

West Asia's Power Game

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West Asia's Power Game: How Trump's Proposal Reshapes the Region

Context

West Asia has been at the center of **intense geopolitical and military conflicts** for decades, but since **October 7, 2023**, the region has experienced an **unprecedented level of violence and instability**. The **Israel-Hamas war**, the involvement of **regional and global powers**, and shifting alliances have **reshaped the political, economic, and security landscape**.

Key Background Factors:

1. The Israel-Hamas War:

- The war began after a **surprise attack by Hamas on Israel on October 7, 2023**, resulting in thousands of deaths.
- Israel launched a **massive counteroffensive in Gaza**, causing **widespread destruction and displacement of civilians**.
- The conflict escalated into a **broader regional crisis**, involving groups backed by **Iran, Hezbollah (Lebanon), and the Houthis (Yemen)**.

2. The Role of Iran and its Proxy Groups:

- Iran has long supported armed groups across **Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen** to counter **Israeli and Western influence**.
- However, the war has **disrupted Iran's regional strategy**, weakening its influence **from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean**.

3. The Abraham Accords and Saudi Arabia's Position:

- Under the **Trump administration (2017-2021)**, several Arab states **normalized relations with Israel** through the **Abraham Accords**.
- **Saudi Arabia** was expected to join but **demanding a resolution for Palestinian statehood** before considering normalization.
- The Gaza war has made it **even harder for Saudi Arabia to engage with Israel** without securing Palestinian rights.

4. Humanitarian and Economic Crisis in the Region:

- **Thousands of civilians killed and millions displaced** in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and

- Yemen.
- **Massive destruction of infrastructure**, with Gaza alone needing **\$50 billion** for reconstruction.
- Economic instability due to **sanctions, wars, and overreliance on oil exports**.

In this volatile environment, **former U.S. President Donald Trump**, known for his **bold and unconventional diplomatic style**, proposed a **radical new plan for Gaza** and hinted at a **broader regional reconfiguration**.

Trump's Proposal: The "Expanding the Canvas" Strategy

On **February 4, 2025**, **Donald Trump** made his **most controversial diplomatic proposal yet**. His plan focused on **resolving the Gaza crisis** in a way that would also serve **U.S. strategic interests**.

Key Aspects of Trump's Proposal:

1. Depopulating Gaza:

- The **2.3 million residents of Gaza** would be **relocated to Egypt and Jordan**.
- Gaza, which has been described as a **war-torn "demolition site,"** would be **emptied of its Palestinian population**.

2. U.S. Control and Redevelopment of Gaza:

- The **United States would take over the Gaza Strip**, turning it into a **global tourism and luxury hub**.
- Trump described his vision as **"a riviera for the world's people"**, suggesting massive infrastructure and commercial development.

3. A New Proposal for the West Bank:

- Trump hinted that in **four weeks**, he would announce **another major proposal for the West Bank**, which remains under Israeli control but is claimed by Palestinians for their future state.

4. Saudi-Israel Normalization:

- Trump and **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** suggested that **Saudi Arabia was close to joining the Abraham Accords**.
- However, **Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS)** immediately rejected this, stating that **Saudi Arabia would not establish ties with Israel unless a Palestinian state was created**.

Reactions to the Proposal:

• Supporters' Viewpoint:

- Some saw it as a **bold negotiating tactic** aimed at **forcing stakeholders to present**

counteroffers.

- It reflected Trump's "art of the deal" strategy, where an **extreme opening bid** is made to push the opponent toward a **more realistic settlement**.

- **Critics' Viewpoint:**

- Many condemned it as a **blatant attempt at ethnic cleansing and colonial land acquisition**.
- Palestinians and Arab leaders **rejected the idea outright**, calling it "**unacceptable and illegal**."
- Critics argued that the plan would **escalate tensions rather than resolve them**, potentially sparking a **wider regional war**.

This proposal, even if **unrealistic**, highlights **deeper regional tensions** and the **challenges of finding a peaceful resolution** to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Geopolitical Reconfiguration in West Asia

1. Military and Strategic Shifts

- **Israel's "Invincibility" Challenged:**

- The war has **shaken Israel's reputation as an unbeatable military power**.
- Despite its **technological and military superiority**, Israel has suffered **significant political and security challenges**.

- **Iran's Regional Influence Weakened:**

- Iran's carefully built **network of proxy groups** has suffered setbacks.
- However, Iran **remains a key player**, and its influence **could be revived** under changing circumstances.

- **Palestinian Statehood Gains Renewed Global Attention:**

- The war has **re-centered** the Palestinian issue in **global diplomacy**, making it a **major factor in any future regional negotiations**.

2. Political Challenges in West Asia

- **Regional Instability and Mistrust:**

- A series of **proxy wars, assassinations, and airstrikes** have **deepened divisions** among regional powers.
- Trust among nations is **at an all-time low**, making **diplomatic solutions difficult**.

- **The Role of Saudi Arabia and Iran:**

- While **Saudi Arabia and Iran restored ties in 2023**, they remain **rivals for regional dominance**.

- Saudi Arabia **seeks economic leadership**, while Iran **focuses on military influence**.

3. Economic Challenges

- **Reconstruction Costs:**

- **Gaza:** \$50 billion needed to rebuild 170,000 destroyed homes.
- **Lebanon:** \$8.5 billion in damages.
- **Syria:** \$500 billion in economic losses due to the 13-year-long civil war.

- **Dependence on Oil and the Energy Crisis:**

- West Asian economies **remain heavily dependent on oil exports**.
 - Trump's policies—such as **increasing U.S. oil production**—could **push oil prices down**, harming **Gulf economies**.
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Saudi Arabia's Growing Role in Regional Stability

1. Saudi Arabia as an Economic Powerhouse

- **Largest economy in West Asia** with a **\$1.07 trillion GDP**.
- **Public Investment Fund (PIF)** holds **\$930 billion** in assets.
- **Saudi Aramco** valued at **\$1.79 trillion**, making it one of the **world's richest companies**.

2. Saudi-U.S. Relations Under Trump

- Trump views **Saudi Arabia as a vital partner** in his economic and geopolitical plans.
 - At **Davos 2025**, Trump revealed that **MbS offered to invest \$600 billion in the U.S.**. Trump asked him to **round it up to \$1 trillion**.
 - Despite U.S.-Saudi ties, **MbS remains firm on the Palestinian issue**, demanding a **path to statehood** before normalizing ties with Israel.
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Conclusion: The Future of West Asia Under Trump

The **geopolitical future of West Asia** is at a critical turning point, with **conflicts, economic uncertainty, and shifting alliances shaping the region's trajectory**.

- **Trump's radical proposal for Gaza** may be a **negotiation tactic**, but it has **intensified political tensions**.
- **Saudi Arabia's role is crucial**—it has the **economic power to aid reconstruction** but remains firm on **Palestinian statehood**.
- **Iran, Israel, and Arab states must decide** whether to pursue **diplomatic solutions or continued confrontation**.

With **global attention focused on West Asia**, the coming months will determine whether **peace or further conflict prevails**.