

**2025 WINTER
FEATURE ISSUE**



**THE FUTURE
OF
MULTILATERALISM**

GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS



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Dear Readers,

Multilateralism is shifting. Institutions that once promised cooperation and stability now face growing distrust. The rules that shape the global order no longer feel secure, and the actors who enforce them often lack legitimacy. This issue looks ahead.

The future of multilateralism is not unfolding in a single conference room or treaty negotiation. It is taking shape across contested landscapes, legal grey zones, and geopolitical flashpoints. In Argentina, Indigenous communities are fighting to protect their land from lithium extraction wrapped in the language of green development. In Southeast Asia, China is building infrastructure and influence through the Belt and Road Initiative, challenging old alliances. On the Moon, new legal frameworks compete to define ownership and responsibility in outer space. In Ukraine and Gaza, the global response reveals who receives justice and who is ignored.

These pieces expose a world where power often outweighs principle, but they also highlight efforts to resist, reimagine, and reclaim the idea of shared governance. They challenge us to see multilateralism not as something broken or obsolete, but as something still being shaped by those who refuse to accept the status quo.

We hope this issue encourages reflection, sparks debate, and opens new conversations. Thank you for reading.

*Editors-in-Chief
Steffi Hebel and Ada Trybuchowska*

SELECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY: THE CASE OF UKRAINE AND GAZA

By Krithik Sivabalan. Edited by Tasnia Reza, Aurora Schatz.



Selective Accountability

The wars in Ukraine and Gaza are nearing their end, yet a lasting and ethical peace remains uncertain. American President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin are engaging in negotiations to end the War in Ukraine, with talks of land concessions to Russia. At the same time, Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu propose expelling 1.8 million Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to Arab states like Jordan and Egypt; this proposal outlines that the U.S. will assume control over Gaza to oversee its reconstruction with an American and Israeli vision. While the proposed settlements have sidelined the voices of Ukrainians and Palestinians, it is clear that U.S. foreign policy is far more sympathetic to Ukraine, defending its territorial integrity while dismissing Palestinians' right to remain in their homeland.

Trump's divergent stance reflects a broader trend in the foreign policies of many countries in the Global North and highlights a fundamental flaw in the existing international order: political alliances take precedence over universal principles in multilateral approaches to conflict resolution.

The selective responses to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Gaza War demonstrate how geopolitical interests distort the application of international law and punitive measures against aggressor states. When global responses to conflict are shaped by strategic alliances rather than consistent humanitarian principles, multilateral institutions lose credibility, and lasting peace becomes increasingly elusive. While this has long been a feature of international relations, it has been made more apparent by the inconsistent responses to these wars, signaling a bleak future for multilateral cooperation towards conflict resolution.

A Unified Stand: The Global North's Swift Response to Russia's Invasion

The international reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been swift and decisive. On February 24, 2022, when Russian forces launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine to depose its government, most states united in condemnation – except for five that voted against and 35 that abstained at the UN. In particular, the Global North stood firm in opposition. Sanctions were imposed, foreign investments were withdrawn, and Russia was expelled or suspended from key international organizations, including the UN Human Rights Council and the Council of Europe. The plight of Ukrainian civilians was a foremost concern, with war crimes like that of the Bucha Massacres making global headlines. The Global North provided extensive military and financial aid

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to defend Ukraine's sovereignty and penalize Russian aggression. When the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin – primarily for the forced deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia – there was widespread support. In essence, the Global North stood united in unwavering support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russia's actions.

A Fractured Response: The Divisive Reaction to Israel's War in Gaza

In contrast, the response to Israel's actions in the Gaza War has been far less united. The war began on October 7th, when Hamas, the governing authority in Gaza, launched an attack on Israel, killing nearly 1,200 Israelis in a single day and taking 220 civilians hostage. Many states of the Global North viewed Israel's military response as self-defense. However, despite the many crimes against humanity committed by Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and the humanitarian catastrophe brought by the war, Israel has not faced the same level of international pressure as Russia. The current state of Gaza is apocalyptic: more than 64,000 Palestinians have been killed, including nearly 10,000

children; the population is at risk of facing famine; basic services are virtually obsolete; prisoners of war and civilian detainees are tortured and raped; civilians are killed at point blank; and airstrikes across the Gaza Strip, often targeting schools, mosques, hospitals, and residential buildings, have left the landscape in rubble with Gaza's infrastructure and housing nearly wiped out.

