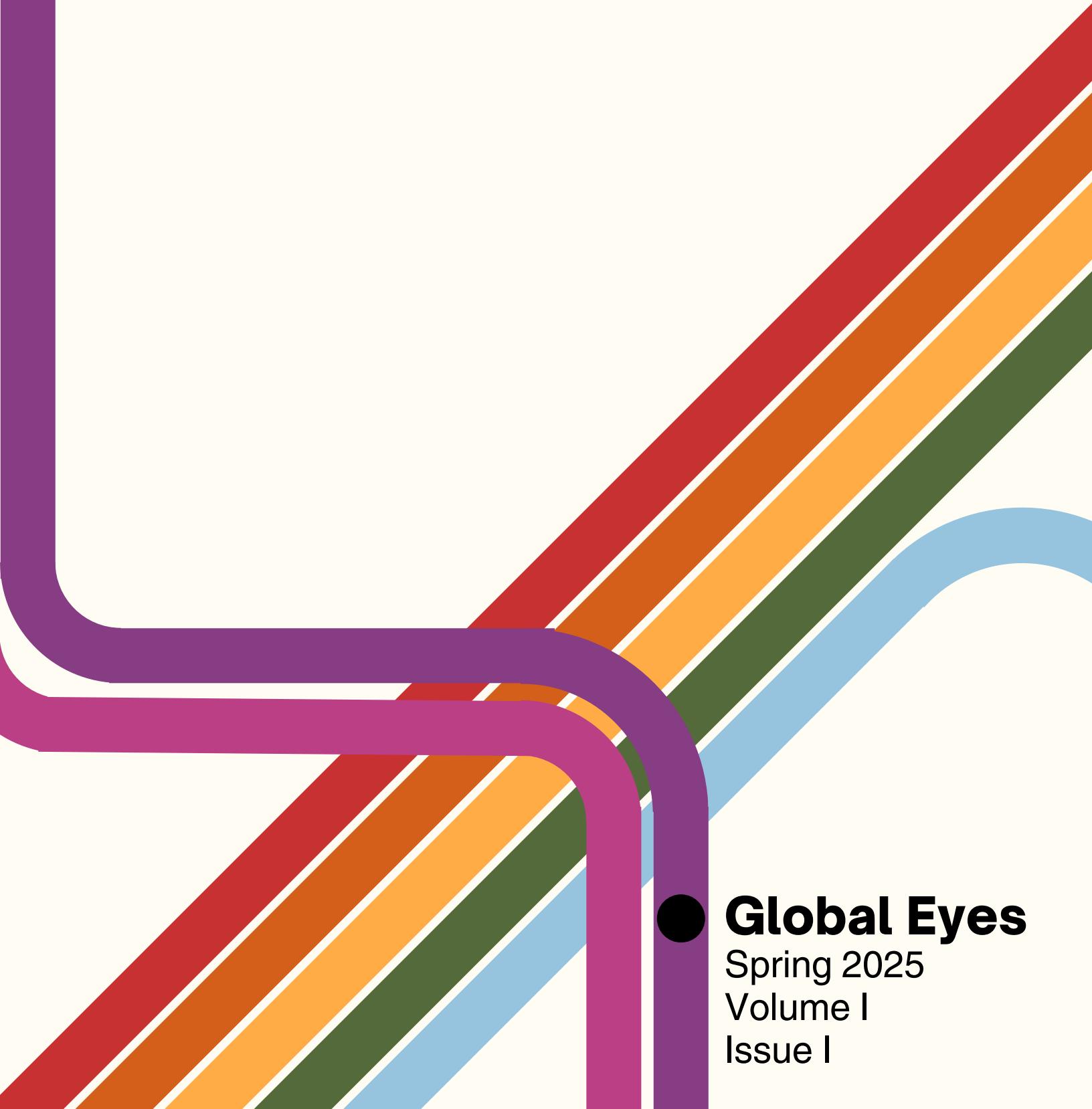


# • Migration:

movement of people and beliefs



• **Global Eyes**  
Spring 2025  
Volume I  
Issue I

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# Editor's Letter

When there's a shift somewhere in the world, we're not quick to think of it as migration. We don't always think of the people involved as migrants, and they rarely think of themselves as such. We simply call it the way things go. Change is what turns the globe on its axis, and is so ingrained in human nature that we just call it *life*. This spring, we seek to highlight the movement of people and ideas in real-time; the world order is shifting rapidly and in a way we've never seen, so we wanted to offer our writers' fresh perspectives as things unfold.

