

The Future

March 2025



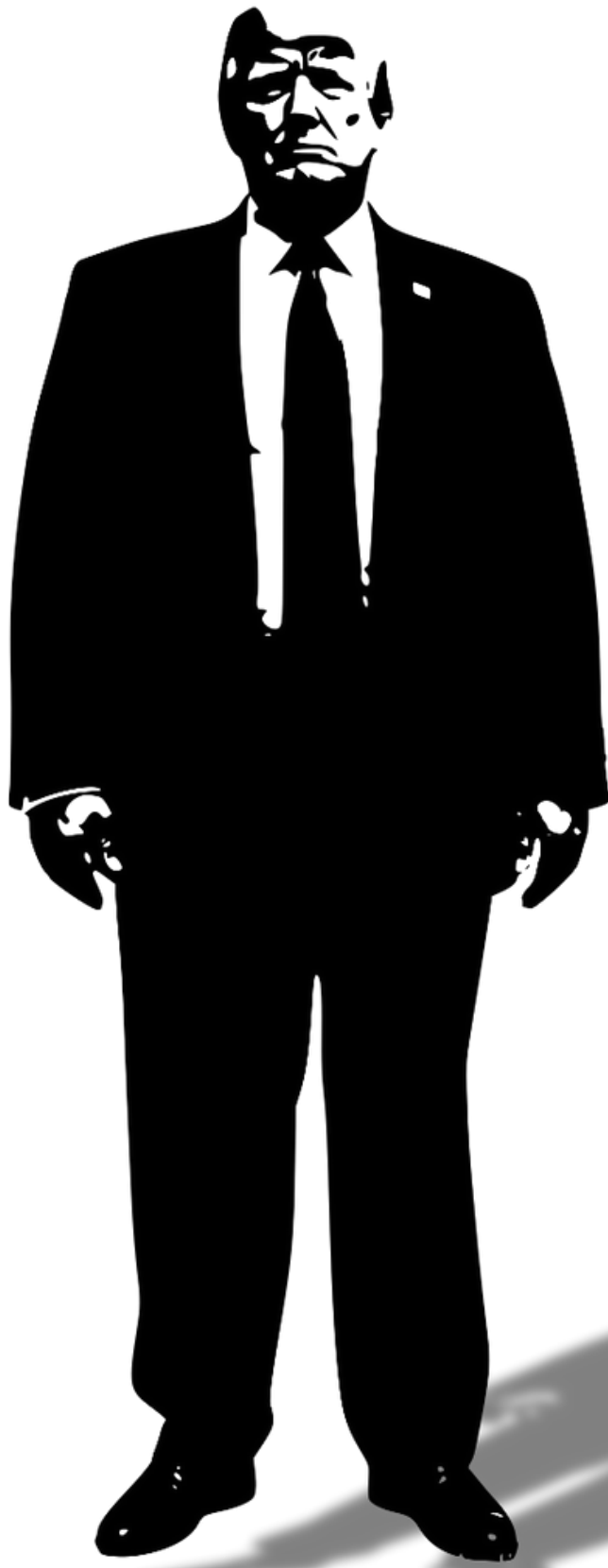
The Future is a newsletter periodically published by The Future Institute from First Floor, East, Business Centre, 93 Greenfield Rd, London E1 1EJ.

