Negative Brief: Azerbaijan

By “Coach Vance” Trefethen

AFF Plan cancels US security assistance to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan and Armenia have been fighting off and on for years over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region on their border. AFF probably blames the Azeris for the fighting and wants to either punish them or else try to stop the conflict by not arming them.

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Negative: Azerbaijan

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE

1. A/T "Suffering in Armenia"

Advocates for Armenia are making political statements without actually investigating any facts

Dr James J. Carafano 2022. (master's degree and a doctorate from Georgetown University as well as a master's degree in strategy from the U.S. Army War College. He was an adjunct professor at Hillsdale College and taught as a visiting professor at National Defense Univ.) 22 Sept 2022 "Armenia-Azerbaijan War Of 2022: What Should America Do?" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.heritage.org/europe/commentary/armenia-azerbaijan-war-2022-what-should-america-do

Some in Washington can’t seem to wait to wade in and take sides. Cementing her self-appointed role as global crisis ambulance chaser, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Sunday dispatched herself to Armenia, where she [condemned Azerbaijan](https://www.cnbc.com/2022/09/18/speaker-pelosi-strongly-condemns-illegal-and-deadly-attacks-by-azerbaijan-during-visit-to-armenia.html) for what she called “illegal and deadly attacks.” Meanwhile, Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) introduced [a non-binding resolution](https://twitter.com/RepAdamSchiff/status/1570096589095555075?s=20&t=4Qwx8iozGxMUZNILv5_vkQ) condemning Azerbaijan.   These initiatives likely have less to do with a studied conclusion about which belligerent is right or wrong and more to do with the active and aggressive lobbying effort from the Armenian diaspora in the U.S. If you have any doubt the Armenian regime and its loyal contingent here heavily lobbies for political support, just try tweeting something supportive of Azerbaijan. You’ll be assailed by more trolls than ever appeared in The Lord of Rings.

Azeris are cleaning up the mess the Armenians made, including millions of landmines

Dr James J. Carafano 2022. (master's degree and a doctorate from Georgetown University as well as a master's degree in strategy from the U.S. Army War College. He was an adjunct professor at Hillsdale College and taught as a visiting professor at National Defense Univ.) 22 Sept 2022 "Armenia-Azerbaijan War Of 2022: What Should America Do?" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.heritage.org/europe/commentary/armenia-azerbaijan-war-2022-what-should-america-do (Carthage was a city completely destroyed by the Romans in ancient history)

Let’s go back to the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War. When the fighting stopped, Azerbaijan had retaken much of the territory that Armenia had captured and held for decades.  I recently visited the liberated lands and found that all the Armenians had sowed in decades of occupation were millions of landmines. They left most of the region looking like the remnants of Carthage. The Azeris have pledged to rebuild. They have already made significant investments, clearing mines, building roads and airports, and setting conditions for hundreds of thousands of people to return to their homeland.

Armenia is an ally of Russia and Iran

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Nor is Armenia as bad as some would paint it. It is not a puppet state of Putin’s Russia, as some have claimed, although that is not far from the truth. Armenia hosts thousands of Russian soldiers and at least two Russian military bases.  When Russia invaded Ukraine this year, [Armenia did nothing.](https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-705804) The Armenian regime is also a firm friend of the Iranians. So, just to recap, Pelosi rushed to console and comfort a close ally of both Russia and Iran.

2. A/T "War with Armenia"

US should increase security cooperation with both sides and call for a negotiated settlement (not cancel aid to Azerbaijan)

Dr James J. Carafano 2022. (master's degree and a doctorate from Georgetown University as well as a master's degree in strategy from the U.S. Army War College. He was an adjunct professor at Hillsdale College and taught as a visiting professor at National Defense Univ.) 22 Sept 2022 "Armenia-Azerbaijan War Of 2022: What Should America Do?" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.heritage.org/europe/commentary/armenia-azerbaijan-war-2022-what-should-america-do (Carthage was a city completely destroyed by the Romans in ancient history)

The Azerbaijani ambassador to the UN called for an end to fighting and direct negotiations between the two parties. This seems the appropriate way forward. The Minsk process is dead, and the U.S. should abandon efforts to revive it.  Rather, U.S. political leaders should rethink the wisdom of inserting themselves in the conflict. Here, less is more. The U.S. should stand by, calling for a bilateral negotiated settlement that delivers a cease-fire and respects the territorial integrity of every state in the region. Meanwhile, the U.S. should increase engagement in the South Caucasus, particularly with Georgia and Azerbaijan. Washington should look to increase security cooperation with both, as well as continue providing support for demining efforts in the region.

