

BAKU DIALOGUES

POLICY PERSPECTIVES ON THE SILK ROAD REGION

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Table of Contents

Vol. 7 | No. 1 | Fall 2023

Essays

- 6 The Geopolitics of Energy are Changing:
It's Essential to Update Policies
Robert F. Cekuta
- 20 Legal and Political Mechanisms for Peacemaking:
How These May Apply to the Armenia-Azerbaijan
Peace Process
Rodrigo Labardini
- 44 The Russo-Ukrainian War and the Exhaustion
of the 1945 World Order:
Tracing the Origins, Examining the Consequences
Manuel Becerra Ramírez
- 60 Resolving the Russia-Ukraine Impasse:
Lessons from an African Cosmological Viewpoint
Evans O. Ogada
- 72 Latin America and the 'New Caucasus':
Linking Points Between Brazil and Azerbaijan
Roberto Rodolfo Georg Uebel
- 88 Transport and Transit Policy of Kazakhstan and
the Silk Road Region
Bulat Auelbeyev & Aidar Kurmashev
- 100 Fostering a New Global Conversation:
A View from Mexico on Diversifying
Inter-Regional Engagement
Guadalupe González Chávez

The Geopolitics of Energy are Changing

It's Essential to Update Policies

Robert F. Cekuta

Energy security is a core element of a country's national security policy. However, what constitutes energy security is changing dramatically, which means governments must review and update their policies. Moreover, these policy reviews and updates must be ongoing, given the continuing, multifaceted evolution taking place in the global energy sector. Changes are afoot and it is imperative that policymakers are aware of this reality and are open to taking the necessary steps to take advantage of them. Just as a country keeps reviewing defense and other threats to its place in the world, so too must it reappraise and adjust its policies and tactics to ensure its energy security.

Regardless of whether a country is a net importer or exporter of energy, countries the world over are affected by today's dynamic realities. Moreover, while trying to anticipate how future directions and new developments in the global energy picture will affect a particular country or region, policymakers need to think not only about how to adapt, but also about how a country might try to affect those changes so as to improve its well-being. At the same time, a government must consider how others—whether friends or current or potential enemies—might try to shape these geopolitical changes. Passivity or simply just continuing policies that have been in place over the past few decades will not serve countries well.

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This essay examines how new factors, such as climate change, new technologies, and resurgent weaponization of energy sources, affect countries' energy security today and

may affect it in the coming years. At the same time, it looks at the likelihood that some level of oil and natural gas will be needed for the foreseeable future and the reality that the demand for energy is not being met in many parts of the world. It also considers the actions that governments are taking, or need to take, in light of these developments and the resulting changes occurring in international relations.

Background

Energy security has traditionally been defined as the assured, continued, and predictable supply of adequate energy at an affordable price. Consumers—whether private individuals, businesses and industries, or governments—want assurances they will have all the energy they need, when they want it, and at a price they can afford. Over the past two or more decades, another imperative—sustainability—entered the equation

Just as a country keeps reviewing defense and other threats to its place in the world, so too must it reappraise and adjust its policies and tactics to ensure its energy security.

as the world realized the climate and environmental impacts of energy generation and use. Therefore, the definition of energy security has to be updated to remain the assured, continued, and predictable supply of adequately sustainable energy at an affordable price.

For energy producers, there is another dimension: the need for adequate assurance that there will be sufficient demand to justify the often tremendous capital outlays essential to exploring for, developing, producing, and shipping energy oil, natural gas, or other energy sources.

Furthermore, government actions have been a key factor in advancing—or threatening—energy security. Geopolitics, thus, are integral to thinking about energy security.

The oil crises of the 1970s and early 1980s brought this point home to government chambers, corporate boardrooms, and the general public. The 1973 Arab oil embargo, which sought to reorient the policies of the United States and other countries regarding

the Arab-Israeli conflict, caused Western industrialized countries to take a number of steps to avoid again falling victim to a weaponization of oil supplies.

Working in concert, the United States, Japan, and Western Europe acted to lessen dependence on Middle Eastern oil, to increase energy production where possible at home, and to diversify types and suppliers of energy. These mature, industrialized OECD economies built strategic petroleum reserves to enable their economies to weather further supply disruptions. They explored and promoted energy-saving technologies and co-founded the International Energy Agency as a means to understand better oil markets and other energy sector developments and to help develop sound energy policy options.

Higher oil prices in the 1970s and early 1980s also stimulated inflation and caused budgetary problems. These economic dislocations had a particular impact on lower-income countries. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) as a whole established development funds to help poorer countries suffering from higher oil prices and to ameliorate the political backlash that resulted as the massive spike

in oil prices provided oil exporters with huge increases in revenues.

Ensuring oil shipping routes stayed open—especially the Bab al Mandab, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Straits of Malacca—was a top focus for the United States, the major Western European states, Japan, and, later, China. Another initiative designed to circumvent chokepoints and to keep needed oil moving to global markets was the construction of major strategic export pipelines, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan project that the United States worked with European governments, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Türkiye to realize in the 1990s. China's Belt and Road Initiative, first made public in October 2013, also seems to include decreasing dependence on the Straits of Malacca for its energy needs as one of its goals.

Oil producers also developed and acted upon their own plans in light of the then-prevailing geopolitics of energy. Most Americans today would probably be shocked if they read mid-1970s news reports that highlighted Iran's role as a valued, important alternative oil source as the United States worked to overcome the 1973 energy crisis. Saudi Arabia and other OPEC producers strove to build and maintain oil supply arrangements

in the 1980s with U.S. refiners and, despite their earlier actions during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, would engage the U.S. and other governments to be seen both as suppliers Americans could count on and as responsible parties interested in stable, predictable oil markets.

Natural Gas, like Oil, Becomes a Geostrategic Commodity

In the twenty-first century, natural gas would likewise come to assume geostrategic importance, with a realization that supplies of gas, like those of oil, could be weaponized as a foreign policy tool. In the early years of the past decade, there was talk of a “golden age of gas.” However, by the end of the decade, there were deep concerns over how Russia used Gazprom to advance state interests.

A number of major new discoveries, such as Azerbaijan's giant Shah Deniz II field and the development of new technologies like hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling, have greatly increased natural gas supplies. These increased supplies were seen not just as energy sources, but also as a means to provide needed cleaner power

in the United States, Europe, and the rapidly growing economies in China and elsewhere given that gas-fired power plants produce far fewer pollutants than burning coal.

However, like oil, natural gas supplies and demand soon took on a geopolitical edge. As with oil, diversity of natural gas supply would prove essential to energy security. The prudence of building the Nord Stream II pipeline from Russia to Germany, which would bolster an over-dependence on Russian gas, became a major foreign policy issue between Washington and Berlin and between Germany and a number of other EU member states. Efforts to ensure the diversity of Europe's natural gas supply were important factors in U.S. diplomacy in the South Caucasus, where Ambassador Richard Morningstar and others worked with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, BP, and others to realize the construction of the Southern Gas Corridor.

It became apparent that assured supplies of affordable natural gas could not be taken for granted, especially as the world turned more and more to gas as a source for generating electricity and meeting other needs.

Russia briefly cut natural gas supplies flowing through Ukraine

to EU customers in 2006 and natural gas supplies to Ukraine in 2009 and 2014. By 2020, what had been warned about in diplomatic discussions was becoming fact. Gazprom was charging different countries different prices for Russian natural gas. In addition to Russia's efforts to cut off gas supplies to Ukraine and to build alternatives to the Soviet-era pipelines that ran through that country to parts of the European Union, Gazprom's policies served Russian foreign policy objectives, rather than acting on market signals. Better relations meant lower prices. Politics, not market forces, were setting the prices for Russian gas, in contrast to arrangements for gas from Qatar, Australia, the United States, and other exporters.

Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine caused Germany and the other EU member states to scramble for alternatives to Russian natural gas, both to be assured of the energy they needed for their publics and industries and to diminish income that Moscow could use to prosecute the war. The EU Commission's president, Ursula

von der Leyen, visited Baku in July 2022 to seek additional natural gas and sign a historic Memorandum of Understanding to that effect, as did leaders of several EU member states.

Looking to deprive Russia of gas export earnings that helped finance the war and to head off a possible Russian decision to halt supplies at a time of its own choosing as a means of wringing political concessions from the EU and others, some EU member states bought up liquefied natural gas from the United States and Qatar. American companies were willing to sell, and the U.S. government saw these transactions as an important contribution to Europe's energy security.

According to a recent Bloomberg report, European purchases of liquefied natural gas from the foregoing sources and others rose by 60 percent in 2022, replacing gas previously imported by pipeline from Russia. These purchases helped to ensure that consumers in the EU and to some extent elsewhere (e.g., the Western Balkans) would have

While the geopolitics of oil and gas exploration, production, sales, and consumption are generally recognized, the need to fight climate change brings new strategic realities.

the energy they needed as governments and companies scrambled to develop other long-term supplies. However, they also drove up the price and pulled supplies from other consumers, including China. Due to deteriorating, tense relations between Beijing and Washington, China, for its part, was already questioning the wisdom of relying on natural gas from the United States despite growing U.S. gas production and the new American facilities brought on line to liquify and export it.

Expanded Geopolitical Equations

While the geopolitics of oil and gas exploration, production, sales, and consumption are generally recognized, the need to fight climate change brings new strategic realities. Fighting climate change includes reducing carbon emissions worldwide and implementing ways so that countries—and here there is a particular focus on China, India, and other emerging market and lower-income countries—can boost their economic well-being without the carbon emissions that Western industrialized societies produced as they developed.

One school of thought argues a dramatic shift can be made almost immediately to renewables and other low-carbon alternatives. Proponents argue that such a shift—while benefiting the environment—would also boost a country's energy security by lowering, if not ending, the need for oil and gas imports. Besides being highly questionable as to whether a complete move away from oil and gas is possible, the geopolitics surrounding the photovoltaic (PV) panels essential to the harnessing of solar power are instructive in evaluating this proposition.

A July 2022 International Energy Agency (IEA) special study found that

China's share in all the manufacturing stages of solar panels (such as polysilicon, ingots, wafers, cells, and modules) exceeds 80 percent. This is more than double China's share of global PV demand. In addition, the country is home to the world's 10 top suppliers of solar PV manufacturing equipment.

Moreover, that study found that with the additional manufacturing capacity under construction in China, Chinese firms would soon command a 95 percent share of world markets for PV equipment. While Chinese engineering and manufacturing certainly brought

about numerous changes that greatly reduced the price and increased the availability of solar power, such a concentration of sources of supply presents a significant vulnerability.

As the world found first with oil and later with natural gas, diversification of sources of supply is a core factor in any country's energy, and hence national, security.

Even hydroelectric power—another of the technologies that can help move the world to a lower carbon future—can have a geopolitical dimension. A dam and hydroelectric plant in one country may depend on upstream water sources located in another. Moreover, that hydroelectric plant may affect the water supplies needed in another country downstream from the project. The new Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile is such an example. Ethiopians see the project, which they financed, as providing electricity and water for greater economic growth and well-being. In Sudan and Egypt, by contrast, the project is characterized as an existential threat because of fears it will reduce the water supplies on which both of them depend.

Renewables also bring another increasingly high-profile factor into the geopolitical mix: the need for rare earths, lithium, and several other critical materials.

There have been similar concerns over hydroelectric projects in Central Asia (not to mention the South Caucasus), where managing trans-boundary river flows for agriculture and other uses, in addition to power generation, has been seen at different times as either a potential cause for conflict or as a vector for greater regional cooperation. Moreover, fears concerning higher temperatures and the resulting changes in the Himalayan ice packs that give rise to Central Asia's rivers add to the energy security/regional geopolitical mix.

New Sources, New Challenges

Renewables also bring another increasingly high-profile factor into the geopolitical mix: the need for rare earths, lithium, and several other critical materials.

Lithium, nickel, cobalt, manganese, and graphite are essential for the rapidly growing demand for batteries as the world shifts to lower-carbon, electrified systems. Rare earth elements are essential to motors

in both wind turbines and electric vehicles. Copper, silicon, and silver are needed for photovoltaic systems, and miles of copper and aluminum wiring will be required for expanding updated electricity systems as well as for electric vehicles. Where these metals and minerals can be found, extracted, and processed for use in the lower carbon economy is a geopolitical and commercial concern.

Rare earth supplies are an increasingly high-profile item on the energy geopolitical agenda. In 2010, China halted supplies of rare earth minerals to Japan because of a territorial dispute between the two countries. Immediately following that event, the U.S. government examined the situation, considered re-opening domestic mines and processing facilities, and perhaps establishing strategic reserves of rare earths and other critical minerals along the lines of what had been done with crude oil in the 1970s and 1980s. The issue drifted off Washington's radar until the general disruptions in global supply chains that accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic, which in turn led to a reappraisal of an over-dependence on a single source, namely China. Rare earth supplies are now one of the ongoing themes in U.S. discussions about the extent to which America should allow itself to rely on Chinese production and supply sources.

Recent reports show that China accounted for 70 percent of the world's mining of rare earths in 2022. However, it is also the processing of these elements that is geopolitically important. Here again, China has a clear preponderance. Reports show that 85 percent of the world's capacity to process rare earths is located in China. On top of these figures is an apparent renewed move by China's government to restrict exports of rare earths, ostensibly to ensure that Chinese industry has the supplies it needs.

The Trump and Biden administrations, as well as Japan and others, have made access to rare earths and other materials integral to the evolving energy picture important pieces of their geopolitical thinking. A 2022 White House Fact Sheet notes that

Critical minerals [...] such as rare earth elements, lithium, and cobalt [...] are key inputs in clean energy technologies like batteries, electric vehicles, wind turbines, and solar panels. As the world transitions to a clean energy technology, global demand for these critical minerals is set to skyrocket by 400-600 percent over the next several decades, and for minerals such as lithium and graphite used in electric vehicle (EV) batteries, demand will increase by even more—as much as 4,000 percent.

In addition to a broad range of steps to boost the mining and processing of these materials domestically and strengthening stockpiling, the United States has pursued a number of diplomatic initiatives in this context over the past two years. As a 2023 Aspen Institute study reports that “the United States cannot solve the critical minerals challenge on its own. Regardless of the reforms taken [domestically], the United States will be unable to fully reach self-sufficiency for critical mineral mining and processing in the time frame available.”

The United States is now engaging other consuming and producing countries to address the situation. In March 2023, for example, the United States and Japan signed a bilateral agreement to strengthen critical mineral supply chains. Also, in July 2023, the EU Commission authorized negotiations with the U.S. on a critical minerals supply chains agreement, one of the goals of which is “to prevent distortive and protectionist practices in critical minerals supply chains,” as

Today’s evolving energy geopolitics demand engagements among a broader range of countries on a broader range of commodities than in the past.

both sides pursue a lower carbon future.

The United States is also signing a number of agreements with critical mineral producers. In June 2023,

America signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Mongolia “to jointly advance secure and resilient critical mineral supply chains in the Indo-Pacific region.” This document includes a framework “to

work together on technical areas of support to further Mongolia’s efforts to develop capacity to encourage investment in its mineral resource sector, which is vital to the global clean energy transition.” The United States has also signed similar such agreements with the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia. One motive is U.S. awareness of the outsized role Chinese firms can often play in mining and processing these key minerals in Africa and elsewhere.

Thus, today’s evolving energy geopolitics demands engagements among a broader range of countries on a broader range of commodities than the energy security policies of the 1970s and 1980s.

Non-State Actors Matter

Energy geopolitics, like other security issues today, includes non-state actors. First and foremost is the role of international energy companies and other private sector actors. Boardroom decisions have long been crucial to exploration and development moves affecting the production and supply of oil and natural gas. Government interactions with these companies to develop the resources in their countries are an ongoing dimension of the energy world.

At the same time, non-state actors can also have a distinctly negative impact. For example, hackers have used computer systems to disrupt grids and other means of supplying energy. Notable examples of this new reality are the cyberattacks on Ukraine’s electrical grids in 2015 and the shutdown of the Colonial Pipeline in the United States in May 2021. The 2015 cyberattacks on Ukraine’s electrical grids meant 200,000 people lost power. NotPetya’s attack on Colonial Pipeline’s operating systems meant the pipeline had to be shut down for five days, and the firm paid 75 BitCoin, approximately

A key, but too often overlooked, factor is the immense unmet need for energy in developing countries.

\$4.4 million, to get the pipeline back online. Federal authorities reportedly recovered 63.7 BitCoin, about \$2.3 million, but not until severe localized gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel shortages occurred in the southeastern United States.

The increased role of computerization and IT in the energy sector makes cybersecurity very much part of the global energy security equation.

Energy Poverty

Geology, the geographic placement of resources, the actual or potential weaponization of the supply of those resources, and the broadening range of technologies are not the only factors in the changing geopolitics of energy.

A key, but too often overlooked, factor is the immense unmet need for energy in developing countries. As a result, one of the UN’s sustainable energy goals is ensuring access to clean and affordable energy, which is essential to the development of agriculture, business, communications, education, healthcare, and transportation. All this bears witness to the essential

role access to energy plays in economic and human development.

There has already been a massive shift in who drives world energy demand. The global reality is that, with their explosive growth and large populations, emerging market countries—especially China, but also India—and developing countries have replaced the industrialized countries as the world's top energy consumers and key determiners of energy demand trends. Importantly, the rising energy-related demand in China, as noted above, includes demand for lithium, rare earths, and other critical minerals connected with a low-carbon future, as well as the need for oil and natural gas.

However, the growing energy needs of China, India, and other emerging market and middle-income countries—as critical as they are to the shift in the geopolitics of energy—are just part of the story. A few facts underline the need to take a closer look at energy poverty when thinking about global energy politics.

Over 2.6 billion people today do not have a safe way to cook their food, replying daily on wood, charcoal, dung, or other means to cook. All these methods harm or threaten to harm the health of the mainly

women who cook the food, as well as those living with the toxic fumes. Moreover, despite efforts to achieve progress, the UN reports that it seems likely that 2 billion people will still depend on polluting fuels and technologies for cooking in 2030.

Moreover, the UN's 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Report shows that 733 million people—about one in ten of all people worldwide—still lack access to electricity, with 548 million of them living in Sub-Saharan Africa. There are probably many millions more whose electricity supply is inadequate for their current and future needs. The supply of electricity and the way it is produced is not only important for economic development, education, and other aspects of an individual's well-being but, as noted above, is also important for combating climate change. The UN reports that \$25-\$40 billion needs to be invested annually between 2021 and 2030 to reach universal access to energy.

There is another statistic that too often seems to get overlooked in energy security conversations, but which is extremely relevant: the global population continues to grow. Expectations are that another 1.8 billion people will come into the world by 2045, 80 percent of whom

will be born in the developing world. Thus, the geopolitics of energy should consider not just the needs of today's global population, which we are already failing to meet, but also the needs of those who will be born in the coming years.

Meeting the Geopolitical Challenge

Having laid out the problem, it is incumbent to offer thoughts on how it might be addressed. What follows are ten steps governments can consider in deliberating how to address the evolving geopolitical challenges of the world's ongoing need for energy.