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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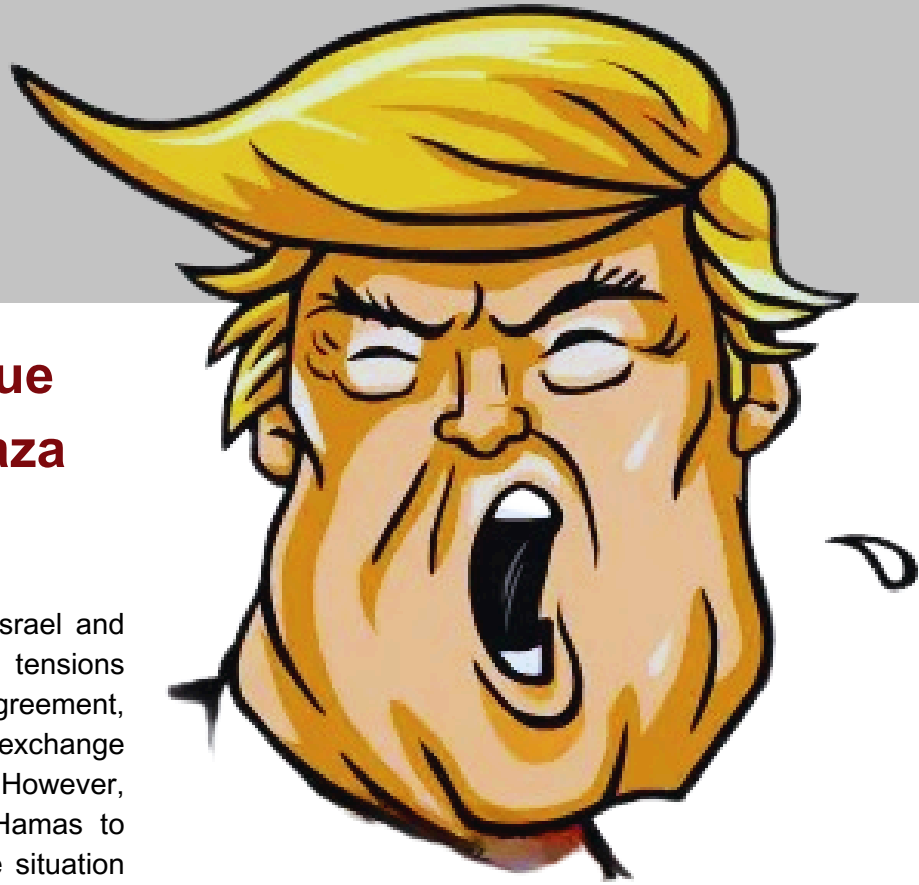
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Trumplomatic

Trump's Global Influence and Consequences

In recent weeks, Donald Trump's foreign policy decisions have affected multiple regions, eliciting reactions from allies, adversaries, and international stakeholders alike. The unfolding situations in Gaza, Ukraine, India, and South Africa highlight the complexities of Trump's approach, often marked by controversial stances and strategic miscalculations.



Trump and Israel continue attempts to sabotage Gaza ceasefire

The ceasefire negotiated by Qatar between Israel and Hamas emerged in the wake of increasing tensions following the October 7 attack. As part of the agreement, Hamas released several Israeli hostages in exchange for Palestinian captives held in Israeli prisons. However, after Israeli violations of the ceasefire led Hamas to suspend further releases on February 10, the situation turned precarious once more. Under threats from Trump and Netanyahu to reignite conflict, Hamas resumed its hostages' release.

By February 25, an agreement was reached between Israel and Hamas to exchange the bodies of hostages, but Israel refused to release the 600 Palestinian hostages, claiming Hamas was using the situation for propaganda purposes. Following the collapse of negotiations regarding phase two of the ceasefire, Netanyahu imposed a blockade on aid to Gaza, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis and violating the ceasefire's stipulations. Trump's ongoing pressure to resettle the Palestinian population in neighboring countries has heightened regional tensions, with Arab nations resisting this notion in favor of stability and aid for Gazans.

The Arab League convened on March 4 in Cairo and devised a \$53 billion plan for the reconstruction of Gaza, as suggested by the UN, which aims to rebuild Gaza's infrastructure while keeping its population in place. Analysts have warned that Trump's plan for permanent displacement of Palestinians is effectively a strategy for ethnic cleansing, threatening the stability of any Arab regime willing to participate in such actions. The increased Israeli military actions in the West Bank and Trump's unwavering support for Netanyahu have compounded regional tensions, raising international concern.

Ukraine and NATO in disarray after Trump's takes U-turn on Ukraine issue

On March 3, 2025, Trump ordered a suspension of over \$1 billion in military aid to Ukraine, signaling a drastic departure from previous U.S. policy towards Eastern Europe. This decision came after a contentious meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, during which Trump expressed dissatisfaction with Zelenskyy's approach to peace negotiations with Russia. The meeting, characterized by a pointed rebuke of Zelenskyy in front of the media, culminated in Zelenskyy being sent away early before a scheduled press conference.