Despite condemnations from numerous countries, the United Nations, and humanitarian organizations, and investigations from the International Court of Justice and the ICC, states of the Global North hesitate to act decisively. While certain actions have elicited strong responses from the Global North – Israel's attempted invasion of Rafah, for example, prompted strict warnings from its allies, including the United States – Israel has not faced the kind of economic and diplomatic pressure imposed on Russia. Even when Israeli tanks deliberately struck a clearly marked post operated by the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, causing injuries to 15 peacekeepers, several of Israel's allies condemned the action, but did not hold Israel accountable.

Even when international bodies like the ICC offer avenues for action, the Global North hesitates to act. When the ICC issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes, the international response was

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divided, particularly in the global north – unlike the warrants for Vladimir Putin. The U.S. for example supported the ICC's actions against Putin, but strongly rejected the warrants for Israeli leaders and even sanctioned ICC officials. Other states in the Global North acknowledged the ICC's legitimacy but hesitated to respond decisively. Germany, for example, stated the warrants present a "host of difficult questions to answer", while France affirmed Israel's immunity since it is not a signatory to the ICC's founding statute – it made no such exception for Putin, despite Russia also not being a party to the Statute.

The Role of Alliances: How Geopolitical Interests Shape Responses

The contrasting international responses to the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza stem largely from longstanding strategic alliances. Global North nations, historically aligned against Russia, perceive Ukraine as a crucial strategic partner, serving as a buffer between Europe and Russia. As a result, they were less restrained in their swift and rightful condemnation and punitive action against Russian aggression.

On the other hand, Israel has cultivated strong ties with Global North countries, thus restraining the Global North's desire to pressure Israel and express support for Gaza. The most relevant strategic alliance for Israel is with the United States, the world's foremost superpower. Due to the value of Israel's demand in the American weapons market, a historical alliance forged during the Cold War, and Israel's strategic value in securing American interests and influence in the region, Israel remains a strong ally of the United States and the states of the Global North. This enduring alliance explains the United States' extensive financial support – nearly \$310 billion of aid since 1947 – and diplomatic support – the US often vetoes UN Resolutions critical of Israeli actions in the occupied territories, an example being the veto of a ceasefire resolution on November 20th, 2024. While other states of the Global North may not have nearly as strong of an alliance, their general alignment with Israel, for similar reasons, contributes to the disparity in responses between the two conflicts.

Eroding Multilateralism and Strengthening Impunity

This inconsistency reveals a troubling reality: violations of international law are intolerable – unless they are committed by an ally. When the rules of war are applied inconsistently, they cease to be rules at all; instead, they become instruments of political convenience. As a result, certain states may feel emboldened to act with

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impunity, knowing that their strategic alliances will shield them from meaningful repercussions. Moreover, the failure of a consistent multilateral approach erodes trust in international organizations and weakens multilateral cooperation. Many states of the Global North continue to provide Israel with military aid and maintain robust diplomatic and economic ties, despite engendering suffering dubbed a 'betrayal of humanity' by UN Officials. In contrast, Russia faces continued international isolation for its invasion of Ukraine.

Multilateralism is only as strong as the global commitment to enforcing it consistently. When political alliances dictate responses to war crimes and humanitarian crises, the global order loses its ability to function as a fair and just system. Hypocrisy in foreign policy is not exclusive to the Global North. Countries such as South Africa, China, and Iran have vocally condemned Israel while remaining ambivalent, if not at times supportive, of Russia's actions in Ukraine. However, the Global North's hypocrisy is particularly consequential because of its disproportionate influence over international institutions, financial

systems, and global governance mechanisms. Consequently, groups like the Palestinians are left to endure hardship without access to recourse – in the form of a multilateral effort to enforce international law and pressure aggressors – that could alleviate their suffering.

If the international community continues to selectively enforce accountability, it risks rendering global forums and institutions like the UN and the ICC obsolete, fostering a world where power and alliances, rather than principle, determines justice. Without a genuine commitment to applying the same standards to all conflicts, multilateralism will remain an ideal rather than a reality.



By Krithik Sivabalan

Edited by Tasnia Reza, Aurora Schatz

THE LAWMAKING CHALLENGE IN INTERNATIONAL SPACE LAW: RESOURCE USE AND BEYOND

By Matthew Chasmar. Edited by Julia Chapman, Aurora Schatz.



