

February 2025

GLOBAL UP-TO-DATE

A CGS Publication

The world around us is changing rapidly. Wars, new turn in global politics, human rights issues are occurring every day, posing new challenges and concerns. Global Up-to-Date is an initiative by Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) which will work as a hub for explaining the contemporary global issues.

The regular briefs will focus and explain the issues related to International Politics, Economy, Security, Human Rights, and Development. There will be a monthly printed version newsletter containing briefs of all the contemporary global important issues. The online version contains regular updates of the pressing issues along with the PDF version of the news letter.

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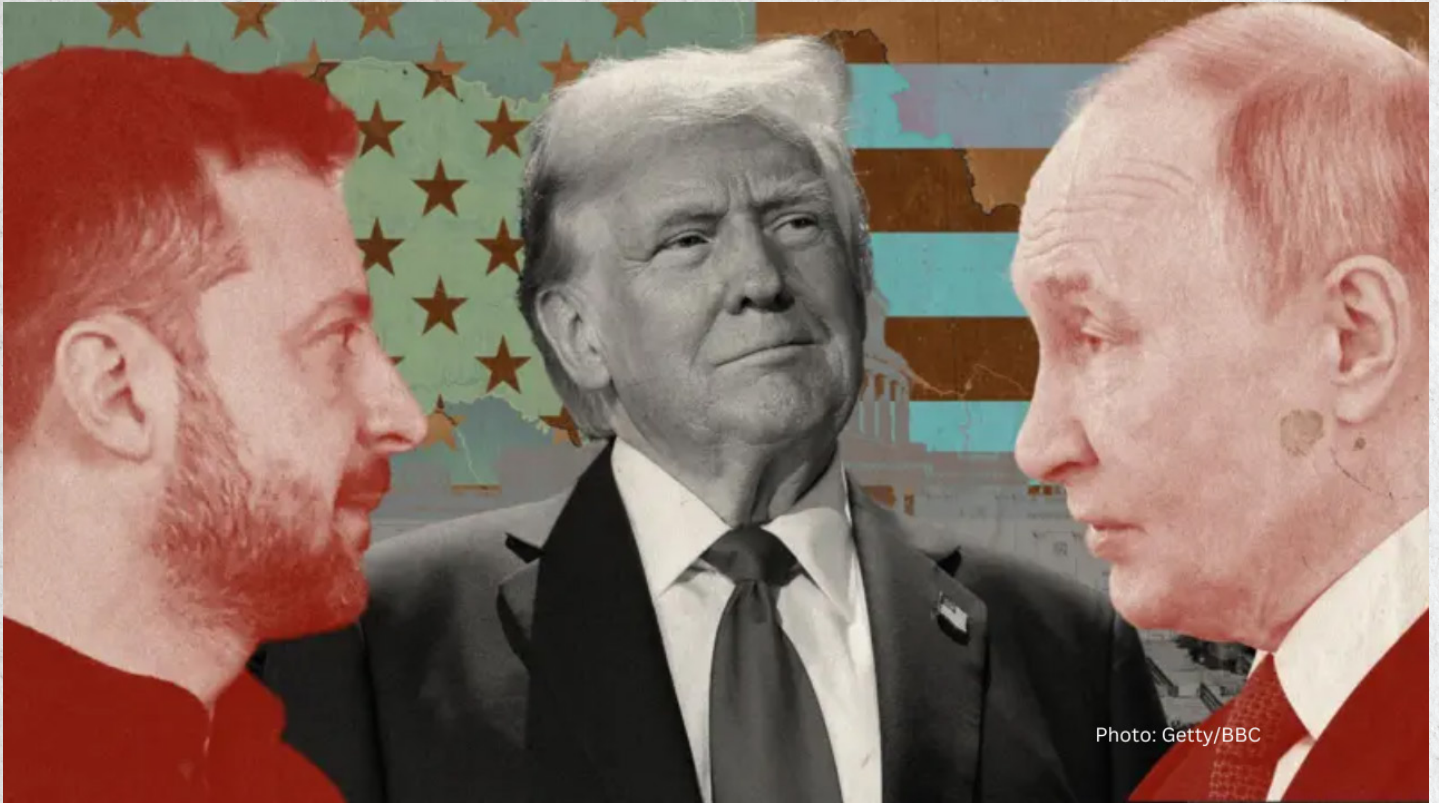


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Caught in the Diplomatic Struggle: Ukraine's Battle Amid U.S.-Russia Negotiations

Marzana Mahnaz



The war between Ukraine and Russia began in February 2022 when Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This conflict has resulted in significant geopolitical tensions, a humanitarian crisis, and numerous casualties. The war has seen various phases, including intense battles, territorial gains and losses, and ongoing diplomatic efforts to reach a resolution. The shift of administration in the U.S. has brought a shift in diplomatic efforts for the long going protracted conflict between the two countries.