The reactions from key European nations, including the UK and France, were swift, reaffirming their support for Ukraine and commencing discussions on a new peace plan that would involve the U.S. as a participant. Trump's insistence on an "America First" approach and renegotiating support based on Zelenskyy's commitment to engage more meaningfully with Russia has raised alarm bells regarding Ukraine's defense capabilities and the overall balance of power in the region.



Trump meets Modi: Failure or success?

In February, Trump and Indian Prime Minister Modi met at the White House to discuss key issues related to trade, defense ties, and regional stability. Despite appearances of camaraderie, analysts concluded that little substantive progress was made. Trump criticized India's high tariffs as "unfair" and restrictive to U.S. market access, adding fuel to ongoing trade disputes. In response, Modi announced a plan to lower tariffs on certain U.S. products but stopped short of addressing the broader issues raised by Trump.

The discussions included potential increases in defense cooperation, with the U.S. proposing military sales to India, including the advanced F-35 stealth fighter jets. However, this pivot toward U.S. weapons raises concerns about India's historical reliance on Russian and European defense systems. During a joint press conference, Trump was questioned about the political crisis in Bangladesh, including the influence of the American "deep state." He deflected responsibility by stating, "I'll leave Bangladesh to the Prime Minister," revealing his reluctance to engage directly on human rights issues in the region. Ultimately, the meeting concluded with unresolved tensions over trade and defense.

Why is Trump targeting South Africa with sanctions?

Last month, President Trump ordered a freeze on all foreign aid to South Africa, justifying his decision based on the South African government's land reform laws, which allow for the expropriation of land from white farmers under certain conditions. Trump's controversial statement about accepting Afrikaner refugees echoes broader racial tensions and has raised concerns about the violation of minority rights. The aid freeze has significant implications for health service programs in South Africa, especially those addressing the AIDS crisis, leaving many vulnerable citizens without essential support.

Many observers speculate that Trump's actions, alongside the involvement of prominent figures like Elon Musk, may be tied to South Africa's commitment to pursuing an international court case against Israel for alleged genocide in Gaza. This perspective underscores the irony of Trump's stance, as he supports land grabs in Palestine while condemning similar actions in South Africa. Despite the sanction's tone, South Africa remains unwavering in its support for Palestine, demonstrating a commitment to international justice despite potential repercussions from the U.S. and its allies.

As regional conflicts persist and alliances shift, the impact of Trump's policies is being felt worldwide, drawing criticism and raising serious humanitarian concerns.

Surge in global activism against Israeli genocide

In recent months, a surge in global activism has emerged, challenging alleged Israeli genocide and impunity in Gaza and the West Bank, and calling into account the international supporters of Zionist genocide. The U.S.-based human rights organization Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN) has formally requested the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate former President Joe Biden, along with ex-Secretary of State Antony Blinken and former Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, for their complicity in Israeli war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza. The 172-page submission urges the ICC to investigate these officials and their publicly documented role in providing military, political, and diplomatic support to Israel, facilitating severe offenses, including arms transfers and diplomatic protection, despite awareness of an ongoing genocide in contradiction to international law.

While public opinion within Israel has largely been supportive of Israeli genocidal actions, diaspora Jewish organizations have taken the lead in protesting against Israel's actions in Palestine. Among the latest of such activities is a full-page ad in The New York Times titled, "Jewish People Say No to Ethnic Cleansing!" by a group called Jews for Shared Safety, where well-known Jewish figures, including actor Joaquin Phoenix, playwright Tony Kushner, and comedian Ilana Glazer, joined 350 rabbis on Thursday to call for an end to US President Donald Trump's plan to expel Palestinians from Gaza. On the other hand, the documentary titled "No Other Land," co-directed by Palestinian activist Basel Adra and Israeli journalist Yuval Abraham, recently won the Oscar for Best Documentary Feature. The film chronicles settler violence and the Israeli demolitions of Palestinian homes in the occupied West Bank.

