

## A BIOS PERSPECTIVE FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE SILK ROAD

### [Ambassador Kai Falkman](#)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Sweden

Recently, I had the privilege of attending an international conference in Baku, on the Restoration of the Historical Silk Road. Representatives of 33 countries, from Japan in the East to Great Britain in the West, were invited by President Aliyev of Azerbaijan and President Shevardnadze of Georgia to sign agreements aimed at building a modern corridor of transports, by road, railway, sea and air, from the Far East to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

The most important aspect of this undertaking was to reinstate the Caucasian and Central Asian states into this network, that is opening up the way for these former Soviet republics to free trade with Europe and the West, including Japan. Since the time of the establishment of the Soviet empire in the beginning of the century, all land links between East and West have gone through Siberia and Russia – now a new and shorter route will be opened up south of the Himalayas and south of the Caspian Sea.

Oil has replaced silk as the motor for the Silk Road. The richness of oil and gas in the region of the Caspian Sea – the largest sea in the world – is, of course, the basis of the West's interest in this Euroasian project. A modern infrastructure must be built in order to transport these natural resources to the markets of the Western world. The representative of the European Union Presidency – Austria – said at this conference that it is not only a question of trade and economy, but also of values and culture. Much wisdom from the East has reached the West through the Silk road and now, in exchange, the West is prepared to use this link for sending Eastwards ideas about democracy and human rights, free expression and free elections, protection of minorities and of the environment. The representative of the EU Presidency emphasised the importance of respecting and applying an article in the agreement that stated the necessity of taking measures to protect the environment.

Enormous investments are going to the region of the Caspian Sea, and it is important that part of these investments are directed towards protecting the environment. Baku was called the Black City in the beginning of this century because smoke from the oil chimneys blackened the sky and made people sick. The landscape is scattered with oil towers stretching far out into the sea with no respect for borderlines. It is our responsibility as members of the European Union to see to it that the mistakes of the last oil boom will not be repeated in the future. Our need for energy must not be paid for by the destruction of the sea, soil and air in the regions of energy production.

Here, the values of bios must always be in the foreground. Diplomats and businessmen, politicians and bankers, who are attracted to the restoration of the Silk road because of the richness of the resources in the Caspian Sea region, must deal with this Euroasian project guided by bio-environmental ethics. We must never forget that bios provides the unifying force for the harmonious co-existence of all forms of life, leading to a new era of human co-existence with Nature.

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**Ambassador Kai Falkman** has served successively as Attaché at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Attaché in Tokyo, Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, First Secretary in London, Counsellor in Lisbon and Ambassador in Luanda. He has also worked with Special Duties at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and has been engaged in studies at the CFIA at Harvard University. Ambassador Falkman holds a Law degree and, from 1991 to 1995 was the General Consul of Sweden in Istanbul.