With migration comes disorder and disparity, both of which the *Global Eyes* staff explores in our very first issue as it pertains to four pillars of society: health, economy, politics, and environment. We hope to showcase each writer's unique background and worldview to deliver you the most well-rounded and diverse product possible. We also stress the nonlinearity and unpredictability of migration. Sometimes, change is uneasy – the discomfort is how human beings grow, adapt, and rise to meet it.

*Global Eyes* is proud to feature pieces on migration in a literal sense, as in the mass movement of people across borders, but also in a philosophical sense, as the exchange of ideas and the ebb and flow of global economies. In today's political context, the word "migrant" is loaded with fear – we at *Global Eyes* want to claim migration for ourselves, and implore that you do as well. Movement and realignment is essential both to our survival as a species and the longevity of the Earth itself. We're excited to see where the wind takes us, and we hope you can join us.

**Sincerely,**  
**Your Co-Editors in Chief**  
**Simon Fisher and Priyanka Iyer**

# Our Team

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# Glacial Flooding in Pakistan Continues

*Following the destructive events of the 2022 floods, government officials, climate activists, and entire communities are still in need of a solution.*

## Els Krimsky

Nestled between lush river valleys and arid deserts lies Pakistan, a country whose diverse geography defines the nation's cultural, political, and economic landscapes. A stark difference from the hot coastlines in the south, the country's northernmost region is studded with over 7200 glaciers spread out across three intersecting mountain ranges: The Himalayas, the Karakorum, and the Hindu Kush. These glaciers provide Pakistanis with the majority of their freshwater by slowly feeding into various river systems that travel throughout the country. Despite their importance, Pakistan's glaciers have slowly started to cause panic for Pakistani and global citizens alike. Their resurgence due to rising temperatures is causing glacial lakes to form at a rapid rate, consequently increasing the occurrence of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs).

GLOFs have been naturally occurring in Pakistan for many years. However, the onset of climate change and its increasing severity has left the country in a vulnerable position, unable to adapt as quickly as these floods occur. The worst of the flood events hit Pakistan in June 2022, when a combination of heavier-than-normal monsoon rains combined with more frequent GLOFs devastated the region's population and infrastructure, resulting in more than 1700 immediate deaths, damages costing upwards of \$30 billion, and the beginning of a humanitarian crisis lasting over a year after the initial flooding.

After the immediate harm ceased, Pakistan was left to confront an array of both new and pre existing crises that were worsened due to the floods. Pakistan's economy, which



Earth.org

was already struggling to adjust to COVID-19-related inflation, now had to address efforts related to relief and reconstruction. Infrastructure, schools, municipalities, and entire communities were wiped out and had to be rebuilt. These damages also resulted in another 1700 deaths caused by a mix of contaminated water and food insecurity. Similarly, waterborne diseases such as cholera, malaria, and dengue began to spread at faster rates. This ultimately further complicated relief efforts and worsened the fragile state of the 33 million people who were affected. With the help of foreign aid, Pakistan recovered but remains a vulnerable nation with thousands of glacial lakes still looming over the nation.

The 2022 floods mark a critical moment in climate change history, given that the number of GLOFs more than tripled in just one year. During a four-year period spanning from 2018 to 2021, 14 GLOFs occurred in total. However, that number increased to 75 at the end of 2022, meaning 61 GLOFs occurred that year alone.

These floods can be attributed to an increased rate of glacial melting caused both global warming and air pollution. It is commonly misunderstood that water directly from glacial melt is causing these floods, skipping an intermediate component that is critical to understanding these natural disasters.

When glaciers melt and subsequently recede, they leave indentations in the Earth where they previously covered and slowly eroded. The water that melts away from the glacial body fills these craters, forming what are known as glacial lakes, which are dammed by either ice from other glaciers or the Earth itself. GLOFs occur when the dams fail, meaning water levels in the lakes exceed the height of the wall (either by more water or being displaced by falling glaciers) or when it physically changes and allows water to leave. As temperatures continue to rise and pollution remains unchecked, the occurrences of these floods increase as glacial lakes become fuller and more abundant.

There is currently no data suggesting glaciers in Pakistan's mountains will stop melting at such a rapid rate. Rather, climate scientists have predicted Pakistan will lose 75% of their ice by 2100 if they continue to recede at their current rate. As seen in the aftermath of the 2022 floods, this reality will have devastating impacts not just on Pakistan, but the entire world. An estimated fifteen million people worldwide are at risk of being directly affected by GLOFs, with two million, or approximately 13%, of those people being located in Pakistan. Economies will suffer, the spread of diseases will surge, and essential services will be unreachable. In Pakistan specifically, mountain villages directly downstream of glacial lakes already face disproportionately high levels of poverty compared to other areas of the country, putting them in an even more difficult position when time comes to respond.



