

On the current stage of implementation of the TRIPP project

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Annotation

ARVAK analyzes the transition of the “Trump Route” (TRIPP) project into the practical implementation phase as of August 2026. The commentary examines institutional and financial shifts, including the doubling of the capitalization of the TRIPP+Enterprise Fund and the change in project supervisors. Particular attention is paid to Ankara’s diplomatic passivity, which is interpreted as an indicator of a significant revision of Washington’s geopolitical priorities in the region. The commentary substantiates the hypothesis regarding the diminishing role of the “Turkic factor” in favor of the growing influence of the Israeli vector concerning transit logistics in the South Caucasus. It demonstrates how the TRIPP project is being transformed from a tool for realizing Pan-Turkic ambitions into an element of a global strategy aimed at reformatting the regional balance of power.

Keywords: TRIPP, South Caucasus, geopolitics, “Zangezur Corridor”, U.S. foreign policy, Turkey, Israel, Iran, logistics, Abraham Accords, regional security, investments, transit corridors.

1. Revitalization of the TRIPP project: Institutional development and financial expansion

Judging by the intensification of U.S. actions on the TRIPP agenda, the route project is entering the phase of practical realization.

In mid-July 2026, it became known that the management of the newly created *TRIPP+Enterprise Fund* under the U.S. Department of State was entrusted to Konstantin Sokolov. He is a venture investor and founder of IJS Investment, known for his close ties to the U.S. Republican Party and substantial financial contributions (\$12 million) to Donald Trump’s election campaign.

Just a day after news of Sokolov’s appointment broke, data from the official U.S. government spending database confirmed a twofold expansion of the *TRIPP+Enterprise Fund*. According to a notice from the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs dated January 30, 2026, the fund was initially allocated a grant of \$201 million with a program validity period until December 31, 2036. However, on July 16, 2026, the terms of the agreement were revised: the funding volume increased to \$402 million, though the final deadline for project implementation remained unchanged.

Shortly thereafter, on August 5, 2026, Aryeh Lightstone – senior advisor to U.S. Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and one of the key architects of the geopolitical and economic concept of TRIPP – visited Yerevan. The central topic of his talks with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan was the coordination of a schedule of preliminary measures within the framework of the practical launch of the “*Trump Corridor*”. Upon completion of the meeting, the participants expressed optimism, noting that “*as a result of resolving technical issues, practical steps in this direction will become even more tangible in the near future*”.

August 8, 2026, marked one year since the signing of the 2025 Washington Declaration, which solidified Yerevan and Baku’s intention to abandon military confrontation and launch the TRIPP corridor through Armenian territory. On this occasion, D. Trump held phone calls

¹ The original (in Rus.) was posted on our website on 14.08.2026.

with the leaders of both countries, during which the interlocutors reaffirmed their commitment to achieving a comprehensive peace and noted positive progress in implementing the “Trump Route” project. On the anniversary of the Washington agreements, the U.S. State Department issued a separate statement noting the “*courage*” of Armenia and Azerbaijan in their pursuit of peace in the South Caucasus and expressing hope for the “*swift construction of transport and energy communications*”. The American diplomatic body emphasized its “*unwavering support for the territorial integrity and jurisdiction of the region’s states within their internationally recognized borders*”, while highlighting the important role of TRIPP as a central element of the Trans-Caspian Trade Route, which fosters economic growth and strengthens stability in the region.

During the same period, the Azerbaijani leadership voiced a series of statements regarding productive progress on the Azerbaijani-Turkish sections of the trade and energy highway adjacent to the Armenian border. In Baku’s view, these successes demonstrate the urgent need to launch the construction of logistical facilities in the Meghri district. Specifically, on August 4, 2026, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov emphasized the ahead-of-schedule implementation of the obligations assumed by Baku. He noted that the construction of the highway to the border with Armenia is nearly complete, and the necessary funds for the reconstruction of the 180-kilometer Soviet-era railway branch have already been directed. Bayramov added that the Turkish side is strictly adhering to the schedule for constructing the Kars–İğdir–Dilucu railway: “*by early 2027, both projects will reach the border with Armenia*”. The head of Azerbaijan’s Foreign Ministry also expressed confidence that before the end of the current year, Yerevan, with American assistance, will begin developing its 42 km section within the framework of the so-called “*Zangezur Corridor*”.