In another instance, the BBC has come under heavy criticism for pulling a documentary titled Gaza: How to Survive a War Zone from its online streaming platform, after caving in to Zionist pressure. The documentary was a nine-month depiction of life in Gaza under siege through the eyes and experiences of Palestinian children. The primary objection of the Zionists was that Abdullah, the main child narrator, was the son of Ayman Alyazouri, the deputy minister of agriculture in Gaza's Hamas-run government. Although the BBC had amended the programme to acknowledge this, further accusations led to it being dropped. A petition to restore the documentary has included prominent actors and TV personalities. These developments underscore a growing cultural and global political movement challenging Israeli genocide and the complicity of international actors in it.





Photo: Sean Gallup / Getty Images

Far right gains major ground in German elections

The recent elections have reshaped Germany's political landscape. The conservative Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) alliance, led by Friedrich Merz, came in first, securing 28.5% of the vote, which translated to 208 seats in the Bundestag. The second largest party turned out to be the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, which garnered 20.8% of the vote, increasing its parliamentary representation from 83 to 152 seats. The AfD's ascent from the fringes marks a significant shift in German politics. It has capitalized on growing public discontent over issues such as immigration, economic policies, and environmental regulations. Their success was particularly pronounced in the eastern states, where they emerged as the dominant political force. Conversely, the Social Democratic Party (SPD), led by outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz, experienced a significant decline as they came in third, securing only 16.4% of the vote and 120 seats, down from 206 in the previous election.

The CDU/CSU have ruled out a coalition with the far-right AfD, and coalition talks have commenced between the CDU/CSU and the SPD. Collectively, they hold 328 of the 630 Bundestag seats, sufficient for a majority. Initial discussions have been described as promising, focusing on reconciling differing views on border control, migration, citizenship laws, unemployment benefits, and corporate taxation. An interesting aspect pertaining to the German elections has been Elon Musk's controversial involvement in favour of the far-right AfD. Utilizing his social media platform, X, Musk openly endorsed the AfD, asserting that "only the AfD can save Germany." He also participated in a livestream with Alice Weidel, praising her as "very reasonable" and urging Germans to support the AfD. Musk's engagement extended to a virtual appearance at an AfD rally, where he controversially suggested that Germany should move beyond its historical guilt, a statement that drew widespread criticism, especially given its timing near Holocaust Remembrance Day.



China brings out 6th generation fighters: Major challenge to US hegemony in Asia

In a major military development, China test-flew its J-36 and J-XX sixth-generation fighter jets last December, showcasing its leap in air combat technology. As tailless aircraft integrating artificial intelligence, stealth technology, hypersonic speed, and high-power electronic warfare capabilities, these Chinese fighter jets have already surpassed U.S. and Russian developments. The J-36 and J-XX prototypes are much larger than the U.S. F-35s or F-22s; the diamond-shaped and tailless aircraft are designed for long-range stealth and high survivability in contested environments. With a combat range of over 2,500 kilometers, they would be able to strike U.S. military bases in Guam and Diego Garcia and extend as far north as Alaska. The triple engine configuration and spacious interior provide enormous power output—approximately 1 MW—for the use of high-energy radar, electronic warfare, and possibly directed energy systems, which makes China well poised to re-shape dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region.

Compared to U.S. fighter planes that focus on maneuverability, China's new fighter planes focus on endurance, electrical power, and network-centric warfare. These planes act as command centers for swarms of Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs), exponentially expanding their operational reach. The focus on larger airframes and energy capacity suggests shifting towards electronic and cyber warfare dominance, rather than the traditional dogfighting as seen in the case of US and Russian military jets. As China inducts more carrier-based fighters, hypersonic missiles, and advanced drones into its military strategy, the Indo-Pacific region faces a growing challenge to U.S. air superiority, potentially altering the future of global aerial combat. Experts have opined that this makes the reliance of regional powers such as India on US fighter jets a futile exercise, since by the time India gets the rather expensive F-35's, they are already behind the Chinese in terms of superiority and latest in military aircraft generational technology.



UN Report Accuses Former Hasina Government of Heinous Crimes During 2024 Protests

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has released a comprehensive report detailing severe human rights violations committed by Bangladesh's former government led by Sheikh Hasina during the student-led protests between July and August 2024. The report was welcomed by the Bangladeshi interim government's chief adviser Muhammad Yunus, as well as chief political parties the BNP and Jamaat. According to the investigation, based on over 250 interviews and extensive digital evidence, the report estimated that up to 1,400 individuals were killed, with thousands more injured or detained. The report stated that security forces, including the police, Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and the military, employed disproportionate force against unarmed protesters. This is clear from the fact that approximately 78% of the over 1,000 deaths resulted from gunfire, with many victims shot at close range. Moreover, over 11,700 individuals were detained without due process, facing beatings, torture, and ill-treatment. Many were held incommunicado, denied legal representation, and subjected to enforced disappearances.