3. Legitimate security needs

Azerbaijan has legitimate security needs: They got invaded by Armenia and had their territory occupied

Luke Coffey and Efgan Nifti 2018 (Coffey - Director, Allison Center for Foreign Policy at Heritage Foundation. Nifti - Director, Caspian Policy Center, Heritage Foundation) 29 May 2018 "Why the West Needs Azerbaijan" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.heritage.org/asia/commentary/why-the-west-needs-azerbaijan

One of the ways Russia exerts influence in the South Caucasus in through the various so-called frozen conflicts — especially in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh started in 1988, when Armenia made territorial claims on the region, which sits within Azerbaijan but is populated mostly by ethnic Armenians. The dispute soon resulted in a bloody war that left about 30,000 people dead and hundreds of thousands more internally displaced. Since 1992, Armenian forces and Armenian-backed militias have occupied almost 20 percent of territory that the international community recognizes as part of Azerbaijan, including Nagorno-Karabakh and all or part of seven other provinces.

4. A/T "Human rights problems in Azerbaijan"

Human rights issues don't outweigh the foreign policy benefits of maintaining US-Azerbaijan relationship

Luke Coffey and Efgan Nifti 2018 (Coffey - Director, Allison Center for Foreign Policy at Heritage Foundation. Nifti - Director, Caspian Policy Center, Heritage Foundation) 29 May 2018 "Why the West Needs Azerbaijan" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.heritage.org/asia/commentary/why-the-west-needs-azerbaijan

There are still sticking points in the U.S.-Azerbaijani relationship. [Human rights](https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/azerbaijan) issues have been a persistent problem, and in recent years, concerns about [press freedom](https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/azerbaijan) have risen due to a number of high-profile arrests of prominent journalists. While Washington should continue to press for improvements on human rights, U.S. policymakers cannot allow that one issue to create a lopsided foreign policy that undercuts the United States’ broader interests in the region.

SOLVENCY

1. Already tried & failed

Suspension of US aid to Azerbaijan did not benefit Armenia. US aid would improve everything for everyone

Dr. Stephen Blank 2013 (PhD in Russian history; Senior Fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council, former Professor of Russian National Security Studies at the US Army War College) Dec 2013 "Azerbaijan’s Security Azerbaijan’s Security and U.S. Interests: and U.S. Interests: Time for a Reassessment" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program https://silkroadstudies.org/resources/pdf/SilkRoadPapers/2013\_12\_SRP\_Blank\_Azerbaijan\_US.pdf

Unfortunately and for no good reason, too many U.S. officials readily claim that the U.S. has no strategic interests in the states comprising the former Soviet Union outside of Russia and maybe Central Asia. This ignorant and disdainful argument is also compounded by the fact that the notorious Section 907 of the 1993 Freedom Support Act of 1993 remains on the books and explicitly prohibits U.S. government-to-government aid to Azerbaijan. This legislation, passed with the support of the U.S.’ Armenian lobby, has not done Armenia any lasting good and undermined both Azerbaijani-U.S. relations and Washington’s ability to act vigorously in support of its strategic interests in the Caucasus. Despite the claims of the Armenian lobby, repeal or at least suspension of this act would enable the U.S. to act more forcefully on behalf of genuine peace, economic improvement, and or democratic reform in the region, two objectives that are sorely needed by all parties.

2. No benefit

Sanctioning Azerbaijan for trying to take back their own territory that was stolen by Armenia would be only a political stunt and would benefit no one

Dr Stephen Blank 2017. (PhD in Russian history; Senior Fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council, former Professor of Russian National Security Studies at the US Army War College) 27 Sept 2017 "Armenian favoritism will push Azerbaijan to Russia" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/sep/27/armenian-favoritism-will-push-azerbaijan-to-russia/