Resource Use and Beyond

When the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite to orbit the Earth, it sparked a “Space Race” with the United States. Against the backdrop of their intense Cold War rivalry, both countries competed to demonstrate their technological prowess through increasingly ambitious achievements in space. In November 1957, less than a month after launching its first satellite, the Soviet Union launched a second, which carried the first animal to orbit. Then, in 1961, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human to fly in space. Not to be outdone, the U.S. initiated an ambitious agenda of robotic and crewed space exploration, culminating in the Apollo Program, which landed the first humans on the Moon.

Although the space race was defined by technological competition, it was also a time of legal innovation. Advancing the new domain of spaceflight demanded international law to establish common principles and rules. Thus, both the superpowers and their allies turned to multilateralism through the United Nations system.

In 1959, the UN General Assembly established the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). In 1963, COPUOS adopted a non-binding Declaration of Legal Principles followed shortly by the binding Outer Space Treaty in 1966. Described as the “Magna Carta of Outer Space,” the OST is the foundational document of international space law.

The exploration and use of outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development, and shall be the province of all mankind.

While the principle of ensuring space exploration benefits everyone is foundational, as space activities advance, new rules, regulations and guidelines become necessary. A crucial example of this is the debate surrounding space resource use. Article II of the OST states that:

Outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means.

In drafting Article II, the OST’s authors intended to prevent states from making territorial claims in space. However, whether the language of “national appropriation” also prevents the extraction of space resources, such as

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through mining, remains a controversial issue.

Following the Outer Space Treaty, the members of COPUOS would go on to negotiate four other space treaties: the Rescue Agreement (1968), Liability Convention (1972), Registration Convention (1976), and Moon Agreement (1984). While the first three of these treaties have been relatively uncontroversial, the fifth – the Moon Agreement – highlights the limitations of the multilateral approach to space law, and the challenges of translating the OST's principles into more concrete rules.

The Moon Agreement seeks to further develop provisions of the Outer Space Treaty pertaining to the Moon and other celestial bodies. Article 11 of this Agreement declares that lunar resources are the "common heritage of mankind" and obligates States Parties to collaborate on an international regime to govern lunar resource use. It further outlines the goals of this regime, which include ensuring that lunar resources are developed sustainably and safely, and that the benefits of such resources are shared equitably across developed and developing

nations. Unfortunately, the Moon Agreement has never had more than eighteen States Parties, and no major spacefaring states have ratified the agreement.

Interstate competition in space is on the rise again, in what some have described as a "new space race." Through its Artemis Program, the U.S. plans to once again send astronauts to the Moon, with longer-term ambitions for a crewed mission to Mars. Meanwhile, China has built its own space station, sent record-breaking robotic missions to the Moon, and seeks to land its own astronauts there by 2030.

The competitors in this "new space race" include many countries that are relatively new to space travel, such as India, as well as non-state actors. Today, spaceflight is considered a growing industry. For example, SpaceX, an American company, has achieved great commercial success by developing the reusable Falcon 9 rocket, which has greatly decreased the cost of launching objects into orbit. SpaceX regularly conducts missions previously reserved for government space agencies, such as by transporting cargo and astronauts to the International Space Station.

Regarding resource use, space mining has received growing interest, spurred on by the abundance of resources on the Moon and other celestial bodies.

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Last year, the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration awarded contracts to private companies to collect lunar regolith for the first time. Closer to home, the Canadian Space Agency has given research funding to companies developing space mining technology.

To meet the need for new space law, states no longer readily turn to COPUOUS. Instead, they have sought to develop new law through non-binding “minilateral” declarations developed outside of the UN system. The most prominent example of this approach is the Artemis Accords, a series of non-binding bilateral agreements drafted by the U.S.

The Accords seek to facilitate effective and mutually beneficial cooperation in space, with thirteen sections pertaining to a wide range of civil space activities. The Accords also promote an interpretation of Article II favourable to the burgeoning space mining industry. Most notably, Section 10(2) of the Accords asserts that:

The Signatories affirm that the extraction of space resources does not inherently constitute national appropriation under Article II of the Outer Space Treaty, and that contracts and other legal instruments should be consistent with this treaty.

As of February 2025, 53 states have signed the Accords. Despite this large and growing membership, the Accords are far from universally accepted. China and Russia, both major spacefaring states, have criticized the Accords, and are pursuing a rival initiative: the International Lunar Research Station (ILRS). The ILRS is a planned multinational moon base, with thirteen member states. These members must sign the (unpublished) ILRS Principles, which are thought to be akin to the Accords.