Women, children, journalists, and human rights defenders were specifically targeted. Children accounted for approximately 12-13% of the deaths, and numerous reports indicate sexual violence against women by security forces. Journalists faced harassment, injury, and detention, with several media outlets censored or shut down. In order to prevent news from being relayed within the country and to the outside world, the government had imposed internet shutdowns and media censorship to control the narrative and limit public awareness of the ongoing violations. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk reiterated the findings of the OHCHR fact-finding team, calling them an essential tool for justice. Turk criticised the former Bangladeshi government's response to the protests and had been at the forefront of urging it to respect the rights of all citizens, particularly in allowing the freedom to assemble peacefully and express dissent. The report was also backed by Amnesty and Human Rights Watch, who voiced recommendations from the UN report calling on the Bangladeshi government to hold investigations, ensure justice for victims and provide for reparations.



Terror group PKK to heed Ocalan's call for peace

Photo: AFP

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has declared an immediate ceasefire in its four-decade-long conflict with Turkey, responding to an appeal from its imprisoned leader, Abdullah Ocalan, to disarm and dissolve the organization. On February 27, 2025, Ocalan, who has been incarcerated since 1999, issued a message from his prison cell urging the PKK to convene a congress to disband and lay down arms. Calling for disarmament, Ocalan had appealed to members of the PKK in a letter read out by Dem party members Ahmet Turk and Pervin Buldan in both Kurdish and Turkish. He said "all groups must lay down their arms and the PKK must dissolve itself", adding that his movement was formed primarily because "the channels of democratic politics were closed". However, with the efforts of leaders like MHP's Bahceli, backed by positive signals from Erdogan and other political parties, the right environment for the PKK to lay down its arms had been created, Ocalan added. The peace initiative between the Turkish state and the PKK, which is considered a terrorist organization by Turkey and its Western allies, was started in October by Turkish President Erdogan's coalition partner, MHP's leader Devlet Bahceli, who suggested that Ocalan could be granted parole if his group renounces violence and disbands.

