



THE FUTURE

APRIL 2024

ISSN 2753-3670



The Future is a newsletter periodically published by The Future Institute from Marlyon Road, Ilford, United Kingdom.

This newsletter aims to chronicle the major events and developments in the societies of emerging nations with the potential to impact their future. This publication offers snippets of news analysis that might be advantageous to academics, policymakers, social and political workers, students and various organisations.

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Israel-Gaza war continues past 170 days; thousands die in human-induced famine

After more than 170 days of war, Gaza lies in ruins and the people of Palestine are going through unimaginable suffering in the face of a man-made humanitarian crisis. More than a million people are left struggling to even procure basic necessities of life. Apart from its antics in helping to defund UNRWA, Israel allows only a fraction of much-needed aid to pass through, creating conditions of famine that have led to the deaths of scores of children, women and elderly from hunger and malnourishment. More than 31,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since the conflict began on October 7, with 70,000 injured. The UN recently declared that 80 per cent of Gaza is now uninhabitable, and the hunger rate is at 100 per cent. In the past month, several countries, including Egypt, Jordan, France, the UAE, Qatar, and the US, have participated in airdropping aid over Gaza to alleviate hunger. While these drops have garnered media attention, critics say their impact is questionable at a time when thousands of aid trucks loaded with vital supplies are waiting at the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing. The irony of the move can be understood in that the entire US air-dropping operation for a day in mid-March equalled just a fraction of a truckload; some of the aid fell into the sea, while other crates killed aid-seekers when they crashed upon them. Critics have argued that such instances of airdropping of aid are tantamount to belittling and humiliating Palestinians. On the other hand, Israel has killed more than 400 air-seeking desperate Palestinians waiting to receive aid as of mid-March in incidents such as the 'Flour massacre', while it has repeatedly carried out operations against hospitals such as the Al-Shifa hospital, targeting it with heavy artillery and killing scores in the process.

The number of Palestinian casualties in Gaza as of March 27 is at least 32,490 dead, including more than 13,000 children and 8,400 women, while the number of Palestinians wounded has reached more than 74,889, including at least 8,663 children and 6,327 women. The number of missing people is more than 8,000. In the Occupied West Bank, there have been at least 453 deaths, of whom more than 116 are children, while more than 4,700 are injured. According to the latest data from the UN, WHO and the Palestinian government as of March 14, 360,000 residential units (more than half of Gaza homes) have been destroyed or damaged, 392 educational facilities have been damaged, 12 out of 35 hospitals are partially functioning, 83% of groundwater wells are non-functional, while 267 places of worship have been damaged. Every hour in Gaza, 15 people are killed, of whom 6 are children, while 35 people are injured and 12 buildings are destroyed. As of March 15, more than 100 journalists, predominantly Palestinians, had been killed since October 7. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), 96 Palestinian, three Lebanese, and four Israeli journalists were killed.

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UN Security Council finally adopts resolution calling for immediate ceasefire in Gaza

The UN Security Council has passed a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip till the end of the holy month of Ramadan, which will end in 2 weeks, along with the release of hostages held by Hamas. The resolution which was proposed by the 10 elected members of the council, was backed by 14 members of the Security Council with the exception of the United States, which abstained on the grounds that the resolution did not do enough to condemn Hamas. Nonetheless, taking into account that the United States had actively vetoed all earlier resolutions calling for a ceasefire on the ground since October 7, analysts said that US abstention pointed to a shift in attitude in the face of mounting international pressure and increasing difficulty faced by the US in reigning in Israeli genocidal actions on the ground in Gaza.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the United States' refusal to reject the resolution was a "clear retreat" from its prior position, harming Israel's military operations and drive to free more than 130 hostages being held by Hamas. In reaction to the UN vote, Netanyahu cancelled a high-level delegation trip to Washington which was to discuss the planned Israeli military strike in Rafah, the southern Gaza city where about 1.5 million Palestinians have taken sanctuary. Many world leaders welcomed the adoption of the UN resolution, including Palestinian leaders, who said it was a step in the right direction. Hamas also welcomed the resolution and said in a statement it "affirms readiness to engage in immediate prisoner swaps on both sides". The most recent vote came after Russia and China blocked an earlier US-sponsored resolution calling for "an immediate and sustained ceasefire."

