

The Future

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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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Topics in this issue

Children die from hunger in Gaza as Israel weaponizes aid and kills with impunity	04
Amidst genocide in Gaza, Muslims worldwide converge for hajj and prepare for Eid al-adha	06
Amidst war and negotiation for peace, Russia-Ukraine standoff at a critical point	07
Trump administration's war on international students amidst spat with Harvard	08
US lifts sanctions on Syria in surprise yet significant move	09
PKK to disband bringing hope to a region devastated by decades of conflict	10
India-Pakistan tensions abate following foreign mediation, but India may have suffered a decisive military defeat	11
Bangladesh-Myanmar-India tensions rise over Rohingya issue	12



Children die from hunger in Gaza as Israel weaponizes aid and kills with impunity

In May 2025, Israel announced military plans to take full control of the Gaza Strip, a move that has been met with widespread international condemnation. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed that Israel intends to seize Gaza for an unspecified period, effectively reoccupying the territory it withdrew from in 2005. This declaration has been hailed by Israeli hardliners but has raised alarms globally about the potential for further displacement and escalation of hostilities. The humanitarian situation in Gaza has reached catastrophic levels, with the United Nations declaring it the "hungriest place on Earth"; UN says 100 percent of Palestinians in Gaza at risk of famine. Approximately half a million Palestinians are at risk of starvation, and the entire population faces severe food insecurity and famine concerns due to the ongoing blockade and limited aid access. The global outcry forced the Israeli army to allow a limited amount of aid after more than 2 months, but despite this, the delivery process has been obstructed by security challenges, including looting and raids on medical warehouses. Observers have blamed Israeli intelligence-sponsored gangs for being responsible for the breakdown of order in the Strip.

Following a complete Israeli blockade on the Strip, and the banning of humanitarian operations of UNWRA as well as other humanitarian orgs, Israel greenlit the shadowy for-profit Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), a U.S.-backed initiative operated by masked mercenaries, to begin distributing aid in southern Gaza. The program has been heavily criticized by the United Nations and other aid organizations for its militarized approach and dehumanization of Palestinians. Reports indicate that GHF aid drops are traps to lure hungry Palestinians into death centers employing mechanisms to weaponize aid to forcefully displace Palestinians. At least 102 Palestinians have been killed and over 500 injured in incidents near GHF distribution sites in Rafah, when Israeli forces have used machineguns to open fire on crowds of hungry Palestinians seeking aid. Critics argue that the GHF's operations serve to further dehumanize Palestinians and exacerbate their suffering, turning humanitarian assistance into a tool of political and military weaponization.

As Israel has been perpetuating this genocide against innocent men, women and children of Gaza over more than 19 months with exclusive use of US armaments, US efforts to broker a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas have encountered significant obstacles, mainly due to Israeli attempts at sabotaging negotiations and desire to perpetuate the war. The United States proposed a 60-day truce involving the release of 10 living and 18 deceased hostages by Hamas, in exchange for Israel releasing Palestinian prisoners. Hamas has stood strong in its demands – it has responded with amendments seeking a permanent ceasefire, complete Israeli military withdrawal from Gaza, and unrestricted humanitarian aid entry. Attempts by Hamas to garner US goodwill have included the release of Israeli-American hostage Edan Alexander after being kept in captivity in Gaza for 19 months. But the US and Israel, after jointly perpetuating a genocide for 19 months, seem to have no inclination to stop or sidestep any gestures of goodwill, and Israeli leaders have repeatedly expressed their desire at completely wiping out the population, ethnic cleansing and mass displacement of the more than 2 million Palestinians from Gaza.

Currently, an effort by international humanitarian activists to break the siege on Gaza is underway through a freedom flotilla named Madleen led by activist Greta Thunberg, and has been the topic for fiery discussion and media attention. Since Israel broke the ceasefire on March 18, at least 3901 people have been confirmed killed, including hundreds of children, and at least 11,088 people have been injured. While tens of thousands remain buried under the rubble, presumably dead, at least 54,056 Palestinians are confirmed dead from Israeli attacks. The real death toll is considered to be easily above sixty to seventy thousand, or even higher.