The Accords and ILRS are competing to define the future of international space law. The pursuit of these initiatives outside the UN increases the risk of fragmentation – that different groups of states will follow different rules in space. However, there is room for coexistence among different approaches: although Saudi Arabia withdrew from the Moon Agreement after signing the Artemis Accords, Mexico and Australia remain members of both initiatives. As well, in December 2024 Thailand became the first state to participate in both the Accords and ILRS.

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Moreover, even in a world of competing unilateral frameworks, there is still room for multilateralism to succeed. In 2022, the Legal Subcommittee of COPUOS established a Working Group on the Legal Aspects of Space Resource Activity. Among the tasks of this Working Group is assessing the need for new international governance instruments on resource use.

COPUOS has over 100 members, and operates by consensus. While consensus has its disadvantages, it also ensures that measures advanced through COPUOS represent broad, multilateral consensus among states. So far, this is a characteristic neither the Artemis Accords nor ILRS can offer. For this reason, the UN system may yet regain its position as the primary forum for addressing current challenges in international space law.

By Matthew Chasmar

Edited by Julia Chapman, Aurora Schatz



FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD, OR CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD

By Isabella Facchinelli. Edited by Tasnia Reza, Aurora Schatz.



China's Belt and Road

Last winter, after finishing my undergraduate degree and feeling completely burnt out, I decided to take a gap year and travel across Southeast Asia to learn about local cultures and heritage and simply take a break from academic life. About a month into my journey, I arrived in Laos—arguably one of Southeast Asia's poorest countries, with a GDP per capita 31 times smaller than Canada's and 18.3% of people living below the poverty line. To my astonishment, when searching for transportation options between towns, I discovered Laos offered a high speed rail. How could a country struggling economically with thousands living below the poverty line possess such advanced infrastructure? Canada, significantly wealthier, does not yet have a high-speed rail, yet this small, landlocked Southeast Asian nation boasts a \$6 billion high speed railway spanning over 400 kilometers.

Upon further investigation, I learned that this railway was constructed by China as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Started in 2013 by Chinese President Xi Jinping, the Belt and Road Initiative is an ambitious global infrastructure project, creating

an expansive network of ports, roads, railways, and other infrastructure connecting China to the world. It is now the most expensive project in history, reinforcing China's role as a rising global power. The initiative draws comparisons to the U.S.-led Marshall Plan following World War II but with significantly more skepticism regarding China's true intentions. Many accuse China of employing debt-trap diplomacy—a strategy intended to increase global influence and diminish the role of Western countries, particularly under the Trump administration, which has heightened tensions surrounding multilateral relationships.

In an era where multilateral relationships and institutions are increasingly questioned, China's Belt and Road Initiative prompts critical reflection: Is it genuinely an alternative model for global cooperation and economic development, or merely a strategic scheme to assert dominance?

The Belt and Road Initiative encompasses both land ("Belt") and maritime ("Road") routes, reviving the ancient Silk Road pathways. Specific projects include the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and various maritime Silk Road investments in strategically located ports. Details remain elusive, with approximately 2,600 projects across over 100 countries expected to reach investments between

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\$1.2 and \$1.3 trillion by 2027. China uses the BRI not only to secure trade routes—importing raw materials and exporting value-added goods—but also to create a web of political interdependence.

Supporters of the BRI argue that the initiative could lift approximately 7 million people out of poverty and significantly boost global trade. However, the darker side reveals troubling debt accumulation for countries such as Djibouti and Sri Lanka, whose debts to China have soared dramatically. Djibouti's debt to China, for instance, has reached 70% of its GDP. Sri Lanka, facing overwhelming debt obligations, was forced to cede control of a major port to China for 99 years after defaulting on its loans. These examples raise profound questions about compromised sovereignty and economic independence.

Thus, the Belt and Road Initiative sits at the intersection of opportunity and threat, embodying competing visions of global development—China's model of state-driven economic growth versus the Western approach championed by institutions like the IMF

and the World Bank. As tensions escalate between China's autocratic governance style and Western democratic ideals, the BRI's future significance for global multilateralism remains an open, urgent question.

The Trump administration's recent pullback on foreign aid and multilateral commitments has created a significant opportunity for China's Belt and Road Initiative to expand its global influence. As the U.S. reduces its overseas footprint by scaling back USAID funding and support to global institutions, China can swiftly move into this space, positioning itself as a viable alternative through targeted infrastructure investments and economic partnerships.