One, be aware of and keep current with the evolving global and regional energy security pictures. Today's realities mean energy security requires more than just getting enough hydrocarbons out of the ground and then delivering them to world markets. It is imperative that governments and their constituents look at the broadening range of factors affecting the energy needs of their countries and the overall

The geopolitics of energy should consider not just the needs of today's global population, but also the needs of those who will be born in the coming years.

evolution taking place in the energy sector.

Two, in concert with developing and maintaining this ongoing awareness of energy

sector developments and their implications comes a need for a continuous re-evaluation of policies—both to utilize those developments to enhance national well-being and to be prepared for developments in the energy space that could harm a country's national security.

Three, realize the need to take different time horizons into account. Climate change, for example, is an urgent threat, and steps need to be taken now and in the coming years to address it. However, as the world re-learned after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, we continue to need hydrocarbons for our energy security and must ensure immediate and short-term supplies.

Four, realize that different countries are at different points in shifting to a lower carbon energy future and have different levels of capacity to make the necessary shifts.

Five, recognize that diversification—both in terms of types of

energy and in terms of suppliers—remains an essential core factor in energy security. Governments and businesses need to act to ensure the diversification of energy sources and technologies. There is much to be said in favor of an “all of the above strategy” when it comes to developing a country’s energy portfolio. At the same time, the same type of focus that went into diversifying oil or natural gas suppliers in past years needs to be applied into ensuring the diversity and integrity of systems for supplying lithium, rare earths, and the other minerals and metals critical for greater electrification and a lower carbon future. Moreover, all should expect suppliers to also keep an eye out to ensure adequate diversification in their customer base.

Six, pay attention to private sector actors and market forces. Companies will not invest and produce oil, natural gas, or copper and lithium unless it is profitable to do so, the necessary financing is available, and there is adequate demand for the product. In short, when governments are thinking about energy security, they need to be aware of market realities and allow market forces to work.

Seven, a corollary to the foregoing is that—as the world looks to lower- and middle-income countries to

help build a lower carbon future and not simply repeat the route the mature industrialized economies took—the ability to attract and utilize financial capital is crucial. If, however, a country has challenges attracting capital in general, it will likely also be hard to attract funding for a solar or wind farm or for a needed upgrade to the electrical grid.

Eight, revise regulatory impediments to ensuring energy security. The prohibition against enabling its regional financial institutions like the EBRD or the EIB to finance new gas pipeline projects—even if these could later be converted to transport hydrogen—is one such example.

Nine, keep an open mind and keep all options open. There is a tendency not only for government leaders and agencies to stick with what has been done in the past, but also to be swept up in enthusiasm or focus on one or two energy technologies which may seem to be “the answer.” Pursuing a particular technology that experts or international conferences highlight at a particular moment may or may not be the right course. It can also blind policymakers to other alternatives that might be available or developing that could prove more effective in a particular country or region.

Ten, energy security is not something any government can realize on its own. As my own country found recently, even with a tremendous increase in U.S. oil and natural gas production, the prices for oil and natural gas are determined by global markets—a reality that meant Americans faced higher gasoline prices in 2021 despite record oil

production. Americans are also learning that a lower carbon future will mean reliance on African and other producers of cobalt and other minerals, even if the United States can dramatically increase domestic mining and processing activities. This reality will also confront other countries and will continue to be an important factor in the geopolitics of energy. **BD**

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Legal and Political Mechanisms for Peacemaking

How These May Apply to the Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Process

Rodrigo Labardini

Despite various tensions that have been going on for some time, there have been a number of indications that a formal peace treaty may be signed between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the time ahead. This expectation became even sturdier after a significant increase in the number of meetings between the leaders of both countries, particularly during May and July 2023 (Brussels on 14 May, Moscow on 25 May, Chişinău on 1 June, and Brussels again on 15 July). These meetings were parallel to several others by the Deputy Prime Ministers and Foreign Affairs Ministers of both countries in diverse cities ranging from Brussels and Chişinău to Washington and Moscow and on the bilateral border. Statements and readouts from these

meetings evidence a complex negotiation and an interrupted conversation mechanism with the EU's facilitation, the U.S.'s support, and Russia's mediation, including encouragement from Türkiye and, to some extent, France and Germany.

The conversations have been very complicated. Not only do they deal with very thorny issues having to do regional security, the restoration of transport links between the two South Caucasus states (this would assist and further develop regional linkages in the Silk Road region and points beyond), the delimitation of the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, the future of Karabakh's ethnic-Armenian population and Azerbaijan's internally displaced persons (IDPs), and a possible

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peace treaty. But, at least implicitly, they also deal with overcoming a protracted animosity—that is to say, the question of reconciliation.

A significant part of the intricacy involved is due to the paradigm shift in the balance of power that resulted from the outcome of the Second Karabakh War. In less than two months, Azerbaijan fully recovered seven of its eight regions that had been militarily occupied by Armenia for nearly 30 years. All at once, everything had changed: the face of the South Caucasus had been abruptly altered in just 44 days, which gave nations little time to accept the new reality and adapt to the new set of circumstances. When commentators have touched upon the issue, discussions generally include the trilateral statement that put an end to active hostilities, adopted by the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia on 10 November 2020, and some of these referred to the document as a treaty—i.e., a legally binding agreement signed between States to be governed by international law—which it is not. This essay examines the nature of said trilateral statement as a “politically linking agreement”—or what I call *ligante pacta politica*—fixing a set of further negotiations and actions. It will also offer remarks on issues and paths that may eventually lead to a peace

treaty that will undoubtedly benefit not only the South Caucasus but the Silk Road region in general.

The Trilateral Statement

A trilateral statement was adopted on the night of 9-10 November 2020, remotely signed in the three capitals by the leaders of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the Russian Federation. While the statement does not explicitly mention starting negotiations to conclude a peace treaty, all its provisions are oriented toward achieving a state of peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Highlighting the importance of the issues, the three leaders met twice in 2021 (Moscow on 11 January and Sochi on 26 November), issuing statements confirming continued adherence to the 2020 trilateral statement, once in 2022 (Sochi on 31 October), where they confirmed the supremacy of the Alma-Ata documents of 1991, and again in 2023 (Moscow on 25 May).

Since the adoption of the November 2020 trilateral statement, numerous commentators and analysts have referred to it as if it were a legally binding agreement, i.e., a treaty: an “international agreement concluded

between States in written form and governed by international law” as defined in Article 2(1)(a) of the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. We can see this from frequent remarks alluding to the supposed fact that one or another term of the statement has or has not been duly complied with, while repeatedly denoting the specific terms used in the statement as if they had been written in stone. In other words, by highlighting these aspects, the geopolitical environment apparently seems to consider that the statement was not only a political agreement between warring sides to end hostilities and set guidance for future development, but, rather, an international legally binding agreement: a treaty. No one offers any characterization as to what type of treaty it might be: peace, war-ending, border demarcation, or otherwise. Nonetheless, as President Aliyev stated in May 2023: “the trilateral declaration, it is not a ceasefire agreement, but it is also not a peace agreement.”

What is clear is that the 10 November 2020 trilateral statement calls for a “complete ceasefire and

a cessation of all hostilities.” The term ‘ceasefire’ does not have a universally standardized or legally binding definition. The lack of a single definition can lead to variations in how the term is used in different contexts, including media, government documentation, and scholarly work. This flexibility allows for different interpretations based on the specific context and goals of the parties involved. The term ‘ceasefire’ is also closely associated with ‘cessation of hostilities,’ ‘truce,’ and ‘armistice’—the latter two having long-standing precedents pertaining to inter-state armed conflict.

Generally speaking, ‘ceasefire’ refers to a temporary cessation or pause in hostilities, typically between warring parties in an armed conflict. Ceasefires can vary widely in terms of their scope, duration, and conditions. Several definitions treat ceasefires as distinct types of agreements separate from comprehensive peace agreements. These definitions often emphasize that a ceasefire does not necessarily signal the end of a conflict but rather a temporary pause in the fighting.

The lack of a fixed definition of the term ‘ceasefire’ allows flexibility in addressing the unique dynamics of each situation, yet it may concomitantly complicate issues precisely due to such flexibility.

The trilateral statement would seem to be an armistice, as it ended active hostilities and put in place a set of future negotiations and actions arranging a path towards a peace treaty, but it is definitely not a document that marked the end of a war.

Ceasefires can also be viewed as components of broader peace agreements. In this context, a ceasefire is one element of a larger political and/or legal framework aimed at resolving the underlying issues of the conflict and establishing a sustainable peace.

The lack of a fixed definition of the term ‘ceasefire’ allows flexibility in addressing the unique dynamics of each situation, yet it may concomitantly complicate issues precisely due to such flexibility. It is also worth noting that the understanding of terms like ‘ceasefire’ can evolve over time, as the understanding of both conflicts and conflict resolution strategies develops. Thus, given the varied nature of conflicts and their resolutions, it is important to consider the specific context when discussing or analyzing ceasefires.

On the other hand, Article 36 of the 1907 Hague Convention (IV), “Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land,” states that an “armistice suspends military operations by mutual agreement between

the belligerent parties.” An armistice constitutes an initial contact between the parties, often leading, in due course, to a peace treaty; but the legal state of war continues. In other words, an armistice is not peace.

The terms ‘ceasefire,’ ‘truce,’ ‘cessation of hostilities,’ and ‘armistice’ also have differences of meaning related to their temporality. Truces are mostly preliminary with a local scope, allowing field commanders to execute them for humanitarian purposes, whereas armistice and cessation of hostilities are more permanent arrangements. Truce, cessation of hostilities, and armistice seem like a sequence and can be considered as

the “three stages of progress from war to peace” or as “a first link in a chain running from war to peace.” A break in fighting is intended to provide a period of calm to facilitate negotiations, discussions, or the implementation of certain measures, including negotiating a more permanent peace agreement. Also, due to political repercussions involved in a ceasefire, they are

often not referred to in such terms but rather as “codes of conduct” or “declarations.”

The trilateral statement would seem to be an armistice, as it ended active hostilities and put in place a set of future negotiations and actions arranging a path towards a peace treaty, but it is definitely not a document that marked the end of a war. Fighting can break out at any moment, as evidenced by various fatalities occurring several times since 10 November 2020. In fact, one can surmise that while the armed conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan known as the First Karabakh War (1988-1994) and the Second Karabakh War (2020), both situations really constitute a single conflict, as there were almost 30 years of “frozen conflict” with numerous deaths, parallel to continuous discussions and negotiations conducted primarily under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, with peace never achieved—this produced something akin to a false sense of peacetime in the middle of wartime.

One could also deduce that, after 2020, the four UN Security Council resolutions on the subject were finally executed. Yet, peace still has not been attained, and situations have arisen that may lead to the widening of the conflict and

undermine peace and security in the region. On the other hand, they may serve to produce the opposite outcome: the results of the recent “antiterrorist measure” conducted by Azerbaijan (19-20 September 2023) speak to this point, for it brings to an end the functioning of the ethnic-Armenian secessionist “grey zone”—as presidential adviser Hikmet Hajiyev and others had put it—that was generally understood to be one of the major impediments to the successful completion of peace talks between both warring sides. Be that as it may, a peace agreement remains essential for the well-being of both Azerbaijan and Armenia and the region in general—the South Caucasus and the whole of the Silk Road region.

Any such result will have overreaching geopolitical implications, starting with the fact that a state of peace will be present and thus there should be no further need of external ceasefire monitoring or peacekeeping operations. The region would attain a state of peace that has not existed since the demise of the USSR. Additionally, it would improve regional stability and security, propel cooperative arrangements, and develop the individual countries’ economic situation, particularly in trade, communications, transport, energy, and tourism sectors.

While not legally binding, the 10 November 2020 trilateral statement should be considered as a politically linking agreement. This is what I call *ligante pacta politica*—an agreement that politically links the parties but does not legally bind them. This distinction can be understood as one between a “gentleman’s agreement”—i.e., one that “relies upon the ‘decency’ and ‘honor’ of the parties rather than the law to bind the parties”—versus a “treaty”—i.e., an agreement concluded by States governed by international law. At this point, it is important to underline that both political and legal agreements are encompassed within the concept of international commitments adopted by states.

The main difference may be inferred from the following. A perfectly drafted treaty shall be legally binding and enforceable in the international arena—subject to the natural limitations of the international system. However, if there is no political will, such

a perfectly drafted treaty may attain no outcome and come to nothing, transforming itself into a chimera, and a peace treaty may become a scrap of paper. On the other hand, a political agreement may be executed and further developed by the parties, and while its non-compliance may be demanded, this can only take place in political terms—including resorting, once again, to war. Any agreement—political or legal—requires the will to pursue and achieve any result.

If it is of a legal nature, its execution may be exacted through the appropriate institutions, whether from the counterpart itself, an arbitration, a court, or an international organization such as the United Nations. If it is political in nature, its execution will be exacted through political means. The legal avenue is generally favored, as it establishes a known path for all actors and falls in line with the UN Charter, international law, and general principles of international relations, international amity, and comity. Political mechanisms are not

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excluded as long as they follow the principles of the UN Charter.

As the University of Southern Denmark's Chiara de Franco points out, cessation of military confrontations rarely coincides with the end of war. Legal and political matters continue after the last shot has been fired, civilians driven from their homes try to rebuild their houses and their lives, military veterans need to adapt to their new role in civil society, and only then begins the struggle to define the history and the significance of recent past events and long-gone days. Further, determinations must be made regarding persons in affected territories before, during, and after military occupation. Thus, after ongoing military operations end, mechanisms for reaching a peace treaty become crucial. "In international wars with more than two participants, a single treaty may be signed by all the belligerents, but usually several treaties have been concluded," Professor de Franco tells us; but with only two parties in play, one treaty will generally suffice as only their interests should be taken into account. And, as stated, in the South Caucasus this would have a cataclysmic geopolitical reorganization of the Silk Road region.

Political Agreements

An inescapable fact in human affairs is power, evermore so in the international arena influencing the conduct of states. International law does not differ from other kinds of law in being inseparably related to power. In this sense, while separable, international law is sometimes seen as a tool of power politics. In fact, as journalist Mervyn Jones states, "international law is not less, but more, political than any other type of law."

Ligante pacta politica and otherwise political commitments, political agreements, or "gentleman's agreements" are, in general, perfect examples of how diplomacy can successfully achieve an accord and reach a solution to numerous situations arising in the lives of nations. While political agreements are not treaties, they may reflect the parties' intent to cooperate or address specific issues, often lacking the necessary legal framework to ensure legal compliance or legal enforcement. Instead, they rely on the goodwill and commitment of the parties involved to fulfill their obligations.

As the University of Potsdam's Andreas Zimmerman reminds us,

non-legally binding documents are increasingly being used in recent decades. Nowadays, States incrementally choose informal, non-binding mechanisms over treaties to organize their international affairs. These instruments are more flexible than treaties. Since they are not governed by UN Charter Article 102 (requiring treaties to be submitted to the UN to be published), they come into force swiftly, typically without parliamentary approval, are simple to change or terminate, and are not required to be disclosed. *Ligante pacta politica* are exempt from time-consuming formalities and processes required to conclude formal treaties precisely because they are not treaties. But they are not irrelevant to international relations and law. Evidencing how much States resort to this type of deal and understandings, in 2020, the Inter-American Juridical Committee issued Guidelines on Binding and Non-Binding Agreements. Other forums have also dealt with the issue, including the Committee of Legal Advisers for Public International Law of the Council of Europe.

Political commitments are considered agreements, but they are non-binding; they only link politically, and they only announce or provide assurances of political

intentions. An agreement—defined as "mutual consent by participants to a commitment regarding future behavior"—encompasses both treaties (legally binding) and political commitments (defined as a "non-legally binding agreement between States, State institutions, or other actors intended to establish commitments of an exclusively political or moral nature"). Political agreements are international arrangements or informal pacts between governments to address issues of mutual interest—and they serve as important instruments in international relations, shaping cooperation and addressing global challenges. These commitments are flexible with great adaptability to circumstances. This also gives sufficient confidence for the parties to determine the degree and extent to which they link (politically) or bind (legally) them.

The degree to which political agreements may link parties will vary. The moral and ethical considerations of political commitments may have an impact on their compliance. Due to the concepts of good faith and mutual trust, parties may feel obligated to keep their promises. Political agreements frequently have reputational repercussions, which force parties to uphold their obligations to preserve

credibility. Political agreements can also be the first step toward more formalized cooperation and can act as a prelude to legally binding treaties. This viewpoint is further illustrated by instances of political agreements that have been recognized as legally binding. Some of the circumstances that may influence whether any declaration may be considered legally binding will depend on specific facts involved, including criteria like the “intention of the parties to be bound in international law, significance of the arrangement, requisite specificity, including objective criteria for determining enforceability, the necessity for two or more parties to the arrangement, and the form of the document.”

Hence, *ligante pacta politica* possess a “pre-law-function” as it may lay out the terms with which states could potentially be willing to comply in the future, within the framework of a treaty that would then be legally binding. In this way, they may be considered precursors for concluding treaties, as they may inform the content of a future treaty, and, in practice, they evidence a will and exercise, or as Zimmerman says, a “normative pull.” Without the existence of previous political agreements, many treaties could not have been signed and executed.

Several factors influence the linking ability of political agreements. The level of formality and specificity plays a crucial role. While not required, clear and specific language enhances the likelihood of the political agreement being treated as linking, therefore politically exacting that it complies with the terms used. The presence of enforcement mechanisms or consequences for non-compliance strengthens the linking nature of political agreements. While the absence of such mechanisms may undermine the agreement’s enforceability, the logic of that sort of endeavor suggests that the parties will likely resort to any political means available to uphold the political commitment. The general political context and power dynamics surrounding the political agreement will significantly impact upon its linking force. Stronger states or influential actors may exert greater pressure or leverage to ensure compliance.

Nine Examples

Nine examples of linking political agreements will be discussed in what follows. First is the Atlantic Charter, which is nothing but a joint declaration depicting the political will of the

U.S. and the UK regarding global security. It was issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill on 14 August 1941 (notably, *before* the United States entered World War II), after their first wartime conference on board the HMS Prince of Wales anchored in Placentia Bay off the coast of Newfoundland, which at the time was still a British Dominion. The Atlantic Charter is not an official document but a joint statement expressing the war aims of the two countries—one technically neutral and the other at war. The Atlantic Charter expressed the two countries’ beliefs in the rights of all people to live in freedom from fear and want, the freedom of the seas, self-determination, and the belief that all nations must abandon the use of force and work collectively in the fields of economics and security. One of its major provisions declared:

[A]fter the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, [we] hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want...[S]uch a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance.

The Atlantic Charter is considered one of the first significant steps towards the formation of the United Nations.

Another example is the Tehran Conference (28 November-1 December 1943) and the Yalta Conference (4-11 February 1945) between the British Empire, the U.S., and the USSR, which also did not result in any treaty: they were politically linking conferences that decided several monumental issues that were later attained and adhered to by the parties and the world, including the establishment of the United Nations Organization and the partition of post-Hitler Germany. Yalta had a clear and staunch political commitment and the division of Germany into occupied zones was essential to its execution, evidencing political will as a paramount component in an international relations mechanism.

