of power in the IRI and the risk of losing state sovereignty altogether led to the removal of the issue of discretion and extreme caution in relations with the USA. Donald Trump left the IRI's military-political leadership no choice but to defend themselves by all available means and was forced to face not only military losses. Iranian attacks on the oil and gas, logistical, and technological infrastructure of U.S.-allied Middle Eastern countries indicate

that Tehran is ignoring any “red lines” in its pursuit of inflicting maximum damage on U.S. military and financial-economic interests in the region.

The expert community monitoring TRIPP is nearly unanimous: the “*Trump Route*” infrastructure, regardless of its stage of readiness, would inevitably have been attacked by Tehran during the current conflict. Iran demonstrated its readiness to close the Strait of Hormuz – the key global maritime artery for hydrocarbon exports – ignoring the interests of the international community. In view of this, it seems unlikely that the land route through Armenian Syunik would have escaped a similar fate. Consequently, if the U.S.-Iranian conflict is prolonged or maintains a sluggish character, project implementation will be postponed due to the permanent threat of strikes from Tehran.

The continuation of the conflict in any form will hinder the flow of private investment upon which Washington and Yerevan pinned their hopes. If the U.S.–Iranian conflict ends in a lasting peace involving the lifting of sanctions, the unfreezing of international assets, and the establishment of trade ties, the geopolitical and economic significance of TRIPP will significantly decrease. In this case, the route will lose profitability on a global scale, as Iran itself, being “*rehabilitated*” and open for cooperation, will become the most convenient continental transit platform. Advancing the “*Trump Route*” project in such a situation would benefit only Azerbaijan and Turkey in the context of their plans to connect the geographically fragmented “*Turkic world*” via the so-called “*Zangezur Corridor*”.

However, in a disposition where the USA loses interest in TRIPP, the Turkish-Azerbaijani initiative will lose weight substantially. It cannot be realized without Tehran’s consent, which is unlikely to show loyalty to a project for unhindered land connection of the OTS alliance via a trans-territorial corridor through sovereign Armenian land. The IRI would most likely prevent the route’s functioning in such a format under the threat of force, a stance the Russian Federation might support based on its own concerns regarding the OTS and geopolitical interests in the South Caucasus.

In summary: without coordination with the current authorities in Tehran and obtaining corresponding guarantees, TRIPP will remain unviable, under a permanent security threat, inevitably leading to an investment deficit. If the anti-Iranian coalition succeeds in changing the regime in Tehran to one loyal to the West without violating Iranian sovereignty and territorial integrity, the “*Trump Corridor*” will naturally lose its profitability. Turkey and Azerbaijan would remain the only beneficiaries, but without Western support it will be difficult for them to reformat the project into an element of the intra-Turkic integration agenda.

### **3. Political crisis and the prospect of change of power in the USA**

The protracted impasse concerning Iran has adversely affected Donald Trump’s approval rating and collectively diminished the standing of the U.S. Republican Party. Analysts suggest the Democratic Party already has significant chances of removing D. Trump through impeachment. However, to ensure guaranteed success, they will likely wait for the November mid-term elections, after which, according to all polls, Republicans may lose their majority in both chambers of the Congress. Under such a configuration, the President will lose support on Capitol Hill, making the impeachment process nearly certain to succeed.

Democrats are convinced that by that time, D. Trump will be unable to resolve the Israeli-Iranian aspect of his foreign policy and, most significantly, the Iranian failure will affect the standing

of J. D. Vance – the strongest Republican candidate for the next presidential election. His attempts to rectify the situation through negotiations with Tehran currently do not inspire optimism.

In any case, the current White House administration risks facing an early departure, accompanied by an unprecedented political and legal review of its activities in U.S. history. According to independent experts, the scandal surrounding the so-called “*Epstein case*”, the Iranian war, and a significant array of controversial decisions by Donald Trump both domestically and internationally are fraught with the discredit of his entire presidency and a process of cardinal reassessment of his initiatives by the new U.S. authorities. It is possible that TRIPP, inextricably linked to Trump’s name and considered his “*personal achievement*”, will quickly gain a reputation as an initiative lacking prospects in the new geopolitical realities of Western Asia and representing no substantial value in the context of U.S. national interests.

#### **4. Armenia’s internal political factor: risk of obligation revision**

The prospects for TRIPP are directly dependent on the internal political situation in Armenia. This circumstance is not given due attention; however, in the event of an Armenian opposition victory in the elections and their projected revision of the current government’s foreign policy portfolio, the legal, economic, and technical basis of the “*Trump Road*” project could be reviewed by Yerevan. Furthermore, it could involve the denunciation of the Washington Declaration altogether if the Republic of Armenia under a new government recognizes the “Civil Contract” Party’s activities as contrary to legislation, sovereignty, and national interests.

Such a scenario is possible given the high probability of U.S. positions weakening in this region due to the anti-Iranian campaign and Russia’s increased activity in the South Caucasus. Even without denunciation, Yerevan, with the tacit support of Moscow and Tehran, could systematically delay the process of coordinating project details and potentially seek a revision of the entire configuration of TRIPP beneficiaries, acting in its own interests as well as those of the IRI and the RF. In this case, the chances of Washington, Ankara, and Baku to force Yerevan into a fast-tracked fulfillment of previous TRIPP agreements by legal means are assessed as extremely low, since the “*Trump Corridor*” project is subject to implementation exclusively in conjunction with the final signing of a comprehensive Armenian-Azerbaijani peace deal. Without this document, TRIPP remains merely a declaration not providing for mandatory execution. Consequently, the key question is whether Baku (in the event of power change in Yerevan) will be ready to accept new Armenian conditions for the comprehensive peace treaty to save TRIPP. Such a framing radically changes the assessment of the “*Trump Corridor*” agenda, making it directly dependent on Yerevan’s position and, consequently, on the degree of RF and IRI influence on the new Armenian leadership.

#### **5. Summary**

Given all these factors, the prospects for TRIPP’s implementation, at least in the form presented to the public, appear uncertain. The signatory parties continue to declare that preparatory work is on schedule, but the rapidly changing regional situation and the deepening power crisis in the USA indicate otherwise. Several American analysts already confidently state that TRIPP is an unviable project born of Trump’s ambitions and “*lacking independent economic justification*”. Consequently, this project not only fails to secure the

peaceful Armenian-Azerbaijani agenda but may become one of the reasons for its failure and, as a result, a new round of escalation in the South Caucasus.

Thus, with its loud presentation followed by a demonstration of illusory prospects upon contact with reality, TRIPP repeats the fate of many geopolitical projects that were also originally masked as economically expedient and profitable programs.