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THE HUMAN COSTS OF EXITING AND REVISIONING TRADE AND INVESTMENT AGREEMENTS: LOCAL COMMUNITY INTERESTS, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GLOBAL POLITICS

Diane A. Desierto*

International law is both a process of assertion and reliance and a system of principles and rules: together they constitute the course of international law, confounding those critics who simplistically assert that it can be one (process) or the other (system) but not both.

. . . we treat the international legal system as an axiom—a social fact. We differ on many other ideas: new subjects, the limits of multilateralism, fragmentation, pluralism and universality, as a result of which we continue to debate the true characteristics of the international system.\(^1\)

States intent upon effecting changes in the law will naturally prefer to take the risk of a comprehensive and ruthless change of which they themselves are the authors than to entrust the international community with the task of an alteration of the status quo on the basis of justice.\(^2\)

Exit and Change in Treaty-Making Processes

In the ordinary course of diplomatic exchanges, treaty exits and treaty revisions are pedestrian matters for states.\(^3\) They are just as much an instrument for deploying any state’s foreign policy strategy—and extracting the desired political leverage in international relations—as any ordinary treaty-making process.\(^4\) One would be hard-pressed to find examples throughout history of modern international cooperation (especially since the beginnings of

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2 5 HERSCHEUTERPACHT, DISPUTES, WAR, AND NEUTRALITY 25 (Cambridge Univ. Press 2004).


the League of Nations\(^5\)) of any state that purposely concluded treaties of a perpetual duration and that are intended to be immune from any change or termination.\(^6\)

The possible closest analogues to seemingly immutable agreements—or at least treaties that are most resistant to change or termination—are those treaties that are forged under a shared desire of the States Parties thereto to deliberately give their political, economic, and social cooperation agreements a long-term and stable character, such as those treaties referred to under Article 56 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties that do not have provisions for termination, denunciation, or withdrawal.\(^7\) Examples of treaties that might be resistant to change or termination are territorial and maritime boundary delimitation treaties, which are crafted to ensure border stability and avoid future boundary disputes,\(^8\) and multilateral treaties that establish global institutions that are reasonably expected to have a constitutionalizing nature (and, as such, ordinarily cannot be terminated as a whole without the application of Article 56 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties)—such as the Charter of the United Nations,\(^9\) the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization,\(^10\) the Rome Statute of the

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\(^6\) See Int’l Law Comm’n, Second Rep. on the Law of Treaties, U.N. Doc. A/CN.4/156 and Add. 1-3, at 62–63, ¶¶ 1–4, 8–10 (1963) (discussing the typology of surveyed treaties with various exit, revision, termination, or renewal clauses); id. at 63 ¶ 1 (noting “the comparatively small number of cases where the treaty appears expressly on its face to contemplate that it shall remain in force ‘perpetually’ . . . either by expressly providing for the treaty to remain in force indefinitely without providing for any right to denounce or withdraw from it, or by expressly excluding any right of denunciation or withdrawal without fixing any term to the treaty.”).

\(^7\) Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, art. 56(1), May 23, 1969, 1155 U.N.T.S. 331 (“A treaty which contains no provision regarding its termination and which does not provide for denunciation or withdrawal is not subject to denunciation or withdrawal unless: (a) it is established the parties intended to admit the possibility of denunciation or withdrawal; or (b) a right of denunciation or withdrawal may be implied by the nature of the treaty.”).


\(^10\) Note that the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization contains provisions on amendments (Article X), accession (Article XII), acceptance, entry into force and deposit (Article XIV), and withdrawal (Article XV), but no provision on the termination of this agreement for all Members. Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization, Apr. 15, 1994, 1867 U.N.T.S. 154.
International Criminal Court, the Bretton Woods Agreements creating the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, among others. Arguably, there are treaties that might possibly be regarded as de facto more stable, semi-permanent, or long-term in nature, because they are altogether difficult to change or exit from due to copious legal requirements, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) or the fundamental human rights treaties.

**Heightened Economic Treaty Exits and Changes**

In the canonical universe of state-driven or state-centric international law-making, a state’s decision to exit from, renegotiate, or revise existing trade and investment agreements would be perceived as part of its domaine réservé. This notion has less force in today’s international law, where individuals are equal subjects of international law as states, where states in particular bear international human rights obligations towards the individuals,

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11 Similarly, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court does not contain a provision on expiration or termination of the Statute, but does contain provisions on amendments (Articles 121 & 122), signature, ratification, approval, accession (Article 125), entry into force (Article 126), and withdrawal (Article 127). Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, July 17, 1998, 2187 U.N.T.S. 90.