In its zeal to make foreign policy, a power entrusted by the Constitution to the executive branch, Congress may be making a serious error regarding American interests in the Caucasus. Recently Congress threatened to impose sanctions on Azerbaijan for its human rights shortcomings and authorized a small expenditure for demining in Nagorno-Karabakh. These moves have, in turn, prompted several Azerbaijani officials to warn that they would then cut off ties to NATO if sanctions are imposed. While sanctions can serve useful purposes in U.S. foreign policy, e.g., Iran and Russia, they are not necessarily the answer to Azerbaijan’s policies at home. And funding Armenia, even if rhetorically and with minimal amounts of money, only exacerbates the situation. Indeed, it is clear that Congress has not thought through the nuances of the Caucasus in its haste to adopt this legislation. The authorization for demining in Nagorno-Karabakh calls the region Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan, when it is in fact occupied by Armenia. Therefore, this resolution owes more to U.S. domestic politics — a congressman in a heavily Armenian district needing to gain popular support as re-election looms — than it does to foreign policy. And at the same time, it shows the inadequacy of this congressional response because it antagonizes Azerbaijan for no discernible purpose that advances U.S. interests or strategic gain while betraying congressional ignorance of the facts on the ground.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Reduced energy security in Europe

Azerbaijan advances energy security in Europe by providing an alternative to Russia for oil and gas

Anthony B. Kim 2022. (Research Fellow and Editor of the Index of Economic Freedom at Heritage Foundation) 21 July 2022 "Why Azerbaijan Merits Greater Strategic Attention From Washington" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.heritage.org/europe/commentary/why-azerbaijan-merits-greater-strategic-attention-washington

Over the past three decades, since Azerbaijan’s independence from the Soviet Union, the U.S.-Azerbaijan relationship has grown [comprehensively](https://www.state.gov/azerbaijans-national-day/) in advancing [energy security in Europe](https://www.dailysignal.com/2022/02/24/how-3-seas-initiative-could-be-antidote-to-russias-energy-coercion/), combating transnational threats, and boosting bilateral trade and investment, among other policy priorities. The Caspian Sea nation’s vast hydrocarbons and other natural resources—the backbone of its economy—have been enabling it to serve as a significant alternative to [Russia](https://www.dailysignal.com/2022/03/24/sanctions-on-putins-russia-an-initial-assessment/) for oil and gas.

Azerbaijan natural gas is key to breaking European dependence on Russia

Anthony B. Kim 2022. (Research Fellow and Editor of the Index of Economic Freedom at Heritage Foundation) 21 July 2022 "Why Azerbaijan Merits Greater Strategic Attention From Washington" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.heritage.org/europe/commentary/why-azerbaijan-merits-greater-strategic-attention-washington

The Southern Gas Corridor consists of three pipelines—the South Caucasus Pipeline through Azerbaijan and Georgia; the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline across Turkey; and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline via Greece and Albania to Italy. In a particularly welcome development on Monday that will help the European Union reduce its reliance on Russian energy, the European Commission signed a deal with Azerbaijan to double imports of natural gas by 2027.  During her visit to Baku for the important announcement, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen [noted](https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/amp/2022/07/18/von-der-leyen-heads-to-azerbaijan-to-secure-new-gas-import-deal), “Today, with this new Memorandum of Understanding, we are opening a new chapter in our energy cooperation with Azerbaijan, a key partner in our efforts to move away from Russian fossil fuels.”

Brink: Violence could easily break out and threaten the Azerbaijan oil and gas pipeline

Luke Coffey and Efgan Nifti 2018 (Coffey - Director, Allison Center for Foreign Policy at Heritage Foundation. Nifti - Director, Caspian Policy Center, Heritage Foundation) 29 May 2018 "Why the West Needs Azerbaijan" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.heritage.org/asia/commentary/why-the-west-needs-azerbaijan

Most of the main oil and gas pipelines passing through the Ganja Gap and carrying Caspian energy to Europe are located near the frontlines of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, where troops for the two sides still face off. Moscow knows that any major outbreak in violence would threaten the viability of these pipelines. Given Russia’s influence over Armenia, it would not take much to provoke new fighting.