DW.com

The disasters that have resulted from GLOFs and anticipation of more to come have caused an increase in climate-induced migration among Pakistanis. Residents of Pakistan's mountain villages have been displaced to more southern regions of the country as well as across borders. Ultimately, contributing to the increasing number of the world's climate refugees. Despite the impending floods, individuals and families who inhabit the villages and towns most at risk still find it difficult to leave. Many of those fleeing are leaving behind a place where their family has lived for centuries, as well as established tight-knit communities. However, some Pakistanis are in the opposite position; they want to leave but lack the resources to do so. Despite the clear need for a solution, Pakistan and other South Asian countries have yet to find one.

Having been previously underserved or completely ignored by foreign aid, the increased urgency of glacial melting has drawn more attention from international relief organizations. Areas that faced the worst of the 2022 floods are now under the watch of the United Nation's Second Glacial Lake Outburst Flood project. Since 2017, support from GLOF II has funded sensors which measure rainfall and water discharge, weather stations, and speakers capable of communicating warnings in

Pakistan's mountain villages, as well as updated infrastructure that slows and disperses the movement of flood water.

In March 2025, The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and China, Pakistan's neighbor to the north, deployed a joint plan called the Tailored Intelligence for Actionable Early Warning Systems (TIAEWS) to upholster Pakistan's current proactive and reactive responses to GLOFs. China's involvement is essential to lessening the impact of GLOFs, given their production of black carbon and other pollutants has contributed significantly to the region's melting glaciers.

The TIAEWS project will target the northern region Gilgit-Baltistan and looks to address three key areas that will help Pakistan manage GLOFs: developing an integrated data management system for early warnings, strengthening community awareness and disaster preparedness, and improving governance and coordination for effective dissemination of critical warnings. This will in part look like establishing 70 automatic weather stations, 70 hydrometric stations, and 70 warning posts throughout the area.

Pakistan's struggle with glacial lake outburst floods brings attention to a broader, global struggle to combat the consequences of climate change. As glaciers continue to melt at alarming rates, the effects pose a critical threat not only to Pakistan's most vulnerable communities but to international stability as a whole. While new initiatives like the TIAEWS and growing global partnerships offer temporary solutions, they are not substitutes for long-term, unified action against glacial melting. Without sustained international support and aggressive efforts to curb emissions and reduce pollutants, GLOFs will only grow more frequent and destructive. The story of Pakistan's glaciers is a stark reminder that the climate crisis is no longer a distant concern; it's already reshaping lives, landscapes, and nations.



DW.com

# Climate Change: Not Just Extreme Weather

*Higher Temperatures Mean Tropical Diseases in Non-Tropical Climates*

**Evan Heffelfinger**

When you think of “climate change” you probably think of how hot it gets in Pittsburgh during the summer, how we barely get snow anymore, or perhaps that winter a couple of years ago when we had seventy-degree days once a week. While I certainly welcomed being able to wear shorts and hang out with my friends on the Cathy lawn in January, it was concerning. However, climate change is a real issue that impacts multiple facets of life, not just here, but all across the globe. One of the most dangerous impacts of our rapidly heating world is the spread of diseases to new places. Namely, vector-borne diseases, such as malaria, dengue fever, and chikungunya. Which are all illnesses spread by mosquitoes that prefer these increasingly hot and humid environments to breathe and thrive.

## Vectors, Diseases, and Why They Are Spreading

With increasing temperatures and more prevalence of diseases, neglected tropical diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, and chikungunya are now on the rise. Recently, neglected tropical diseases have spread farther north in North America and Europe and to higher altitudes in mountainous regions. European nations, specifically, have long seen themselves as immune to neglected tropical diseases, as the climate in this region simply was not supportive of mosquitoes. However, the migration patterns of mosquitoes have changed in recent years, seeing species move farther north on the European continent. The Asian tiger mosquito, *Aedes*

*albopictus*, is of particular concern in the European region. This mosquito, known to carry chikungunya and dengue viruses, has been able to survive and reproduce in high quantities in higher latitudes. This has led to established populations being reported in southern Europe over the last decade and even isolated populations as far north as the United Kingdom.

Additionally, mosquito species that have previously been prevalent in Europe one hundred years ago and disappeared have returned. *Aedes aegypti*, which is responsible for spreading yellow fever, dengue, chikungunya, and Zika, has been reported in Europe as recently as 2022. *A. aegypti* is more concerning than *A. albopictus*, not only because it is more efficient at transmitting viruses, but it is also associated more closely with human populations, increasing opportunities for transmission. In 2022 alone, locally reported cases of dengue in mainland Europe were equal to the number reported between 2010 and 2021.