Photo: Al Jazeera





Amidst genocide in Gaza, Muslims worldwide converge for hajj and prepare for Eid al-adha

As the sacred month of Dhul Hijja unfolds, over 1.4 million Muslims have converged in Mecca for Hajj 2025, one of Islam's five pillars. The pilgrimage officially commenced on June 4, with pilgrims donning ihram garments and proceeding to Mina, followed by the pivotal Day of Arafah on June 5, where they will stand in prayer and reflection. In response to last year's extreme heat, which claimed over 1,300 lives, Saudi authorities have implemented enhanced safety measures - cooling systems, free internet, and enhanced crowd monitoring measures. Eid al-Adha, the Festival of Sacrifice, will be observed on June 6 in Saudi Arabia and many other countries, and on June 7 in regions like India, depending on moon sightings. This festival commemorates Prophet Ibrahim's unwavering faith and willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to God. Muslims worldwide will mark the occasion with special prayers, the ritual sacrifice of livestock such as sheep and cows, as well as acts of charity in the community.

However, all is not normal, as for a second consecutive year, the people of Gaza are welcoming Eid facing an Israeli genocide that has now raged on for twenty months. With severe famine conditions, critical shortages of food, medicine, and fuel, and continued Israeli blockades and relentless bombardment, celebrations are overshadowed by constant mourning and catastrophic hunger. Humanitarian agencies have warned that the crisis is deepening, and images of malnourished children and destroyed neighborhoods stand in stark contrast to the festive spirit witnessed elsewhere. The global Muslim community, or Ummah, will be embracing this sacred period with both joy and grief—celebrating divine blessings while mourning the suffering of their brothers and sisters in Gaza. From the bustling streets of Istanbul to the mosques of Jakarta, calls for justice and solidarity echo alongside takbirs and prayers. Many mosques and community centers are dedicating Eid sermons to the plight of Palestinians, and charity efforts are being redirected to provide emergency aid to Gaza.



Amidst war and negotiation for peace, Russia-Ukraine standoff at a critical point

Over the past month, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has intensified, with both sides escalating military operations and diplomatic efforts. Peace talks in Istanbul revealed deep divisions: Russia proposed a short truce for body exchanges, followed by negotiations demanding Ukraine's recognition of Russian sovereignty over Crimea and four other regions, neutrality from NATO, and protections for Russian speakers. Ukraine, however, insisted on a full, unconditional 30-day ceasefire monitored internationally, along with the return of abducted children and the release of detainees. The talks yielded limited progress, with agreements only on prisoner exchanges and the repatriation of soldiers' bodies. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy emphasized Ukraine's refusal to concede its sovereignty and called for a direct meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin to seek a resolution.

On the battlefield, Russia has launched a significant spring offensive, intensifying assaults across multiple fronts. In Kharkiv Oblast, Russian forces reoccupied 13 settlements and advanced to the northern bank of the Vovcha River in Vovchansk, aiming to create a "buffer zone" to prevent further attacks on Belgorod. Simultaneously, in the Kupiansk offensive, Russian troops established bridgeheads across the Oskil River and captured most of Dvorichna, seeking to encircle Ukrainian forces and disrupt logistics. In Sumy Oblast, a cross-border incursion led to the reoccupation of parts of the region, causing the evacuation of 56,000 residents. In response, Ukraine has intensified its strategic operations. A notable development was the execution of "Operation Spiderweb," a covert drone campaign targeting Russian bomber bases deep within Russian territory. This operation reportedly damaged or destroyed multiple strategic bombers, including Tu-95 and Tu-160 models, which are integral to Russia's long-range strike capabilities. Additionally, Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) carried out an underwater sabotage operation against the Crimean Bridge, a critical supply route for Russian forces, using approximately 1,100 kilograms of explosives to damage its structural supports. These actions underscore Ukraine's evolving military capabilities and its commitment to disrupting Russian military infrastructure.



Trump administration's war on international students amidst spat with Harvard

In May 2025, the Trump administration launched a sweeping crackdown on U.S. universities, targeting alleged antisemitism and pro-Palestinian activism on campuses, with Harvard University at the center of its campaign. The administration froze more than \$2 billion in federal research funding and attempted to revoke Harvard's authorization to enroll international students. Harvard swiftly filed a federal lawsuit, calling the measures unconstitutional and politically motivated. The crackdown extended beyond Harvard, affecting universities like Columbia and UC Berkeley, and took a dramatic turn when the ban included thousands of Chinese students, many of whom were enrolled in STEM and social science programs. The administration cited vague concerns over ideological indoctrination and national security, drawing parallels to earlier Trump-era restrictions. Civil rights organizations and academic leaders condemned the move as xenophobic and politically charged, warning of severe consequences for U.S. higher education and global research partnerships.