Positive assessments of the TRIPP agenda were also voiced by the Armenian authorities, who noted that Washington’s high level of activity, along with the multiple-fold increase in the investment fund’s volume, clearly demonstrates the firm intention of the U.S. to fully implement this program. Official statements from Yerevan indicate that Armenia has come close to beginning the practical stage, and comprehensive engineering and survey work in Syunik is currently in its final phase.

A key step in this direction was a trilateral meeting of foreign ministry representatives from the U.S., Armenia, and Azerbaijan held on August 10, 2026, in Washington, where the main topics were accelerating the implementation of TRIPP and coordinating further joint actions. Thus, having passed through a period of informational pause caused in part by tensions surrounding Iran, the TRIPP project has once again taken center stage precisely on the anniversary of the Washington framework agreement. This confirms both an active phase of preparatory work and a deep interest on the part of the U.S. administration in giving the route real physical shape as quickly as possible. Nevertheless, against the backdrop of this generally optimistic context, the absence of one crucial detail stands out starkly, giving grounds to assume a significant revision of priorities and the geopolitical role of TRIPP by the United States.

2. “Turkish Silence” as a marker of changing geopolitical priorities

Despite TRIPP's central place in Ankara's long-term planning and its previous efforts to secure a key role in the project, the highest Turkish authorities demonstratively ignored the resumption of activity around the *"Trump Route"*. While other interested parties issued comments on the anniversary of the Washington agreement, the total absence of an official response from Turkey appears in clear dissonance. The Turkish Foreign Ministry refrained from publishing a special statement on TRIPP. Remarkably, on August 9, 2026, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, responding to an Anadolu Agency correspondent regarding the agreement's anniversary, limited himself to general thoughts on regional security, completely bypassing the *"Trump Route"* project.

Equally noteworthy is the fact that recent developments surrounding the *"Trump Route"* were entirely ignored even by Turkey's Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Abdulkadir Uraloğlu. Previously, he had highlighted the strategic importance of the so-called *"Zangezur Corridor"* for the Republic of Turkey almost monthly and regularly reported to the public on the progress of work on the Kars–İğdir–Dilucu railway line, as well as repairs to road infrastructure heading toward Nakhijevan.

During his last public appearance on 03.08.2026 in Sakarya Province, Uraloğlu limited his remarks to announcing success in constructing new tunnels on the Ankara–Istanbul highway, maintaining silence regarding the Kars–İğdir–Dilucu project. Such silence appears highly atypical on the eve of the anniversary of the signing of the TRIPP agreement, as well as against the backdrop of U.S. decisions regarding the selection of a route operator and the doubling of the state investment fund's capital. In this light, statements by Azerbaijani Foreign Minister J. Bayramov regarding parallel work on the Kars–İğdir–Dilucu section are perceived as an attempt by Baku to smooth over the lack of reaction from Ankara and project an absence of complications.

Indirect confirmation of a significant underlying problem is found in the complete absence of any mention of Turkey in the U.S. State Department statement timed to the anniversary of the Washington agreement and the progress of the *"Trump Route"*. Although since August 8, 2025, White House and State Department representatives regularly emphasized Ankara's strategic geoeconomic role in TRIPP – declaring the creation of an unhindered logistical corridor to Europe and the Middle East through Turkish territory for the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia – the rhetoric in the current communique has shifted radically. The State Department restricted itself to general phrasing about the *"Trans-Caspian Route"*, of which TRIPP is a component, and ensuring seamless transit between Azerbaijan and Nakhijevan.

3. Regional reconfiguration: The Israeli factor, the role of Iran, and challenges to stability

The signal from the U.S. regarding the diminished role of the Turkish factor within the TRIPP agenda is quite distinct. With a high degree of probability, the American side has over recent months revised its approach to establishing administration mechanisms for the corridor in Syunik, forming its managerial staff, and directing investment flows. Furthermore, the U.S. decision on selecting an operating company may have come as an unexpected move

for Ankara, which had likely guaranteed consideration of its interests and recommendations in these areas previously.

In this context, Ankara's demonstrated passivity and the complete absence of references to it in American rhetoric surrounding the revitalization of TRIPP attract particular attention. This is occurring parallel to a critical escalation in the Turkish-Israeli standoff and the finalization of the so-called "*Sunni NATO*" following the signing of the relevant agreement in Mecca on August 07, 2026. A clear correlation can be traced between these processes and Washington's subsequent refusal to restore Turkey's participation in the *F-35* program, despite personal assurances given by D. Trump to R. T. Erdoğan at the NATO summit in Ankara.