A third example of linking political commitments and arrangements is the Helsinki Accords, or the “Final Act” of the First Conference of Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) Summit of Heads of State or Government of the Helsinki Conference. This document was signed by 35 States on 1 August 1975 and served as a political capstone of sorts of the Cold War

doctrine of *détente* championed by Henry Kissinger and embraced by his Soviet counterparts.

While not legally binding, the political commitments made in the Helsinki Accords have had substantial long-term effects. They established the inviolability of European frontiers and reject any use of force or intervention in internal affairs. They reflected and evidenced a strong commitment to follow the principles of the peaceful settlement of disputes whilst urging the signatories to respect human rights, including freedom of thought and religion. They have no formal sanction mechanism; nonetheless, they provided for collaboration, communication, a cooperative mindset, and transparency.

The Helsinki Accords are not treaties but rather constitute a politically linking—some would say politically binding—agreement consisting of three main sections informally known as “baskets” adopted on the basis of consensus. Although not legally binding, the Helsinki Final Act facilitated dialogue, cooperation, and trust-building between East and West, helping to reduce Cold War tensions, particularly on the ground in Europe. Its influence on subsequent developments and its impact on human rights issues in

East-Central Europe demonstrates the lasting influence of this kind of political agreement. The Helsinki Final Act has had long-term impact and influence, contributing to a shift in the political landscape. It played a crucial role in the eventual collapse of communist regimes in East-Central Europe. Its non-binding nature did not prevent it from shaping the course of history.

A fourth example of linking political commitments and arrangements is the Oslo Accords—i.e., Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) signing two documents: the Oslo I Accord in Washington, D.C., in 1993 and the Oslo II Accord in Taba, Egypt, in 1995. This signaled the beginning of the Oslo peace process based on Resolutions 242 and 338 of the UN Security Council. The Oslo process got underway following negotiations held in secret in Oslo, Norway, which led each party to agree to accept the other as a negotiation partner. The PLO recognized the State of Israel while Israel recognized the PLO as “the representative of the Palestinian people.”

A fifth example is the 1988 Baltic Sea Ministerial Declaration and the 1992 Baltic Sea Declaration, which clearly paved the way for the 1992 Helsinki Convention

on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the 1998 Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade. These had been preceded by merely political agreements negotiated under the auspices of the UN Environment Program (UNEP) and the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). These cases also show that the content, and even the specific language of a treaty, can be mainly determined by such instruments.

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement is a sixth example of linking political commitments and arrangements setting the path for considerable institutional change in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. A pair of agreements were signed on 10 April 1998 that largely put an end to “The Troubles,” an ethno-nationalist conflict that raged in Northern Ireland since the late 1960s. It represented a significant advancement in the 1990s Northern Ireland peace process. It consisted of an international British-Irish Agreement between the London and Dublin governments and a Multi-Party Agreement reached by the vast majority of the political parties in Northern Ireland.

This established a cross-border committee with strong coordination and implementation powers and, potentially, executive powers for specific functional areas of cooperation for the island of Ireland. It also established a power-sharing Assembly that would be elected by proportional representation within Northern Ireland. The agreement placed high priority on issues of sovereignty, governance, discrimination, military and paramilitary organizations, justice, and policing. It included accepting the concept of consent, a dedication to civil and political rights, cultural parity of esteem, police reform, paramilitary disarmament, and the early release of paramilitary prisoners, followed by demilitarization. Additionally, and quite significantly, the Irish government backed the revision of Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution as part of the negotiations leading up to the Agreement in order to modify the Irish territorial claim to Northern Ireland. Two referenda were held on 22 May 1998, and despite the difficulties of establishing sustainable peace in Northern Ireland, progress was achieved because Anglo-Irish policymaking was logical and had the characteristics of what international relations theoretician Ernst B. Haas long ago called a “learning process.”

A seventh example of the degree to which linking political agreements can link adversarial states is the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The JCPOA, which not without controversy and detractors, to say the least, stated that the UN would lift the international sanctions against Iran and, in exchange—in an evident *quid pro quo*—Tehran agreed not to develop nuclear weapons.

The articulation of the difference between political commitments and binding agreements played a major role in the U.S. legal position. In this sense, the U.S. argued at the time, the JCPOA is merely a political commitment and thus does not impose any binding obligations on America. It is claimed that the obligations of the U.S. may be laid down in the JCPOA—which is a political agreement—while the rights of the U.S. are set down via various UN Security Council Resolutions—which are oftentimes binding for all UN member states. The endorsement of the JCPOA by the Security Council, via Resolution S/RES/2231 (20 July 2015), established a certain basis for political commitments to become binding under international law. However, the language used in S/RES/2231 is controversial as it “calls upon” member states to take actions

in support of the JCPOA while it “decides”—making it mandatory, in terms of Article 25 of the UN Charter—that certain measures will expire in 10 years after the JCPOA’s adoption. Despite all of the above, what is clear is that the JCPOA was a linking political agreement that may have become legally binding but only until it was endorsed by the Security Council—i.e., the JCPOA remained politically linking while S/RES/2231 was mandatory in certain of its provisions.

My eighth example of linking political commitments and arrangements is the 1978 Aegean Sea case, in which the International Court of Justice (ICJ) analyzed several communications and language between the Foreign Ministers of Greece and Türkiye to determine whether there was a legally binding agreement or not. The ICJ found that there was no such agreement because even though delegations of both parties met, the Brussels Joint Communiqué of 31 May 1975 did not reflect a legally binding agreement between them.

Regardless, some political agreements may become legally binding. Few, but some, scholars believe that every commitment made by states is inevitably legal, for states are unavailable to select

arrangements to fall outside the international legal order in which all UN member states operate. At a minimum, international customary law springs into life from states’ daily acts, whether by action or omission. In the case of *Qatar v. Bahrain*, which came to pass some two decades after the Aegean Sea case, the ICJ declared that exchanged “minutes” of meetings and letters constituted an international legally binding agreement. Thus, while Bahrain contended that these documents had only been political negotiations and could not have a legally binding effect, and even though Bahrain’s Foreign Minister insisted that neither he nor the Bahrain government had the intent to adopt a legally binding agreement, the political arrangement amongst the Foreign Ministers of Qatar, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia was to be found binding—as reflected in the “minutes.”

This would signify that *ligante pacta politica* may not only set the path towards a treaty but that such political agreements can *themselves* become binding—even if the parties apparently did not have the definite intention to enter into a legally binding agreement. Moreover, in this case, these three states had had previous agreements, which the “minutes” reaffirmed.

In this respect, during the 1982 Argentina-United Kingdom war regarding the Malvinas/Falkland Islands, both countries did not officially declare war, but both declared the islands a war zone. This ninth and final example tells us that diplomatic relations between both countries were restored after a meeting on 17-19 October 1989 in Madrid, whereafter both governments issued separate statements on 19 October 1989. A salient point of these documents, which are of a political nature, was that neither were signed nor formally adopted. They were simply released by both governments, giving credence to the argument that they were jointly adopted. In a joint letter to the UN Secretary General on 24 October 1989, both the Argentine and British Permanent Representatives to the UN transmitted their joint statement, further requesting that it be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The joint statement indicated that nothing should be interpreted as “a change in the position of the [Argentina or the UK] with regard to sovereignty or territorial and maritime jurisdiction over the [Islas Malvinas/Falkland Islands], South Georgia, the South Sandwich Islands, and the surrounding maritime areas” nor “recognition of or support for the position of [Argentina or the

UK] with regard to sovereignty or territorial and maritime jurisdiction” over such regions. Both governments met again on 14-15 February 1990 in Madrid and adopted a new joint statement, which was sent to the UN Secretary General via a joint letter on 21 February 1990.

Interestingly, the February 1990 joint statement specifically states that the “formula on sovereignty over the [Falkland Islands/Islands Malvinas], South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, recorded in paragraph 2 of the joint statement of 19 October 1989, applied to [the 1990] meeting and its consequences.” While both joint statements are political in nature and were never signed nor formally adopted as legally binding documents, both governments continue to strictly abide by their terms, which explicitly state that no change occurred in either country’s position regarding the sovereignty of the Islas Malvinas/Falkland Islands. Further, it is worth noting that Argentina adopted a new constitution in 1994, which *inter alia* declare the Islas Malvinas to be a part of one of its provinces.

By definition, *ligante pacta politica* are not supposed to establish any independent legal rights or responsibilities. In

practice, however, we clearly see that, in fact, they are frequently used by states as a way to avoid legally binding obligations. Nonetheless—to quote the 2020 Inter-American Juridical Committee’s Guidelines—states “honor their political commitments and apply them with the understanding that other states will expect a performance of a State’s political commitment whether due to their moral force or the political context in which they were made.”

The takeaway here is that *ligante pacta politica* can both have substantial policy effects and affect the conduct of the concerned parties if there is widespread acceptance and support for these documents within the international community. However, they are not exempt from answerability. States may resort to all political means available to them. And a previous war between the parties is a harsh reminder and not a good omen.

Separability of the Main Issues

In diplomacy and international negotiations, we often see that the principle of “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” being applied, which is normally

stated in an explicit fashion. This principle was adopted in the Joint Framework Document between Britain and Ireland in 1995 and was later applied in cases involving Israel-Palestine, Bosnia, Colombia, and Cyprus. It was also present in the November 2001 Declaration of the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Single Undertaking under the Doha Declaration, which failed in 2011 after ten years of negotiations by 160 countries. The goal of the approach that takes this principle as a starting point is to promote “big picture negotiations” in which parties can avoid committing to certain provisions of the agreement individually and when individual issues apparently may not be resolved independently. However, the application of the “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” principle also implies that they are all free to renege on any agreements they have made at any time. Thus, the principle is not to be assumed in any negotiation, particularly between two parties, unless explicitly stated.

All issues being dealt with in the South Caucasus are quite complicated—e.g., regional security, transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan (and, indeed, from Central Asia to Anatolia), border demarcation, and a possible peace

treaty. Progress in one area will and should be considered as definitely contributing to confidence-building measures and promoting the achievement of a general state of peace.

Towards a Peace Treaty

Political scientist Dan Reiter reminds us that two central factors shape war-termination decisionmaking: information about the balance of power and the resolve of one’s enemy, and fears that the other side’s commitment to abide by a war-ending peace settlement may not be credible.

For these purposes, and to overcome obstacles, states will engage in different negotiation processes, generally following three stages identified by legal scholar Christine Bell in peace progress mechanisms: pre-negotiations (“talks before talks”), negotiations (“the talks”) and post-negotiation (a “rocky road to implementation”).

The first stage is crucial to “break the ice,” facilitating the parties to communicate their concerns, examine solutions for making peace, and understand one another. This allows them to ensure their mutual commitment to the peace process. In this pre-peace treaty phase, the

parties tend (or are compelled) to choose mediators or facilitators (or both) in order to identify a common good and develop confidence between one another. In this stage, parties will probably coincide on the same road they intend to construct. Peace negotiations may begin in official or informal interactions.

To reach a peace treaty, parties make use of what are called “Confidence Building Measures” (CBMs) to increase their confidence and desire to negotiate and to ensure one another that there will not be a deviance from actions intended to promote peace. The purpose of CBMs is not to solve interpersonal conflicts but to establish a workable trust so that parties can engage in real conversations to resolve a conflict’s underlying concerns. CBMs may include, amongst other actions, the release of detainees, the removal of soldiers from contested regions, disarmament campaigns, military and police patrols, communications between defense ministries,

assistance during natural disasters, encouragement of intercommunal interactions, and the suppression of criminal activity along a shared border. The presence of mediators is another way to build confidence, facilitate contact, and find mutually-acceptable common ground. In the context of the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process, one could argue that by hosting several meetings, the U.S., Russia, and the European Union are contributing towards establishing a state of peace. Establishing trust between the former belligerents’ military chiefs is also generally useful, and the direct line established in November 2021 between Baku and Yerevan for communication between their defense ministers to provide crisis

management was a good step forward. While all these measures are non-binding, parties become inclined to execute a peace treaty if they mutually respect such conditions.

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An authoritative text on the subject defines a “treaty of peace” as a “formal instrument professing to establish permanent peace between the parties” after a war has ended. Its purpose is to establish an order, maintain a sustainable peace, and lay down the terms for a non-belligerent future

between the parties” after a war has ended. Its purpose is to establish an order, maintain a sustainable peace, and lay down the terms for a non-belligerent future. Several conditions should be achieved in order to generate an environment propitious for signing and executing a peace treaty. Before signing a treaty, formerly warring parties must show their willingness to participate in negotiations and seek a peaceful outcome—in other words, previously warring parties must show an honest and genuine desire to engage in negotiations. In the negotiation process itself, parties should prioritize the long-term benefits over immediate ones—particularly of a contemporary political nature.

Establishing a fair, workable dispute resolution procedure, such as mediation, arbitration, or recurring to neutral third parties can also be crucial to fostering confidence and a productive negotiation process. A mutually-accepted solution can sometimes be reached with the support of competent mediators, who can encourage discourse, build trust, and aid in improving communication.

To reach agreement on a peace treaty, it is also important to raise public awareness of the peace process and its advantages to

win support from the general population.

The key outside stakeholders—neighboring countries, other states, and inter-state organizations—can contribute to the success of a peace process by inter alia supporting parties diplomatically.

Finally, there needs to be a strong commitment from all parties to uphold the conditions of the peace treaty, including adhering to deadlines, participating actively in follow-up processes, and working with monitoring mechanisms (should they be agreed upon).

The Peace Treaty

A peace treaty is key to the overall normalization process. However, it is not a panacea. It is therefore better to think of it as one of the many stages in a complex transition from wartime into peacetime. A lasting peace will likely derive from a treaty that takes into account multiple aspects of those mentioned above. On the other hand, there will likely be delays, setbacks, or even derailment where an agreement, whether political or legal, fails to take into account several of the above-mentioned issues. Two significant concerns will arise, often in apparent contradiction. On

one side, since a peace treaty is a legally binding agreement, drafters will want to prepare and design it as best as possible, thus vying to prevent any foreseeable difficulties.

On the other hand, word and phrasing imperfections, viability, or validity need to be balanced against the

necessity to keep moving forward the impetus from war to peace. As French and now UN diplomat Jean Arnault puts it:

ambiguities, lacunae, even stark impossibilities are acceptable costs. Over time, ambiguities will be lifted, lacunae will be filled, amendments will be made to take account of impossibilities, and, most importantly, the relevance of seemingly intractable issues will erode as the parties gradually learn to value accommodation over confrontation.

The sustainability of peace will depend on how to successfully deal with problems that will surface at the implementation stage and, additionally, to determine how and to what extent demands explicitly or implicitly placed by the parties and influential outside actors can be met. A common fault is to overestimate the implementation capabilities of the parties, in terms of either the scope of the commitments they have undertaken or the

timing of their implementation. The gravest risk consists in misinterpreting the other side's lack of capability as a lack of political will.

This is sometimes followed by how public opinion's expectations are met or not. Another quandary consists in dealing with political constraints,

since an agreement implies a compromise between positions initially held by the parties, while public opinion—and other domestic and international political actors—will remain in the extremes. Some actors may oppose to certain concessions, which oftentimes is evidence of political weakness.

Vital interests cannot be postponed to the implementation stage in the hopes that better circumstances will be present for their settlement. Instead, they must be adequately addressed throughout the negotiation process, and they should be framed in the peace agreement in such a way as to lend themselves to be implemented speedily, simultaneously, and around the time of the signing of a peace agreement. Nonetheless, implementation will be of paramount importance and quite difficult to manage. Ambiguities of language, almost a necessity in the drafting negotiation process, will arise.

A strong agreement will lead to a more durable peace.

However, a clear understanding of the parties' political commitments will assist in developing the legally binding agreement and its appropriate application.

Maintaining Peace

What makes peace easier or harder to maintain? Some scholars point out that a decisive victory tends to create a more stable situation than stalemates, while conflicts over territory are more likely to reemerge. Changes in relative capabilities over time provide the best explanation for the breakdown of peace. In this sense, the durability of peace is best examined as a decision to restart the war as part of an ongoing bargaining process, so that changes taking place after the fighting stops are most likely to affect whether it starts again.

Another crucial point to keep in mind in the context of preserving peace is to vigilantly pay attention to the strong connection between an enduring rivalry and

the resumption of war. Although democratic peace theory, in the tradition of Bruce Russett, is generally considered to be the major empirical finding of international relations scholarship, conflicts between great powers, recently independent states, or contiguous states are more likely to recur. Therefore, territorial disputes and conflicts that result in stalemates are more likely to persist. Domestic political factors like regime type and issue prominence also have an impact on the termination of such rivalries.

A peace treaty becomes a necessity to put an end formally and legally to a war. Ceasefires and armistices are not mere scraps of paper. The implementation of specific mechanisms can help make peace last. In essence, a strong agreement will lead to a more durable peace.

Political agreements can take various forms, such as trilateral statements, joint statements, declarations, memoranda of

Political agreements can still impose certain political commitments and obligations on the parties concerned, which can eventually make them legally obligatory even though they are typically regarded as non-binding or may not have the same legal enforceability as treaties.

understanding, letters of intent, and many other denominations. While *ligante pacta politica* will not have the legal implications of a treaty because they do not embody the states' intention to be governed by international law, they will still politically link the parties. International relations—both bilateral and multilateral—may become strained, they may lose credibility and reliability, and the parties may suffer great damage to their reputation and international standing in the event that they break the promises and commitments outlined in any political commitment—particularly with their active counterparts, with or without maintaining diplomatic relations.

In some circumstances, parties may experience diplomatic or political repercussions, such as economic sanctions or the loss of political support by foreign countries. Political agreements can still impose certain political commitments and obligations on the parties concerned, which can eventually make them legally obligatory even though they are typically regarded as non-binding or may not have the same legal enforceability as treaties.

Wartime or Peacetime?

Is there peacetime or wartime between Azerbaijan and Armenia? The gravest military aspects seem to have finished when active hostilities ended due to the 10 November 2020 trilateral statement. Yet, this situation is not definitive, as evidenced by different clashes and untimely deaths occurring along the line of contact and their—still undefined—borders. High-level conversations are not only contributory elements for achieving peace but are also important pacesetters for communications and exchanges. However, the foregoing neither necessarily means the end of hostilities nor the establishment of peace between states.

In the European theater, World War II hostilities ended on 8 May 1945, when Germany surrendered. By his Proclamation 2714 dated 31 December 1946, U.S. President Harry Truman announced the cessation of hostilities while indicating that “a state of war still exists.” Such a state of war continued until 19 October 1951, when the U.S. Congress adopted a Joint Resolution—echoed by Truman in Proclamation 2950 a few days

Is there peacetime or wartime between Azerbaijan and Armenia?

later (24 October 1951)—that declared the end of the state of war with Germany. In the Pacific theater, days after the United States dropped nuclear bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on (respectively) 6 and 9 August 1945, Japan announced its surrender on 14 August 1945 and signed its instrument of surrender on 2 September 1945. However, the peace treaty was signed on 8 September 1951 and came into force on 28 April 1952. Hence, neither a ceasefire, a cessation of hostilities, an armistice, nor the surrender of one party signifies, in and of itself, the end of a war. Such types of documents only mean the active discontinuation of armed hostilities and are properly understood as steps for further negotiations to achieve a state of peace.