Impact: If Russia’s gas isn’t replaced, European economies will come to a standstill with disastrous consequences

Vijaya Ramachandran 2022 (director for energy and development at the Breakthrough Institute) “Germany Should Look to Africa for Gas, Not Russia” <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/11/germany-putin-russia-gas-energy-africa-development/?gclid=CjwKCAjwyryUBhBSEiwAGN5OCLaO-Hl6mX4Jq6Z5LNFuYkNMB_4AEQmEUWLR-h-FW9Sz74rngjijlxoChb4QAvD_BwE> (accessed 27 May 2022)

With the United States and United Kingdom banning Russian energy exports and the European Union announcing it will reduce Russian gas imports by two-thirds by the end of the year, the West is urgently debating how to replace Russian energy deliveries. The most crucial issue is the Russian gas on which Germany and other parts of Europe depend. From Washington to Berlin, politicians have announced they will be doubling down on wind and solar energy. But while renewable energy production will be part of a long-term solution, the idea that it can replace Russian oil and gas quickly and at scale is disingenuous at best—and disastrous for Western economies and consumers at worst. The reasons should be clear to all but the energy-illiterate: Wind and solar power can replace some of the Russian gas used to generate electricity—but only when the wind blows and the sun shines, requiring substantial backup generation capacity, much of it powered by natural gas. What’s more, electricity is only part of the energy equation: The majority of Russian oil and gas is not used by power plants but to heat homes, run factories, and fuel cars, trucks, planes, and ships—none of which can be easily shifted to other fuels. If Western countries don’t want their economies to come to a standstill, oil and gas previously delivered from Russia needs to be sourced elsewhere. Europe will therefore need a large, reliable supply of non-Russian fossil fuel for the foreseeable future.

Impact: Prolongs suffering. Every day they keep importing fuel prolongs the Ukraine war by funding Russia’s military

Prof. Basil Kalymon 2022 (*Professor Emeritus at Ivey Business School in Canada*) 12 Apr 2022 “Europe must stop funding Vladimir Putin’s war crimes in Ukraine” <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/europe-must-stop-funding-vladimir-putins-war-crimes-in-ukraine/> (accessed 27 May 2022) (brackets added) (FYI as of 27 May 2022, the euro = $1.07)

While war is raging in Ukraine, EU countries continue to send an estimated EUR 1 billion [euros] every single day to Russia in payment for oil and gas imports. This European money is the lifeblood of Vladimir Putin’s war machine. About 60% of Russian oil exports and 75% of Russian gas exports currently go to Europe, according to Energy Facts IEA. Oil and gas revenues are critical for the continuation of the Russian war effort and constitute and estimated 45% of the country’s state budget. Without this funding, the Russian economy would spiral into collapse and Putin’s ability to continue the invasion of Ukraine would be drastically reduced.

2. Azerbaijan allies with Russia

Link: US sanctions on Azerbaijan would move them to turn to Russia

Dr Stephen Blank 2017. (PhD in Russian history; Senior Fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council, former Professor of Russian National Security Studies at the US Army War College) 27 Sept 2017 "Armenian favoritism will push Azerbaijan to Russia" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/sep/27/armenian-favoritism-will-push-azerbaijan-to-russia/

By essentially disregarding the fact that Nagorno-Karabakh remains occupied territory and attacking Baku’s human rights record, Congress, perhaps unintentionally or unwittingly, sends Baku a message that the U.S. is not interested in its agenda or problems. That message only encourages hard-liners inside Azerbaijan who would be all too happy to incline to Moscow to justify what would amount to Azerbaijan’s subordination to Russia with the argument that we have nothing to gain or fear from Washington because it clearly is against Azerbaijan.

Impact: Everything gets worse post-sanctions. Human rights and chances for peace in the region get worse

Dr Stephen Blank 2017. (PhD in Russian history; Senior Fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council, former Professor of Russian National Security Studies at the US Army War College) 27 Sept 2017 "Armenian favoritism will push Azerbaijan to Russia" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/sep/27/armenian-favoritism-will-push-azerbaijan-to-russia/

Thus, these sanctions damage U.S interests, for it is clear that a pro-Russian Azerbaijan will be even more immune to U.S. human rights charges and that peace in the Caucasus will be surrendered as an issue to Moscow’s discretion, a guarantee that there will be no peace. We need to understand, as do strategists like Edward Luttwak, that the pursuit of human rights is a powerful and discriminating tool for the advancement of both U.S. interests and values.