However, this shift is more nuanced than it initially appears. The expansion of the BRI also faces considerable hurdles, notably increasing skepticism from recipient nations wary of becoming overly dependent on Chinese loans. The troubling experiences of Sri Lanka and Djibouti have become cautionary tales, prompting countries to approach China's offerings with greater caution.

Moreover, China's opaque decision making processes and geopolitical motives contrast starkly with the conditions-based Western aid model, which, while often seen as more transparent, has also faced criticism for imposing stringent requirements and contributing to debt distress in some nations.

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This complexity prompts countries to carefully reassess their options, weighing potential long-term implications for national sovereignty and economic autonomy.

Ultimately, while the Trump administration's policy shifts provide short-term openings for China, the longer-term consequences are far less predictable. Reflecting back on my initial surprise in Laos, the presence of advanced infrastructure amid widespread poverty captures the very essence of the BRI dilemma. Is it genuinely lifting nations out of poverty, or could it entrench dependency and vulnerability? As countries navigate these uncertain waters, the balance between opportunity and risk embodied by the Belt and Road Initiative remains an essential global conversation.

By Isabella Facchinelli

Edited by Tasnia Reza, Aurora Schatz



WHITE GOLD OR GREEN COLONIALISM? THE LITHIUM BOOM IN ARGENTINA AND THE STRUGGLE FOR INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

By Maria Fernanda de Almeida. Edited by Tasnia Reza, Aurora Schatz.



White Gold or Green Colonialism?

On March 4, I attended the “Critical Minerals in Argentina,” an event hosted by the Canadian Council of the Americas in Toronto. It brought together key figures in Argentina’s mining sector, including Luis Lucero, Secretary of Mining, and Pablo Quirno, Secretary of Finance, as well as the Governors of Jujuy, Mendoza, and San Juan, the Vice-Governor of Catamarca, and the Minister of Production and Sustainable Development of Salta. The ministers emphasized Argentina’s commitment to attracting new investors throughout the discussion. Lucero underscored the sector’s role in the global shift toward clean energy, stating, “We need to do things right [...] mining is essential for electric vehicle production and the clean energy policies in the developed world.”

The rapid expansion of lithium mining in Argentina—often referred to as “white gold” due to its essential role in modern technology and renewable energy—presents economic opportunities and significant challenges. President Javier Milei’s administration has prioritized mining development as part of its broader strategy to reshape Argentina’s economy. The government

has introduced reforms to attract private investment, including proposals to privatize state-owned mining companies and eliminate the 8% export tax on mining products. These policies aim to position Argentina as a global leader in lithium production. However, they also raise concerns about the potential for increased exploitation of indigenous lands and resources, often without adequate protections for community rights. The lithium industry exemplifies a wicked problem with interwoven social, environmental, and economic dimensions that lack straightforward solutions.

The Lithium Triangle—shared by Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile—contains some of the world’s largest lithium reserves and is home to indigenous communities whose ancestral lands, water sources, and cultural traditions are increasingly threatened by large-scale extraction. The expansion of mining disrupts indigenous ways of life, leading to cultural erosion and displacement. Although while in Toronto, Minister Lucero asserted that there has been a shift in how natural resources are managed, with mining now recognized as a source of wealth rather than an environmental threat, tensions persist. Like many Latin American nations, Argentina struggles to balance economic development with protecting indigenous rights, exposing gaps in inclusive governance. Despite international frameworks such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which

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advocates for self-determination, indigenous voices are often marginalized in policy decisions.

For centuries, indigenous communities have faced marginalization and dispossession, particularly in the context of resource extraction. This issue was highlighted at the recent Andean Intercultural Summit of Communities Affected by Lithium Exploitation, held from January 17 to 19, where over 200 representatives from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Peru condemned the adverse social and environmental impacts of lithium mining. Verónica Chavez, a water guardian from Jujuy, articulated a growing concern, stating, "for more than a decade, ancestral territory began to be coveted until it became the Lithium Triangle. Magnates like Elon Musk and companies from countries like Germany and China land threatening to destroy a peaceful way of life." Her statement reflects anxieties about foreign investors prioritizing profits over environmental and social sustainability.