We also need to distinguish between conflict and war. The military aspect may have stalled due to an armistice, but the present situation cannot be qualified as constituting peacetime. Various types of underlying tensions are imbued with diverse

patterns, including economic, social, political, cultural, legal, historical, and pertaining to international humanitarian law. In this context, war is often considered as part of a continuum of conflict, sharing similarities with other forms of disagreements and engagements such as arms races, international crises, and more. We can draw comparisons to bargaining engagements, games, epidemics, cyclical processes, duels, fights, lawsuits, and so on. War is difficult to classify into one specific type of conflict, given its complexity and multifaceted nature. Peace may only happen when war has ended; and yet, conflict will probably still remain in varying degrees, as there is a long train of animosity.

In short, while we can neither consider the 10 November 2020 trilateral statement to be a treaty nor a “legally binding agreement,” we may consider it not just as a “political agreement” but as a *ligante pacta politica*—a linking political agreement to which both sides adhere as much as possible. One political commitment setting the path towards sustainable peacetime. **BD**

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The Russo-Ukrainian War and the Exhaustion of the 1945 World Order

Tracing the Origins, Examining the Consequences

Manuel Becerra Ramírez

In the early hours of Thursday, 24 February 2022, the government of Russian President Vladimir Putin launched what it called a “special military operation” on Ukrainian territory. On 21 February 2022, Russia officially recognized the two self-proclaimed people’s republics that had established themselves in earlier rounds of fighting. This was supposedly based on Article 51 of the UN Charter, which provides for legitimate individual or collective defense. Later that year, Russia annexed them outright.

Of course, in reality, Russia’s invasion violated the UN Charter and

the principles contained therein. This constitutes a disregard for the norms that emerged after World War II as understood by the proponents of the “rules-based international liberal order” and others. The UN Charter privileges the solution of conflicts by peaceful means. Legitimate defense is only permissible in the face of a current attack, not a hypothetical one (this is why, for example, the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, which was termed a “preemptive war” by the George W. Bush Administration). Moreover, the UN Security Council (with what is effectually an endorsement or legitimization function) must always be aware of such actions.

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It is sophistry to argue, as too many in the West do, that the present conflict over Ukraine is one between good and evil; rather, it is more accurate to state that the conflict represents the total breakdown of international order, notwithstanding the fact that it had previously had significant identifiable fissures since its establishment in 1945.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union left a natural void in the Central Asian region. This vacuum has been filled with a series of regional organizations, which, although they have somewhat worked, basic geopolitical logic dictates that the Russia-Ukraine war will result in various adjustment to these, given the expected new geopolitical reality.

Behind the conflict between the two Slavic cultures, it is possible to glimpse a conflict between two models of world order: one unipolar with the hegemony of the United States, and the other multipolar. With this armed conflict, the rise of the latter model has begun not only to grow but

to accelerate, thanks in part to the appearance of other centers of power, fundamentally with a Sino-Russian axis, as well as the choices by many of the countries of the developing world (the “Global South”) not to “take sides” but rather to focus on their own interests in this period of transformation. And it also reveals the urgent need to reform the international system that was born with the end of World War II, and which already manifests a clear obsolescence.

The Post-War World Order

After two devastating world wars, the UN Charter established a new world order that, formally, remains in place today. Among its fundamental premises, we can underscore the prohibition of war and centralization of the UN Security Council—particularly the possibility of this organ being able to issue resolutions of a coercive nature and, above all, serving as a collective guarantor of international peace and security.

It is sophistry to argue, as too many in the West do, that the present conflict over Ukraine is one between good and evil; rather, it represents the total breakdown of international order.

Thus, in its first two articles, the UN Charter establishes the fundamental guidelines of the world order, pointing out the purposes of the UN and the principles of international law that form the backbone of global order and the international legal system. Amongst many other transformations and revolutions brought on or codified by this document, we can mention the relegation to the dustbin of history of the 1928 Briand-Kellogg Treaty as a means of settling disputes. The UN Charter takes up this pacifist position in Article 2. Along with that, we also have the terms of Chapter VI, which obliges UN member states to settle disputes peacefully, and only in specific cases can an argument be made that the resort to force is legitimate:

- In the case of individual or collective self-defense, in accordance with Article 51.
- In the case of the principle of self-determination (revolutions for independence against a regime of a colonial character).
- When the Security Council acts in accordance with the UN Charter's Chapter VII terms to deal with conflicts that endanger international peace and security—i.e.,

when the Security Council chooses to authorize the use of force.

However, this system of collective security did not fully function by virtue of the outbreak of the Cold War, mainly after the possession of nuclear weapons by the leading countries of the two hegemonic poles, the socialist and the capitalist. Both poles built their own systems of international organization, including parallel economic, political, and, most importantly, collective security systems (i.e., NATO and the Warsaw Pact). With this, a confrontation between the two blocks was avoided since a kind of balance was built by the “terror” of the indescribable capacity to destruct both poles; neither pole dared to attack the other side in the face of the escalatory danger of “mutually assured destruction” (MAD)—truly, a scenario of madness. In addition, a series of local conflicts (Vietnam, Nicaragua, Korea, Congo, dictatorships in South America, Egypt, etc.) had the help or encouragement of some of the hegemonic poles. In the fact of these conflicts, the security system of the Security Council did not work due to the veto power of its five permanent members. That was the system

that prevailed during the Cold War.

The Abandonment of Multilateralism

In addition, the multilateralism that the UN Charter proclaims in Articles 1-3 was gradually abandoned by the great powers starting in the 1970s, after the almost total decolonization of the world, sponsored by the UN itself, in the 1960s. The emerging group of newly decolonized countries of Asia and Africa appeared on the international scene with strong criticism and demands, many of which grouped around the newly-established Non-Aligned Movement. For example, they demanded a minimum percentage of the colonizing country's gross national income (GNP) as compensation for their exploitation of their former colonies—as evidenced by King Willem-Alexander's recent apology on 1 July 2023 for the Netherlands' involvement in slavery. Instead of the powers assuming their responsibility for the underdevelopment of their former colonies, they withdrew from multilateralism and began to build ad hoc groupings composed of peers or near-peers (e.g., the G7 and then the G20).

Missed Opportunity at Reform

The end of the Cold War (after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989) provided a great opportunity to create a more democratic system within which the Security Council could function based on multipolarity. Since dawn of the *perestroika* campaign, President Mikhail Gorbachev had expressed the idea of Europe as a “common home,” including the USSR. Even later, the Security Council's reaction to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, where the postures of all its permanent members were compatible enough to authorize a U.S.-led coalition to use force to act against Baghdad's aggression, led to the belief that this was where the future of world order, understood as adherence to the UN Charter by all powers, great and small, was headed. However, the First Gulf War turned out to be only a passing moment of effective global governance. Instead of the acceptance of a plural, multipolar reality, the “end of history” hypothesis (and its various derivatives) quickly began to drive Western thinking *about* the world and, more dangerously, Western conduct *in* the world.

To that end, U.S. hegemony (“unipolarity”)—instead of promoting

the reform of the United Nations system, which by the end of the twentieth century was already overtaken by the new geopolitical reality and seeking to strengthen multilateralism—engaged in changing global trade rules through its dominating power of international lobbying and bilateral free trade agreements. In addition, the U.S. promoted the expansion of NATO, under the ashes of the Warsaw Treaty, to create a system that sought to strengthen Anglo-Saxon hegemony.

On 11 September 2001, the attack on the Twin Towers in New York constituted the first warning that this unique world of American hegemony was not being achieved. However, the path towards a multipolarity of international relations could still be rectified. But it was not done. Instead, economic globalization was strengthened, causing an unequal world with the concentration of wealth in a few hands, putting transnational corporations at the center of the world economy. The most recent example is the political and economic power shown by transnational pharmaceutical industries during the COVID-19 pandemic, which did not give any concessions on their intellectual property rights despite the request of many in the Global South before

the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Similarly, in the post-Cold War international arena, the United States has tended to assert its global hegemony before sharing its power. Its wars (“interventions”) against Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria and the continuation of its unilateral sanctions regime against Cuba, Venezuela, and Iran, which have no explanation nor justification in international law, are all examples of that trend. It should also be noted that, in the wars fought against Serbia in 1999, Afghanistan in 2001, Iraq in 2004, and Libya in 2011, NATO illegally functioned as an instrument of Western coercion. It was logical to expect that as NATO was a product of the Cold War and working in opposition to the socialist bloc’s Warsaw Pact, NATO should have disappeared along with its politically and ideologically vanquished foe. But no, on the contrary, it has grown and strengthened.

The Ex-Socialist Space

If we look at things coldly, from a purely historical perspective, the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, was a very violent event. The building of the Soviet

Union involved intense political, social, economic, and cultural construction that cost millions of lives; to tear it down and finish it in less than 10 years meant engendering a violent change that, of course, left many loose strands in the social, political, and economic fabric of the affected regions. For example, take the population. At the end of the USSR’s existence, it was said that 60 million Soviet citizens lived outside of their territory of origin. This was normal in a multinational country where the Russian population was predominant. However, with the end of the USSR, the Russian diaspora had problems in the Baltic States. In addition, it is now a factor that Russia uses as *casus belli* in its war against Ukraine, since it claims the protection of the Russian population in the Donbass and Crimea.

Of course, the abrupt end of the USSR brought about a reorganization of the Caucasus and Central Asian republics, with a strong presence of Russia as a dominant power—the admittedly declining use of the term “near abroad” makes Russian ambitions evident, as do the terms outlined in Moscow’s most recent National Security Strategy (July 2021) and Foreign Policy Concept (March 2023).

Indeed, with the disappearance of the USSR, several organizations were established in the Silk Road region, broadly understood, that sought to create spaces for international cooperation. These include the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC). A brief examination of each follows.

One of the key factors that brought on the end of the USSR was the inability (or unwillingness) of the Kremlin to prevent the drifting away of the 15 Soviet republics from its centralizing orbit. Ironically, a precipitating cause of this implosion was the introduction and execution of the policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost* by the government of the last Soviet head of state, Mikhail Gorbachev.

The idea of changing the parameters of the relationship between the center and its peripheries produced the unintended consequence of opening up space in (almost) all the Soviet republics—including the Russian one—for the emergence of popular movements that sought

to exit from the Soviet Union. Along with some others, the Baltic republics (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) were the most active in this regard. The repressive use of the Soviet military in places like Azerbaijan (January 1990) also played a significant role in delegitimizing the USSR in the eyes of many of its citizens.

By the time he got around to realizing what was happening, Gorbachev no longer had the political capacity or popular support to dismantle the burgeoning independence movements—including the Russian one led by Boris Yeltsin. He did make some feeble attempts with some projects, such as the establishment of the Union of Independent States (UEI), a project that was not successful and gave way to another one, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which had an ambitious objective: to create an area of political and economic cooperation. On 8 December 1991, the three Slavic states, Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, concluded the Minsk Agreement establishing the CIS. The new organization was open to all Soviet republics and whoever shared its objectives. From the beginning, the three Baltic republics and Georgia refused to be part of the new organization.

Thus, 11 republics were originally part of the CIS: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. In 1993, Georgia joined the organization due to the support that it obtained from Russia in a civil war fought against secessionism.

However, the CIS has since thinned out. On 26 August 2005, Turkmenistan withdrew from the body and only remained as an associate member; Georgia withdrew in 2008 for well-known reasons (it formally disengaged in 2009); and Ukraine began its withdrawal 2014 (the process concluded in 2018). The same happened with Moldova. Having already expressed willingness to withdraw from the CIS and join the EU, the conflict over Ukraine prompted Moldova's parliament to vote for withdrawal from the CIS in May 2023—a petition that was approved by its Cabinet of Ministers on 14 August 2023.

In 1996, something called the Shanghai Group was established and promoted by China. Membership was made up of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. In 2001, Uzbekistan joined, and the name Shanghai Cooperation

Organization (SCO) was adopted. The SCO deals with issues relating to Islamic radicalism, terrorism, drug trafficking, environmental and economic problems, and cultural issues.

Undoubtedly, there is domination from China, which provides financial aid through the SCO. According to experts, the consolidation of this body depends inter alia on the cooperative relationship between the two great regional powers—China and Russia—as well as finding a way to curb the antagonism between two newer members: India and Pakistan.

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is an international organization created before the collapse of the USSR. It was promoted by Pakistan, Iran, and Türkiye in 1985 to advance economic, technical, and cultural cooperation among its member states. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, and the five Central Asian republics joined it. The ECO is endowed with a certain cultural cohesion, as it unites all the non-Arab Muslim-majority countries of the Silk Road region, understood broadly.

In general terms, the ECO lacks a structure to enforce the obligations

of the member states and presents certain weaknesses derived from the intra-organizational rivalries, such as between Iran and Türkiye. However, it constitutes a space for those states that belong to it to diversify their foreign relations with those sharing cultural and religious commonalities.

The CSTO is today a collective security organization led by Russia, and its objective is to counterbalance NATO (and, to a lesser extent, China). Its origin stems from the CIS and the Collective Security Treaty (the Tashkent Treaty or CST), signed by Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in 1992. Later, in 1994, as the CST had a sunset clause of five years, Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Georgia joined as the old members stayed on. The 1999 Protocol on Prolongation of CST was only signed by Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan.

In 2000, within the framework of the Tashkent Treaty and at the proposal of the CIS, the establishment of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) was suggested. The CSTO charter was signed in 2002 and ratified in 2003 by six original member states: Armenia, Belarus,

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan. Uzbekistan joined the CSTO in 2008 but suspended its membership in 2012. The CSTO's objectives are cooperation, "the fight against traditional threats," international terrorism, and drug trafficking.

However, the CSTO cannot escape from two crucial factors: the hegemony of Russia (for example, in 2003, a Russian military base was established in Kyrgyzstan) and Russia's concern about the advance of NATO, which is why it provides cheap weapons and other forms of military assistance and guidance to fellow CSTO members. Armenia's recent publicly expressed dissatisfaction with this organization is also another limitation, the impact of which may become quite serious in the time ahead.

The EEC is inspired by the European Union, although it is far from having the success of its model. It was created in 2000 at the initiative of President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan as an economic mechanism that enables successful economic cooperation.

Today, even though the EEC's organizational structure is not fully functional, core Eurasia

(what the editors of *Baku Dialogues* call the "Silk Road region") is very important for three reasons. First of all, it is a communication route or bridge between the rising Asian power, China, and the Middle East and Europe. Secondly, it has large important energy resources essentially in three states of the region: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. And finally, because water is a resource that is potentially the cause of conflicts between them. It is an important energy resource enclave for current powers (the United States with its well-known addiction to oil, Russia with its historical dominance in the region, China with its emerging power via its Belt and Road Initiative) and emerging powers such as Iran and Türkiye, which stands as the Silk Road region's gateway to Europe.

The foregoing helps to explain why such resources are presented as transcendental geopolitical factors in the region. Central Asian states, in particular, must take these factors into account and be willing to negotiate or enter alliances. For example, the Chinese are willing to build energy pipelines to supply or distribute oil and gas.

Peace and War in the Ukrainian Theater

It would be hard if not impossible to make a convincing argument that Russia's war on Ukraine does not violate the UN Charter. This violation of international law—similar in principle if not in scope to what the West did with the arms of NATO in various theaters in the recent past—shows us how far the post-war international order of 1945 has been overtaken by events and gives us clues to what the emergence of a new system will look like. One characteristic will probably be the end of U.S. hegemony.

In principle, the urgency of a negotiated end to the war may be taken up by China and the other members of BRICS. This is a controversial position to take in some quarters, but the fact of the matter is that by unilaterally imposing a sanctions and export restrictions regime on Russia (and threatening to penalize third countries for not adhering to said regime), the bloc of countries led by the U.S. and the EU has effectually become a party to this conflict. Serving as an honest broker in trying to end it seems to be problematic, to say the least: their actions (along with those of

Russia, of course) have further downgraded the centrality and legitimacy of the Security Council's supreme authority under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

The belligerents have turned down a series of peace initiatives formulated by Brazil, China, Italy, Mexico, and Türkiye. The Vatican itself has activated a peace mission led by Cardinal Matteo Supp, to facilitate dialogue between the direct belligerents, which has not been successful to date. Brazilian President Lula da Silva has been clear in stating that the "United States must stop encouraging war and start talking about peace, and the European Union must start talking about peace." Other major non-Western powers have echoed this sentiment, as has at least one EU and NATO member state (e.g., Hungary; Slovakia may soon follow; also, the Austrian posture is in some ways similar to that of Hungary, although it is not a NATO member state).

Neither Russia nor the United States show signs of seeking peace, due to a fever of arms production, untold billions of dollars spent on the war effort. Instead of bringing NATO expansion to an end, the opposite has happened. Putin is now at a dead end, leaving victory as his

only choice—a very dangerous position considering that he has the option of pushing to red button to launch nuclear weapons at Ukraine (or elsewhere) in case it becomes necessary to defend what he considers Russian territory (especially Crimea).

Furthermore, this unbridled armament has an economic explanation. In one of his writings, renowned economist Branko Milanović reminds us that wars, such as the one in Iraq, create a lot of economic benefits, including government outlays such as lobbyists, private security companies, and military companies. Additionally, the economic machinery of armament production and commercialization generates a huge spill of money.

War Pushes Transformation

Regardless of the effects of war on the death of thousands of people, the migratory effect of people fleeing war, the immeasurable damage to the environment, the violation of humanitarian rights, and the impact of the globalized economy when armed conflict

The present period reminds us like nothing else of the time in Europe between the end of World War I and the start of World War II.

continues, we can also see a gradual transformation of the world. This includes a Sino-Russian alliance, the strengthening of the BRICS-type economic-political alliances, a partition of the world between the countries of the West (the United States, Europe, and their allies) and the East (Russia, China, India, North Korea, Iran, and their allies), and creating a de facto new Cold War, not between states of different political, economic, and social ideas, but between states unwilling to attach themselves to the perpetuation of Western hegemony, commanded by the United States.

On the other hand, as signs of the phenomena being produced, we have a quickening of the de-dollarization trend in world trade, with the Chinese RMB now the currency with which 90 percent of trade between China and Russia is carried out. In the same direction, BRICS is looking for a new currency for their commercial exchanges, indicating another possible manifestation of the quickening of the de-dollarization trend.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has demonstrated yet again that

the avowed institutional axis of multilateral world order rooted in international law—i.e., the United Nations—is totally ineffective, notwithstanding the evident fact that this conflict endangers peace and security and puts the world on a path towards a Third World War. For example, the UN has been unable to bring the conflict's real geopolitical contenders to the negotiating table (i.e., the NATO countries, along with Russia and China) to resolve the conflict. The present period reminds us like nothing else of the time in Europe between the end of World War I and the start of World War II.

A fundamental change in the United Nations system is necessary, starting with the reform of the Security Council—an issue that has been discussed since the disappearance of the bipolar world. One of the first substantial changes must be the concept of “international security,” which, in the philosophy of the UN Charter, is linked to the outbreak of a military conflict. The experience of humanity suggests that the source of global imbalances is also inextricably connected to economic inequality (both within and between states), internal security, systematic violation of human rights, the environment, and others, which produce phenomena

such as mass migration along with a whole host of others.