 3. Reduced pressure on Armenia

Link: AFF reduces pressure on Armenia by disarming Azerbaijan

Link: Armenia is actively helping Russia bypass sanctions over the war in Ukraine

Dr Stephen Blank 2022. (PhD in Russian history; Senior Fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council, former Professor of Russian National Security Studies at the US Army War College) 25 Aug 2022 "Honey, Vinegar, and Another Way to Undermine Russian Capabilities" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2022/08/25/honey\_vinegar\_and\_another\_way\_to\_undermine\_russian\_capabilities\_850015.html

The Financial Crime Enforcement Network (FinCEN) and the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) of the U.S. Department of the Treasury have [included](https://www.fincen.gov/sites/default/files/2022-06/FinCEN%20and%20Bis%20Joint%20Alert%20FINAL.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2kg0pdpB1adArR2g5jURKJlQbblq7YGEw2QiN-CEwT8Uf78fy32j9K5A4) Armenia in the list of countries through which sanctioned goods can reach [Russia](https://jam-news.net/category/geography/russia/) and Belarus. The concerning issues contain items that include equipment to be used for military purposes: aircraft parts, sonar systems, antennas, test equipment, GPS systems, oilfield equipment. [In May, an absolute record was set in Armenia](https://www.hetq.am/hy/article/146730) in the entire history of the tracking of receipts from Russia - $ 266 million was received from Russia. This more than doubled the $115 million received in March. In addition to the transfers from abroad, money is also sent from Armenia abroad. [In January-May 2022, money transfers of individuals from Armenia abroad](https://www.hetq.am/hy/article/146730) through banks amounted to about $660 million, which is 41% more than in the same period last year. In particular, $182 million was sent to Russia, with an increase of 19%. In May 2022, individuals sent $412 million from abroad to Armenia through banks. According to the data published by the [Armenian Central Bank](https://www.1in.am/3142982.html), this too is a record figure for Armenia.

Link: Now is the time to pressure Russian allies like Armenia to STOP helping Russia invade Ukraine

Dr Stephen Blank 2022. (PhD in Russian history; Senior Fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council, former Professor of Russian National Security Studies at the US Army War College) 25 Aug 2022 "Honey, Vinegar, and Another Way to Undermine Russian Capabilities" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2022/08/25/honey\_vinegar\_and\_another\_way\_to\_undermine\_russian\_capabilities\_850015.html

Depriving adversaries of allies and supporters is always sound strategy. Moreover, this principle applies to Western support for Ukraine. Just as Moscow visibly pursues strategies to divide NATO and EU members, we should be doing our utmost to detach countries who are helping Russia circumvent the sanctions imposed on it for its war of aggression. Apart from China and India, Russia has turned to other countries like Turkey, Egypt, and even Armenia to get around the sanctions and their impact.  By combining incentives with penalties or the threat thereof, or honey with vinegar Washington and its European allies can not only put pressure on them to break with Moscow but also advance their shared interests in key theaters like the Caucasus.

Impact: Increased chance for peace. Pressuring Russia's allies increases the likelihood of ending the Ukraine war

Dr Stephen Blank 2022. (PhD in Russian history; Senior Fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council, former Professor of Russian National Security Studies at the US Army War College) 25 Aug 2022 "Honey, Vinegar, and Another Way to Undermine Russian Capabilities" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2022/08/25/honey\_vinegar\_and\_another\_way\_to\_undermine\_russian\_capabilities\_850015.html

Thus, we now have the means and the incentive to use both the honey and the vinegar in Armenia’s case to advance its, our, and Ukraine’s interests all at the same time. We also have Moscow’s criminal aggression in Ukraine. Armenia’s example should be invoked sooner rather than later to demonstrate both the risks and the gains involved for governments who are tempted or feel coerced to provide covert support for Russia’s war machine. By depriving Moscow of its “allies” and supporters we can bring this war to an end sooner, advance our and those countries’ shared interests, and help bring peace to other conflict-zones.

4. Ganja Gap trade route threatened

The "Ganja Gap" in Azerbaijan is the only route for hundreds of billions of dollars in trade, and it's threatened by Armenia and Russia

Luke Coffey and Efgan Nifti 2018 (Coffey - Director, Allison Center for Foreign Policy at Heritage Foundation. Nifti - Director, Caspian Policy Center, Heritage Foundation) 29 May 2018 "Why the West Needs Azerbaijan" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.heritage.org/asia/commentary/why-the-west-needs-azerbaijan

There are only three ways for energy and trade to flow overland between Asia and Europe: through Iran, through Russia, and through Azerbaijan. With relations between the West, Moscow, and Tehran in tatters, that leaves only one viable route for hundreds of billions of dollars’ worth of trade: through the tiny Caspian Sea nation of Azerbaijan. When you factor in Armenia’s occupation of almost one-fifth of Azerbaijan’s territory, all that is left is a narrow 60-mile-wide chokepoint for trade. We call this trade chokepoint the “Ganja Gap” — named after Azerbaijan’s second largest city, Ganja, which sits in the middle of this narrow passage. And right now, the Russians hold enough influence over Azerbaijan’s rival neighbor Armenia to potentially reignite the bloody Nagorno-Karabakh conflict of the late 1980s and early 1990s — giving them a dangerous opportunity to threaten the “Gap” itself.