A particularly pressing issue is the impact of lithium extraction on water resources. Lithium mining in Argentina

primarily relies on evaporative brine extraction, which consumes significant amounts of water. The high-altitude salt flats in Jujuy, Salta, and Catamarca are already arid regions with scarce water. A 2022 study by Argentina's National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET) found that lithium brine extraction depletes underground water reserves critical for indigenous agriculture and daily life. These concerns have spurred protests and legal battles. For example, in 2021, indigenous groups in Salinas Grandes successfully halted a lithium project through a court ruling that affirmed their right to prior consultation, as outlined in International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169.

During the event in Toronto, Argentine governors, including Alfredo Cornejo of Mendoza and Marcelo Orrego of San Juan, emphasized the importance of international standards and regulatory improvements in ensuring responsible mining practices. Cornejo noted that "mining is also an economic and social policy tool." At the same time, Orrego underscored the role of trust and collaboration, stating, "Trust is fundamental—without it, no project can move forward." Despite these assurances, concerns remain about the disparity between official narratives and the realities on the ground.

One of the most contentious issues is the inadequacy of consultation processes. Many Indigenous communities argue that mining

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companies and government officials engage in superficial consultations that fail to secure meaningful consent. At the January Summit, participants criticized the lack of transparency and coercion tactics used to silence dissenting voices. Some communities have accepted mining permits in the Salinas Grandes and Laguna Guayatayoc basins, creating internal divisions that companies exploit to claim local support. These fractures undermine collective resistance and distract from broader ecological and social concerns.

Despite the economic potential of lithium mining, the benefits are not equitably distributed. JPMorgan forecasts that Argentina will become the world's second-largest lithium producer by 2027, and provinces like Jujuy and Catamarca already rely heavily on lithium exports since the 1990s. However, local communities see only a slight improvement in living conditions as they continue to denounce human rights abuses from companies and the government.

The provincial government of Jujuy stands accused of prioritizing commercial interests over human

rights, particularly those of Indigenous communities. While Indigenous peoples are theoretically entitled to "prior, free, and informed consultation," recent constitutional reforms have effectively curtailed their rights. In June 2023, Governor Gerardo Morales led a clandestine effort to amend the provincial constitution, introducing provisions that reclassified Indigenous land as "public land destined for production" and declared all provincial water sources as state property—measures that conveniently facilitate lithium extraction. These reforms not only undermine Indigenous land rights but also criminalize social protests, effectively suppressing opposition to resource exploitation. The crackdown on dissent became evident when protests erupted against the constitutional changes, with demonstrators facing violent repression. Reports from activists and local media detail police firing rubber bullets at protestors' faces and eyes, leading to severe injuries, including cases of blindness among teenagers. The broader issue extends beyond Jujuy, as researchers estimate that 54% of minerals essential for the energy transition are located on or near Indigenous lands.

This raises a critical question: Is the shift to green energy being built on the systematic displacement and marginalization of Indigenous peoples? By facilitating lithium mining at the expense of human rights, Jujuy's government exemplifies the troubling

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trade-offs inherent in the rush for critical minerals.

Yet, misinformation and corporate influence continue to shape narratives, often highlighting job creation and foreign investment while downplaying environmental risks and community displacement. Greater transparency is necessary to ensure that all stakeholders, particularly indigenous communities, are well-informed about the impacts of lithium extraction. In response to growing concerns, Argentina joined the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2018, committing to international standards for disclosing mining-related revenues and environmental impacts. Technological advancements such as remote visualization tools are also being explored to enhance environmental monitoring, though their implementation remains inconsistent.

Nevertheless, beyond economic and environmental considerations, mining activities contribute to cultural erosion as traditional practices and community cohesion are increasingly undermined. Jimena Cruz Mamani, representing the Atacameños Peoples, articulated these fears, stating,

"Indigenous communities do not want to be part of an energy transition that generates territorial dispossession." The sentiment reflected a strong demand for binding prior consultation processes that respect Indigenous sovereignty and traditional governance structures.

Ultimately, Argentina stands at a crossroads. Lithium mining presents an opportunity to stabilize the nation's economy and attract foreign investment, but it must not come at the cost of indigenous rights and environmental sustainability. The government's deregulatory approach must be balanced with stronger safeguards to ensure that economic growth does not exacerbate historical inequalities. If Argentina can establish a more equitable and responsible lithium extraction framework, it could set a precedent for ethical resource management in Latin America and beyond.



*By Maria Fernanda de Almeida
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