12 Articles of Agreement of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development does not contain a provision for the agreement’s termination or expiration, but contains provisions on withdrawal from membership (Article VI), amendments (Article VIII), entry into force and signature (Article XI). See Articles of Agreement of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, July 22, 1944, 2 U.N.T.S. 134.


16 While other subjects of international law—groups, international organizations, non-state actors, among others—have certainly expanded authorship of international law norms, states remain the primary drivers of international law-making. See Samantha Besson, State Consent and Disagreement in International Law-Making: Dissolving the Paradox, 29 LEIDEN J. INT’L L. 289, n.6 (2016); Arnold N. Pronto, Some Thoughts on the Making of International Law, 19 EUR. J. INT’L L. 601, 602 (2008).

17 See Katja S. Ziegler, Domaine Ré servé, MAX PLANCK ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL LAW ¶ 1 (2013) (defining the domaine réservé as “the areas of State activity that are internal or domestic affairs of a State and are therefore within its domestic jurisdiction or competence . . . the domaine réservé describes areas where States are free from international obligations. . . .”).

groups, and local communities that comprise their populations, and where the latter increasingly possess more avenues to access justice against states in the international sphere.\(^{19}\)

However, a distinction can be observed from the current significantly rapid and simultaneous international economic treaty changes or exits around the world owing to pre- or post-2016 geopolitical developments.\(^{20}\) While such treaty exits or changes should not appear unusual in the ordinary life span of treaties—today’s rapid, nearly simultaneous, and geographically-ubiquitous decisions to exit from or change trade and investment treaties around the world merits an intensified analysis. The haste and pace of today’s heightened economic treaty exits and changes threaten to obscure or neglect the real human costs of these decisions to exit or revise trade and investment treaties.\(^{21}\)

A brief listing below of these geopolitical decisions to withdraw from, terminate, amend, or renegotiate existing trade and investment treaties should suffice to emphasize the extraordinary nature and scope of changes sweeping the international economic system today due to simultaneous, ubiquitous, and rapid decisions of political elites within states:

1. The “America First” foreign policy of the United States,\(^{22}\) manifested in renegotiations of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)\(^{23}\) and


the Korea-United States Free Trade Agreement (KORUS);\textsuperscript{24} the United States’ withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and its articulated openness to a renegotiated version under the renamed Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement on Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP);\textsuperscript{25} the United States’ withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change;\textsuperscript{26} and the United States’ threatened actions against the multilateral trade system under the World Trade Organization;\textsuperscript{27}

2. The United Kingdom’s 2016 Brexit decision to leave the European Union, the ongoing renegotiation of approximately 759 treaties, and the corollary changes to EU governance arising from Brexit;\textsuperscript{28}

3. China’s expenditure of over $1 Trillion (USD) to create global infrastructure corridors for its interests through approximately sixty countries under China’s One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative;\textsuperscript{29} its spearheading of the sixteen-member Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) (which spans the ten Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN], plus ASEAN’s external partners Australia, China, India,


Japan, Korea, and New Zealand); its leadership of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank; and other Chinese-led trade agreement initiatives, among various signs of economic and geopolitical expansion presaged under Chinese President Xi Jinping’s “Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” that was added during the 2017 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China; and

4. Reconfiguring global economic alliances, such as through the renamed and revised eleven-member CPTPP led by Japan; a new proposed alliance between the United States, Japan, India, and Australia as an infrastructure investment alternative to China’s OBOR initiative; after the Comprehensive EU-Canada Trade Agreement (CETA), prospective new trade agreements of the European Union now being negotiated with countries such as Mexico and other countries in the Paris Agreement; new proposals to establish a single market for the African continent under a Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) that would link the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the East African Community (EAC), as well as Latin America and South

30 See Shawn Donnan & Andres Schipani, China Pledges to Lead the Way on Global Trade, FIN. TIMES (Nov. 19, 2016), https://www.ft.com/content/ad63b9c6-ac88-11e6-a37c-8a01f1b0fa1; David A. Gantz, The TPP and RCEP: Mega-Trade Agreements for the Pacific Rim, 33 ARIZ. INT’L & COMP. L. 57, 63 (2016).
38 See Martha Belete Haile, Regional Economic Integration in Africa: Challenges and Prospects, 8 MIZAN L. REV. 299, 327 (Dec. 2014); Shannon Manders, Africa’s Free Trade Agreement: A Step Too Far?,