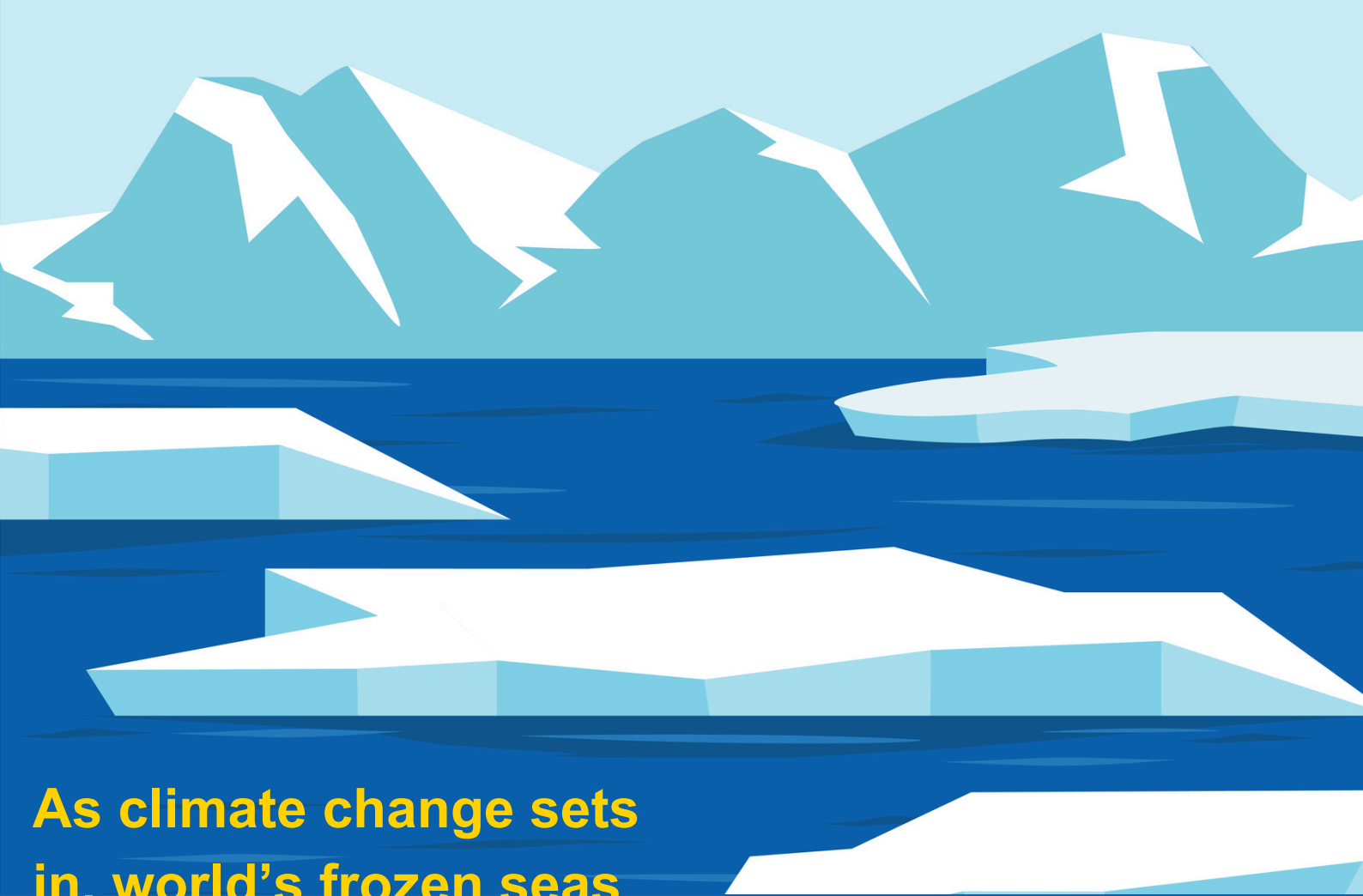
Erdogan welcomed the developments and said that Ocalan's message was a "new phase" in peace efforts in Turkey. Ocalan's call has the potential to end a conflict that has resulted in over 40,000 deaths since 1984, and rippled across the borders of multiple neighboring countries. The conflict between the PKK and Turkey has had devastating effects on Turkey and neighbors. Ocalan's call for peace on Thursday marked a major turning point and could have far-reaching implications for the Middle East. As per analysts, this groundbreaking announcement by the PKK comes against the backdrop of fundamental changes in the region, including the reconfiguration of power in neighboring Syria after the toppling of President Bashar Assad, the weakening of the Hezbollah militant movement in Lebanon and the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. An earlier ceasefire between the PKK and Ankara broke down in 2015, prompting a period of violent attacks and reprisals across northern Iraq, Turkey and Syria that claimed thousands of lives. The International Crisis Group estimates that since 2015, 7,152 people have been killed in clashes or terror attacks in Turkey and northern Iraq, including 646 civilians, 1,494 members of the Turkish security forces and 4,786 militants.

Amidst hardship and adversary, Muslims worldwide start celebrating holy month of Ramadan



Muslims around the world marked the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan in March, where they will observe the fast by refraining from eating and drinking from dawn to dusk every day for an entire month to achieve greater “taqwa”, or consciousness of God, and purification of the soul. Muslims in Saudi Arabia and other Arab and Muslim countries started fasting the month on Saturday the first of March. This included Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, the Palestinian territories, Sudan, Tunisia, as well as Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority country. Some other nations, such as Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Pakistan and South Africa, began observing Ramadan on March 2. This year's Ramadan comes amidst some momentous events – the end of the war in Syria following decades of Assad family rule, a fragile ceasefire in Gaza where the first phase has ended and the next one is yet unsure, following fifteen months of an Israeli-sponsored genocide which has killed more than 40,000 people, as well as the first Ramadan in Bangladesh after the fall of Sheikh Hasina's autocratic government through a popular revolution.