Protests erupted across campuses, and international student enrollment dipped sharply amid fears of targeted enforcement and deportation. In the meantime, federal judges quickly intervened - a Boston judge issued an emergency injunction halting the Harvard visa ban, describing the administration's actions as "punitive overreach unsupported by credible evidence." Other courts followed suit, blocking enforcement at multiple institutions. While the administration has been forced to roll back the ban for now, Trump officials have said that they will pursue tighter screening measures for international students applying to elite universities like Harvard, especially those from China and Muslim-majority countries. In parallel, Trump's policies have contributed to a chilling wave of censorship targeting pro-Palestinian speech on U.S. campuses. In recent weeks, students at George Washington University, NYU, and MIT have been censured, disinvited from graduation ceremonies or faced their diplomas being withheld after denouncing the genocide and call for Palestinian rights in their speeches. Faculty across campuses report being warned or disciplined for statements deemed politically sensitive.



US lifts sanctions on Syria in surprise yet significant move

On May 13, 2025, while on a state visit to the Gulf region encompassing Riyadh, Doha and the Emirates, President Donald Trump announced the lifting of U.S. sanctions on Syria, marking a significant shift in American foreign policy. This decision has significant bearing on Syria, which had been hit by the sanctions while under the rule of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who was ousted in December 2024, following which interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa, a former Islamist rebel leader, had taken over. The Trump administration issued a general license authorizing transactions with the new Syrian government, the central bank, and state-owned enterprises, effectively easing restrictions that had isolated Syria from the global financial system. President Trump stated that the move aimed to give Syria "a chance at greatness" and was influenced by discussions with leaders from Saudi Arabia and Turkey, who advocated for the sanctions' removal to facilitate Syria's reconstruction efforts.

The aftermath of the sanctions' removal has seen a flurry of diplomatic and economic activities. The U.S. raised its flag in Damascus for the first time since 2012, signaling a thaw in relations. Special Envoy Thomas Barrack met with President al-Sharaa and announced plans to scale down U.S. military bases in Syria from eight to one, reflecting a strategic shift in American military presence. Additionally, Syria signed a significant energy project agreement with a consortium of Qatari, Turkish, and U.S. companies to develop gas turbines and a solar plant, aiming to supply over 50% of the country's electricity needs. These developments indicate a concerted effort to rebuild Syria's infrastructure and economy with international support, moves that Syrians have been welcoming with open arms and gratitude, as they start the rebuilding process of war-torn Syria in earnest.

However, situation in Syria is still far from normal. To the south-west, Israel has expressed significant concern over the U.S. decision to lift sanctions on Syria in May 2025, viewing it as a potential threat to regional stability. Moreover, Israel has not altered its military strategy in the region, continuing to maintain a strong military presence in southern Syria, asserting that its forces will remain "for an indefinite period" to counter any "emerging threats." Instead of de-escalation, it has expanded its operations in Syria, including airstrikes on military targets and the indefinite occupation of a UN buffer zone. The Israeli government has condemned Syria's new rulers as extremists, though al-Sharaa's administration has denied any aggression, emphasizing a focus on national reconstruction and unity after over a decade of civil war.