America’s prospective vast trade deals with the European Union and partners other than the United States.39

*International Human Rights Law in exiting From, Revising, or Renegotiating Economic Treaties*

The global economic climate of rapid exits from, or changes to, trade and investment treaties, is also a significant opportunity for states to write the terms of the international economic system in a manner that deliberately respects and protects the fundamental human rights of communities, individuals, and groups that comprise states’ populations—and who are the ultimate beneficiaries and principals of the global economic system.40 States wield their diplomatic, foreign policy, and treaty-making powers only as elected or designated representatives or agents of the populations under social contract.41 Fulfilling international human rights commitments is arguably an intrinsic part of the state’s social contract with its population. The United Nations Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order, Professor Alfred de Zayas, implicitly acknowledges this precise point when he called for primacy of international human rights law in states’ drafting, revision, and renegotiation of trade and investment agreements:

The international community has an interest in reaffirming a duty to protect and actively advance civil, economic, political, and social rights. Governments, parliaments, and courts have a responsibility to act in the public interest for economic stability, social development, environmental sustainability, food security, improvement of health and labour standards. . . . *Those generic obligations of governance are the raison d’etre of organized society.* Rights holders of the responsibility to act are individuals and peoples, including indigenous peoples. Duty bearers are Governments, parliaments, and courts. . . . All potential States parties to the Trans-Pacific


Partnership Agreement, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement and Trade in Services Agreement are bound by the international human rights treaty regime and most are parties to universal and regional human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter. **Pacta sunt servanda requires States to fulfil their human rights treaty obligations in good faith and prohibits them from entering into agreements that would delay, circumvent, undermine, or make impossible the fulfilment of their human rights treaty obligations.**

Since many states’ authoritative decision-makers are now rapidly and ubiquitously taking decisions to reconfigure trade and investment treaty commitments, there is greater urgency under international human rights law to consider the intergenerational consequences of these decisions on the interests and basic human rights of the actual constituencies of these states: individuals, groups, and local communities. It is important not only that these constituencies be heard in the decision-making process over international trade and investment decisions, but also that they be heard through meaningful participation and transparent access to the information that undergirds these global economic decisions. It is equally imperative—particularly under international human rights law—that states ensure their international human rights law commitments to their constituencies to be ingrained and protected under the forthcoming rules on the international economic system. As the United Nations General Assembly stressed in its Resolution 67/171 with respect to the protection of all human rights through the right to development, “the primary responsibility for the promotion and protection of all human rights lies with the State . . . [including] the primary responsibility of States to

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create national and international conditions favourable to realization of the right to development.\textsuperscript{46}

Whether the states’ decisions are to exit from, to amend certain provisions of, or ultimately to wholly renegotiate trade and investment treaties, I argue that, at least where their international human rights commitments are concerned, states cannot shield themselves from international responsibility by seeking blanket refuge in orthodox domestic constitutional or legal doctrines, such as the “executive privilege in the treaty-making process,”\textsuperscript{47} “national security considerations,”\textsuperscript{48} or government prerogatives to ensure “efficiency in treaty-making”\textsuperscript{49} to deny their individual, group, or local community constituencies any meaningful access to information or participation over these treaty exit, revision, or renegotiation decisions. In the first place, states cannot invoke provisions of their internal or domestic law to justify their failure to perform their existing international human rights treaty obligations.\textsuperscript{50} Because trade and investment treaties stand to directly impact the long-term protection, enjoyment, and realization of the basic human rights of their populations,\textsuperscript{51} states must ensure that decisions to exit from, revise, amend, or otherwise


\textsuperscript{48} David Kravets, Obama Administration Declares Proposed IP Treaty a ‘National Security’ Secret, WIRED (Mar. 12, 2009), https://www.wired.com/2009/03/obama-declares/; see also DE WITT C. POOLE, THE CONDUCT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS UNDER MODERN DEMOCRATIC CONDITIONS 96 (Yale Univ. Press 1925) (“The consideration of public necessity which is sometimes deemed to run counter to the disposition of modern statesmen to be communicative is not to be treated lightly, for it relates to the fundamental right of self-preservation and takes on a moral color. European thought, while generally recognizing secret treaties as undemocratic and undesirable in themselves, is strongly influenced by the struggle for national existence and hesitates to forego any available means of self-defense.”).