Undoubtedly, the world's flagship international organization must substantially reform its institutions. As Portuguese professor Boaventura de Sousa Santos says:

The UN is a state organization, and Kofi Annan's attempt to make it more open to civil society failed. After the crisis in Iraq and Ukraine, the UN will follow the path of discredit. And this will only deepen the greater their submission to U.S. geostrategic interests. If we live permanently in war even though the ordinary people of the world (except those linked to the military industry or mercenary armies) want to live in peace, isn't it time we had an organized and global voice to make itself heard?

Taking Responsibility

The leaders of the great powers have a historic responsibility to stop the Russian-Ukrainian war. They must show up at the negotiating table instead of pretending that everything is up to Ukraine to decide. Surely, it is clear to everyone now that this is no longer a war between two neighboring Slavic states, but a larger conflict between different models of life. Sooner or later, every war has an end. In such a case,

logically, we would have different hypothetical scenarios, which only reality can confirm or reject.

First, if Russia wins the war, that Slavic country would strengthen itself as a regional power with global projection. Second, if Russia loses the war, then we would have an advance of the NATO countries in a region that Russia still dominates, and the latter would become a weakened and limited state. Third, there could be a negotiation in which Russia does not lose its status as a military power, but it becomes limited, and Ukraine's sovereignty is maintained but equally limited. However, in all these scenarios, a reform of the international order would be necessary.

The mistakes made after the end of the Cold War must be

corrected. The pact of world order conceived after the Second World War and enshrined in the UN Charter must be renewed and adapted to current almost revolutionary conditions—a notable characteristic of which is the enormous and still growing state of inequality between developed and developing states. Such a project of renewal and adaptation—if successful—surely would mitigate the likelihood of future conflicts of global significance.

The resulting new world order would need to reflect the geopolitical reality of a multipolar world—one in which political diversity is truly respected and genuinely understood to represent an authentic expression of the cultural richness of humanity. **BD**

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Resolving the Russia-Ukraine Impasse

Lessons from an African Cosmological Viewpoint

Evans O. Ogada

This paper makes a case for the utility of Ubuntu philosophy in providing a context within which resolving the conflict and post-conflict stages of the war between Russia and Ukraine may take place. Before speaking to Ubuntu's conflict resolution utility, it is first necessary to provide an explanation of its basic tenets because it is not likely to be well-known to the readers of Baku Dialogues.

Ubuntu philosophy affirms the animating spirit of the organic wholeness of humanity. As an ethical notion, Ubuntu has been decisive in shaping and informing the normative content of

human dignity. Ubuntu's malleability makes it an attractive tool, as it has been employed in dispute resolution situations such as during the South Africa Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission and the Gacaca Courts in Rwanda in an endeavor to achieve restorative justice. Ubuntu can contribute, give shape, and provide meaning to dignity. In addition, with respect to certain crucial areas of law, such as socioeconomic rights, Ubuntu can help define obligations and even democratic processes.

Everyday life in Africa has always been centered around the community. With the onset of colonialism, Europeans attempted

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to impose their own alien norms, which were centered on the individual as the focal point of social organization, attitudinal behavior, and motivational achievement. European colonization aimed to establish and maintain the European conception of reality, knowledge, and truth in all colonized parts of the world. An intricate part of the African worldview is community and being in harmony with African society.

Recourse must be made to Ubuntu philosophy to appreciate the essence of being from an African perspective. Ubuntu is an ethical and philosophical concept that traces its origins back to pre-colonial knowledge systems in Africa. The being of an African is inseparably linked to Ubuntu. Ubuntu or its linguistic equivalents—'botho' in Sesotho and Setswana, 'utu' in Swahili, or 'hunhu' in the Nguni grouping of languages—remains useful in addressing the challenges faced

in Africa. Be it in the context of resource allocation or dispute resolution, Ubuntu has ontological resonance from the Nubian desert

to the Cape of Good Hope and from Senegal to Zanzibar as the foundation and edifice of African philosophy.

Ubuntu describes a symbiotic and cooperative relationship between people that can provide the basis many acts in a community. It has been argued that the core meaning of the concept of Ubuntu is frequently expressed using the Zulu-Xhosa aphorism "*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*"—a human being is a human being through other people.

Ubuntu is two words in one, consisting of the prefix *ubu-* and the suffix *-untu*. Ubuntu can be explained through three sayings that draw from the Sepedi, a

Northern Sotho language-speaking group in Southern Africa: first,

"*motho ke motho ka batho*," second "*feta kgomo o tshware motho*," and third, "*kgosi ke kgosi ka batho*."

The first means that to be human is to affirm one's

humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish respectful human relations with them. The second

Before speaking to Ubuntu's conflict resolution utility, it is first necessary to provide an explanation of its basic tenets because it is not likely to be well-known to the readers of Baku Dialogues.

aphorism means that if and when one is faced with a decisive choice between wealth and the preservation of another human being's life, then one should opt for the preservation of life. The third maxim, a principle deeply embedded in traditional African political philosophy, states "that the king owed his status, including all the powers associated with it, to the will of the people under him."

It has thus been argued that Ubuntu is associated with the affirmation of personhood and human dignity. It is important to note that both human dignity and Ubuntu are intrinsically tied to an ethical ideal of what it means to be a human being.

From a moral perspective, moreover, Ubuntu is viewed as a basic attitude of mutual respect and recognition of the rights of others in order to promote human dignity and harmonious, peaceful coexistence.

Therefore, Ubuntu makes a powerful case for a shared humanity, and it is this concept of shared humanity that provides for the possibilities of reconciliation in conflict and post-conflict societies.

The Principle of Pacific Dispute Resolution in International Law

The bedrock of international dispute settlement is captured in the UN Charter, which states that the first purpose of the United Nations is:

To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace.

The UN Charter additionally provides that:

The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice.

Furthermore, there are several UN General Assembly resolutions that are fundamental in articulating the principle of Pacific Dispute Resolution, such as resolutions 2627 (XXV) adopted in October 1970, 2734 (XXV) adopted in December 1970, and 40/98 adopted in November 1985.

However, the most important of the UN General Assembly's resolutions in the present context is the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation Among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (the Friendly Relations Declaration), which states that "States shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered."

The 1982 Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes, which is an annex to the General Assembly resolution 37/10, reaffirmed the principles set out in the UN Charter to the effect that all states shall settle their disputes by peaceful means. These "peaceful means" for dispute settlement are identified in Chapter VI, Article 33 of the UN Charter and include negotiations,

enquiry, mediation, conciliation, judicial settlement, or resort to regional agencies.

The principle of pacific dispute settlement is related to other principles of international law. These corollary principles are mainly captured in the 1970 Friendly Relations Declaration:

- States shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.
- The principle concerning the duty not to intervene in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of any state, in accordance with the UN Charter.
- The principle that states shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace, security, and justice are not endangered.
- The principle of sovereign equality of all UN member states.
- The principle that states shall fulfill in good faith the obligations and duties assumed by them to cooperate with one another in accordance with the UN Charter.

These principles are interrelated, and in their application, the ideal position is that each principle should be construed in the context of other principles.

The breadth of vision and the loftiness of the principle of pacific settlement of disputes has had tremendous influence on the global order. Significantly, it finds resonance with the principle of Ubuntu in so far as dispute resolution is considered a desirable ideal.

Ubuntu and Dispute Resolution

The adversarial paradigm that is characteristic of the conception of power in the global North is thought of in conflictual terms. Power can be considered a complex reality, with breadths of facets that can be operationalized in different ways. If power can be examined in terms of a broad spectrum, then on one end we could identify authoritarian and oppressive forms, while on the other end, we could speak of deeply cohesive

and relational versions of power. Ubuntu identifies with the latter notion of power, as it is argued to be circular, organic, and collectivist as opposed to linear, materialist, and individualistic.

An agreed consensus of Ubuntu philopraxis is that peace through the concrete realization of justice is the fundamental law of Ubuntu philosophy, and that justice and peace contribute to cosmic harmony.

Ubuntu has to be examined in the context of the African socio-political and cultural milieu, whereby rationality is interpreted in terms of societal harmony. Harmony in the African socio-cultural and political context understands that the well-being of every member is dependent on the well-being of the social body as a whole.

Ubuntu identifies with a deeply cohesive and relational versions of power, as it is argued to be circular, organic, and collectivist as opposed to linear, materialist, and individualistic.

In other words, a web of relations free from friction and conflict constitutes rationality.

Ubuntu-inspired dispute resolution discourse would require a display of humanness, showing hospitality, generosity, care, and compassion as well as the acknowledgment that that opponents bear intrinsic

worth as human beings. Ubuntu cultivates dialogue and communication not only for its own sake but with a higher purpose in mind. Ubuntu strives for cohesion, consensus, and mutual exposure in dialogue. Ubuntu ingrains an appreciation that the notion of humanness underlies our being—that our common humanity allows us to think and talk differently about our perceived interests and identity. In essence, Ubuntu inculcates an understanding that any society cannot be considered to be in its best-possible, much less ideal state if it does not embrace or use, as a regulatory maxim, the basic and universal values that underlie all human nature—dignity, mutual recognition, and respect. These values, which are integral to Ubuntu, ought to characterize all dealings between human beings.

Ubuntu fashions an organic worldview that is premised on harmony and cohesion, and which operates from the premise that human nature is profoundly relational and oriented to minding others. Ubuntu, therefore, becomes useful in negotiations, as like-minded individuals are able

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to transcend their differences and identity in the pursuit of a higher principle and grounded in the belief that the other possesses dignity and is worthy of respect—namely, that “my humanity is caught up, inextricably bound up in yours.”

Dispute resolution entails identifying the root cause of the problem and engaging all concerned in addressing the underlying issues. The offending party is usually saddled with the obligation of offering apologies and compensation. The sense of justice derived from an Ubuntu-influenced process is based on the idea that whatever outcome is the result needs to improve the relationship of the protagonist parties and that the outcome will be wise and practical.

Resolving the Russia-Ukraine Impasse: Lessons from Ubuntu

Armed conflict in eastern Ukraine erupted in early 2014 following Russia’s annexation of Crimea. Therefore, the dispute

between the two countries can be traced to a dispute regarding territory. State territory is an emotional matter in international relations, law, and politics because territory is the spatial sphere within which a state's sovereignty is ordinarily manifested. The external intervention by Russia on Ukrainian territory has put severe stress on Ukraine, continuing a pattern in recent years where the principle of territorial integrity has faced tremendous challenges.

Skepticism has been expressed about the inability of the traditional tools of international law to resolve the impasse between Russia and Ukraine owing to the fragile, uncertain, and ineffective status of the international system capstoned by the UN Charter in establishing durable peace and cooperation between states and peoples. One challenge that has been identified with regards to the weakness of the international legal system in terms of its effectiveness is the lack of a centralized authority to enforce its edicts. The envisaged interdependence within the global order under the UN framework has also been significantly frayed by the inability of states to respect the rules that ought to govern world order.

The inability of the United Nations to deal with the Russia-Ukraine dispute has to be understood in the context of the organization's institutional architecture. The function of international peace and security is primarily placed within the ambit of the UN Security Council, with UN member states obligated to carry out the Security Council's decisions pursuant to the powers granted to it under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In the context of the Russia-Ukraine dispute, the contentious politics within the UN Security Council—especially amongst its five permanent members—has ensured that a paralysis ensues, and as such, not much has been achieved in terms of the UN's peace and security mandate.

The fashionable portrait of international law as a “toothless tiger,” which is premised on the assumption that national self-interest takes precedence over the rules of international law, is therefore reinforced by the apparent paralysis. In this regard, the use of force (except in instances allowed under the UN Charter, like the inherent right of the self-defense of UN member states in the event of an armed attack) becomes an obvious example of national interests overriding considerations of international law. Though it must be admitted that the

domain of politics and the realm of law are inextricably intermeshed, the current dire state of affairs threatens the relative peaceful order that has been ensured under the aegis of the UN system. It is not entirely hopeless, if the ideals that animate the UN are reconsidered and reinvigorated by the use of pollinating ideals drawn from Ubuntu.

Although it is difficult to render precisely into Western language and thought, Ubuntu should be understood as simply denoting three things that connote humanity in line with the vision, ideals, and principles that undergird the United Nations: sharing, belonging, and participation. For example, interdependence and humanness ideals are resplendent in the UN Charter, reflected in the enumeration of requirements for state cooperation and respect of human rights.

The utility of Ubuntu is that its embrace can ensure that the efforts to resolve the dispute between Russia and Ukraine cascade down to the ordinary people,

The utility of Ubuntu is that its embrace can ensure that the efforts to resolve the dispute between Russia and Ukraine cascade down to the ordinary people, shaping their views about each other by engendering an attitude of hospitality, friendliness, care, and compassion.

shaping their views about each other by engendering an attitude of hospitality, friendliness, care, and compassion. In denying individuality and by defining an individual in terms of wholeness, Ubuntu—as a concept—orients thinking in two ways.

Firstly, the interests of the people of Russia and Ukraine are thought of in relational and higher principal terms. The emphasis on interdependence and the inherent dignity of the people of either country becomes a pivotal focus of negotiations, engendering mutual respect. Ubuntu will emphasize the fact that the people of Russia and Ukraine share a common heritage and a common bond as human beings with dignity, making it important that negotiations and a resolution to the conflict that respects their collective humanness be found.

Secondly, having recourse to Ubuntu means that the conversation is elevated to move beyond personalities and personal interests. For example, the needs and interests of

ordinary Russians and Ukrainians—understood as being above or beyond the interests and politics of presidents Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelenskyy—become urgent and more pressing items for negotiation and eventual resolution. Ubuntu’s appeal to higher normative ideals ensures that politicians and their political interests cede way for a broader conversation about common ground and the binding, traditional ties between the two countries that should resuscitate the brotherly/sisterly bonds that have existed for years. The concept of Ubuntu—in its emphasis on the value of collective existence within the community instead of individual value—trains the eye on the importance of working together so as to ensure survival.

The Ubuntu value of fairness should inform a post-conflict inquiry rooted in acknowledged relationships and justice. Ubuntu should be able to help nurture restoration and healing in a post-conflict situation, since it recognizes a connection between all people and a need for harmonious

The deliberative tools of conflict resolution can derive benefit from the deeply relational values embedded in Ubuntu: tolerance, respect, and the acknowledgment of a shared humanity.

living. Ubuntu would reinforce the idea that conflicts must be resolved in order to prevent them from escalating into violent actions and thereby ensure the peaceful, harmonious, and stable existence of peoples, who would come to view each other not as antagonists but, rather, as persons that share the same humanity.

Dispute resolution using the Ubuntu ideal has always been employed at the community level in Africa, whereby councils of elders or community leaders take the lead in resolving disputes and seeking justice. This local dispute resolution model can be used in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which has been characterized by nationalistic fervor and tension. These local communities that have lived together for years can resolve their differences by sourcing answers to divisive issues from among themselves and then doing the same at higher levels.

Being that conflicts must be understood in their social context, it would be profitable to deal with the fears, suspicions, needs,

interests, values, and root causes of the conflict from a local perspective through dialogue. As construed in local paradigms, justice plays a significant moral and ethical role as it imbues a feeling of widespread acceptability.

Ubuntu’s Aim

Conflicts are inevitable in human life. The aim of conflict resolution in African societies, at least from the perspective of Ubuntu, is to mend broken or damaged relationships, rectify wrongs, and restore justice. From an Ubuntu perspective, conflict resolution aims to induce a mood of cooperation and the achievement of harmony by settling disputes in a manner that improves relationships. As an animating philosophy of conflict resolution in Africa and of widespread application and appreciation, Ubuntu is malleable enough to be of use in multiple aspects of international life, including sociology, a moral quality, a worldview, a philosophy, or an ethical framework.

Ubuntu is particularly attractive as a tool for its potential dovetailing properties, which can fit within the existing framework of conflict resolution in the existing global order and, as such, should not be subjected to the accusation that it is mere romanticism. Chapter VI of the UN Charter, which deals with the pacific settlement of disputes, provides for methods of dispute settlement that can accommodate Ubuntu’s conceptual advantages. Mediation, good offices, conciliation, negotiation, and other unnamed peaceful means envisaged under Article 33 of the UN Charter are discursive processes. The deliberative tools of conflict resolution can derive benefit from the deeply relational values embedded in Ubuntu: tolerance, respect, and the acknowledgment of a shared humanity.

The significance and meaning of Ubuntu as a one-word social statement is certainly not vaunted as an elixir or panacea that will solve all problems. But Ubuntu does serve to remind us of values considered essential for all human beings. **BD**

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Latin America and the ‘New Caucasus’

Linking Points Between Brazil and Azerbaijan

Roberto Rodolfo Georg Uebel

For those arriving in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, after crossing the Atlantic Ocean and flying over war-torn Europe, in addition to the modern buildings along the Caspian Sea coast and the unique hospitality of its people, what stands out the most is the emerging ‘New Caucasus’ on the horizon.

It is a region no longer constrained by the geopolitical, geoeconomic, and cultural ties to the old Eastern Europe and no longer overshadowed by historical hegemony like Russia (most recently) and Iran (previously). When I visited in

2022, I discovered a country, and a region, that masterfully coordinates a pragmatic foreign policy without relinquishing its Caucasian and Caspian values and roots, creating a unique political identity that, to some extent, resembles our Latin American political identity, of course bearing in mind the appropriate hemispheric and historical proportions. My observation is that Azerbaijan is emerging as a strategic actor in the Caspian Sea region as well as in the relations between Central Asia, the Caucasus, the European Union, and the Middle East.

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Understanding Azerbaijan

Bordering two geopolitical powers—Iran to the south and Russia to the north—Azerbaijan also shares a border with Georgia, one of its main regional partners. Georgia serves as a pathway for Azerbaijani oil and gas pipelines and export routes towards Türkiye and the rest of Europe through the Black Sea. The other border, marked by two wars and several eventful skirmishes in the past three decades, is with Armenia, which previously militarily occupied the Azerbaijani territories of Karabakh. These territories have now been liberated by Azerbaijan, albeit with a concession having had to be made to allow a Russian peacekeeping force to operate in a small part therein.

To the east, Azerbaijan is bordered by the Caspian Sea, the source of its main wealth: crude oil and natural gas. The Caspian Sea is, in fact, the world’s large lake that, in addition, has no direct connection with other seas or oceans. Its basin includes, besides Azerbaijan, Iran, and Russia,

Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan. Some authors consider Uzbekistan part of the Caspian basin, although it is not bordered by it.

With this geopolitical configuration, the region has attracted the interest of international actors in recent decades due to its logistical, productive, economic, and geostrategic potential.

It is located in what Halford Mackinder referred to as the “pivot area”—the contact point between Europe and Asia. These issues become evident once one examines the reality of this former Soviet republic, which has only recently cele-

brated three decades as an independent and sovereign state.

Baku showcases classic European architecture, with buildings reminiscent of Paris and Brussels, combined with cultural elements from Central Asia, typical of Turkic countries, as well as longstanding influences from the Middle East brought by Islam and the legacy of Persian civilization. Additionally, Baku exhibits characteristics shared with other Caucasian countries such as Georgia and Armenia.