Even mosquito species native to Europe have seen increasing populations and rapidly increasing transmission. *Culex* mosquitoes, which are native to the European continent and spread West Nile Virus, have seen population growth. This is complemented by increasing case counts of West Nile Virus in the past decade on the continent, with cases being reported at higher latitudes than expected. This growth is not unprecedented, as New York City famously had an outbreak of West Nile Virus in 1999, marking the first time an

“old world” virus had been identified in the Eastern Hemisphere.

Climate change leads to greater and more expansive populations of disease-carrying mosquitoes because of two factors: rain and heat. Mosquitoes thrive in warm and humid conditions, laying their eggs in standing water. Even the tiniest amount of standing water, like a bucket in a backyard garden, is a sufficient breeding ground for mosquitoes. Therefore, as regions at higher latitudes face hotter and wetter summers, they also foster greater opportunities for mosquitoes to thrive and reproduce.

Furthermore, recent concerns have voiced that vectors may have genetically different responses due to climate change and therefore, selective pressures can evolve to possess an increased ability to transmit disease.

## **Effects of Increased Disease Burden**

These viruses are legitimate public health threats, especially in regions where much of the population may be immunologically naïve, meaning that they have not been exposed to the disease and, therefore, do not have any immunity. malaria, West Nile Virus, dengue fever, and chikungunya tend to be mild but can cause severe complications and death in elderly or immunocompromised patients. One of the more concerning impacts in Europe is that these diseases may be transmitted through organ and blood donations. Even more alarming is the fact that there may be shortages of blood and organs due to an outbreak of a neglected tropical disease.

## **What Can Be Done?**

The most obvious solution to this problem

of the ever-expanding mosquito habitat is to simply “fight climate change.” Well, this is already being done through environmental regulations and greater awareness of carbon footprints. Not to say that this is not a good thing, but more specific efforts need to be taken to combat neglected tropical diseases existing in places that are anything but tropical.

The surveillance of mosquito populations is one of the most impactful tools to combatting this crisis. However, adequate surveillance of mosquitoes is extremely labor-intensive and is not often achievable by health authorities alone. Scientists in Barcelona, Spain have established a project called Mosquito Alert, which allows people to photograph mosquitoes and report them through an app. This system updates mosquito counts in real time and maps the locations of populations. In 2018, an app user documented the first sighting of *Aedes japonicus* outside of central Europe. Spanish health authorities said they would have never considered sampling for *A. japonicus* had it not been for this documentation. Co-founder John Palmer hopes that Mosquito Alert can be expanded globally, especially to regions where neglected tropical diseases are endemic and have significant disease burdens.

In Europe, vaccines are approved for malaria, dengue fever, and chikungunya. However, despite the efforts of the European Union, vaccine inequities exist. Although this inequality is not unique to Europe, these inequities have a negative impact on the combat against neglected tropical diseases. Vaccine access inequities are best combated at community and local levels, so raising awareness about the threat of neglected tropical disease outbreaks will help these community organizations combat these threats.

The alarming reality of neglected tropical diseases in Europe is that they can be transmitted locally. This was not always the case, as these diseases used to be acquired almost exclusively because of international travel. One major implication of this reality is the increased threat of an outbreak of a disease such as malaria or dengue. Hospitals in northern Europe are not entirely equipped to handle outbreaks of this nature. Malaria, for example, can require IV antimarial therapy if a patient is unable to take oral medication. In a large-scale outbreak, this resource may become scarce. This can be combated by increasing the capacity and stock of these medications, primarily by ensuring that supply chain volumes can be increased in this scenario.

Heightened awareness of the very real threat posed by tropical diseases in non-tropical climates. While the threat is imminent, there is still much that can be done to combat this threat and ensure that human populations are safe. Humans cannot directly reverse the altered migration patterns of mosquitos, but steps can be taken to indirectly return the climate to historically normal patterns and to prepare for oncoming public health threats.



Asian Tiger mosquito (Wikipedia)

# The DRC: Humanitarian Crisis and Infectious Diseases

*The Public Health Impacts of Ongoing Instability*

**Zoë Perri**

The beginning of February 2025 consisted of a flurry of news from both the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in regards to the supposed “Disease X”. According to officials, the disease spread rapidly in the Boloko village of the Equateur province, killing many. What truly grabbed global attention were the hemorrhagic fever-like symptoms present in multiple cases. Upon further investigation, the Ministry of Health, supported by the WHO, ruled out both Marburg and Ebola viruses. Since the development of these cases, officials have now begun to consider either a chemical contamination in the village or bacterial meningitis outbreak.