\textsuperscript{49} Michael Colaresi & Nathan Jensen, Do Trade Negotiations Have to be Done in Secret? Here’s What Experts Think, WASH. POST (Sept. 24, 2015), https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/09/24/do-trade-negotiations-have-to-be-done-in-secret-heres-what-experts-think/?utm_term=31c679d655ec (A Washington Post survey of trade experts found, among other things, that “secrecy makes ratification more likely because the lack of transparency made it harder for the opposition to mobilize against the deal by focusing criticism on an unpopular aspect of the agreement. Others thought that secrecy made it easier for special interests to capture benefits from the agreements at the public’s expense.”).


\textsuperscript{51} See Human Rights Council, Rep. of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier de Schutter, ¶ 2, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/19/59/Add.5 (2011) (“Human rights treaty bodies and special procedures of the Human Rights Council have regularly called upon States to prepare human rights impact assessments of the trade and investment agreements that they conclude. Human rights impact assessments can be an important tool for States in negotiating trade and investment agreements, particularly to ensure that they will not make demands or concessions that will make it more difficult for them, or for the other party or parties, to comply with their human rights obligations . . . .”).
renegotiate their trade and investment treaties do not jeopardize their ability and capacity to ensure continued protection, unimpeded enjoyment, and progressive realization of the fundamental economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights of their populations.

Secondly, it can also be argued that states are obligated to allow meaningful access to information about, and meaningful participation in, their treaty exit, revision, or renegotiation decisions, according to a separately emerging norm of transparency under international law, the well-settled right of public participation in the conduct of public affairs in international human rights law, and the increasingly accepted right to public information under international human rights law. Collectively, the international law principle of transparency, the right to public participation, and the right to

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public information are critical for enabling states to fulfill their continuing duties to prevent violations of human rights owed to their populations, especially when these states make long-term decisions impacting such human rights by exiting from, amending, revising, or otherwise renegotiating trade and investment treaties.

Individuals, groups, and local communities that comprise the populations of states cannot be deemed to be passive recipients or rule-takers of international concessions made in secret by their elected representatives during the international trade and investment treaty negotiation process. The transparency principle in international law—a corollary with the right to public information—ensures that individuals, groups, and local communities—and not just chambers of commerce, industry associations, or other private interest stakeholders of free trade and foreign investment who usually have more access to trade and investment treaty consultations—are aware of the exact trade and investment concessions made by their political representatives, enough for them to be able to reasonably assess how these concessions will impact their present and future enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights, such as the rights to work and to fair conditions of labor, the right to an adequate standard of living including the right to health, which can be affected when decisions on trade and investment displace local businesses, and alters the terms of competition in favor of foreign business enterprises without subjecting them to the same environmental, labor, and social regulations as local enterprises. The right to public participation in international human rights law anchors the right of

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57 This right is arguably recognized with respect to the public’s right to access information on environmental matters and natural resources. See INT’L LAW COMM’N (ILC), DRAFT ARTICLES ON PREVENTION OF TRANSBOUNDARY HARM FROM HAZARDOUS ACTIVITIES, art. 13 (2001), http://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/commentaries/9_7_2001.pdf (“States concerned shall, by such means as are appropriate, provide the public likely to be affected by an activity within the scope of the present articles with relevant information relating to that activity, the risk involved, and the harm which might result and ascertain their views thereon.”).
individuals, groups, or local communities to seek meaningful modalities or avenues of participation in the decisions being taken on their behalf by their political representatives in trade and investment negotiations—where there is no legal mechanism for demanding the public accountability of political representatives during this trade and investment treaty negotiation process (largely because these negotiations occur in a climate of secrecy, and political representatives do not routinely undertake broad, nondiscriminatory, and informed consultations with their all of their respective local constituencies), then, clearly, the essence of the right to public participation would be hollowed out and defeated.60

Regardless of the claims of geopolitics or neo-imperial ambitions of any states’ authoritative decision-makers in making decisions to exit or change their trade and investment treaties, states must, at the outset, internalize their international human rights law commitments when they set their normative priorities for such economic decisions. After all, individuals, groups, and local communities will experience first-hand the economic consequences,61 as well as feel social impacts (such as diminished public funds due to investor compensation awards or costly retaliations against a Member’s domestic industries arising from non-compliance with trade decisions) of these long-term economic decisions of states in trade and investment,62 whether it be through job contractions or losses from trade,63 environmental hazards from irresponsible foreign investment,64 unfair labor conditions or morally hazardous activities—such as corruption due to lack of oversight over multinational enterprises65 or endemic corruption of political elites taking