Impact: US and global economy at risk. Protecting flow of trade through the Ganja Gap should be top priority

Luke Coffey and Efgan Nifti 2018 (Coffey - Director, Allison Center for Foreign Policy at Heritage Foundation. Nifti - Director, Caspian Policy Center, Heritage Foundation) 29 May 2018 "Why the West Needs Azerbaijan" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.heritage.org/asia/commentary/why-the-west-needs-azerbaijan

The United States is the most important global power ensuring uninterrupted and secure flow of international trade through chokepoints around the world. The free flow of global trade, including U.S. exports, brings huge benefits not only to the global economy, but ultimately to the economy of the United States, too. In terms of U.S. geostrategic priorities, the Ganja Gap should rank close to the top.

5. US national security at risk

US national security interests support military aid to Azerbaijan

Luke Coffey 2021 (Director, Allison Center for Foreign Policy, Heritage Foundation) 1 Oct 2021 " One Year After the Second Karabakh War, the U.S. Needs to Increase Engagement in the South Caucasus" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.heritage.org/europe/report/one-year-after-the-second-karabakh-war-the-us-needs-increase-engagement-the-south ("Section 907" is a law that has been used to try to block security aid to Azerbaijan)

Provide military and security assistance to all deserving allies in the region. The U.S. government’s decision to provide military assistance to another country should be based on American security interests, not on certain pressure groups lobbying Congress. Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act is an unfair impediment to acting in the interest of U.S. security.
Conclusion
Azerbaijan will continue to be a regional economic leader in the South Caucasus, and an important economic actor in the Caspian region. If the U.S. pursues correct policies, Azerbaijan could also serve as an important alternative source of energy for Europe well into the future. Today, the U.S. sees an Azerbaijan that is more cautious and mindful of its place in the region. Globally, Azerbaijan is trying to maintain a balance between its relations with the West and Russia. Regionally, Azerbaijan has sought to keep a balance between Russia and Iran while striving to preserve its autonomy or independence as much as possible. With great-power competition heating up around the globe, the U.S. needs to increase its engagement with Azerbaijan.

Voting Impact: US national interests - duty to its own citizens - take priority over other foreign policy goals

Doug Bandow 2021 (senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties. He worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan; JD from Stanford Univ.) “Eight Ways We Can Serve US Interests and Pursue Human Rights Too” 28 May 2021 (accessed 7 Sept 2022) <https://www.cato.org/commentary/eight-ways-we-can-serve-us-interests-pursue-human-rights-too>

“The central purpose of Washington’s international strategy should be to advance the interests of the American people. That means protecting them along with their territory, constitutional system, liberties, and prosperity. These objectives transcend the many other goals routinely set by governments.”

6. US hegemony versus Russian hegemony

Supporting Azerbaijan is key to maintaining influence in the region

Luke Coffey and Efgan Nifti 2018 (Coffey - Director, Allison Center for Foreign Policy at Heritage Foundation. Nifti - Director, Caspian Policy Center, Heritage Foundation) 29 May 2018 "Why the West Needs Azerbaijan" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.heritage.org/asia/commentary/why-the-west-needs-azerbaijan

Indeed, given the strength of Moscow’s ties to Yerevan, the United States and Europe should prioritize relations with Baku as the critical trade, energy, and economic link between the east and west of the Eurasian landmass. The West should strive for cordial relations with Armenia, but the United States needs to be mindful and realistic when setting its strategic priorities in the region. Armenia is largely a lost cause; Azerbaijan, even with all its flaws, is a better bet.