What does this have to do with a humanitarian crisis? Soon after the outbreak occurred fear mongering persisted throughout the media. Many publications almost immediately labeled it a mystery disease, causing panic as discussions of the chance of a possible new pandemic or novel disease circulated. Due to the lack of immediate knowledge on what exactly was spreading, the media took this story by storm. Even when the outbreak was relatively contained, and remote, Western news outlets reported it as if it were spreading globally.



United Nations

Although the WHO and local health agencies' reactions were necessary for highlighting the possible severity of a novel disease, the focus on the DRC grew without much attention to its ongoing crisis. With the globe's recent attention on the DRC, it is imperative to consider the implications of ongoing emerging and endemic diseases as its decade-long humanitarian crisis poses a risk for further disease spread, humanitarian needs, and refugee crises.

## The Crisis and M23

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees released its Global Appeal 2025 Situation Overview outlining the current crisis within the DRC. As well as the events that have contributed to decades of conflict. Since the late 1990s conflict has waged in the DRC. On the Eastern border fighting between rebel non-state armed forces and Congolese forces has created a devastating and complicated humanitarian crisis. These hostilities began during the first and second Congo Wars and continue today as the Kivu conflicts waged calamity. During the wars, immigration of Rwandan Hutu refugees across the eastern border has raised tensions between Hutu extremists and Tutsi groups. From 2003 onward rebel groups have violated humanitarian rights and committed violent acts on the eastern front of the Congo. Since then, the mass displacement of Congolese people due to the ongoing conflict has projected 27 million in need of care, and roughly 7 million people seeking refuge in neighboring countries.

Throughout the past year, the rebel group March 23 Movement, also known as M23, has continued to commit international and humanitarian law violations. The destruction of civilian life is extensive and the state of the country continues to grow weaker as government forces push back on M23 movements. As noted by the global conflict tracker, the Congo faces diminishing relations with Rwanda as tensions rise similar to those during the Second Congo War.

These destructive acts reach far beyond the eastern border and beyond the Congolese government. The rebel groups have been responsible for sexual violence, assault, and mass killings of civilians. On top of these crimes, M23 has further introduced recruitment campaigns in which young men – some being 14 or 15 years old – have been enlisted into the fighting. In some cases, reports of abduction have occurred, as well as forcing youth to risk their lives for a fight that is not theirs. The vast amount of conflict in the region poses a serious risk for increasing infectious disease rates among both forces, civilians, and refugees.



Reuters

## Migration into Surrounding Countries

With M23's presence throughout the DRC vast migration has occurred. It is estimated that over one million Congolese civilians

have sought refuge in surrounding countries. These countries include: Angola, Burundi, the Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia (UNHCR). The humanitarian crisis has forced mass displacement in and out of the country. Most recently, as Goma fell in late January 2025, civilians desperately fled the area as M23 devastated the region. According to the UN an estimated 900 to 2,000 people were killed. While unilateral ceasefires were made on February 4, 2025, the distress caused by Goma has sent displacement up again.

Another primary concern for the bordering countries is the relationship between Rwanda and the DRC. As mentioned previously, it is not very hospitable. Rwanda has managed to cultivate some military action on the eastern border of the DRC. With this, some Rwandan groups have shown support for the M23 efforts. Similarly, both Rwanda and Uganda profit from Congolese tantalum mines that have helped fund M23 efforts. This ongoing complexity is only heightened with the number of DRC civilians migrating to Uganda and Rwanda.

## Spread of Disease

Within the DRC, multiple diseases are endemic such as malaria and mpox, as well as a significant burden of disease with ongoing outbreaks such as Ebola, Marburg, cholera, and measles. These are just a few of the prevalence throughout the country. Moreover, the diseases listed above are highly prevalent in areas such as the eastern border, which has high rates of conflict. In conflict-prone areas, weak infrastructure, poor sanitation, and malnutrition are all factors that increase the likelihood of disease transmission. This is extremely alarming when considering the migration throughout the greater region.



NPR

As noted, the DRC has faced an uptick in infectious diseases in 2025. The influence of Western media made the transmission of the supposed unknown illness in February widely known and highly concerning. The attention called for considering the state of malaria in the country and the government's ability to mitigate contaminated water sources. Yet this flurry of news glossed over one of the most concerning aspects of war. With conflict the spread of disease is bound to occur. Since the new year, continued outbreaks of disease have been circulating within the region. Conflict in the area has only exacerbated mpox transmission throughout eastern DRC.