64 See, e.g., ORG. FOR ECON. COOPERATION AND DEV., ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN THE MINING SECTOR IN SUB-SAHARAN AF RICA 1 (2002); George D. Applebaum, Controlling the Environmental Hazards of International Development, 5 ECOLOGY L. Q. 321, 321–22 (1976).
advantage of new economic expansion from trade and investment actors in order to engage in more rent-seeking behavior.\textsuperscript{66} The conventional perception that trade and investment agreements are matters exclusively for states (and concomitantly, that states’ internal political, economic, or other normative considerations for exiting from or otherwise changing trade and investment agreements are mere matters of domaine réservé and not for international law\textsuperscript{67}), is a state-centric fiction that can no longer be maintained in the face of international law treaty, custom, and jus cogens norms that now protect the rights of individuals, groups, and communities.\textsuperscript{68} Any state’s decision to exit from, revise, or renegotiate its existing trade and investment treaties impacts on the long-term livelihoods, consumer preferences, employability, health, and education of local communities—matters that all directly involve individual, group, and community enjoyment of their respective economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights.\textsuperscript{69}

Ongoing treaty exit, revision, or renegotiation initiatives todayvariably consider, if at all, the crucial norms of transparency, right to public information, and right to public participation in international human rights law. Brexit negotiations have thus far not created a formal channel on the


\textsuperscript{67} W. Michael Reisman, \textit{Sovereignty and Human Rights in Contemporary International Law}, in \textit{DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND INTERNATIONAL LAW} 239, 243 (Gregory H. Fox \\& Brad R. Roth eds., Cambridge Univ. Press 2000) (“International law still protects sovereignty, but—not surprisingly—it is the people’s sovereignty rather than the sovereign’s sovereignty. Under the old concept, even scrutiny of international human rights without the permission of the sovereign could arguably constitute a violation of sovereignty by its ‘invasion’ of the sovereign’s domaine reserve. The UN Charter replicates the ‘domestic jurisdiction—international concern’ dichotomy, but no serious scholar still supports the contention that internal human rights are ‘essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State’ and hence insulated from international law.”); Galina G. Shinkaretskaya, \textit{Content and Limits of Domaine Reserve}, in \textsc{International Law and Municipal Law} 123, 123–31 (Gregory I. Tunkin \\& Rüdiger Wolfrum eds., Duncker \\& Humblot GmbH, Berlin 1988).


participation of individuals, groups, or communities in the UK. Dr. Alan Renwick explains:

All sides agree that public opinion should continue to influence the process, but there are two views on what that should mean. One view is that the public spoke in the referendum and the task now is simply to implement that decision. The other view is that opinion is more complex and changeable and that evolving public views should also be considered. One way public opinion might be heard is through a referendum on the final deal. The form this would take, the effects it might have, and how it might come about are complex issues. The most likely version would pit the negotiated deal against remaining in the EU. Circumstances leading to such a vote are imaginable, but its outcome is impossible to predict. The prevailing public mood will, in any case, influence MPs’ and ministers’ day-to-day decisions. Direct public intervention could also come in the form of a general election.70

In a letter dated February 28, 2017,71 the EU Ombudsman urged the EU Commission to ensure transparency and consultation with all stakeholders in the Brexit negotiations to “assist in protecting EU citizens’ rights.” In response, the Commission has adopted a tailor-made policy of “maximum level of transparency” opening all negotiation documents on the Article 50 negotiations with the United Kingdom.72

In contrast, the NAFTA renegotiations process has not built in formal channels for negotiation transparency,73 public consultations with all stakeholders,74 and public participation,75 although the United States Trade Representative set up a limited public comment period on its NAFTA

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renegotiation objectives. This flies in the face of the basic objective of ensuring public participation in development decisions under Article 8 of the Declaration on the Right to Development (“States should encourage popular participation in all spheres as an important factor in development and in the full realisation of human rights.”). Without access to information on the terms of the ongoing negotiations, individuals, groups, and local communities who are denied stakeholder participation will not be able to weigh in on the ultimate terms of the NAFTA renegotiation, contrary to business groups, chambers of commerce, producer groups, and other supply chain firms who have a greater wherewithal of resources to make their positions known to their respective governments conducting the NAFTA renegotiations.