The stance of U.S. administrations on the Ukraine-Russia conflict has evolved over time. Under President Obama, the U.S. condemned Russia's actions and imposed sanctions in response to the annexation of Crimea. The Trump administration took a different approach, with President Trump expressing a desire to improve relations with Russia and at times questioning the extent of U.S. involvement in Ukraine. In the past, the Biden administration reaffirmed support for Ukraine, providing military aid and diplomatic backing. However, recent developments under President Trump have seen a shift towards negotiating directly with Russia, often excluding Ukraine from key discussions and focusing on economic transactions rather than traditional security commitments. According to the BBC, President Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin recently spoke on a phone call and agreed to begin negotiations to end the war in Ukraine.

Although President Trump is now determined to resolve the war, he reached out to the counterpart who initiated it first, rather than the one who has been fighting against it. The U.S. President also welcomed Russia's President Vladimir Putin back to international diplomacy with the 90-minute phone call, to be followed by a face-to-face meeting, possibly in Saudi Arabia.

After reaching President Putin, Ukrainian counterpart President Volodymyr Zelensky also received a phone call from the white house. However, Trump calling him after speaking to Putin, seemed to regard him, at best, as a junior adjunct to any peace talks. The phone calls only interpret that Trump and Putin are attempting to settle Ukraine's future without anyone else in the negotiation. Along with President Zelensky, The European Union is worried too about the resolution being only one sided. BBC reported that the EU foreign policy chief KajaKallas posted that Europe must have a central role in any negotiation. "Our priority now must be strengthening Ukraine and providing robust security guarantees," Kallas said.

Collectively, European allies have provided Ukraine with more financial support than the United States. Zelensky is acutely aware that, despite the steadfastness of his European allies, the US remains the world's most powerful military force. In a recent interview with the Guardian, he emphasized that "security guarantees without America are not real security guarantees."

On the other hand, the change of administration bore flexibility for the Russian President amid the insecurity of Ukraine and the EU allies. Putin is getting a much easier ride than he had from Biden. According to Al Jazeera, Kyiv demands a full withdrawal of Russian troops from its territory and immediate NATO membership. Moscow says there is no question of returning any land it occupies, and wants Ukraine written out of NATO. Regarding the issue of land dispute, Trump seemed to suggest that the huge numbers of dead and wounded in the Russian military gave some kind of legitimacy to Putin's demand to keep the land captured and annexed by Russia. To add fuel to the fire, a week after the phone call, President Donald Trump suggested Ukraine was responsible for Russia's invasion in 2022, arguing that Kyiv could have made a deal to avoid the conflict. Trump made these remarks while criticizing Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for expressing concern about not being included in peace talks between the U.S. and Russia in Saudi Arabia. Trump claimed he could have negotiated a deal that would have prevented the war and spared lives and infrastructure.

The change in the U.S. administration has highlighted the rise of a populist leader who appears to lack a full grasp of the gravity of the long-standing Ukraine-Russia war. President Trump's approach, which seems to support the totalitarian leader Vladimir Putin, has left Ukraine in a precarious position. The diplomatic efforts between these two authoritative superpowers have sidelined Ukraine, creating a sense of insecurity for the nation.

This approach from President Trump has raised concerns among European allies, who fear that the resolution may be one-sided and not in Ukraine's best interest. The EU foreign policy chief emphasized the need for Europe to have a central role in any negotiation, stating that "our priority now must be strengthening Ukraine and providing robust security guarantees".

The current diplomatic landscape has left Ukraine caught between the diplomacy of two authoritative superpowers, with its future uncertain. The EU's support, while crucial, may not be enough to secure a lasting resolution to the conflict without the involvement of the United States.

When the Wildfires Came for the Rich: What It Means for Climate Action

Kazi Rhid



On January 8th, a particularly striking image appeared on social media. A photograph depicted a large collection of crockery and fine China submerged in a swimming pool, an effort by an elderly woman residing in the Palisades to protect her belongings from the encroaching wildfires.