US support for Azerbaijan is key to pushing back against Russia's attempts to gain hegemony and undermine international security

Dr. Stephen Blank 2013 (PhD in Russian history; Senior Fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council, former Professor of Russian National Security Studies at the US Army War College) Dec 2013 "Azerbaijan’s Security Azerbaijan’s Security and U.S. Interests: and U.S. Interests: Time for a Reassessment" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program https://silkroadstudies.org/resources/pdf/SilkRoadPapers/2013\_12\_SRP\_Blank\_Azerbaijan\_US.pdf

Moscow’s unremitting pressure on Ukraine and Georgia as well as its unending attempts to subordinate all of Central Asia to its designs indicates that its neo-imperial vocation is undiminished, and if anything growing, not least due to the sense that it faces weak Western opposition. Since such encroachments can only disrupt international security and are actually beyond Russia’s capacity to sustain them, these Russian maneuvers, if unchecked, can only trigger a profound international crisis throughout Eurasia. It is essential not just for the interests of individual countries like Azerbaijan or the U.S. to rebuff them and help build up partners like Azerbaijan. It is also necessary to realize that such Russian policies threaten the fabric of regional and international security.

Azerbaijan is key to long-term stability of the region. It avoids Russian, Chinese and Iranian influence

Dr James J. Carafano 2022. (master's degree and a doctorate from Georgetown University as well as a master's degree in strategy from the U.S. Army War College. He was an adjunct professor at Hillsdale College and taught as a visiting professor at National Defense Univ.) 22 Sept 2022 "Armenia-Azerbaijan War Of 2022: What Should America Do?" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.heritage.org/europe/commentary/armenia-azerbaijan-war-2022-what-should-america-do (Carthage was a city completely destroyed by the Romans in ancient history)

In contrast, following the Russian invasion, Azerbaijan opened up its natural gas supplies to Europe through the southern gas corridor. Those supplies will help get Europe through the tough winter ahead. The Azeris have done nothing to help the Russians. They keep the Iranians at arm’s length. And they have been wary of Chinese investments.  From the Western perspective, Azerbaijan is increasingly [important for the long-term stability of the region](https://www.heritage.org/europe/commentary/why-azerbaijan-merits-greater-strategic-attention-washington).

Maintaining good relations with Azerbaijan is key to countering Russia, Iran and China influence

Luke Coffey and Efgan Nifti 2018 (Coffey - Director, Allison Center for Foreign Policy at Heritage Foundation. Nifti - Director, Caspian Policy Center, Heritage Foundation) 29 May 2018 "Why the West Needs Azerbaijan" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.heritage.org/asia/commentary/why-the-west-needs-azerbaijan

The Trump administration’s National Security Strategy emphasizes the need to develop good relations with stable allies. This is particularly necessary in the South Caucasus. Decreasing tensions in the region would help secure vital energy, communications, and trade corridors. Ganja’s history as a source of trade and commerce dates back to the Silk Road that once crossed Eurasia. Even today, any grand strategy that takes into account a resurgent Russia, an emboldened Iran, and an economically expanding China has to reckon with this tiny 60-mile gap.

Great power competition requires US influence in Azerbaijan due to its strategic location

Luke Coffey 2021 (Director, Allison Center for Foreign Policy, Heritage Foundation) 1 Oct 2021 " One Year After the Second Karabakh War, the U.S. Needs to Increase Engagement in the South Caucasus" (accessed 2 Jan 2023) https://www.heritage.org/europe/report/one-year-after-the-second-karabakh-war-the-us-needs-increase-engagement-the-south

Geostrategic location in the context of great-power competition. At one point on the vast Eurasian landmass, all trade and transit has to pass through one of three countries: Russia, Azerbaijan, or Iran. The breakdown in relations between the West and Moscow and Tehran means that Russia and Iran are not viable options for the free east–west flow of trade and energy. This trade chokepoint is the Ganja Gap—named after Azerbaijan’s second largest city, Ganja, which sits in the middle of this narrow passage. Keeping access to the Ganja Gap is important to any U.S. strategy in the region.

US should be increasing, not decreasing, its commitment to allies right now. It's essential to maintaining US hegemony

Ashley Tellis 2020 (Tata Chair for Strategic Affairs and a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He is also a counselor at the National Bureau of Asian Research and the research director of the Strategic Asia Program) 4 May 2020 "COVID-19 Knocks on American Hegemony" (accessed 5 Oct 2022) https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/05/04/covid-19-knocks-on-american-hegemony-pub-81719

But even as it attends to the business of internal regeneration, Washington must double down on its alliances and partnerships. Only this U.S.-led confederation contains the preponderance of the global product that will durably immunize the “strategic West” against any future challenges emanating from China or other rivals. Preserving American hegemony over the long term thus must begin with consolidating Washington’s leadership within the largest single bloc of material power in order that it may be effective beyond. Ensuring this outcome requires the United States to take seriously—and deepen meaningfully—the special geopolitical ties it has nurtured throughout the postwar period, which would among other things enable it to better shape the world’s engagement with China to advance its own interests.