Reckoning the Human Costs of States’ Exits, Revisions, and Renegotiations of Trade and Investment Treaties

Public access to any or some information on trade and investment treaty exits, revisions, or renegotiations is empty and meaningless if the individuals, groups, and local communities that comprise states’ populations are not empowered by their political representatives to determine the human impacts of these economic decisions. A layperson can read hundreds or thousands of pages of a supposed draft of a new trade and investment agreement, but if states do not meaningfully communicate the human rights impacts of these agreements, the sheer density and technicality of these trade and investment agreements will make any supposed access to information a Pyrrhic exercise. It is thus not sufficient for states to simply release the outcome documents of trade and investment treaty negotiations, because this simply begs the question

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77 G.A. Res. 41/128, supra note 53, arts. 2(3), 8(2).


80 The full text of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), for example (which should be read alongside nearly six thousand pages of the original Trans-Pacific Partnership text), was released in February 2018 by the Government of New Zealand, but without any annotation, analysis, or human rights impact assessment. Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, supra note 34.
of moral hazards that can arise from the “private bargaining”\textsuperscript{81} of trade and investment concessions made without the full knowledge of the public.

Releasing the negotiated treaty text is an exercise in afterthought. It nowhere empowers members of the public to properly and carefully discern how trade and investment treaty concessions made by their political representatives affect their short and long term enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights—while also privileging those parties (especially businesses and other market actors) who are otherwise heard and have seats at the negotiating table or in whatever direct stakeholder consultations conducted by trade and investment treaty negotiators or political representatives.\textsuperscript{82} This asymmetric practice ultimately reduces members of the public to being passive “rule-takers,” rather than equally active subjects in the making of international law through their possible inputs in trade and investment treaty negotiations.

Current decisions to exit from, amend, revise, or renegotiate existing trade and investment treaties reflect the ongoing information, participation, communication, and assessment deficit faced by individuals, groups, and local communities. In December 2016, the U.K. Parliament released its report on “The human rights implications of Brexit,” noting the Government of the United Kingdom “has not been able to set out any clear vision as to how it expects Brexit will impact the UK’s human rights framework.”\textsuperscript{83} The Government of the United Kingdom “seemed unacceptably reluctant to discuss the issue of human rights after Brexit. The Minister of State responsible for human rights was either unwilling or unable to tell us what the Government saw as the most significant human rights issues that would arise when the UK exits the EU.”\textsuperscript{84} The ongoing omission to conduct ongoing human rights impact assessments for the United Kingdom’s departure from the European


\textsuperscript{83} UNITED KINGDOM HOUSE OF LORDS AND HOUSE OF COMMONS JOINT COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, THE HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS OF BREXIT: FIFTH REPORT SESSION 2016-2017, 2016 Cm. 695.

\textsuperscript{84} Id. at 33.
Union continues to be criticized. In contrast, the European Commission Directorate General for Trade has preexisting Guidelines as well as settled practices on sustainability impact assessments, although the Commission has not yet released any such impact assessment report in relation to the ongoing Brexit negotiations and supposed negotiation thereafter for a new U.K.-EU trade treaty.

The NAFTA renegotiations process does not provide for any such human rights impact assessments, especially since human rights have not figured much in public discussions of NAFTA “2.0.” Neither has human rights impact assessments figured (dominantly or tangentially) in any of the other ongoing trade and investment exits, amendments, revision, or renegotiation of massive trade and investment treaty initiatives in the CPTPP, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and other cross-border regional projects launched under China’s OBOR, Japan’s Quality Infrastructure (QI), regional trade and investment agreements of ASEAN, as well as any other trade and investment treaty revision, renegotiation, exit, or change contemplated by other countries in the Asia-Pacific, Africa, or Latin America. While the scarce use of human rights impact assessments for trade and investment agreements could be explained by the absence of a settled or uniform methodology in conducting such human rights impact assessments tailored to trade and investment treaty negotiations, it is also plausible that this gap exists due to the disinterest of those who can be better represented in the current asymmetry of information and participation in trade and investment

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88 Castañeda & Heredia, supra note 81.
90 See BERNE DECLARATION, CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION & MISEREOR, HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR TRADE AND INVESTMENT AGREEMENTS (2010).
treaty negotiations—such as politicians and political elites;91 market actors, like chambers of commerce and industry associations;92 as well as trade and investment treaty negotiators who are schooled more in the techniques of international trade and foreign investment (and less so on international human rights law) and who might punt international human rights law and impacts questions back to governments, authorities, and legislatures in their respective states.93