A comparative analysis of events following the Israeli cabinet's vote on recognizing the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire (June 28, 2026) indicates that Tel Aviv, using traditional levers of influence over the U.S. political establishment, leaned on the White House to contain Turkish ambitions in the region. This manifested, in particular, in sidelining Ankara from among the implicit beneficiaries of the TRIPP initiative, which had previously been enthusiastically dubbed the "*Turan Road*" in Turkey.

A telling sign in this vein is the appointment of ethnic Jews as the primary American supervisors of the "*Trump Route*". Specifically, the financial-economic block of the corridor has been placed under the management of Konstantin Sokolov, while political accompaniment of the project and interaction with Yerevan are curated by Rabbi Aryeh Lightstone – advisor to Steve Witkoff.

Of special significance is the fact that Lightstone is among the authors of the "Abraham Accords" framework. His involvement in the U.S.-Armenian track may be perceived by Ankara as an attempt by Washington and Tel Aviv to draw Yerevan into the "*club of Abrahamic nations*". Special Envoy Steve Witkoff hinted at the possibility of such a scenario as early as May 2025, mentioning Armenia in the same breath as Azerbaijan, whose accession to the pact is blocked by Turkey.

Turkey appears to fear that the U.S.-Israeli alliance is prepared to push Yerevan's integration into the "Abrahamic process" on a standalone basis, resulting in TRIPP being reformatted to suit the interests of Israel and the U.S. Jewish lobby. Should such a plan be realized, Ankara's geopolitical aspirations to construct a direct overland corridor to the Turkic world of the Caspian and Central Asia will face severe disruption.

It is precisely these factors that likely explain the restraint displayed by Turkey's ruling circles. In recent developments around TRIPP, Ankara detected preemptive moves by Israel aimed at establishing control over the 43 km "Armenian isthmus". Meanwhile, this section holds key significance for the concept of "*Great Turan*", into whose realization Turkish authorities have directed considerable political, financial, and military resources for nearly three decades.

However, the described geopolitical equation – presuming a tangible devaluation of the Turkic factor in TRIPP and a defining role for Israeli interests on this track – is impossible without the consent of Iran. The new scheme cannot be viable without taking Tehran's position into account; otherwise, it will, with a high degree of probability, spark escalation in the South Caucasus, as Iranian officials have repeatedly warned. Therefore, in this context, the fact that

the Iranian side, like the Turkish side, reacted quite temperately to the latest U.S. moves regarding TRIPP is of particular interest. High-ranking Iranian officials did not issue statements condemning the project, which came as a surprise given the announced growing role of Israel and the Jewish factor in the route project. From this perspective, a statement made on 11.08.2026 by Sargis Khandanyan – an MP from Armenia’s ruling Civil Contract party faction and former Chairman of the NA Standing Committee on Foreign Relations – noting that mutual understanding on TRIPP had been reached between Armenia and Iran, warrants attention.

According to Khandanyan, Tehran’s position depends heavily on the state of U.S.-Iranian relations, and after months of arduous negotiations, a *“peace plan appears to have taken shape”*. It is obvious that the MP was referring to the presence of TRIPP’s fate on the negotiation agenda between Washington and Tehran, and that the Armenian side possesses a degree of information regarding a potential U.S.-Iranian consensus on this matter. Thus, the implementation and security of TRIPP serve as a bargaining chip in negotiations, and Tehran may have potentially consented to American plans for the route in exchange for concessions from Washington on other critical issues across their broad negotiating agenda. It is also plausible that Tehran secured for itself the right to full and unhindered access to the Black Sea through Armenian territory, as evidenced by ongoing construction work on the Meghri–Kajaran–Kapan (“North–South”) highway across complex terrain, in which Iranian contractor firms are directly participating. Work in this direction may point to the formation of a de facto logistical crossroads in Armenia’s southern regions, where the “North–South” axis – though significantly inferior in geopolitical weight to the “West–East” direction – will complement the communications framework being built by the U.S. and Tel Aviv positioned behind Washington.

Thus, recent developments surrounding TRIPP can be seen as an unexpected maneuver by Tel Aviv in the broader Turkish-Israeli geostrategic chess match, one that has significantly weakened Ankara’s positioning on the Caucasian-Central Asian board. It was a formidable move. Evidently, Turkey has taken a pause and is contemplating its countermove.