According to the UNHMC, the recent capture of Goma by rebel M23 forces has led to the creation of an epicentre of mpox along the eastern border of the country. During the fighting many local hospitals were swept up in the conflict. As a result, approximately 600 mpox patients fled the area in hopes of survival elsewhere. The fleeing has since created an approximate 31% case increase and a total of 16,255 cases in the eastern border of the DRC.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most crucial aspects of these cases is that mpox fatality rate increases as resources dwindle. So areas such as conflict zones, war, and refugee sites are perfect for transmission and further spread. Due to a lack of public health infrastructure as a result of the current conflicts, delays in

disease detection and response stem from poor healthcare conditions. Therefore, conflict in the area only further extends the suffering from both the rebel groups and increases the risk of transmission. Consequently, diseases such as mpox, malaria and ebola are only going to further transmit as conflict expands and innocent people flee.

Where conflict zones arise, infections surge as war and displacement dismantle health systems. In the case of the DRC increased infrastructure, aid, and resources are all needed for the betterment of these populations. Although recovery is typically attainable for mpox it is necessary that areas of conflict have proper infrastructure for aid to ensure that vulnerable populations receive help. The correlation between immigration, disease, and conflict is inevitable. So, with increasing outbreaks of both emerging and reemerging diseases in this region adequate steps need to be taken to mitigate the damages against humanity.



AP News

# War Flu

## *How Disease Spreads in Palestinian Refugee Camps*

**Julianne Needleman**

Since October of 2023, Israel has launched a full-scale war on the Gaza Strip, killing tens of thousands and displacing hundreds of thousands more. This war is not Gaza's first with Israel. It has been marred by violence nearly non-stop since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, beginning with the mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinians known in Arabic as the "nakba," or catastrophe. Already a wartorn region, Gaza has seen unprecedeted violence in the past year and a half. Approximately 1.9 million people, the majority of whom are children, have been forcefully displaced as a result of the war, deemed a genocide by Amnesty International and numerous UN experts. Uprooted from their homes and torn from their families, these refugees end up in overcrowded, poorly equipped camps where disease spreads easily, especially among children whose already weak immune systems have been crippled by extreme stress, hunger, and exhaustion.

### **Which diseases are spreading among Palestinian refugees?**

Palestinian refugees are facing a myriad of outbreaks of infectious disease, but the most common fall into two categories: vaccine-preventable diseases like polio and hepatitis, and diseases caused by sewage runoff like cholera and skin infections. Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah, two sites containing some of the largest camps of Palestinian refugees, have detected polio and cholera in their wastewater, indicating widespread and serious outbreaks among the vulnerable populations in these refugee camps.



A Palestinian child showing signs of skin disease; (BBC)

### **Why does disease spread so easily in Palestinian refugee camps?**

Gaza has been in a state of relentless chaos since Israel waged war on it following the attacks in southern Israel on October 7. Mass vaccination campaigns have been nearly impossible to carry out as hundreds of thousands are forcibly displaced to areas within and outside of Gaza. Additionally, the dangerous conditions in the area make it so that there are fewer aid workers willing to carry out a vaccination campaign. The particular variant of polio circulating around Gaza, vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2, tends to affect regions where vaccination rates are particularly low. This variant emerged from a vaccine, where the weakened version of the virus used in the oral polio vaccine spreads from child to child. Vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 is every bit as dangerous as wild-type polio; however, and its propagation in Palestinian refugee camps poses an extreme risk to global public health.

Palestinian refugees are facing other health risks as well.

According to a 2024 UN environmental report, the incessant Israeli bombardment has collapsed Gaza's already overwhelmed wastewater management system. This lack of proper sanitary infrastructure in refugee camps leads to sewage runoff contaminating residences, causing outbreaks of painful, disfiguring skin infections, especially among children.

The raging violence has also destroyed many of Gaza's largest hospitals, with only four left functioning out of thirty-six. The destruction of hospitals within the Strip has been especially concentrated around its most populated urban centers, Gaza City and Khan Younis, with the latter having no fully functioning hospitals to serve its estimated population of over 200,000, in addition to the refugee camps in the surrounding area.

Additionally, the immune system functioning of Palestinian refugees is depressed on an individual level because of extreme stress, famine, and exhaustion. The body's response to stress is to release the hormone cortisol, which in the short-term facilitates immune function by curbing inflammation. However, prolonged heightened levels of cortisol decrease lymphocyte, or white blood cell, count. White blood cells are the immune system's critical first line of defense against pathogens. In an overcrowded environment with exposure to contaminated wastewater populated by refugees facing extreme stress and low lymphocyte counts, deadly diseases will proliferate easily.