Certainly, the right to development—as described in the U.N. Declaration on the Right to Development94—does not expressly make it mandatory for states to use human rights impact assessments for all of their economic decisions. However, in the aftermath of global financial crises and upheavals in states’ economic decision-making policies in the last decade, the U.N. Human Rights Council issued its Resolution on March 16, 2017, which requests the Independent Expert (on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of states on the full enjoyment of all human rights—particularly economic, social and cultural rights) to “develop guiding principles for human rights impact assessments for economic reform policies, in consultation with States, international financial institutions and other relevant stakeholders, and to organize expert consultations for the development

92 Mercedes Botto, Think Tanks in External Trade Negotiations: Do They Advise, Mediate, or Legitimate Interests? A Comparative Analysis of the Southern Cone, in RESEARCH AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE POLICY NEGOTIATIONS: KNOWLEDGE AND POWER IN LATIN AMERICA 48, 62–63 (Mercedes Botto ed., Routledge 2010) (“The private sector, essentially that represented by the business chambers, does not normally engage in research. It does take part in the process by advising negotiators of its positions and/or the sector’s demands on one or another negotiation or scenario, but its participation is defensive and it makes few proposals . . . . In recent years, some of the business chambers with noticeably offensive interests have become professionalized.”).
93 See Stephen Joseph Powell & Trisha Low, Beyond Labor Rights: Which Core Human Rights Must Regional Trade Agreements Protect?, 12 RICH. J. GLOBAL L. & BUS. 91, 93 (2012) (“Captured within dozens of United Nations human rights treaties and a growing corpus of customary international norms, human rights law embraces literally hundreds of specific entitlements, each by U.N. guarantee indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated. This foreboding array of obligations, each ostensibly of equal rank, whose legal intricacies are sometimes beyond the experience and training of trade ministries, explains the reluctance of trade negotiators to undertake the responsibility for further integration of trade rules with human rights . . . .”).
94 See G.A. Res. 41/128, supra note 53, art. 2(3) (“States have the right and duty to formulate appropriate national development policies that aim at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals, on the basis of their active, free, and meaningful participation in development . . . .”); id. arts. 2(3), 8(2) (e.g., “States should encourage popular participation in all spheres as an important factor in development and in the full realization of all human rights.”).
Likewise, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights’ General Comment No. 24 now emphasizes the need for states to conduct human rights impact assessments before entering into trade and investment agreements: “The conclusion of such treaties should therefore be preceded by human rights impact assessments that take into account both the positive and negative human rights impacts of trade and investment treaties, including the contribution of such treaties to the realization of the right to development.”96 In 2013, the World Bank together with the Nordic Trust Fund produced a useful Study on Human Rights Impact Assessments (HRIAs), which identifies essential elements of HRIAs (e.g., normative human rights framework, public participation, equality and non-discrimination, transparency and access to information, accountability, inter-sectoral approach, and international policy coherence) as well as surveys of the spectrum of current methodologies used for HRIAs (e.g., methodological steps, quantitative and qualitative indicators, among others).97 These are all promising developments that could assist states in devising human rights impact assessments as a routine and intrinsic part of their trade and investment negotiations processes.

**Adjustments to Trade and Investment Impacts: Planning for Local Communities**

Most importantly, apart from reckoning the human costs of state decisions to exit from, amend, revise, or renegotiate their trade and investment agreements, the state also has the heavy task of simultaneously planning policies and strategies to enable local communities to adjust to anticipated trade and investment impacts on employment, production, consumption, social security, and environmental protection, among others. States vary in their practices of providing trade adjustment assistance,98 which often are a

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combination of state-subsidized worker retraining programs, cash assistance, and other forms of social insurance programs to cushion against anticipated labor displacements or production impacts resulting from increased competition brought by free trade. The World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund declared:

**Trade has, however, negatively impacted groups of workers and some communities.** Recent evidence on the effect of import competition on manufacturing jobs in certain locations in Europe and the United States demonstrates how harsh such impacts can be in the absence of accompanying policies. Dislocations depend not just on the size or abruptness of the trade shock, but on broader circumstances, such as the health of the economy, labor market rigidities, and other impediments to resource reallocation, as well as the adequacy of social protection policies. Moreover, policies that help to sustain strong economic and job growth can ease the costs of adjustments to trade. Understanding the various factors driving dislocations is critical to designing appropriate domestic policies to address them.