Azerbaijan is emerging as a strategic actor in the Caspian Sea region as well as in the relations between Central Asia, the Caucasus, the European Union, and the Middle East.

The country, which hosted the 2015 European Games, similar to the Pan-American Games, thus constructs its identity based on eclectic combination of Western European, Turkic, Muslim, Persian, and Caucasian elements. The result is a distinct Azerbaijani national and state identity and directly impacts upon the way the country conceives and executes its foreign policy—in terms of various bilateral relationships as well as the manner in which it engages within and with regional and international fora. This is a hallmark of President Ilham Aliyev's government.

In this sense, the geopolitics of the Caspian Sea are strongly influenced by its strategic surroundings, akin to Nicholas Spykman's "Rimland" paradigm, as the demarcation of its international waters faces challenges and borders two actors that assertively pursue international and regional agendas that diverge from the mainstream, namely Russia and Iran.

On the other hand, Turkmenistan, a country that is usually understood to be averse to greater international and regional integration poses a challenge discernible in the discourses of Azerbaijani authorities and researchers, despite periodic

meetings between the leaders of the two countries and their respective foreign ministries.

Uzbekistan, perceived as a sleeping giant next to Tajikistan, is a particularly active participant in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)—some like to call this flagship initiative the "New Silk Road"—whose projects include building highways, railways, and waterways that would connect East and Southeast Asia to Europe and the Atlantic. However, the security issues stemming from the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan and its networks across the region present challenges and obstacles to greater integration and advancement in inter-regional trade, as observed during my visit to the Port of Baku.

The port, which recently celebrated its 120th anniversary and is being modernized under the management of executives from Azerbaijan and Singapore, is currently underutilized, with few ships docked and a low number of containers. This indicates the consequence of two scenarios. Firstly, China's COVID-19 policy concentrated a record number of containers in its ports and closed its main logistics hubs, such as Shanghai, for months. Secondly, the war in Ukraine amplifies the uncertainties and unpredictability

from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea. The latter is the main route for the region's production to flow through Türkiye to the rest of Europe. The port authorities, together with the country's leadership, have put strategic development plans for the port to become a "five-star hub" of the Middle Corridor, a transport and economic route designed to bypass sanctioned Russia and Iran that could serve as a driver of prosperity for the entire Silk Road region.

Regarding Türkiye, the close relationship between Baku and Ankara is noteworthy, as the two countries have signed mutual defense treaties. In practice, this would constitute indirect protection of Azerbaijan by a member of NATO. If a country were to attack Azerbaijani territory, it would be considered an aggression against Türkiye under their signed treaties, and vice versa. One could surmise that Azerbaijan is under Western protection from NATO without being an official member of the organization to avoid direct confrontation with Russia and Iran—put differently and perhaps more realistically, one can say that Azerbaijan is immune from direct intervention by both NATO and its adversaries because of the Turkish pledge to defend Azerbaijan.

It was also evident the role that these powers play in Azerbaijan's foreign policy, foreign trade, and energy policies. The country increasingly seeks new partnerships, particularly those beyond the region, in order to diversify its imports and exports and gradually reduce its dependence on Turkish and Russian products in the domestic market. Besides Azerbaijani, the most commonly observed languages in supermarkets, bookstores, and public buildings were Russian and Turkish, which compete for the second place as the most spoken language in the young country.

Regarding cultural and geopolitical aspects, Azerbaijan's main domestic and foreign agenda revolves around the issue of Karabakh and its liberation from external occupation and separatist groups. The secessionist entity that calls itself 'Artsakh' is not (and has never been) recognized by any UN member state, including Armenia, and recent events indicate that it is in the process of dissolution (this should conclude in January 2024)—one of the consequences following the lengthy debates for the liberation of the region and the return of its sovereignty to Azerbaijan, consolidated with the military operation of September 2023 that was widely covered by Western and even Brazilian media.

After two major wars and tens of thousands of deaths and injuries, Baku's priority to liberate, reconstruct, and reintegrate Karabakh back into Azerbaijan's constitutional order is now coming to pass: since its victory in the Second Karabakh War, the country has allocated around \$10 billion into its redevelopment (including a costly and time-consuming demining campaign)—and this is just the start.

The symbolism of Karabakh is not only present in the reconstruction of a war-torn zone but also in small elements of Azerbaijani daily life, ranging from mineral water bottles to frequent exhortative speeches by Aliyev broadcasted on the country's television channels.

Brazil and Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan's engagement in promoting the country's trade and tourism, including its special economic regions such as the recently liberated territory of Karabakh, is also evident in its maritime economy, which seeks to diversify transregional partnerships, including with Brazil.

During a conversation with the Brazilian Ambassador in Baku, Manuel A. Carlos Montenegro L. da Cruz, the potential for enhancing

commercial relations between Brazil and Azerbaijan became evident, particularly in the agro-export, technology, and leather-footwear sectors. Due to operational costs and product characteristics, logistics are expected to occur through waterway and air transportation, once again positioning the Caspian Sea as a pivotal area for distributing these Brazilian products to Central Asia. This includes countries where Brazil already has diplomatic representations, such as Kazakhstan and Pakistan, as well as countries that, according to the ambassador, are significant actors in the region, such as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, where Brazil does not currently have diplomatic missions.

It is worth noting that Azerbaijan could serve as a linking point for Brazil and Latin America with the entire Silk Road region. Currently, the Brazilian embassies in Moscow and Islamabad are responsible for relations with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, respectively, which creates a cultural, geographical, and commercial gap between Russia and Pakistan. This challenge should be reconsidered by authorities in Brasilia.

Regarding the trade balance between the two countries, after the boom in 2013 exports to Azerbaijan reached around \$150

million, followed by export figures of around \$71 million in 2017 and 2018. Exports have shown modest recovery since 2020, trending upwards. There is clearly room for continued improvement, however.

Brazilian imports have increased significantly since 2017, reaching \$219 million in 2021. The majority of the import basket consists of chemical products, with fertilizers at the top of the list. During the same period, Brazilian exports ranged from \$210 million in 2017 to \$280 million in 2021, primarily composed of tobacco, iron ore, meat, and other food commodities.

In 2022, exports surpassed the values of 2014 and 2015, indicating an interesting scenario of commercial opportunities for Brazil with Azerbaijan and other countries bordering the Caspian Sea. This highlights the importance of encouraging and deepening studies on that region and its geopolitical and geoeconomic actors, as well as the role of the maritime economy in understanding the existing intercontinental dynamics.

Historical secularism, domestic political stability, and the pursuit of new extra-regional partnerships establish Azerbaijan as a state that stands out in the geopolitical complexity of the Caucasus

and the Caspian, positioning it as a pivotal hub in relations between the West and the East. This is evident, for example, in its relations with not only the EU and the U.S.—not to mention Türkiye again—but also with Russia. It is noteworthy that China also sees Azerbaijan and the Caspian Sea as crucial to the further successes of BRI in a world in which Russia (and Iran) will very likely continue to be sanctioned by the West for quite some time.

As a market, Azerbaijan offers numerous possibilities and opportunities, given its population's growth in purchasing power coupled with internal political and economic stability. The country, along with the emerging Silk Road region as a whole, is eager for new partnerships, business ventures, and expanded foreign trade. In this regard, key sectors of the Brazilian economy, such as food production, fruits, grains, clothing, footwear, machinery, as well as services in finance, technology, and education, may find fertile ground in that region, as demonstrated by the aforementioned indicators of foreign trade.

With the reconstruction of Karabakh moving rapidly forward, on the horizon for Azerbaijan is the transition of its energy matrix, the expansion of

foreign trade, and its establishment as a regionally relevant actor with economic and political stability conducive to international investments. In this context, there are potentially interesting opportunities for Brazil and other Latin American countries, as well as the development of strategic partnerships between MERCOSUR (the Southern American Common Market) and the Silk Road region (the Caucasus countries, in particular), which are currently distant and incipient but hold vast possibilities.

The world is witnessing a shifting global order, where emerging economies are forging new alliances and exploring opportunities for cooperation beyond traditional partnerships. In this context, the potential for collaboration between Latin America and the 'New Caucasus,' facilitated by Brazil and Azerbaijan, opens up a realm of possibilities. The rest of this essay thus explores prospects for deepened cooperation, focusing on the following themes: the China-led BRI; alternatives to geopolitical and geoeconomic pressures from the West, Iran, and

Russia; integration in thematic fora; sectors such as oil, energy, commodities, and food; and inter-regional cooperation.

The Belt and Road Initiative is the flagship strategic development strategy launched by China in 2013. This ambitious project aims to enhance connectivity and promote trade and economic cooperation across Asia, Europe, and Africa. Latin America's engagement with BRI has been growing steadily and exploring avenues for cooperation with the 'New Caucasus' region can offer immense benefits.

I have no doubt that, integrating Latin America and the 'New Caucasus' within the BRI framework can strengthen trade links. BRI provides a platform to develop infrastructure projects, such as ports, railways, and highways, facilitating the movement of goods between the regions.

Increased trade can bolster economic growth, create employment opportunities, and enhance overall prosperity.

Enhanced cooperation between Latin America and the

The world is witnessing a shifting global order, where emerging economies are forging new alliances and exploring opportunities for cooperation beyond traditional partnerships.

'New Caucasus' can offer a viable alternative to the geopolitical and geoeconomic pressures faced by both regions from the West, Iran, and Russia. By diversifying their partnerships, they can reduce their dependence on one part of the world and explore new avenues for economic growth and stability in all others.

Brazil and Azerbaijan can act as bridges between Latin America and the 'New Caucasus,' providing a neutral ground for cooperation.

Brazil and Azerbaijan can act as bridges between Latin America and the 'New Caucasus,' providing a neutral ground for cooperation. By fostering diplomatic relations and promoting dialogue, they can facilitate understanding and mutually beneficial agreements. This approach would allow both regions to navigate the complexities of the international system more effectively.

Participation in thematic fora is essential for fostering cooperation and exchanging knowledge between regions. Latin America and the 'New Caucasus' can engage in regional and international fora, such as the World Economic Forum, the United Nations, and the Organization of American States, to promote dialogue and collaboration.

These fora offer platforms for discussing common challenges, sharing best practices, and identifying areas of synergy. By actively participating in these platforms, both regions can enhance their understanding of each other's needs, priorities, and potentials. This knowledge exchange can pave the way for targeted cooperation in various sectors.

The oil, energy, commodities, and food sectors play a crucial role in both Latin America and the 'New Caucasus' region as well as the rest of the core Silk Road region (i.e., Central Asia). Cooperation in these sectors can create opportunities for mutual growth and development. Latin America is rich in natural resources, particularly oil, gas, and agricultural commodities. The region can provide a stable and diverse supply of commodities to the 'New Caucasus' region, ensuring their energy security and food requirements. In return, the 'New Caucasus' region can offer expertise in oil and energy-related technologies, enabling Latin America to develop sustainable and efficient energy solutions.

Cooperation in these sectors can be facilitated through bilateral agreements, joint ventures, and knowledge sharing. Exchange programs between universities and research institutions can promote technological advancements and innovation, driving economic growth and competitiveness.

Inter-Regional Cooperation

Inter-regional cooperation is crucial for establishing a collaboration framework between Latin America and the 'New Caucasus' region. Both regions can foster greater understanding and trust by strengthening diplomatic ties, facilitating cultural exchanges, and promoting tourism. Furthermore, establishing direct air connectivity and improving transportation infrastructure can enhance people-to-people contacts and facilitate the movement of goods and services. This connectivity will contribute to the growth of trade, tourism, and investment between the regions.

There are at least six international fora through which Azerbaijan and Brazil could collaborate on an inter-regional basis.

One, MERCOSUR: Mercosur is a regional integration bloc comprising Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Brazil's leadership within MERCOSUR can pave the way for enhanced cooperation between Latin America and the 'New Caucasus' region. This collaboration can focus on trade liberalization, investment promotion, and the exchange of best practices in areas such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services.

Two, UNASUR: The Union of South American Nations promotes political, economic, and social integration among South American countries. Brazil and Azerbaijan can explore opportunities for cooperation within UNASUR, contributing to regional stability, infrastructure development, and joint initiatives in sectors like energy, technology, and education.

Three, CELAC: The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States provides a platform for political dialogue and cooperation among Latin American and Caribbean nations. Brazil and Azerbaijan can participate in CELAC to strengthen ties, share experiences in areas such as governance and social development, and foster cultural exchanges.

Four, ALADI: the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI)

seeks to promote economic integration among Latin American countries. Brazil and Azerbaijan can engage with ALADI to expand trade ties, reduce trade barriers, and promote investments and technical cooperation in sectors such as agriculture, industry, and services.

Five, OIC: the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, of which Azerbaijan is a member and Brazil is a potential observer member. Brasilia can leverage its position to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between the OIC and Latin American countries while Baku can champion the potential for collaboration, particularly in trade, investment, tourism, and cultural exchanges.

And *six, OTS:* the Organization of Turkic States wherein Azerbaijan is a member presents an opportunity to deepen cooperation between Turkic-speaking nations and Latin American countries. Brazil's engagement with this organization can also open doors for partnerships in trade, investment, tourism, and educational exchanges.

Immense Potential

The possibilities of cooperation between Latin America and the 'New Caucasus' region, with Brazil and Azerbaijan

as facilitators, offer immense potential for both regions. The regions can enhance economic growth, stability, and prosperity through collaboration in diverse mechanisms, initiatives, and thematic fora.

The governments of Brazil and Azerbaijan have a unique opportunity to cooperate and forge closer ties between Latin America, the 'New Caucasus,' and the entire Silk Road region. By pursuing a shared vision of autonomy in foreign policy agendas, international cooperation, inter-regional integration, and independent decisionmaking on geopolitical and geoeconomic matters, both countries can reduce and minimize the interference of major powers, including Russia, China, Iran, Türkiye, and the two poles of the West (i.e., the EU and the United States).

This essay has tried to explore the possibilities of cooperation between Brazil and Azerbaijan, focusing on the following areas: autonomy in foreign policy, international cooperation, and inter-regional integration. Summarizing the potential for cooperation through expanded interstate fora as discussed above, we present five key areas that Brasilia and Baku can address in a joint pathway.

First, Brazil and Azerbaijan can work together to promote higher degrees of autonomy in their respective foreign policy agendas, enabling them to make more independent decisions on global issues. By aligning their interests and principles, both countries can advocate for multilateralism, respect for international law, and the promotion of peaceful resolution of conflicts. Through diplomatic coordination, they can strengthen their positions and foster a more balanced international system, free from the dominance of agendas set by the West, Russia, China, Iran, and Türkiye

Second, cooperation between Brazil and Azerbaijan can extend beyond bilateral relations and contribute to broader international cooperation. By leveraging their geographical positions and influence, both countries can engage in dialogue with regional organizations and international fora to promote shared values and interests. They can advocate for issues such as sustainable development, climate change, and disarmament, forging

alliances with like-minded states and amplifying their voices on the global stage.

Third, inter-regional integration is crucial for strengthening ties between Latin America, the ‘New Caucasus,’ and the entire Silk Road region. Brazil and Azerbaijan can collaborate to enhance connectivity through transportation networks, trade facilitation, and exchange of knowledge and expertise. By promoting inter-regional initiatives, such as joint infrastructure projects and cultural exchanges, they can foster economic growth, cultural understanding, and cooperation in diverse sectors.

Fourth, cooperation between Brazil and Azerbaijan, anchored in expanded fora, offers several advantages. For instance, it strengthens the autonomy of both regions by fostering independent decision-making in geopolitical and geoeconomic matters. It also diversifies partnerships, reducing dependence on the West, Russia, China, Iran, and Türkiye. Furthermore, inter-regional cooperation promotes

Through sustained efforts, Brazil and Azerbaijan can contribute to a more balanced and multipolar world order, free from external pressures, and promote the development and well-being of their regions.

economic growth, stability, and cultural understanding, fostering mutual development and prosperity.

Fifth, while pursuing inter-regional cooperation, Brazil and Azerbaijan may face challenges such as language barriers, differences in regulatory frameworks, and geographical distances. However, these challenges can be overcome through sustained diplomatic efforts, political will, structured dialogue, and the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate trade and cultural exchanges. The opportunities for cooperation lie in harnessing shared interests, leveraging their respective strengths, and capitalizing on complementarity in sectors such as energy, agriculture, technology, and tourism.

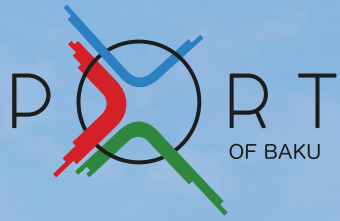
To fully realize these possibilities, sustained efforts in diplomatic engagement, policy coordination, and the establishment of strategic relations are necessary. By leveraging their strengths and exploring new avenues for cooperation, Latin America and the ‘New

Caucasus’ can create a partnership that benefits not only their respective economies but also contributes to a more balanced and interconnected global order.

Cooperation between Brazil and Azerbaijan has the potential to strengthen autonomy in foreign policy agendas, international cooperation, and inter-regional integration between Latin America, the ‘New Caucasus,’ and the entirety of the Silk Road region. By capitalizing on expanded fora such as MERCOSUR, UNASUR, CELAC, ALADI, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Organization of Turkic States, both countries can amplify their voices, shape their destinies, and foster cooperation based on mutual respect and shared interests.

Through sustained efforts, Brazil and Azerbaijan can contribute to a more balanced and multipolar world order, free from external pressures, and promote the development and well-being of their regions. **BD**

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Transport and Transit Policy of Kazakhstan and the Silk Road Region

Bulat Auelbeyev & Aidar Kurmashev

Since the emergence of independent states in the post-Soviet space, it has been predicted that the Silk Road region (i.e., what is usually called core or central Eurasia) could become a global strategic hub, due to both geopolitical and geoeconomic conditions. The region's mid-continental position offers great opportunities for its core countries—particularly those located on its Central Asian side. Concomitantly, the region has attracted the attention of various centers of power—both regional and global.

Furthermore, the development of trans-regional transport networks remains a hot topic, and the issue of communication development is on the agenda of

almost all high-level international meetings. The already popular C5+1 format, in which various regional and world powers offer their cooperation to the Central Asian Five, also contains aspects of transport corridor development.

Indeed, land transport corridors crossing the Silk Road region could create a new reality in the future. Modern logistics and transportation technologies make it possible to connect regions across the continent quickly and reliably. At the same time, states will seek to reduce the effect of non-physical barriers. This, in turn, will affect the relationship and security of all participants along the these corridors and beyond.

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Unlocking Kazakhstan's Potential

Some countries, like Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, occupy a rather advantageous geographic position. Kazakhstan, for instance, borders and is connected by sea routes through the Caspian Sea with major countries and large regional markets. China and Central Asian countries' bilateral trade has reached \$70 billion in 2022, a 40 percent increase compared to 2021. Therefore, Kazakhstan's multi-vector policy, aimed at balancing international relations, is clearly justified, both on account of national and regional interests. Only under these conditions will it be possible to rightly determine its future.