Palestinian refugees from Gaza are also at high risk of famine. Israel has cut off nearly all aid to Gaza throughout the war and destroyed the little internal food production infrastructure it had, effectively starving the people of Gaza. The north of Gaza has been cut off from the south, and it has been blockaded

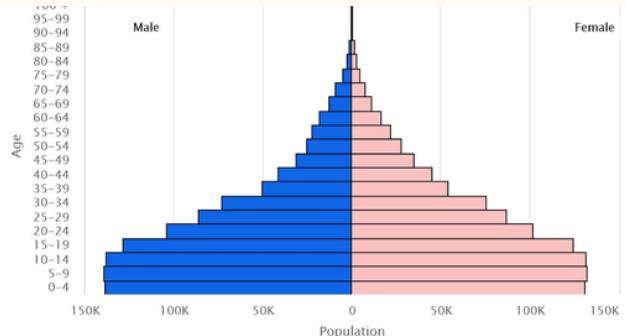
from foreign aid. Malnutrition and dehydration have run rampant in Gaza, with thirty-four deaths reported by the United Nations. The quality of food that Palestinians have access to is poor at best, with many refugees eating one meal per day at most consisting of stale bread, with significant sources of protein and micronutrients like vitamin C being scarce, if available at all. A healthy, functioning immune system depends on consistent and varied sources of nutrition, which Palestinian refugees do not have. Malnutrition represses immune function, especially as it relates to lymphocyte and T cell activity, increasing the body's susceptibility to viral infection.

The population of Gaza also has a disproportionately high ratio of children to adults. Almost 40% of its citizens are children, with almost 600,000 being under 10 years of age. Children have weaker, underdeveloped immune systems and are more susceptible to viral infection. Polio especially has a debilitating effect on children, rendering many paralyzed. It is spread through direct contact like touch and respiratory droplets, as well as through fecal matter. Children are more likely to come into contact with contaminated individuals and surfaces, especially before they learn hygienic bathroom practices. Poliovirus also takes advantage of the comparatively weak immune systems of children, which are only made weaker by the conditions in the refugee camps in which they are forced to live.

The conditions in Palestinian refugee camps, both on an individual and community level, create a perfect storm where disease spreads easily and manifests as more deadly than it would in other populations.

## What needs to be done to stop the spread of disease in refugee camps?

The most imperative first step in addressing the spread of disease among Palestinian refugees is an immediate end to the violence Israel is inflicting on Gaza. The government of Israel must agree to a ceasefire and hold itself to that agreement. A ceasefire ends the violence displacing millions of Palestinians and relieves the inordinate stress they are facing. Moreover, a ceasefire will allow aid workers to carry out a mass vaccination campaign for polio and hepatitis, saving millions of Palestinian lives. The international community must take a stand against the genocide Israel is carrying out on the Palestinian people and directly address how it rears its ugly head, especially as it relates to deadly, yet preventable infectious disease spreading among some of the most vulnerable populations on the planet.



Population age composition of Gaza; The World Factbook

# For Shared Future

*China's expansion of power in Southeast Asia following United States international development funding cuts*

## Simon Fisher

The day he entered office, President Donald Trump signed an executive order cutting global foreign aid programs, sending ripples throughout developing nations. While the brunt of the cut funding was felt primarily by African nations, Southeast Asia has also been affected: access to lifesaving medications, funding of educational programs, and development of improved political and economic systems have been made impossible without foreign aid. The void left by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) looks to be filled proudly by China, as it seeks to expand its influence worldwide.



Cambodian soldiers carry medical equipment from China (TAFP)

China has been rapidly picking up slack left by the United States, stepping in to fund a Cambodian demining program after the United States halted efforts to remove unexploded ordnance from the Vietnam War. Though not officially ended, the program drastically slowed, making the removal of unexploded landmines from 8,400 acres of land difficult. As programs like these froze, China quickly stepped in, providing \$4.4 million to continue funding the program.

Demining initiatives are not the only projects harmed by Trump's actions, and it seems like China will continue to utilize the United States' abandonment of humanitarian aid and altruistic efforts for good press, improving their political standing in a region riddled with complex opinions on Chinese leadership.

## USAID and China Aid

The United States and China have historically differed in their approaches to international development. USAID, founded in 1961 to counter Soviet influence, preceded the establishment of China's official foreign aid apparatus by several decades.