Russia and China both would like to stop US hegemony

Marta Rodriguez Martinez 2015 (MA in journalism, globalism and media) Dec 2015 THE SINO-RUSSIAN AXIS AGAINST THE US HEGEMONY - An approach to the power political strategies and world order policies of China and Russia within a world in power transition (accessed 5 Oct 2022) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316989287\_THE\_SINO-RUSSIAN\_AXIS\_AGAINST\_THE\_US\_HEGEMONY\_-\_An\_approach\_to\_the\_power\_political\_strategies\_and\_world\_order\_policies\_of\_China\_and\_Russia\_within\_a\_world\_in\_power\_transition/link/591c1b880f7e9b7727d9f00b/download

Russia and China share the strategic goal of challenging the US hegemony in favor of a more multipolar world in which they can hold the dominance of their regions. Although several challenges lie ahead, they have already started to forge financial, military and institutional strategic ties to balance the US hegemony and bring a multipolar world in the long run.

Brink: Global order is in crisis, multiple trends make the international system fragile, and US leadership is in danger of retreat

Prof. [Alexander Cooley and Prof. Daniel H. Nexon](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/author) 2020. (COOLEY is Claire Tow Professor of Political Science at Barnard College and Director of Columbia University’s Harriman Institute.  NEXON is an Associate Professor in the Department of Government and at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University) July/Aug 2020 “How Hegemony Ends” <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-06-09/how-hegemony-ends> (accessed 5 Oct 2022)

Multiple signs point to a crisis in global order. The uncoordinated international response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the resulting economic downturns, the resurgence of nationalist politics, and the hardening of state borders all seem to herald the emergence of a less cooperative and more fragile international system. According to many observers, these developments underscore the dangers of U.S. President Donald Trump’s “America first” policies and his retreat from global leadership.

Impact: World peace & prosperity at risk without US influence. US hegemony is key to global peace & prosperity

Capt. M. V. Prato 2009 (United States Marine Corps, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Marine Corps University) “The Need for American Hegemony” <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA508040> (accessed 3 June 2021)

The world witnessed a vast shift in the polarity of geopolitics after the Cold War. The United States became the world’s greatest hegemon with an unequalled ability to globally project cultural, political, economic, and military power in a manner not seen since the days of the Roman Empire. **[END QUOTE]** Coined the “unipolar moment” by syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer, the disparity of power between the U.S. and all other nations allows the U.S. to influence the world for the mutual benefit of all responsible states. Unfortunately, the United States is increasingly forced to act unilaterally as a result of both foreign and domestic resentment to U.S. dominance and the rise of liberal internationalism. [**He goes on to conclude later in the same context QUOTE**:] The United States must exercise benevolent global hegemony, unilaterally if necessary, to ensure its security and maintain global peace and prosperity.

Impact: Decline into anarchy with decline of US dominance and rise of Russia and China. Massive loss of life, money and freedom

Dr. Robert Kagan 2017. (PhD in American history; Stephen & Barbara Friedman Senior Fellow - [Foreign Policy](https://www.brookings.edu/program/foreign-policy/), [Project on International Order and Strategy](https://www.brookings.edu/project/project-on-international-order-and-strategy/) at Brookings Institution) 6 Feb 2017 ‘Backing into World War III” <https://www.brookings.edu/research/backing-into-world-war-iii/>

Think of two significant trend lines in the world today. One is the increasing ambition and activism of the two great revisionist powers, Russia and China. The other is the declining confidence, capacity, and will of the democratic world, and especially of the United States, to maintain the dominant position it has held in the international system since 1945. As those two lines move closer, as the declining will and capacity of the United States and its allies to maintain the present world order meet the increasing desire and capacity of the revisionist powers to change it, we will reach the moment at which the existing order collapses and the world descends into a phase of brutal anarchy, as it has three times in the past two centuries. The cost of that descent, in lives and treasure, in lost freedoms and lost hope, will be staggering.