Aware of this role, Kazakhstan has taken steps to overcome its once dependent and isolated position. The first of them was the construction of several railroads in the late 1990s and early 2000s, such as: Aksu-Degelen, Khromtau-Altynsarino, and Shar-Ust-Kamenogorsk. While each of

them was designed for internal purposes, all of them had a link to external relations as well. At the same time, Kazakhstan adopted its Concept of State Transport Policy in 2011.

The Aksu-Degelen railway line connects the country's north with its eastern regions, linking the regional centers of Pavlodar and Semey. Its launch in 2001 was characterized as a revival of the national economy and the beginning of the establishment of its closed national railway system. Then, with the construction of the Khromtau-Altynsarino railway in

December 2004, a direct connection was established between the Aktobe and Kostanay regions and, in general, between the western and northern regions of Kazakhstan.

This railway line also updated maritime logistics on the east coast of the Caspian Sea

in a new way, as transportation via this body of water reduces the cost of exporting Kazakhstani products, such as wheat, to international markets. The costs of transporting

The success and sustainability of the Middle Corridor is only possible through the development of "strategic knowledge"—i.e., the establishment of an international mechanism for exchanging technologies and ideas among countries of the region.

ore and minerals from the northern and central regions of Kazakhstan to the port of Aktau were also reduced, allowing direct deliveries to the western regions of the republic.

The commissioning of the Shar-Ust-Kamenogorsk railway in 2008 significantly increased the country's export potential. This railroad line concluded the Kazakhstani national railway network in the northeastern part of the country and produced the shortest exit to the other Central Asian countries, Iran, and Afghanistan. Notably, all of these railway projects were made without crossing into Russian territory.

In 2012, two other railway lines were built in Kazakhstan: in the west from Uzen to the Turkmen border and in the south from Zhetygen to the Chinese border. In 2014, with the completion of the Arkalyk-Shubarkol and Zhezkazgan-Beineu lines, the idea of forming an integral North-South and East-West railway network was finally realized.

Highways were also developed simultaneously with

the railway infrastructure construction. One of the largest projects was the Western Europe-Western China project. In 2008, Russia and Kazakhstan signed a memorandum on the development of this corridor. In 2015, the highway's construction became an integral part of the China-led Belt and Road

Initiative. It should be noted that while the Chinese section was built in 2017, the Kazakh section will possibly be completed by 2024. We must also bear in mind that while in 2018

the Russian government approved its "Comprehensive Plan for the Modernization and Expansion of the Mainline Infrastructure" for a period up until 2024, two years later, the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation indicated construction was postponed until 2027.

As seen, since 2015, the development of land corridors has been integrated into the Nurly Zhol State Infrastructure Development Program. At this stage, the second five-year plan is ongoing, with 112 infrastructure projects totaling around \$14.4 billion to be implemented, of which public financing will account for 68 percent.

Kazakhstan plays an important role in developing transport communications and logistics for the Silk Road region due to its geographical location.

The Case of the Silk Road Region

Kazakhstan plays an important role in developing transport communications and logistics for the Silk Road region due to its geographical location. Bordering by land both Russia and China, and by sea both Azerbaijan and Iran, its territory is becoming a natural transit bridge between the major markets of the North, South, East, and West. Its transit opportunities also open up possibilities for neighboring states in Central Asia.

The implementation of land corridors across the Silk Road region exists in a multitude of initiatives put forward by major outside powers, but there is no unified and integrated policy for establishing a transcontinental infrastructure link in the region. In many ways, logistics are localized and fragmented according to the interests of the outside major powers.

In this respect, the region faces several obstacles. The five core Central Asian

countries are suboptimally interconnected, which affects their level of mutual trade exchange—their mutual railway connections are also limited.

In general, the existing transport infrastructure across the region is of poor quality and low capacity. Roadside service facilities are underdeveloped, and most of them do not meet the minimum quality of service requirements and cannot fully meet either international transit traffic or domestic demands.

The unlocking of the transport sector's potential is also hampered by intra-regional competition. Often, transport and logistics projects implemented by one country do not match the interests of all countries in the region, which must be recognized as counterproductive.

To achieve real benefits from international transportation and transit, coordinated and long-term work between neighboring countries is required in order to expand the networks of roads, railroads, and

The implementation of land corridors across the Silk Road region exists in a multitude of initiatives put forward by major outside powers, but there is no unified and integrated policy for establishing a transcontinental infrastructure link in the region.

air routes; building logistics and transport hubs or dry ports in key areas; and, eventually, the establishment of truly efficient and improved transport corridors.

In this regard, Kazakhstan and other states belonging to the Silk Road region continue seeking further trade and economic cooperation, whereby building an open transport policy is a priority. The region's states are now in the process of agreeing on shared approaches in various multilateral platforms and establishing free trade and industrial zones at border crossings.

One of these will be the Central Asia International Center for Industrial Cooperation on the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan border, which accounts for about 80 percent of all trade in Central Asia. The Kazakh leadership supports alternative directions in the international transport routes of its neighbors and shows an economic interest in implementing railway projects like China-Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan and Mazari-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar.

Such an approach is conditioned by concerns with the region's

general development, whereby both the direct participation of investors and the increased capacity of national transport systems are envisaged. It should be mentioned that most of the Western Europe-Western China highway crosses Kazakhstan's southern regions, with its major cities located in territorial proximity to both Tashkent and Bishkek. Astana has also called on its partners to use the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway more actively.

Thus, the connectivity interests of Kazakhstan and the other core Silk Road region countries coincide: these come together in a shared interest to integrate their economies into trans-Eurasian transport corridors, harmonize their development agendas, and establish a stable and reliable transport and communication system to ensure regional security from potential external threats.

Trans-Caspian Transit

Kazakhstan's attention is particularly directed in the western direction, namely the transport and logistics

opportunities of the Caspian Sea and the South Caucasus. Such international processes include progress on the legal definition of the Caspian Sea and strengthening cooperation in the institutional context of the Organization of Turkic States, to which the EU's economic rapprochement with the Silk Road region has also contributed.

Interest in and the development of the Silk Road region is evident. The South Caucasus has long attracted Central Asian countries—and not only due to the transit of raw materials and energy resources to Türkiye and the European continent. Cross-regional ties are also seen as a single link in trans-continental West-East corridors, particularly the Middle Corridor. However, until recent times, the complexity of multimodal transportation and political tensions did not give high competitiveness to the Caspian-Caucasus route.

Now, the situation is changing. Qualitative changes are taking place in the South Caucasus region. The resolution of the

Movement along the trade corridors of the South Caucasus and Central Asia will gradually gain further momentum and, in the long term, will become the key artery of international exchange between the high-capacity markets of Europe and Asia.

longstanding conflict over Karabakh and the impending signature of a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan constitute two sides of the same coin—a historic turning point that represent a gateway to sustainable development.

The achievement of peace and the resulting stability will produce an opening of borders, which will in turn result in greater security and prosperity for the citizens of those two countries and perhaps beyond.

Nevertheless, the South Caucasus is becoming a crossroads for the competing interests of influential international actors: Russia, Türkiye, Iran, the United States, and the European Union. Therefore, the diversification of trans-Caspian and trans-Caucasian routes may face restrictions for a certain time due to geopolitics.

However, given the profitability of interregional ties, movement along the trade corridors of the South Caucasus and Central Asia will gradually gain further momentum and, in the long term, will become the key artery of

international exchange between the high-capacity markets of Europe and Asia.

Iran's Motives

Iran is a very promising and, at the same time, quite difficult partner for the region's countries. For decades, great hopes have been pinned on Iran becoming an economically strong state with developed communications system and extensive transit opportunities to the Middle East and South Asia. In 1996, the northern line of the Trans-Asian Railway of the East-West Transport Corridor opened through the Tejen-Sarabs-Mashhad railway section, and in 2014, the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railroad was put into operation.

However, railway and maritime communications are not fully utilized, even though there are no political contradictions between Tehran and the capitals of the Central Asian republics. The states are united by international organizations such as the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). The governments

of these countries have many opportunities to develop a constructive dialogue.

The reasons for weak trade and economic relations between Central Asia and West Asia is that these regions are situated in an area of acute global and regional confrontation, in which the interests of Iranian politics are closely intertwined. For a long time, Iran has been fully absorbed in the geopolitical struggle for regional leadership in the Middle East, while Central Asian countries have remained out of its orbit.

But here, too, the situation has begun to turn towards the Silk Road region. Tehran, in its new "turn to the East" paradigm, is looking for measures to attract the attention of the Central Asian states (a one or two South Caucasus ones, as well), improve the security situation, intensify trade and economic relations, and open overland transit deep into the continent.

Particular attention is paid to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, with an emphasis on the investment, transport, and communication potential of both countries. In turn, Iran can offer Central Asia its markets and transit opportunities. With the completion of the railway line through Iranian territory

from Zahedan to the deep-water port of Chabahar on the Gulf of Oman, the International Transport Corridor North-South (INSTC), another branch of which traverses Azerbaijan, will become a very profitable destination and contribute to the development of the Silk Road region in general.

The Eastern Neighbor

China remains the most stable and complicated partner for the region. In addition to trade and economic cooperation, Beijing proposed its comprehensive development program—the Belt and Road Initiative, which has become quite attractive in some quarters.

With an eye on the Silk Road region, cooperation with China is seen as more than just trade and economic exchange. Pairing the Chinese strategic initiative with other global projects such as the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) and the Middle Corridor promises considerable dividends.

The development of the Chinese vector for the countries of Central Asia is the realization of great opportunities. The China-Central Asia summit

held in May 2023 once again confirmed the consistency and safety of this direction. The priorities of cooperation were transport infrastructure, industry, including automotive, oil exports, agriculture, water resources, tourism, cultural exchanges, and regional stability.

The Kazakhstani-Chinese dialogue has highlighted the key aspects that would activate the international transport corridor. These include the opening of a railway crossing on the Kazakh-Chinese border, the construction of Kazakhstan's logistics center in the dry port of Xi'an, which will become the main hub for sending direct container trains to the Silk Road region, Türkiye, the Western Balkans, and the European Union, and the launch of the Ayagoz-Bakhty rail link in the direction of China.

The Northern Vector

The most developed and branched out transport communications network is the one that connects Kazakhstan with Russia—and its transit opportunities have been widely used to the Black Sea and Baltic ports, to Ukraine, Belarus, and EU member states. This situation

was due to a shared history and modern relations within a number of economic integration structures.

However, the events of 2022 dramatically changed the development of this vector. The role and place of Russia in global processes is changing—as is its standing as one of the key political and economic partners of the Central Asian republics. International pressure, the threat of secondary sanctions, the practical cessation of transit traffic, and the disruption of trading, technological, and production chains appear to be long-term trends.

At the same time, there is a reverse process, as Russia is looking for trade opportunities with Asian countries. In this regard, Kazakhstani and Azerbaijani transit becomes critically important. For example, the Russian leadership is working to develop a number of transport and communication initiatives, including laying a section of the Rasht-Astara railroad, which would also boost Azerbaijan through the completion of its tranche of an important North-South transport vector—i.e., a branch of INSTC.

If the situation stabilizes in the long term, the Silk Road region will take a special role in reanimating

the economies of the conflicting states (i.e., in the Ukraine theater) in the post-conflict period. Despite the current antagonism of their relations, common transport system, especially the railroads, will remain the main economic arteries in the vast space of the Silk Road region. This is a fact that cannot simply be ignored.

The Afghan Dilemma

The situation in Afghanistan remains critical due to the international non-recognition of its new Taliban government. The citizens of Afghanistan are experiencing a humanitarian crisis, and political consultations within the international community and international organizations on a proposal to break the economic isolation of this country are necessary to help the country get on its feet again.

The Central Asian countries could propose the construction of a railway line from Mazari-Sharif to Herat, which is the most economically rational route, given current conditions. This route would continue to the large Iranian administrative center of Mashhad and become part of INSTC. More could be said on this, but we leave it at that for the moment.

We have also not said anything about the upgraded C5+1 format, which now involves the heads of state of the five Central Asian countries and the U.S. president. The renewed interest for the region shown by its ultimate outside power will need to be taken up another time.

Conclusion

In general, the Silk Road region sees positive joint efforts, which includes closer regional cooperation, perhaps best illustrated by the increase in the number of topics covered by the Consultative Summits of Central Asian Leaders in September 2023, and the inclusion of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev as a guest of honor.

Kazakhstan is currently focusing on expanding cooperation with neighboring countries as a way to intensify the interaction between Asia's macro-regions to build a new architecture of connectivity

against the backdrop of the current geopolitical situation.


According to recent statements by Kazakhstani officials, the notion of the “great game” is outdated, and instead the concept of the “great gain” should be adopted by all countries to amplify the future of mutually-beneficial cooperation. This can be interpreted as Kazakhstan's way of expressing its willingness to act together with the other core countries of the Silk Road region in the name of building a common sustainable future while maintaining balanced relations with all outside major powers.

For this reason, Kazakhstan welcomes any investment to further transform the Middle Corridor into a logistic and economic corridor. From the Central Asian perspective, the success and sustainability of the Middle Corridor is only possible through the development of “strategic knowledge”—i.e., the establishment of an international mechanism for exchanging technologies and ideas among countries of the region. ^{BD}

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Fostering a New Global Conversation

A View from Mexico on Diversifying Inter-Regional Engagement

Guadalupe González Chávez

This essay highlights the importance of fostering a more inclusive global conversation by encouraging both intra- and inter-regional relations. Although one focus will be on fostering more communication between Mexico and the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region with Azerbaijan and the other countries that make up the core Silk Road region, various other regions and mechanisms operating within the contemporary global context will also be discussed.

The dimensions of future governance may be examined from

the perspective of different world regions' capacity to communicate, collaborate, and generate a new conversation. A more inclusive approach can result in a more holistic review of different angles and thus bring out more original approaches for prospective geopolitical analysis efforts, policy design, and decisionmaking in their local, regional, and global expressions.

Communication, knowledge, and culture strengthen their capacity to influence the conversation if key elements of the global governance agenda are taken as a

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common ground for analysis when decisionmaking depends on the incorporation of broader views. While distant, the location and geographical presence of LAC and the Silk Road regions allow for the possibility to analyze commonalities between these two large and complex communities whilst exploring new pathways for dialogue and international policymaking.

The dimensions of future governance may be examined from the perspective of different world regions' capacity to communicate, collaborate, and generate a new conversation.

LAC and Beyond LAC

When trying to understand a region, language and culture considerations are factors to be considered when looking at maps, names of countries, islands, territories, literature, and media content. With this in mind, we can offer the following definition:

LAC covers all the countries of the American hemisphere below Canada and the United States of America. It encompasses a broad continental territory as well as all the Caribbean islands, the sum of which looks west to the Pacific Ocean, east to the Atlantic Ocean, north to the U.S., and south to Antarctica.

Admittedly, the LAC countries are sometimes more associated with one or another region, depending on who makes the classification and for what purpose they try to approach regional studies or subdivisions in the American continent. But rectifying this geopolitical condition in and of itself should be seen as an exercise in overcoming standard developed world geopolitical and diplomatic narratives.

An important aspect of moving beyond standard narratives and barriers to knowledge and analysis is the opportunity to look at the relationship between LAC and the East Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and the Silk Road regions.

The first question may be the following: from which concept or map to begin? On which dimensions and spaces do debates and deliberations foster agreements and considerations for foreign affairs and policies for decisions to be taken? In other words, where does a LAC or a Silk Road worldview begin?

Looking simultaneously at both dimensions can ease the search for a new analytic structure in the

global context. This has become easier when geographical barriers started being removed, around the end of the twentieth century—and it has gained more currency after the COVID-19 pandemic and due to recent global flows and corridors acquiring new relevance.

Mesoamerican Uniqueness

Regional integration and politics are of interest to other regions. Analyzing other regions' agreements and debates can reinforce future processes, as they evidence alternative ways to solve issues.

Within LAC, Mesoamerica deserves greater recognition: after all, it lies at the heart of the region, covering Mexico as a whole, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and all the Central America countries. Not only has it been identified for a long time as a unique geographical area by experts in biodiversity, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, geography, and political studies, but history and current events confirm the importance of looking at the region with a particular view in the context of global, regional, and inter-regional studies.

Belize, Columbia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Mexico see themselves as part of both the Mesoamerican and Caribbean sub-regions of LAC. Together, they interconnect the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans and North and South America. Not only for reasons of merely geographical coincidence, but also for those having to do with historical and regional integration processes, shared cultural and multicultural identities, and political developments, Mesoamerica plays an essential role in global communications, economies, and international political affairs.

A good reference is the Mesoamerica Integration Project adopted after the Tuxtla Dialogue and Concertation Mechanism—a political dialogue started in 2001 to foster integration and development through complementarity and cooperation related to infrastructure, interconnectivity and social development, biosphere protection, and other issues of strategic value. Mexico holds the Permanent Presidency of the Mechanism, while Colombia holds the *pro*

Mesoamerica plays an essential role in global communications, economies, and international political affairs.

tempore Presidency during the second semester of 2023.

Significant Conversations

In recent years, different regions of the world, including LAC, have strengthened ties with other regions and shifted many of their traditional international routes.

In the twenty-first century, but particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional patterns of relations were affected, especially on issues such as mobility, migration, trade corridors, global finance, peace, international security, and environmental contexts. Yet all sought refreshing outreaching efforts to confront tensions, barriers, and difficulties to reach out to many of their traditional friends and partners. This has been observed in both LAC and the Silk Roads region. In essence, greater emphasis was placed on building regional networks instead of regional blocs.

Non-traditional networks and mechanisms constructed or reinforced began to weave new international and global relations,

illustrating that inter-regional cooperation with concrete and positive results is possible when other regions are closed to external exchanges.

An obvious way forward is for the LAC and Silk Road region states to engage more seriously through the Non-Aligned Movement. The priorities and results of Azerbaijan's chairmanship can serve as an important impetus for deepening region-to-region dialogue.

Sharing expertise, resources, means, tools, and solutions to confront the recent pandemic and its impact provided the ground upon which new approaches to the relationships between regions could be built—irrespective of distance. Brief accounts of several of these will constitute the remainder of this essay.

MIKTA—Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Türkiye, and Australia—is a good example of the foregoing. It was established in 2013 as a cross-regional grouping of G20 countries, emerging as a response to the urgent need for cooperation between the keystone countries of

The priorities and results of Azerbaijan's chairmanship can serve as an important impetus for deepening region-to-region dialogue.

five of the world's regions when confronting common affairs in global forums.

MIKTA is an informal dialogue space based on mutual interests, values, common challenges, and collaboration in the multilateral system. Mexico will hold the *pro tempore* presidency in 2024. Country representatives and leaders meet annually at G20 meetings and occasionally at UN Headquarters and elsewhere. MIKTA is already evidence of region-to-region dialogue with the presence of the Americas, Eurasia, East Asia, and Oceania.

Another example is the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), which was established in 2005 thanks to the initial efforts of Spain and Türkiye as a consequence of the UN General Assembly having declared 2001 as the UN Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

Today, UNAOC is led by Spain's former Foreign Minister, Miguel Moratinos, and maintains a broad global multisectoral network of partners from international and regional organizations and society experts and organizations to improve cross-cultural relations between diverse nations and communities

with a global perspective on key issues that impede dialogue and communications between civilization centers, with all the support of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Portugal, and other key factors of the UN System.