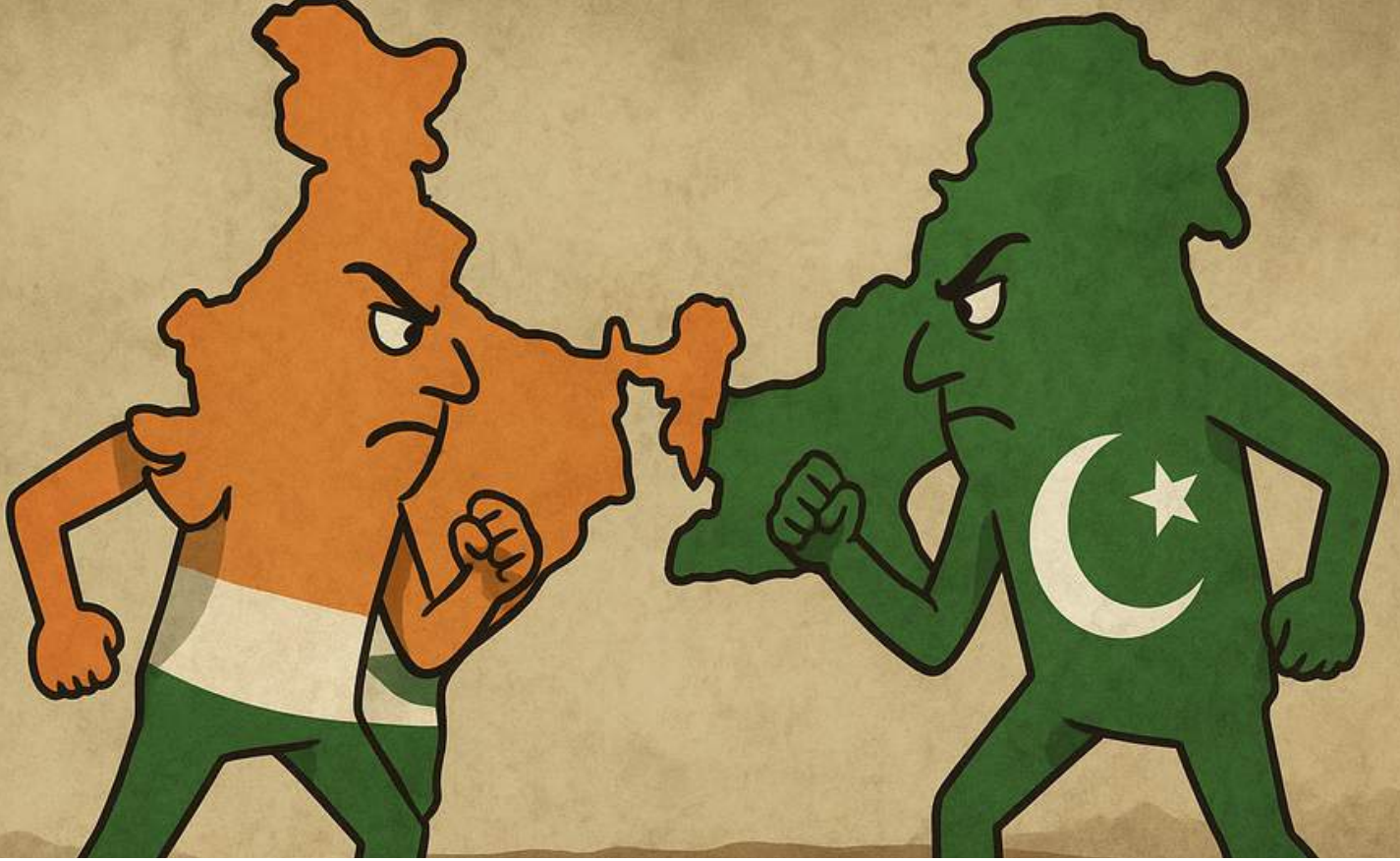


Photo: Ilyas AKENGİN / AFP

PKK to disband bringing hope to a region devastated by decades of conflict

In a historic move, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) announced on May 12, 2025, its decision to disband and end its armed struggle against the Turkish state. This declaration followed the group's 12th Congress held in early May and was influenced by a February call from imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan to dissolve the organization and pursue democratic avenues for resolving Kurdish issues. The PKK, designated as a terrorist organization by Turkey and several other countries, stated that it had "completed its historical mission" and would cease all activities under its name. The announcement marks the conclusion of a four-decade conflict that has claimed over 40,000 lives and strained Turkey's economy and social fabric. The Turkish government and various political factions have responded with cautious optimism. "If the new PKK decision is fully implemented, shutting down all PKK branches, illegal structures, it will be a turning point," said Omer Celik, a spokesman for the governing Justice and Development Party, or AK Party. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan welcomed the move as a potential turning point for national unity and regional stability.

Iraq on Monday evening welcomed the PKK's announcement to dissolve, calling it a step towards lasting regional stability; its Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Baghdad described the move as "a significant opportunity to promote peace efforts and end longstanding conflicts". Its statement also said the development would "strengthen security and stability in Iraq and the region" with the government hopeful it would reduce tensions across its northern borders. The PKK presence in Iraq has long been a major source of tension with neighbouring Türkiye. Earlier, the president of Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdish region, Nechirvan Barzani, said the PKK decision "demonstrates political maturity ... and lays the foundation for a lasting peace that would end decades of violence, pain and suffering". While PKK's disbandment opens avenues for democratic engagement and potential reconciliation, challenges remain, including integrating former fighters into civilian life and addressing the concerns of various Kurdish factions. The international community, including the United Nations, has acknowledged the development as a positive step, emphasizing the importance of inclusive dialogue and sustained efforts to ensure lasting peace and stability in the region.



