

BEYOND ORDER AND DISORDER: STATECRAFT, GREAT-POWER RIVALRY, HYPER-TRANSACTIONALISM AND INTERMEDIARY STATES

Editorial Foreword

The contemporary international system is increasingly characterized neither by stable order nor by complete disorder, but by what may be termed *hyper-transactionalism*: a condition in which political relationships, security commitments, economic partnerships, and diplomatic alignments become increasingly contingent, negotiable, and subject to continuous renegotiation. Unlike the institutionalized bargains that underpinned the post-Cold War order, *hyper-transactionalism* is marked by the weakening of universal norms, the erosion of predictable strategic commitments, and the growing primacy of situational calculations of power and interest. In such an environment, great powers compete through flexible coalitions, economic coercion, and selective diplomacy, while intermediary states and regional actors seek to become pathfinders in an increasingly fluid geopolitical landscape. The result is an international system that cannot be adequately described through the conventional dichotomy of order and disorder. Rather, it represents a dynamic and contested political space in which power, legitimacy, and security are continuously negotiated across multiple levels of interaction.

The discursive architecture of contemporary global politics functions as a primary engine of statecraft, relying fundamentally upon the continuous, strategic production of spatial imaginaries to sustain its systemic coherence. Modern hegemony thrives on the active, performative scripting of specific territories. By artificially categorizing certain geographies as inherently volatile zones of danger while designating others as purely logistical zones of transit, dominant powers successfully validate and operationalize aggressive material interventions. Today, however, this rigid framework faces unprecedented disruption. We are witnessing an era of radical deterritorialization, a profound geopolitical rupture, where established cartographies and inherited spatial boundaries fracture under the immense weight of novel, transnational performative practices. Consequently, the mapping of the world becomes an exercise in power projection, where cartography serves as a weapon to marginalize alternative modes of existence.

It is within this fraught intersection of collapsing borders and resilient statecraft that the authors in this collection situate their critical inquiry. By meticulously

interrogating these shifting, contested spatialities, they expose the profoundly constructed nature of the international order, effectively stripping away the veneer of geographic inevitability that often shields imperial projects from public scrutiny. The contributors go beyond simple observation by tracing the intricate ways in which diverse political actors actively rewrite the spatial grammar of survival.

Ultimately, the central intellectual contribution of this third issue of the *YSU Journal of International Affairs* emerges from a shared, rigorous commitment to unmasking these performative mechanisms. Taken together, the contributions to this issue suggest that contemporary international politics is entering a period in which the boundaries between order and disorder have become increasingly blurred. The cases examined here reveal an international system shaped not by the disappearance of power, institutions, or norms, but by their ongoing renegotiation amid intensifying geopolitical competition and strategic uncertainty. From the unintended consequences of sanctions and the transformation of intermediary spaces to regional responses to multipolarity, the symbolic foundations of global governance, and enduring traditions of statecraft, the articles demonstrate that agency remains possible even under conditions of structural constraint. Yet they also highlight the growing difficulty of sustaining stable political arrangements in a world characterized by fluid alignments and transactional relationships. By bringing together diverse regional experiences and theoretical perspectives, this issue contributes to a broader understanding of how states and societies find their paths in an era of *hyper-transactionalism*, great-power rivalry, and contested geopolitical futures. In doing so, it invites renewed reflection on the changing nature of international order and on the forms of statecraft required to manage an increasingly fragmented and unpredictable world.

The highlight of this issue is the discussion article by Armenia's Defense Minister Mr. Suren Papikyan, and his advisor, Harutyun Matevosyan, which offers a timely analysis of Armenia's transition from military modernization to comprehensive institutional transformation. Operating at the critical nexus of strategic theory, contemporary statecraft, and high-level policy execution, their contribution dismantles the pervasive assumption that sovereign defense is merely an exercise in technological procurement. The authors argue that sustainable defense capability depends not only on advanced weapons and technologies but also on effective military management, mission command, adaptive command structures, professional military education, human resource development, and organizational learning. By examining the 2024–2035 Transformation Concept, the article demonstrates how decentralized command, a professional NCO corps, improved reserve systems, and enhanced morale collectively form the foundations of a modern, adaptive, and resilient military institution capable of meeting twenty-first-century security challenges. The study persuasively situates Armenia's reforms within broader debates

on contemporary warfare, emphasizing that sustainable defense capabilities arise from institutional quality as much as from technological superiority. Integrating theoretical insights with practical policy analysis, the article presents military transformation as a continuous process of organizational adaptation, offering an important contribution to contemporary scholarship on defense reform, military management, and strategic resilience in small states.

Gor Petrosyan grounds his inquiry by exploring the unintended consequences of economic coercion. His analysis of Armenian strategic maneuvering following the 2022 Western sanctions against Russia reveals a fascinating inversion of vulnerability. Sanctions regimes typically operate on the mechanical presumption that financial isolation forces political capitulation. Petrosyan details how Yerevan actively subverted this logic through a phenomenon he identifies as the “sanctions paradox.” The Armenian state absorbed the sudden influx of displaced financial capital to finance a historic decoupling from its traditional Russian security guarantees. Petrosyan introduces the concept of commercial deterrence to explain this pivot. The government embedded American infrastructural capital directly into its national territory through the TRIPP transit corridor. This maneuver substituted global supply chain integration for the hollow promises of a military patron. The intervention illustrates how small states financialize geographic liabilities into sophisticated asymmetric shields.