In many parts of the world, Muslims are increasingly becoming victims of social and state-sponsored oppression that is actively affecting and inhibiting their ability in safely exercising their religious customs and traditions this Ramadan. In Australia, a major police investigation began following an alleged Christchurch-style shooting threat to a mosque in Edmonson Park, Western Sydney, referring to the 2019 attack on a Christchurch mosque in New Zealand, where Australian-born Brenton Tarrant killed 51 people after storming the building and opening fire, all while live-streaming the heinous act. According to authorities, the threat was being seriously addressed by police authorities and has elicited condemnation from Australian PM Anthony Albanese and NSW Premier Chris Minns. In France, the Coordination Council of Turkish Muslims of France (CCMTF), Ibrahim Alci, sent a letter to the French Interior Ministry to request enhanced security measures for Muslim places of worship in France, amidst Muslim concerns about the rise in hostile acts targeting mosques. Moreover, the French Football Federation (FFF) is under fire after banning Muslim players from fasting during Ramadan while training with the national squad — sparking accusations of discrimination and dividing the team. This is not an isolated incident – French authorities have also slapped a discriminatory hijab ban on French female athletes competing in sports, a move that has faced heavy criticism as well. On the other hand, Muslims in India face hurdles in praying and fasting as the local government in some places asked Muslims to pray indoors for the coming Friday in light of the Hindu Holi celebrations, where paint will be splashed all across buildings and people – several mosques in Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh have been covered by tarpauline sheets ahead of Holi processions to ‘maintain the peace.’



As climate change sets in, world's frozen seas and glaciers melting at alarming rate

Arctic sea-ice is currently at its smallest recorded extent for the time of year, while Antarctic sea-ice is close to a new low in satellite records going back to the late 1970s. Data from the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) revealed that both the Arctic and Antarctic experienced significant reductions in sea ice cover. Arctic sea ice was 8% below average, while Antarctic sea ice was 26% below average for the month. Moreover, the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) reported that the average Arctic sea ice extent for February 2025 was 13.75 million square kilometers, marking the lowest February extent in the 47-year satellite record. This decline was attributed to unusually warm temperatures in the Arctic, with some regions experiencing temperatures up to 12°C above average. All this shows that the world's frozen oceans, which help to keep the planet cool, currently have less ice than ever previously recorded, an indelible mark of global warming.

Concurrently, the world's glaciers are melting faster than ever recorded under the impact of climate change, according to the most comprehensive scientific analysis to date. Over the past decade or so, glacier losses were more than a third higher than during the period 2000-2011. The study, published in the scientific journal Nature, combined more than 230 regional estimates from 35 research teams around the world, making scientists even more confident about exactly how fast glaciers are melting, and how they will evolve in the future. The consequences of glacial melting go beyond local changes to landscapes and ecosystems – not only does the sources of fresh water dwindle up, but even small increases to global sea-level can play a big role in increasing the frequency of coastal flooding. With increasing climate change, global sea-levels have already risen by more than 20cm (8in) since 1900, with around half of that coming since the early 1990s, and faster increases are expected in the decades ahead.



New political party forms with the students who ousted Hasina: BNP's popularity to fall under public scrutiny, Jamaat might lose its inevitability

With high expectations, a new political party has been formed under the leadership of Nahid Islam, who led the student protest that toppled Hasina in August 24. Their debut will undoubtedly make the political landscape more intriguing in the days ahead. The BNP and Jamaat will need to carefully consider their future strategies moving forward.

Finally, the much-discussed Bangladesh Citizen Party (BCP) has made its debut through a grand event. In the late afternoon of February 2025, the party leader Nahid's slogan "People, or power; People, people" resonated along the Manik Mia Avenue Road in front of the National Parliament. This news has been widely covered in all major national and international media outlets. In the international media, BCP has been introduced as "a party formed by students who ousted Hasina."

The newest party in Bangladesh began its journey with the announcement of a 171-member convening committee. With the July coup, it was only a matter of time before BCP's emergence came to pass, in line with the political shifting of Bangladesh.

Historically, although the Bangladeshi democratic system has been carried forward by the two main political parties—Awami League and BNP—the coup on July 24 not only ensured the oust of the fascist Awami League but perhaps has buried it for good. The people of Bangladesh seem to have spontaneously rejected the Awami League.