India-Pakistan tensions abate following foreign mediation, but India may have suffered a decisive military defeat

In the aftermath of the brief yet intense conflict between India and Pakistan in May 2025, tensions have subsided due to international mediation, notably by the United States through a ceasefire on May 10. However, both nations had engaged in extensive media campaigns to shape domestic and international perceptions of the war. Indian media outlets, including Zee News, NDTV, and Times Now, broadcasted unverified reports claiming significant Pakistani losses, such as the destruction of cities and the hiding of Pakistan's prime minister. These narratives were often supported by unrelated visuals from other conflicts or even video games, and the media faced backlash for their propensity to broadcast fake news and mislead the public on the realities of the war. The information warfare extended beyond traditional media, with both governments leveraging social media platforms to disseminate their narratives. This digital battleground intensified the conflict's psychological impact, fueling nationalism and complicating diplomatic efforts for de-escalation. One must, however, acknowledge the obstinacy and obtuseness shown by the Indian government in its consistent rejection of diplomatic overtures such as that of Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's call for dialogue on key issues, including the Indus Waters Treaty, terrorism, and Kashmir, all in the name of Pakistan supporting terrorism, which the latter has repeatedly denied.

Militarily, India launched Operation Sindoor, targeting what they claimed were key terror infrastructure within Pakistan. While Indian officials claimed swift success, Pakistani sources alleged that India carried out strikes at additional locations beyond those officially confirmed. At the time, Indian Chief of Defense Staff Gen. Anil Chauhan admitted that Indian fighter jets were shot down by Pakistan during the clashes. There was, however, something deeper at play here which the Indians tried to dismiss – the Pakistanis had used, with a high degree of success, a slew of generation 4.5 Chinese-built J-10C fighter jets, fitted with superior Chinese made air-to-air PL-15E missiles, to repel the wave of Indian airstrikes. It had in fact turned out to be a major success - Reuters reported at least three Indian fighters down, including the latest French-made generation 4.5 Rafales, all of them inside Indian territory. Following that, Pakistan launched a counter-offensive, reportedly codenamed Operation Bunyan Marsoos. This operation involved drone and missile strikes targeting Indian military installations. Experts believe that the superior performance of the Pakistan military acted as a strong deterrent to further escalation of hostilities, and was among the pressing reasons that India had agreed to the truce so quickly.



Bangladesh-Myanmar-India tensions rise over Rohingya issue

Tensions among India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar have intensified in recent weeks over the handling of Rohingya refugees, as each country grapples with the humanitarian and political fallout of ongoing displacement. India has faced international criticism for forcibly deporting Rohingya refugees, including reports of at least 40 individuals being cast into the sea near Myanmar after being detained in New Delhi. The United Nations has condemned the act as a serious violation of the international non-refoulement principle, which prohibits returning individuals to a country where they may face harm. While India has consistently defended its policy of deporting Rohingya refugees, citing national security concerns and the absence of a formal refugee law, recent incidents of Rohingya deaths at sea have highlighted the precarity of their existence amidst war and genocide. In May 2025, two separate boat incidents off Myanmar's coast resulted in the deaths of at least 427 Rohingya refugees. The first tragedy occurred on May 9, when a vessel carrying 267 people capsized, leaving only 66 survivors. The following day, a second boat with 247 individuals sank, with just 21 survivors. These incidents are among the deadliest maritime disasters involving the Rohingya this year.

Bangladesh, already hosting nearly one million Rohingya refugees, is under increasing pressure as more individuals are pushed across its borders. The situation is further complicated by the Arakan Army's control over parts of Myanmar's Rakhine State, including Maungdaw Township, which borders Bangladesh. The rise of non-state actors such as the Arakan Army and the internal instability in Myanmar has prompted security concerns in Dhaka, leading to renewed debate over establishing a "humanitarian corridor" to facilitate aid and voluntary repatriation. While Bangladesh has expressed openness to the idea under UN supervision, India has remained skeptical, viewing it as a potential magnet for more refugees and a threat to regional security. Advocates, including UNHCR and international NGOs, argue that a corridor could provide safe passage for humanitarian aid and medical assistance into northern Rakhine State and allow willing Rohingya to return home under international guarantees. However, critics in New Delhi and Naypyidaw warn that such a move might legitimize non-state actors like the Arakan Army and could be used as a geopolitical tool by rival powers. Meanwhile, Myanmar's internal conflict continues to drive displacement, with the UNHCR reporting increased outflows of refugees into neighboring countries. The ongoing instability hampers efforts to repatriate Rohingya refugees and exacerbates regional tensions.

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