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Moscow faces terror attack just days following Putin's re-election

Russia conducted its eighth presidential election from March 15-17, 2024. The polls saw the incumbent president Vladimir Putin winning with 88% of the vote, the highest proportion in a post-Soviet Russian presidential election, securing a fifth term in what was largely seen as a foregone conclusion. He is set to be inaugurated on May 7, 2024. Earlier, the Russian Central Election Commission (CEC) banned most candidates from participating for a variety of reasons, which experts say cleared the path for Putin. As was the case in the 2018 presidential election, Alexei Navalny, the most renowned opposition leader, was prevented from participating owing to a previous criminal conviction deemed politically motivated. Navalny, however, died in a Russian jail in February 2024, several weeks before the election, under questionable circumstances. Most foreign observers did not anticipate the election to be free or fair, given Putin's heightened political repressions since commencing his full-fledged war with Ukraine in 2022. Following the vote, there were claims of anomalies, including ballot stuffing and coercion, and statistical research has indicated high levels of fraud in the current elections.

However, while Putin may have cemented his hold on Russian politics, the country faces a lot of challenges ahead, the most pressing being his war with Ukraine, which has taken a significant toll on the Russian state and economy. It has also made it vulnerable to security threats. Just days after Putin's re-election, around 137 people were killed and more than 100 injured in a brazen attack on concertgoers at Moscow's Crocus City Hall on Friday, 22nd March. Assailants clad in camouflage opened fire on civilians and reportedly placed explosive devices inside the venue, which was soon engulfed in flames and saw its roof collapse following the tragic attack. On Saturday, Russia's Interfax news agency claimed that eleven persons had been caught, four of whom were directly involved in the armed attack. ISIL's Afghan branch, also known as the Islamic State in Khorasan Province, ISKP (ISIS-K), has claimed responsibility for the attack, and US authorities have confirmed its legitimacy, according to Reuters. While

addressing the nation the next day, Putin blamed “international terrorism” and hinted at Ukraine’s role in facilitating the terror attack - Ukraine has repeatedly denied any role in the attack.

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Biden’s Gaza policy may cost him the US election in coming November

In a letter to US President Joe Biden this week, over 100 Democratic Party donors warned him that his “unconditional support” for Israel’s war on Gaza is making him more likely to lose the next presidential election. In the letter reported by the New York Times, the donors warned that a lot of young voters and voters of colour were starting to wonder if the Democratic Party shared their beliefs regarding the necessity of ending the conflict and putting an end to Israeli atrocities inside Gaza. The donors expressed fears that there was a very real chance that President Biden may lose in November if these voters abstain from voting or support a third-party candidate. Experts have contended that such fears may turn out true in light of the rise of numerous uncommitted and even Abandon Biden campaigns throughout the US.

In other developments, following earlier trends in Michigan, more than 45,000 voters, or 19 per cent of all Democratic voters, chose “uncommitted” in the Minnesota Democratic Party US presidential primary election, sending President Joe Biden yet another message that his administration’s policy on Gaza could cost precious votes ahead of the general elections in November. On the other hand, a co-chair of the Abandon Biden Florida campaign, Azmia Ricchuito, predicts that Biden’s political platform of “I’m not the other guy” won’t be successful anymore this year. A critical mass of Americans now see that while Biden and the Democrats aren’t Trump, they aren’t the good guys, either. A tipping point has been reached where a large number of voters, including American Muslims, Arabs, and Palestinians as well as other people of conscience, are abandoning Biden because they are horrified by the ongoing

of over 160 days of slaughter and the role played by the Biden administration in it. She contends that endorsing a third-party presidential candidate in 2024 would be the only way to avert the ongoing US-backed genocide in Gaza.