As the situation unfolded, it became evident that this event was not merely another wildfire typical of California's annual fire season, often attributed to accidents such as gender reveal parties. The fire proved devastating on multiple levels, not only destroying the homes of celebrities but also severely impacting working-class communities living paycheck to paycheck.

Simultaneously, social media reactions included expressions of *schadenfreude*, with some individuals celebrating the destruction of wealthy homeowners' properties. However, rather than being perceived as a form of justice, such events should serve as a dire warning to address an urgent crisis. Yet, instead of prioritizing climate action, the United States has withdrawn from the Paris Climate Agreement, a response that appears incongruent with the escalating impact of climate change on its citizens.

The Palisades Fire erupted on the morning of January 7 in Pacific Palisades, a Los Angeles neighborhood east of Malibu, as a brush fire. The blaze grew to 23,448 acres before being declared 100% contained on Friday, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire). Cal Fire reported that the fire damaged or destroyed more than 6,800 structures.

The Eaton Fire ignited just hours after the Palisades Fire near a canyon in the sprawling national forest lands north of downtown Los Angeles. It quickly spread to 14,021 acres before being fully contained, according to Cal Fire, which reported that 10,491 structures were damaged or destroyed in the blaze.

Is Climate Change the Only Factor Behind Such Catastrophes? The answer is complicated. While contributing factors to worsening wildfires vary across regions and ecosystems, climate change is an overarching force affecting all areas, said Glen MacDonald, a UCLA distinguished professor of geography and the lead author of the paper *Drivers of California's Changing Wildfires: A State-of-the-Knowledge Synthesis*.

While human sources are responsible for more than 90% of wildfire ignitions, the direct causes have shifted over time. Settler colonialism disrupted Indigenous cultural practices that once stewarded ecosystems and effectively prevented catastrophic wildfires, said Beth Rose Middleton Manning, a UC Davis professor and co-author of the paper.

"The significant reduction of the use of fire by Indigenous peoples following colonization, the introduction of grazing livestock (which reduced fine fuels and decreased surface fire activity), aggressive fire suppression in the 20th century, and early timber harvest practices (which removed large trees and increased surface fuels) resulted in stand densification by fire-intolerant species and increased fuel loading in some California forests, leading to increasingly severe fires in these ecosystems," the authors wrote.

"A forest can't be overgrown if you want to foster the species you need for basketry and medicine," Middleton Manning explained. Because forests were home to Indigenous communities, they regularly cleared brush and used fire to hunt, harvest traditional foods, and maintain paths for transportation.

Late in the 20th century, some wildfire-causing sources, such as cigarette smoking, declined. However, human development expanded into fire-prone areas, leading to more ignitions from cars, power lines, and other infrastructure.

Wildfires have also become more destructive because Indigenous fire management practices were disregarded and lost over centuries due to European colonialism. Respect for the land is deeply embedded in Indigenous cultures, and their traditional environmental practices contributed to the stability of ecosystems worldwide.

These methods may not have followed modern peer-reviewed scientific protocols, but they have historical precedence, passed down through generations. Science has now confirmed that climate change is a post-industrial, human-induced catastrophe. It is time to revisit pre-colonial and pre-industrial anthropological data and examine Indigenous practices through the lens of modern science and technology. This approach could reveal hidden solutions and help prevent future disasters.

Trump's Proposal for Gaza and Its Impact on Palestine

Roman Uddin



Gaza people are the victims of the most violated protracted conflict in the Middle East. They have been occupied by Israel and, with every single political development, they face suppression, rape, mass killings, and genocide. They do not receive the attention and sympathy they deserve from the world. From every angle of discussion, they are the victims: losing their land to Israeli occupation, facing restrictions on movement within their own homeland, and enduring torture by Israeli military forces. Innocent people, including children and women, are brutally killed and severely injured. Yet, despite their suffering, they continue to face criticism. Western countries blindly support Israel for their own political and economic profit, trading the lives of Palestinian people in exchange for their interests.

During this time of crisis, the newly elected Republican President of the United States has announced a controversial idea to displace Gaza's population from their land and intervene in the region. The proposal includes relocating the 2.1 million Palestinian residents of Gaza to neighboring Middle Eastern countries while redeveloping Gaza into a Western-controlled area, potentially transforming it into a tourist destination.