In this context, while it is believed that the remaining two popular parties in Bangladesh, BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, will struggle for power among themselves, BCP's emergence has shifted the power struggle into a different dimension altogether. Historically, the combined vote share of BNP, Jamaat, and Awami League in Bangladesh has been 60-70 percent. Outside of that, about 25-30 percent are swing votes. It is preliminarily estimated that after the departure of Awami League from the political scene, BNP may form a government with an absolute majority. On the other hand, considering the influence of the former Shibir within the predecessor of BCP, Jatiyo Nagorik Committee, Jamaat hoped to gain more votes than before. They believed that even if they could not come to power, they would be able to secure a place as a strong opposition party in the National Parliament.

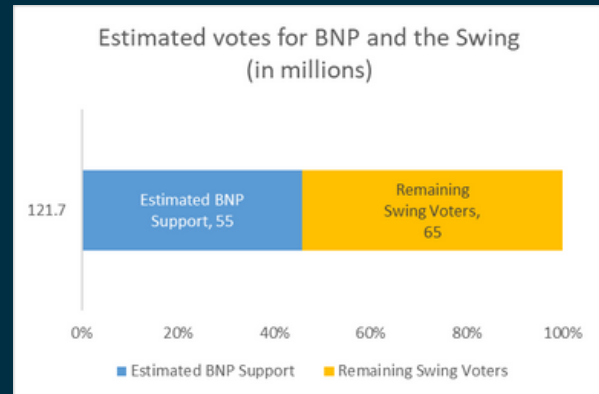
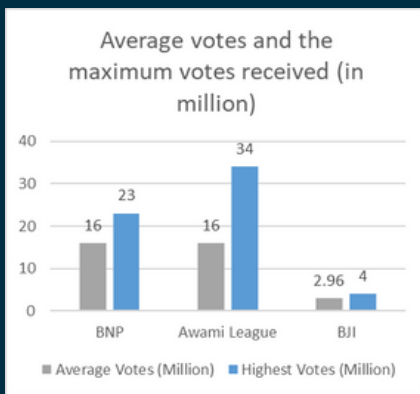
However, before the formation of BCP, its Shibir faction became inactive. At least several influential former Shibir leaders announced that they will not join BCP. While this may not significantly benefit or harm Jamaat, it seems likely that BCP's popularity will increase as a result. One reason for this is the swing voters. A large portion of swing voters are searching for an alternative party to the Awami League. In the past, BNP has been the default option in such cases, but this time the situation is different. Due to various incorrect decisions, actions, and statements from BNP after August 5, their popularity is declining. As a result, BCP could position itself as a centrist party that swing voters might trust.

From 1979 to 2008, the BNP participated in five national elections, receiving an average of 15 million votes, which accounts for 36% of the total electorate. Their highest vote tally during this period was 23 million.

In comparison, the Awami League (AL) took part in eight elections from 1970 to 2008, averaging 16 million votes with a share of 44%. Their peak vote count was 34 million in 2008.

During the same timeframe, the BJI participated in five national polls, garnering an average of 2,955,812 votes, which represents 7% of the total.

In 2024, Bangladesh registered approximately 121.7 million r voters. This suggests that around 100 million voters could be considered swing voters, including those who typically support the Awami League. Even if we allocate a portion of Awami votes to the BNP, their estimated support would not exceed 55 million. This leaves about 65 million voters as potential swing voters.



While initial public perceptions suggest that BNP could win the upcoming elections by a huge margin and form the government, the potential of BCP cannot be completely dismissed. This will depend on BCP's public relations; maintaining the popularity of Nahid, Hasanat, and Sarjis; Akhtar's strategic role, and how well it can connect with the middle class and low-wage community in the country.

It is not entirely impossible that if swing voters cast their votes for BCP, it could result in a miracle for the party and the future of Bangladesh. However, along with this situation, it may also become clearer in the coming days that Jamaat's role in Bangladeshi politics is unlikely to remain very strong or decisive. In the upcoming days, we may witness a three-way conflict in Bangladeshi politics with the participation of BNP and Jamaat. However, it would be wise to wait at least another six months to know who will be able to form the government.

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