**Domestic policies to address trade-related adjustments are critical.** Easing worker mobility across firms, industries, and regions minimizes adjustment costs and promotes employment. Active labor market policies play an important role in supporting these initiatives. If well-designed and tailored to country circumstances, they can facilitate reemployment and augment worker skills; such policies include job search assistance, training programs, and, in some situations, wage insurance. Important social safety nets like unemployment insurance and other “passive” labor market policies can provide workers directly affected by import competition with an opportunity to retool on their own. While they have had a limited impact thus far, if well targeted and adequately financed trade adjustment assistance programs could take on a greater role.

**Approaches beyond labor market policies are also needed.** Education systems need to prepare workers for the changing demands of the modern labor market, and policies in areas such as housing, credit, and infrastructure need to facilitate mobility. Measures aimed at reviving hard-hit communities could also be considered. Dealing with dislocations early and comprehensively is critical since the impact may otherwise become entrenched in the

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community, leading to outcomes that are harsher and longer-lasting. Measures that support competitiveness and productivity growth can also help to ensure that displaced workers find new opportunities. 99

It may seem premature to formulate trade adjustment strategies when negotiations on Brexit and the supposed new U.K.-EU treaty are in early stages, and NAFTA renegotiations are nowhere near reaching agreement on discrete points. However, the uncertain duration of existing or new global economic treaty rules makes it imperative for states that have focused on properly ensuring the right to development for their populations, to also adopt foresight in planning short-term and long-term trade adjustment strategies by forecasting worker displacements and shifts in demands for skilled and unskilled labor. This corresponds the needs of worker adaptability through continuing training and of education strategies that anticipate the diversification of needed skills and relevant expertise from those expected to join the job market after the new global economic treaty rules are concluded and enter into force. NAFTA took fourteen years to conclude in 1994,100 from the time U.S. President Ronald Reagan first articulated a proposal for such an agreement in 1980. In that span of time, the United States has repeatedly been called upon to anticipate labor market changes and corresponding educational needs arising from changing labor markets adapting to NAFTA, such as in the U.S. General Accounting Office’s 1997 Report on NAFTA Impacts and Implementation,101 a 2010 report filed with the National Bureau of Economic Research,102 and even a 2017 Congressional Research Service Report on NAFTA.103 In 2016, the OECD G20 Employment Working Group issued its report, Enhancing Employability,104 which emphasizes the need for continuing evaluation of the adaptability and fit of education policies and labor market strategies in the face of structural shifts from changes in global economic rules, the challenges of obsolescence arising from technological innovation and

automation—alongside the need for states to adopt policy coherence as they make economic decisions that stand to have lasting impacts on populations.

In this era of expected global economic rule changes, it is troubling that states are not holding counterpart discussions on devising long-term labor and education strategies to adapt to future competitiveness under the new economic rules. The World Bank’s 2017 World Development Report just called the attention of states to an urgent learning crisis in global education, where learning outcomes and targets are misaligned with future job market needs.\textsuperscript{105}

Finally, during the period of rewriting economic rules through negotiations on Brexit and the supposed new U.K.-EU treaty, as well as the NAFTA renegotiations, it should also be emphasized that the states involved do not negotiate in a vacuum. There are dense international obligations taken on by all states involved which do not just refer to economic agreements, but more pertinently involve the rights owed under international human rights law to all individuals, groups, and local communities to be affected in the short term by the uncertainty of the regulatory environment, and in the long-term by the new rules arrived at by states’ treaty negotiators. Especially since, as shown above, there are few direct opportunities for full participation by, and information exchange with, individuals, groups, and local communities in the NAFTA renegotiations process or the negotiations on Brexit and the new U.K.-EU treaty, it will be foreseeably harder for these constituencies of international human rights law and international environmental law to check their political representatives in real time during treaty negotiations. If the ultimate sources of sovereignty—which are precisely individuals, groups, communities, and populations—have to wait for a referendum to approve the new draft treaty texts; elections to replace or give another negotiating mandate to their current or future political agents; or even to seek recourse through domestic, regional, and/or international courts and tribunals (where possible), before they can vindicate their preexisting economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights as against infringing provisions of the new economic treaty rules, the exercise of sovereignty through exiting and concluding new trade agreements rings hollow.

The ends of trade and investment agreements, after all, are to realize the authentic meaning of development under the right to development, which is “the inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all

peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realised.” 106 This right is all the more crucial in these times, when politicians are obscurely rewriting the rules for all and are fueling the global economic policy and treaty uncertainty, without ensuring that individuals, citizens, groups, and communities actively take part 107 in drawing the terms of bargaining for the future global economic order.

106 G.A. Res. 41/128, supra note 53, art. 1(1).