This plan is a blatant violation of international law and human rights, stripping the Palestinian people of their homeland and further cementing Israeli control over the territory. The forced removal of an entire population from their homeland is not only a breach of basic human rights but also an indication of a larger agenda aimed at erasing Palestinian identity and territorial claims.

Palestinian leaders, including the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, have condemned the idea, asserting that it would lead to ethnic cleansing and the complete erasure of Palestinian identity from Gaza. Egypt and Jordan have outright rejected the proposal, stating that they will not accept the forced displacement of Palestinians into their countries. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates have also voiced their opposition, warning that such actions would destabilize the region and destroy any possibility of peace in the Middle East. The Arab League has also criticized the plan, calling it a "flagrant violation of human rights and an attempt to rewrite history by eliminating the presence of Palestinians in Gaza."

Despite the strong pushback from Middle Eastern nations, the Western world and so-called democratic, liberal, and civilized countries have remained largely silent on the issue. Apart from a few voices of dissent, such as Australia, which has expressed concern over the human rights violations involved, most Western governments continue to support Israel unconditionally. Their silence and passive acceptance of this blatant displacement plan reveal the hypocrisy in their advocacy for democracy and human rights. While Western nations were quick to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and provide extensive support for Ukrainian refugees, they remain indifferent to the plight of Palestinians facing similar, if not worse, oppression. This double standard underscores the political and economic motivations behind their selective humanitarianism.

The forced displacement of Gaza's population and the full control granted to Israel would be a direct violation of the two-state solution, which has been internationally recognized as the only pathway to peace in the region. By removing Palestinians from their own land, this plan would ensure absolute Israeli dominance and erase any possibility of Palestinian sovereignty. Such a proposal reflects a deeply fascist and colonial mindset, disregarding the basic rights of an entire population. The two-state solution, though increasingly fragile due to continuous Israeli settlements and military control, remains a legal and diplomatic foundation for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Any attempt to displace Palestinians further weakens this possibility and gives full access to Israeli expansionist policies.

Furthermore, the execution of this proposal would ignite new tensions in the Middle East. The relocation of millions of Palestinians to neighboring countries would not only strain the resources and political stability of these nations but also lead to widespread unrest among the displaced populations. The Middle East has already been a volatile region due to ongoing conflicts in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq, and adding another layer of displacement would only exacerbate the situation. The proposal does not consider the psychological and cultural trauma associated with forced displacement, nor does it offer any meaningful solutions for the long-term well-being of the Palestinian people.

The world is currently witnessing an increase in interconnectedness, where conflicts in one region can have significant ripple effects on a global scale. The economic, political, and humanitarian consequences of such forced displacement would not be confined to the Middle East alone. The potential for increased radicalization, the further spread of extremism, and the escalation of regional conflicts could affect global security. Countries in the West, including the United States, cannot afford to turn a blind eye to such actions, as their repercussions will inevitably affect global stability.

The disparity in global responses to conflicts involving different populations highlights a troubling inconsistency in the application of international principles. While significant support and solidarity are extended to certain groups, such as Ukrainians, the Palestinian struggle for basic human rights and self-determination often receives insufficient attention. This selective empathy not only undermines the credibility of international advocacy for human rights but also perpetuates cycles of injustice and conflict. The international community must reject any attempt to forcibly displace Gaza's population and work toward genuine solutions that respect the rights of both Palestinians and Israelis.

In an interconnected world, the repercussions of regional conflicts are not confined to their immediate locales. The destabilization of the Middle East has far-reaching consequences, including the potential for global economic disruptions, increased refugee flows, and the spread of extremist ideologies. It is imperative that the international community adopts a balanced and principled approach, recognizing the equal value of all human lives and addressing the root causes of conflicts with fairness and justice. Every human life matters, whether Israeli or Palestinian, and the response to this crisis must be rooted in impartiality, humanity, and a commitment to peace.

The proposal to displace the population of Gaza and repurpose their land not only contravenes established international laws but also moral imperatives that uphold human dignity and the right to self-determination. The global community must unequivocally reject such measures and work collaboratively toward sustainable and equitable solutions that honor the rights and aspirations of both Palestinians and Israelis. Only through genuine dialogue, mutual respect, and adherence to international norms can lasting peace be achieved in the region. The Gaza crisis is not just a regional issue; it is a matter of global conscience that demands immediate and just intervention.