For LAC representatives, access to international mechanisms like the Global Baku Forum in Azerbaijan or the Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Türkiye has had both an impact on and provided a meaningful contribution to global dialogues. Such and similar events provide access to knowledge networks and academic and think tank that allows participants to position themselves to better participate in future region-to-region conversations.

These developments further highlight instances that identify past and future possibilities for shaping a new pattern of networks supporting international relations and global governance. They deal with aspects of mutual interest, such as strengthening multilateralism solutions for global problems requiring more than what international organizations have already identified.

The Pacific Alliance

The Pacific Alliance was established by Chile, Columbia, Peru, and Mexico in 2011. It has had a remarkable growing presence not only for the founding countries but also for the Great Pacific basin. Representing a population of nearly 225 million people, the Pacific Alliance is the world's eighth economic power and export force.

The Pacific Alliance integration mechanism started with some LAC countries but has now expanded into other regions through partner and observer states status. On 26 January 2022, Singapore signed a free trade agreement with the Pacific Alliance, which will make Singapore the first Partner Member (*Estado Asociado*) of the Alliance. South Korea and Ecuador have also initiated their respective processes for future full membership.

As of 2023, 63 countries have observer status in the Pacific Alliance: 14 from the Americas, two from Oceania, two from Africa, 13 from Asia and the Middle East, and 32 from Europe—with others from all over the world waiting in the wings.

Of particular interest is that Azerbaijan has been an Observer

State of the Pacific Alliance since 2019. This illustrates the genuine commitment by Baku's and other observer countries from different regions to region-to-region dialogue. In that same year, Kazakhstan also received the same status, highlighting the interest in engaging with the Pacific Alliance of two of the Silk Road region's most important countries.

The Pacific Alliance has recognizable experience and owns a multi-layered network that does its works on the basis of three dimensions (i.e., diplomatic, intergovernmental, and intersocietal). It works on a political base with a participatory and consensual approach when difficulties arise.

The Pacific Alliance also operates a number of technical groups, committees, subcommittees, and working groups to develop cooperation programs, projects, and activities in accordance with the interests of the organization to progressively increase the mobility of goods, services, resources, and people within its areas of competence.

The Pacific Alliance includes dynamic drivers like a scientific research network on climate change, academic and student

exchanges, cultural promotion, integration of securities markets, the opening of joint commercial offices, participation in international exhibitions, tourism, and support for the improvement of competitiveness and innovation for micro, small, and medium enterprises. The Pacific Alliance has plans to develop a region-to-region dialogue, which surely could involve the Silk Road region.

LAC and Inter-Regional Fora

Inter-regional fora are generally founded on the presumption that a region sees advantage in look for alternative future organization, planning, and policymaking and how they may interact with one's country and region. But also, partly due to regional diversity, region-to-region relations can be seen as adding value to analyses and alternative proposals delivered with practical views in mind.

Solidarity and cooperation for and from all LAC countries was crucial to its member states' surviving the tumultuous period that became more acute in 2020. Disaster relief and pandemic assistance capacities were enhanced due to the successes of previous

joint efforts facing hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, desertification, political and military tensions, and humanitarian crises.

Furthermore, the governance of global affairs is a common concern for various regions as economic and social development keeps pressing all countries. It may seem complicated for LAC to extend geographical links beyond their traditional relations with the North American, European, and Ibero-American regions—including Portugal, Spain, Andorra, and major players in the Asia Pacific framework.

Nonetheless, inter-regional development for the regions and their participation in global common needs are persistent. Water management, priorities of financing for development, and access to medicines are key for future development.

There are various examples of issues of peace, disarmament, arms control, decolonization, conflict and international tensions, advancement in economic and social needs, international law, and global justice problems finding solutions thanks to region-to-region cooperation, despite difficult geopolitical and geoeconomics contexts.

This explains why LAC is searching for ways to acquire or enhance relations with different countries of the Great Pacific, Africa, Eastern Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Silk Road region, the Middle East, and South Asia—practically all the world except the Americas, Western Europe, and some parts of the Asia Pacific region.

It is with the foregoing in mind that we can highlight some examples that point to common threads between LAC and the Silk Road region. The 1978 Alma Ata Declaration on primary health care, for example, set the path for the 2018 Global Conference on Primary Health Care in Astana.

The events that produced those documents, held in the same country albeit decades apart, recognized a more holistic approach to healthcare, encompassing complete physical, mental, and social well-being for everyone. This is a common area of concern for the Silk Road region and LAC. Another is the UN Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

New collaboration on developing and distributing vaccines and other healthcare resources, with the support of regional airlines

and favorable solutions within the WHO and the UN systems, is another piece of evidence that new paths of cooperation are possible if sustained not by just one country or region. The arrival of vaccines and products to attend to the sort of health needs associated with enhanced regional cooperation are clearly visible for communities and people in other regions and pave the way for rapprochement between them.

The March 2022 International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, was yet another important reference point—as are other women, culture, and environment conferences held in Mexico and other parts of LAC.

The global agenda on peace and international security is a further instance of issues of interest for the two geographically-distant regions. The establishment of nuclear weapons free zones (NWFZs) in Tlatelolco in Mexico, Central Asia's Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, and Mongolia's Nuclear Weapon Free Status demonstrate that preventing arms escalations in regional environments of large territories add to peace and stability factors for global governance. They are also tools for deepening region-to-region dialogue.

These issues, along with the treaties on outer space, Antarctica, the seabed, and the treaties of Pelindaba, Bangkok, and Rarotonga, are agreements that set out prohibitions whereby participants commit to international verification, control, and compliance systems. They are yet another cluster of examples of region-to-region dialogue.

The same can be said with regards to climate, biodiversity, water solutions, and desertification. These and others are integral to advancing the global development agenda and represent common challenges that can be addressed in various region-to-region dialogue formats.

Fresh Approaches

Fostering new cross-regional connections can result in multiple benefits for policy design and decisionmaking. Region-to-region conversations that share best practices and expertise have so far always proven useful.

Being geographically distant is not necessarily a bad thing: it is an enticement to refresh approaches to commonly shared problems. Strengthening inter-regional relations helps not only the regions

involved directly in the process, but can also contribute to the improvement of global governance. In this regard, the recent food emergency and global grain trade crisis signals the priority that combating hunger and ensuring food security should have now.

Inter-regional governance initiatives, mechanisms, and bodies are vital to the future of global governance. Although there are different fora within which LAC and Silk Road region states participate on a country-to-country basis, initiatives to establish spaces of dialogue between both regions may arrive and endure if systematically cultivated. To be effective, inter-regional dialogues—especially if it is new—should be aligned with global goals and trends.

For instance, know-how and expertise in managing gulfs, isthmus, canals, rivers, seas, and lakes may also significantly contribute to region-to-region governance initiatives.

Moving People and Goods

The restrictions on mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic forced each region to redefine the way in which it

ensured sustainable access to health provisions and logistics arrangements. Thankfully, the multiplication of regional connectivity projects means that LAC and the Silk Road region both have better infrastructure than ever.

New ports, air routes, road development, and digital interconnectivity help in this direction. Mexican and other LAC ports are part of the new global interconnection system. New airports, roads, and connecting hubs make solutions to global connections possible, particularly if the planning and operation adheres to the sustainable development principle.

Air hubs like Mexico City, Cancún, Panama City, Bogotá, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Santiago, Istanbul, Baku, and Almaty are shortening times for both passengers and cargo, with further plans to further improve connectivity in this sector. Ports in both regions are also seeing plans for growth and expansion taking shape and being executed.

Thus, agri-food and health chains can benefit and help peace and stability with corridors that benefit food systems. Recently, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) published its report highlighting the

need to maximize sustainable agri-food supply chain opportunities as integral to the effort to redress the impact and effects of COVID-19 on developing countries.

Stability, border governance, and peaceful solutions to problems that arise between communities and global mobility represent grounds for exchange and mutual learning, especially in post-conflict and rebuilding stages in a high mobility environment.

The sustainable development of local and regional infrastructure networks is paramount. Sharing knowledge and best practices may save effort for other regions and cooperation in building communications and transportation infrastructure is strategic for every region and inter-regional connections.

The New Urban Agenda

In recent years, the redefinition and transformation of urbanization has become a welcome addition to a future common agenda of habitat affairs. The International Habitat Summit of Latin America and the Caribbean (CIHALC) brings a new kind of regional conversation for policymaking in the region based on networking

and knowledge-sharing between local communities and urban and regional planners.

CIHALC was established through a sequence of intersectoral and intergovernmental fora for dialogue promotion in an annual space that gathers regional networks to follow and develop advancements of the New Urban Agenda.

The New Urban Agenda provides interlinkages between global agendas on the basis that a range of interdependency recognitions optimize resources and leverage for development. UN Habitat is mandated to create a coherence of global agendas at the urban level enhancing policy coherence, driving progress toward integrated approaches, and establishing incremental and inclusive reporting systems on the status of different habitats worldwide.

Concepts like biodiverse cities, new aspects of smart cities, and habitats formed in land and water territories have been agreed upon by CIHALC and are now dealt with in the regional agenda and taken to international forums like the UN Habitat forum and conferences with the support and participation of universities of the region, including Universidad de Guadalajara in Mexico.

This has become a growing multilateral, regional mechanism with very interesting and worthy expertise. CIHALC regional LAC forums in 2022 and 2023 worked towards the implementing the outcomes of the UN Habitat III Conference and the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development. Additionally, on 18-19 September 2023, the Ecuadorian capital Quito hosted the first UN global summit after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

All this speaks to the importance of the arising strategic issues for designing and implementing the New Urban Agenda. The latest consensus on the agenda documents has already been translated into twenty-seven languages in addition to the official UN languages, providing promising terrain for region-to-region conversation. CIHALC is evidently an important forum for LAC to exchange experiences and develop region-to-region dialogue.

Another good space for region-to-region dialogue in global approaches to responding to global crises and governance challenges is the Second Session of the UN Habitat Assembly (UNHA2), which noted the

importance of a sustainable urban future.

This inclusive and effective multilateral event, held in Nairobi, in 2023,

focused on universal access to affordable housing, urban climate action, urban crises recovery, localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the prosperity that can come with the promotion of local finance solutions.

Culture and Communication

Changing the basis of narratives—and perceptions—is necessary. Knowledge and information networks are imperatives, more so than traveling and hospitality practices and diplomatic and political forums. Interculturality, nodes of communications, changing the historical political, social, and cultural panorama, and integrating the views and recognition of other regions are all necessary.

Sharing views of life on a region-to-region and country-to-country basis will add value to the acquisition of people-to-people knowledge. New communications

Knowledge and cultural international policies must develop in parallel to diplomatic and political dialogues.

and digital networks are already helping in this regard.

Knowledge and cultural international policies must

develop in parallel to diplomatic and political dialogues. Global narratives and conversations on governance and multilateral networks provide space for reflection, debate, deliberation, policymaking design, and new narratives. The states belonging to LAC and the Silk Road region can play greater roles in accelerating this global trend.

International media networks are important global agenda setters, but they should not monopolize the space. Establishing media networks between LAC and Silk Road regions outlets should be understood as being key for the equitable advancement of global governance and inter-regional understanding.

Sharing knowledge spaces are essential to fostering meaningful knowledge networks. Efforts made by think tanks and universities are fruitful and easier to accomplish with digitality and air transportation patterns that help to overcome language, distance, and cost barriers.

Media and information literacy and policies are necessary to build a firm effort against current challenges like disinformation, prejudice, hate, discrimination, and racism in inter-regional and cultural narratives and conversations in global communications environments at different levels.

It is important to highlight how entertainment, festivals, tournaments, and international exhibitions help dissipate those impediments for better people-to-people and society-to-society approaches—and not only when disasters or conflicts bring attention to other regions or when international diplomatic or political summits occur. Internet governance forums and the follow-up consultations arising from the 2022 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) are more important than ever.

The Mondiacult conference held in Mexico in September 2022 offered a new approach towards global culture and its relation to cultural and historical patrimony. It was the largest world conference devoted to culture in the last 40 years.

The conference declaration adopted by consensus provides a new platform for culture, patrimony,

and the economy of culture and could be a new global common interest for conversations between regions.

150 countries participated in Mondiacult 2022, with 135 at the ministerial level, including Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Kazakhstan from the Silk Road region. Culture is a common interest; thus, humanity's heritage and the origin of ancestral communications and languages should be protected in the new digital and information environment.

Books, carpets, food and culinary practices, games, arts, and mathematics are all examples of cultural historical heritage with patterns of mobility and cultural integrations through LAC and the Silk Road region. Ideally, language barriers will no longer block or impede the conversation, thanks to global communications and exchanges.

Learning other languages, accessing media networks, travel, and exchanges are necessary. In the past, this was the only way to learn about other regions. Culture, mathematics, sports, and other disciplines, but also the traditional arts and sciences, have travelled through these roads.

As have the more modern arts, more recently through cinematography, such as television series, dizi, new media, and creative productions in new multi-language streaming and entertainment platforms. In a digital global communications environment, it undoubtedly helps each region to recognize itself and become better known by other regions without the filters that existed before.

A notable example can be seen from the contribution and variety of regional and inter-regional trade practices. *Tianguis* and other traditional trading sites in towns located throughout Mesoamerica and other parts of LAC have ancestral origins. *Tianguis* are ambulant markets in open spaces. The word originates from the Nahuatl culture and indigenous people based in Mesoamerica—and the trade practice is still preserved in the region.

This is also the case for the bazaars and caravanserais located throughout the Silk Road region, as different trading practices, routes, and corridors have endured and evolved while connecting people, goods, and territories.

More and more, art, crafts, goods, food, industrial, and agricultural products are offered along routes

from one region to another. One clear example is gastronomy and hospitality. How did this happen? How is it possible that those pieces of knowledge have been integrated in such distant regions?

Historical and cultural evidence illustrates those aspects that deserve a relevant space in the knowledge of inter-regional agendas. With digitality and new information networks, artificial intelligence could facilitate practical access, the use of research, and the creation of new knowledge for communities to concentrate on.

Could cultural patterns like roads have intertwined and arrived at LAC through the Pacific or the southern part of Africa connecting the Antarctica region through the South Atlantic and connecting the Pacific? Maritime records, local, regional, and national archives, in essence, history and culture, are valuable assets in every port on migration, routes, and experiences.

Are there other routes and directions for cultural and intercultural exchanges between the Silk Road and other countries or regions? Who travelled by foot, ships, or cars between regions in the middle of different geopolitical contexts for centuries?

Global Governance

Responding to global breaches and governance issues may be the greatest challenge for inter-regional relations. Global peace developments and solutions to conflicts that prevent sustainable and strategic development in new conditions must be avoided.

LAC and the Silk Road region are important to each other, particularly when governance is at stake. Regional governance, when related to global governance, is an inter-regional governance mechanism, a thought that is shared throughout the region.

In 2010, the UN General Assembly opened discussions on global governance with a high-level debate. The theme of the Sixty-fifth session was “Reaffirming the Central Role of the United Nations in Global Governance.” Since then, there has been an open and ongoing discussion on different dimensions of governance in regional and inter-regional spaces.

For example, dialogue on how to share good and bad experiences

in mediation, facilitation, conflict solutions, and diplomatic prevention has been considered, as has how to avoid those conflicts and problems that impede global and regional, sometimes regional conversations or with interconnected regions solutions.

The quest to reform international bodies could benefit from a greater focus on inter-regional approaches. The question of how to connect in the post-pandemic world is a crucial matter for the future of everyone and region-to-region dialogue is very important for global and inter-regional governance.

The incorporation of successful region-to-region experiences into future strategies of dialogue, conversation, information communications, and political solutions is necessary. Policymaking based on knowledge networks and new forms of communication without losing the person-to-person approach are needed. Experts, specialists, and think tank networks are also key for strengthening the capacity to respond to current challenges.

The quest to reform international bodies could benefit from a greater focus on inter-regional approaches.

Preventive diplomacy and new structures for solving mechanisms, mediation, and negotiations are vital for the future. Regional and global peace and security regimes are interdependent and interconnected all around the planet.

Peace and international security worldwide depend on regional solutions. Problem and conflict solutions based on principled policies from universal agreements by the UN Charter and other international law-based commitments are necessary to strengthen global governance and regional and inter-regional relations.

Diplomatic Interventions

Goodwill efforts for solving crises, problems, and conflicts in LAC show that they always had both internal and external support from other regions, a mechanism that can assist in solving tensions in one’s own region.

In the past, the Panama Canal crisis ended with Panama’s

sovereignty over the canal. Efforts to find political solutions to tensions and conflicts in Central America in the 1980s and 1990s have been added to global peace efforts in the last decades, with the support of the international community.

Mexico has hosted the talks is supporting Colombia’s efforts to consolidate peace, and there is regional support for the current Colombian integral peace effort, along with Norway Chile, and other countries from other regions.

Mexico is also supporting various UN efforts, including helping to meet Haiti’s humanitarian needs and Norwegian facilitation and mediation efforts. These, as well as Turkish and related efforts to advance the political talks between Venezuela’s different political parties, are being welcomed in the region.

Before the pandemic, the image of other regions and the sense that they were geographically far and rather unreachable and inaccessible for practically any

It is imperative to develop much deeper modalities of inter-regional communication, for without the more active participation of states from these two regions, reform efforts can hardly be expected to take full account of their interests.

economic, political, military, cultural, and religious factors, as well as philosophical or ideological reasons, may have also contributed to such conceptions.

Nonetheless, they gave way to flexible societal networks that are currently widely recognized and applied. Such perceived distances were enhanced by language barriers and an adversarial vision in global competition. However, most of the time, they simply did not know or were unaware of the existence of other regions, except by name. These were additional difficulties for regions to relate with one another.

Noteworthy is that in the UN General Assembly, generally speaking, resolutions that support peace and stability efforts in LAC have received the support of Türkiye and the countries that make up the Silk Road region—and vice versa.

For Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations System—particularly the General Assembly and the Security Council—is the most privileged space for agreement and

collaboration between regions. In this regard, it is important to underline that LAC and Silk Road region countries are bound closely together by their advocacy of strict adherence to the cornerstone principles of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of *all* UN member states.

Final Considerations

Reasons and ways to collaborate, cooperate, and foster mutual understanding are available for region-to-region approaches. There is already a growing interest for doing so both in LAC and the Silk Road region.

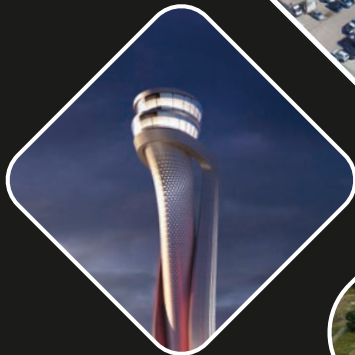
It is imperative to develop much deeper modalities of inter-regional communication, for without the more active participation of states from these two regions, reform efforts can hardly be expected to take full account of their interests. This would mean that, again, as in the past, other regions will remain as dominant as they have been in the context of global governance. This, it seems to me, should not be allowed to come to pass. **BD**

**GƏNCLİYİNİ
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BAKU DIALOGUES

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