Gréta Höhn executes a necessary theoretical disruption by forcing the discipline to confront the unforgiving material realities of geography. Her structural diagnosis of the Russia-Ukraine war discards the prevalent focus on immediate political aggression. Höhn resurrects classical geopolitics to demonstrate the absolute untenability of the intermediary buffer premise in contemporary Eastern Europe. Ukraine suffered a tragedy spatially preordained by its capture between mutually exclusive integration projects. The overlapping claims of the Euroatlantic and Russian spheres rendered sustained neutrality structurally impossible. The collapse of this delicate balancing act exposes a brutal truth regarding modern sovereignty. States occupying heavily polarized pivot spaces face an inevitable descent into deeply institutionalized militarization or coercive territorial dismemberment.

The normative diplomatic frameworks designed to manage such territorial violence face rapid and deliberate degradation. Garik Keryan pivots the editorial focus toward the strategic implications of this institutional collapse by analyzing the projected 2025 shift in United States foreign policy. The New Yalta architecture represents a terrifying retreat into hyper transactional bilateralism. Washington demonstrated a stark willingness during the proposed Alaska summit to bypass traditional European allies. The restrictive ultimatum presented to Kyiv subordinated Ukrainian territorial integrity to extractive rare earth interests. Keryan argues compellingly that replacing multilateral normative commitments with unilateral ultima-

tums permanently institutionalizes regional volatility. The resulting diplomatic paralysis forces secondary powers into unshielded and accelerated arms races across the continent.

Kuralay Baizakova initiates a crucial scalar shift connecting macro-level geopolitical friction directly to localized societal fragility. Her investigation into Central Asian youth radicalization aggressively strips the phenomenon of its conventional ideological mystification. Baizakova synthesizes domestic vulnerability with transnational competition to position extremism strictly as a highly adaptive by-product. This radicalization thrives within specific socioeconomic voids rather than religious vacuums. The digital recruitment logistics utilized by subnational actors are actively facilitated by broader struggles over regional transit routes. This condensed analytical positioning demands a complete rethinking of regional security responses. Reintegration strategies require a holistic approach extending beyond securitized endeavors to address the combustible fusion of global power competition and local marginalization.

The ideological predicates for this contemporary landscape of instability require rigorous historical excavation. Artak Khachatryan and his colleagues completely reframe the temporal arc of our systemic crisis. They shift the locus of analysis away from material capabilities to interrogate the symbolic warfare of the period following the September 11 attacks. The war on terror is conceptualized here as an expansive ontological offensive. The American state manufactured a permanent exception by leveraging the military and entertainment complex to domesticate a rigid civilizational binary. This cultural production successfully masked sweeping geostrategic ambitions across the Eurasian landmass for two decades. The authors argue that the 2021 collapse of the Afghan state represents far more than a localized military catastrophe. It marks the terminal ideological bankruptcy of a unipolar order lacking the capacity to reconcile triumphant cultural narratives with glaring material limitations on the ground.

Vimbiso Juliet Mapfidza decisively dismantles the most pervasive myth dominating contemporary international relations scholarship regarding the Global South. The emergence of a diffused multipolar world is routinely celebrated as a guarantor of structural autonomy for developing nations. Mapfidza anchors her deep interpretive expansion in Southern Africa to expose the severe analytical limits of this celebratory consensus. She shifts the theoretical terrain to critical international political economy to explore the harsh realities of conditional agency. The multiplication of external suitors certainly expands the menu of diplomatic options available to regional actors. This newfound diplomatic agility provides the superficial illusion of authentic sovereign leverage. Yet Mapfidza provocatively demonstrates that the underlying architecture of global capital remains entirely unbroken and largely unquestioned. The absolute parameters of sovereignty are still heavily

dictated by extractive commodity dependence and asymmetric financial hierarchies. Her intervention provides a devastating corrective to the existing literature. It proves that a multipolar global system merely diversifies the managers of systemic inequality without fundamentally altering the economic foundation of exploitation.

Zhak Manukyan concludes this issue with a review of the *Arthashastra*, one of the most sophisticated works on statecraft in world political thought. It highlights Kautilya's systemic conception of governance, integrating institutional organization, enlightened leadership, the Mandala Theory of interstate relations, diplomacy, military strategy, and foreign policy into a coherent analytical framework. The review convincingly argues that Kautilya anticipated key principles of modern political realism and institutional governance while emphasizing the interdependence of domestic stability and external power. By drawing insightful comparisons with Aristotle, it situates the *Arthashastra* within the broader tradition of classical political philosophy. Overall, the review establishes the work as an enduring and indispensable resource for scholars of international relations, strategic studies, and political theory.

Thus, we may note that this issue demonstrates that the contemporary international system is best understood not as a transition from order to disorder, but as the emergence of a condition of *hyper-transactionalism*, in which great-power rivalry, weakening institutional commitments, and the strategic adaptation of intermediary or semi-peripheral states are reshaping the practice of statecraft and the foundations of international order and continuously renegotiated forms of power and security. The contributions assembled in this issue demonstrate that international politics is defined by adaptive dynamics rather than by stable order or pure disorder. Across diverse regional contexts, intermediary states and regional actors are shown not merely as objects of great-power competition but as active participants in shaping geopolitical outcomes. Collectively, these studies underscore that agency persists even under conditions of structural constraint, as well as the growing importance of adaptive statecraft in an increasingly fragmented international landscape and an uncertain geopolitical future.

Dr. Tigran Yepremyan



Editor-in-Chief of YSU Journal of International Affairs

Dr. Suren Tadevosyan



Editorial Manager of YSU Journal of International Affairs

28.06.2026

Yerevan, Armenia