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How most of Israel's liberal left has become complicit in Gaza genocide

In a thought-provoking piece titled "War on Gaza: How Israel's Leftists Quickly Lost Their Compassion for Palestinians," Orly Noy delves into the shifting perspectives of liberal Israelis regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The author sheds light on the transformation experienced by some left-leaning individuals in Israel, who once championed peace and coexistence but now fervently support Israel's genocidal actions in Gaza. According to the author, the Hamas attack on 7 October and the subsequent war launched by Israel gave birth to a new category of "disillusioned" Israeli leftists who are individuals who claim that until that fateful day, they were humanistic seekers of peace. However, the Hamas attack changed everything for them. They now passionately support Israel's actions in Gaza, even if it involves what they perceive as genocide. The ranks of these disillusioned individuals continue to grow, with many from the entertainment industry joining their ranks, begging the question as to what they actually believed in in the first place.

According to the author, the problem lies not merely in their new position but in the extreme shift they've undergone. Some now advocate for the total extermination of Palestinians in Gaza. For example, singer Idan Raichel, known for progressive values, expresses resentment that Gaza residents do not enter tunnels to battle Hamas, even if it costs them casualties. He views them as accomplices to Hamas crimes and legitimate targets for Israeli attacks. After

expressing their newfound support for Israel's actions, these disillusioned leftists have begun seeking absolution within their community, praising the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) as the "most moral army in the world" and thanking them for their heroism. The author highlights the true nature of their earlier activism – all along, this liberal Israeli sympathy for Palestinians was based on the colonial mindset that the subjugated are inferior and should be grateful for their support.

In coming to this conclusion, the article highlights a broader issue: the Western world's colonial mindset regarding Palestine and Palestinians. Emile Badarin, in another Middle East Eye article, discusses how the West remains unmoved by Palestinian suffering. Instead, it demands that Palestinians condemn themselves for daring to struggle against settler colonialism. The West's sympathy for Palestinians often remains confined to viewing them as passive victims rather than active agents seeking freedom. In summary, the article underscores the complex dynamics within Israel's left-leaning circles, where compassion for Palestinians has wavered, and some have embraced a more hawkish stance. It also raises questions about the global perception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the underlying colonial mindset that influences responses to Palestinian struggles.

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Former General Prabowo wins Indonesian presidential elections

On February 14, 2024, general elections were conducted in Indonesia to choose representatives to the House of Representatives (DPR RI), the Senate (DPD RI), local legislative councils (DPRD Provinsi and DPRD Kabupaten or DPRD Kota), the president, and the vice president. According to the constitution, the current president, Joko Widodo,

who served as the nation's premier for two terms prior, in 2014 and 2019, was not permitted to seek reelection a third time. Prabowo Subianto, a former general and minister of defence, Anies Baswedan, the governor of Jakarta, and Ganjar Pranowo, the governor of Central Java, were the primary presidential candidates for the election. The General Elections Commission (KPU) declared Prabowo the winner on March 20 after he garnered more than 96 million votes, or more than 58 per cent of the popular vote, a resounding victory over rivals Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo, who received about 25 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively, according to the election body's official tally. On 20 October 2024, Prabowo, and Gibran Rakabuming, his vice presidential candidate, the eldest son of current President Joko Widodo and Mayor of Surakarta, are scheduled to take the oath of office.

Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo, the losing candidates, have contested the results, claiming that anomalies plagued the poll from the start to the finish. In different challenges, they are requesting that the Constitutional Court declare the election results void and call for fresh elections. Conversely, Widodo came under fire for his lack of objectivity when he endorsed Subianto, who chose Widodo's son to be his running mate. Widodo has also distanced himself from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, under which he ran under in 2014 and 2019 after it nominated Ganjar Pranowo. According to the official vote total by the General Elections Commission (KPU), the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) won the popular vote in the 2024 legislative election, with 25.3 million votes nationwide, or 16.7 per cent of the total vote. The Golkar Party, which won 23.2 million votes, or 15.3 per cent of the total vote, came in second. President-elect Prabowo Subianto's Gerindra Party placed third with 20 million votes.

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Ruling party in India cripples opposition before elections while protests rage in Ladakh against unfulfilled Indian promises

India is seeing increasing instances of dire repression of civil and political rights of citizens and dissenting voices at the hands of the BJP-led Modi government. Ahead of the 2024 general elections scheduled for next month, India's major opposition Congress party has accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of crippling its election efforts by suspending its accounts in an income tax dispute. A portion of the Congress' bank accounts were frozen last month pending a tax case dating back to 2018-19, the party has stated. Earlier this month, a tax tribunal dismissed its appeal to pause the recovery of 1.35 billion rupees (\$16.32 million) in income tax from its bank accounts. Later, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi stated that all of the party's accounts had been frozen, denying it access to finances for campaigns. As the BJP was quick to deny Gandhi's accusations, claiming that the Congress was guilty of tax fraud and had to pay consequences for it, Congress said that the frozen accounts included funds collected by the party through crowd-funding and membership drives. General elections in India are set to take place in seven parts beginning next month, and most opinion surveys have been forecasting an easy victory for Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party.



On the other hand, Ladakh, India's northernmost region, is currently witnessing significant protests and agitation. In August 2019, Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) administration removed Kashmir's special status and divided it into two federally managed regions: Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. While many had hoped for greater autonomy back then, Ladakh's leaders claim they have lost political representation in the current bureaucratic structure and have little influence in the development initiatives launched by the New Delhi-based administration. Locals have also expressed concern about new federal rules that allow outsiders to settle and create enterprises in the region. On March 6, hundreds of people gathered in Ladakh's capital Leh after the most recent round of negotiations with the interior minister produced no results. Sonam Wangchuk, a Ladakh activist, began a 21-day fast to seek power devolution and constitutional safeguards in a non-violent manner in response to what he says is an avalanche of outside influence threatening Ladakh's ethnic identity. As of late-March, thousands of residents launched a third week of protests in cold temperatures, seeking constitutional provisions from the government to protect their territory's fragile ecology and to have autonomy over land and agriculture decisions.

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Geologists reject the declaration of human-led epoch – the Anthropocene

The International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) has rejected a proposal to codify a new geological epoch based on humanity's influence on Earth, known as "the Anthropocene". This means that "the Anthropocene" will not be added to the chronostratigraphic chart featured in textbooks and on classroom posters to record the major changes in Earth's history. In a series of votes, the IUGS said that its geologists had almost unanimously rejected the proposal. Their objections included concerns about adding a new unit in the geological timescale that spans less than a human lifetime, in light of the fact that there is considerably longer history of human impacts on Earth, including the beginning of agriculture and the industrial revolution. Most geological time units are often thousands or millions of years old.

However, the IUGS also recognised that the term Anthropocene had common currency, noting that the term will continue to be used not only by Earth and environmental scientists but also by social scientists, politicians and economists as well as by the public at large. If the proposal had been accepted, the years starting in 1952 would have been referred to as the Anthropocene to highlight how humanity has altered the earth and become a geological force. It would have brought an end to the Holocene epoch, which lasted 11,700 years and saw a stable climate following the last ice age and the rise of human civilization. It took the Anthropocene working group (AWG) fifteen years to produce the proposal, which was formed to examine the idea of the Anthropocene. The most accurate indicator of how human civilization has altered the planet, it was determined, was the radioactive isotopes dispersed over the globe as a result of hydrogen bomb experiments. Canada's Crawford Sinkhole Lake was selected as the particular site to represent the unit of geological time.

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