The United States has established itself as a pillar of global altruism through USAID, focusing aid on health and humanitarian efforts by stepping in to combat food insecurity, build nations back up following natural disasters, and fight to prevent disease outbreaks amongst the most vulnerable communities worldwide.

Despite this history of humanitarian engagement, recent aid cuts have drawn international attention and backlash for their devastating impacts on developing nations, with many world leaders denouncing President Trump's attempts to dismantle USAID. Some of these cries have come from Southeast Asian leaders, as USAID had funded numerous programs through joint cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Projects focused on disaster resilience, combating human trafficking, improving economic integration, and numerous health initiatives have all been halted in Southeast Asia.

In contrast, China's efforts have historically been focused on economic expansion instead of a variety of development efforts, lacking an established foreign aid agency until 2018. While China's relations with Southeast Asian nations shifted significantly throughout the 20th century, by the 2000s, ties were strengthened through increased trade, investment, and development aid. This was upheld by the announcement of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, which has been highly criticized for being "debt trap diplomacy" as China seeks to construct an infrastructure network connecting all of Asia to Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. By 2020, ASEAN countries had become the primary beneficiaries of outward direct investment, with the top 10 Belt and Road Initiative host countries including eight ASEAN members. The nature of this aid shifted in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as all ASEAN member states received medical supplies and information about infection prevention and treatment. Amidst the backdrop of the most severe pandemic in recent history, China was able to continue expanding its aid programs and bolstering its global standing as a "good neighbor." China looks to continue to pursue this image as the United States' image becomes tarnished following the Trump administration's isolationist agenda.

## **China's Expanding Popularity and Power**

The last decade has seen opinions on the United States fluctuate in Southeast Asia, with the past two years allowing China to

gain ground as a preferred ally. Prior to USAID withdrawals, the war in Gaza had already diminished public opinion of the United States due to its alliance with Israel, with many Southeast Asian nations moving from an initial stance of neutrality to one that condemns the conflict. Southeast Asia also has many Muslim-majority states, including Indonesia and Malaysia, which has further thinned the region's relationship with the United States. The collapse of USAID has only exacerbated this shift away from the United States as Southeast Asians begin to view U.S. politics, products, and political efforts with increasing skepticism. USAID, the U.S.' primary source of soft power in developing nations, no longer exists<sup>9</sup> to uphold the U.S.' image in the face of this shifting opposition.



Chinese COVID-19 supplies delivered to Afghanistan.  
(Xinhua)

Whereas the United States has slipped in terms of soft power, China seeks to expand its aid from purely economic to becoming more comprehensive, similar to the structure of USAID. In some of ASEAN's poorest nations, China seems to be considering continuing USAID's responsibilities. This potentially includes a range of health and education focused programs with continued economic development plans. Some countries look to be particularly targeted by these new programs—Cambodia and Laos are reliant on Chinese development for growth, with future expansions outside of strictly economic aims.

Countries with historically more hesitant views towards Chinese partnership, including Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand, could potentially be pushed towards China as their leaders have exhibited concerns over the actions of the new U.S. administration. These countries can all potentially benefit from increased assistance from Beijing, especially if this aid can become more diversified like the USAID approach. Chinese funds have continued more programs in Cambodia than the aforementioned demining project, including ones focused on improving child literacy and nutrition. In contrast to the focus on infrastructure projects previously seen in Cambodia, China is now matching the humanitarian goals of USAID.

## Southeast Asian Hesitance

While countries like Cambodia have graciously accepted the expansion of Chinese investment in the wake of Trump's frosty approach to international development, nations receiving more aid from the United States than China have been hesitant to accept Chinese aid. The Philippines, despite the extreme benefits it could see from increased investment, received the lowest share of Chinese development finance among ASEAN within the last decade. The Philippines has preferred aid from the Asian Development Bank and Japan, as well as the United States, who had provided substantial military assistance prior to the U.S. foreign aid freeze. USAID specifically provided \$198.2 million to the Philippines in 2023 to fund education and climate change reduction programs, in stark contrast to current USAID figures: estimates from the Center for Global Development suggest that country cuts in the Philippines, where programs previously totaled above \$100 million, could be higher than 95% of the value of these programs. While military aid was not entirely cut, it was still significantly

decreased, and the Philippines will likely face barriers in defense capability and humanitarian efforts without United States aid and the refusal to concede to Chinese aid plans. The Philippines has been left with significantly less funding, and potentially greater uncertainty, in the wake of shifting development dynamics worldwide.

President Trump's foreign policy agenda has decimated former strongholds of U.S. soft power, opening opportunities for China to further expand its development plans. Southeast Asia seems a primary target for Chinese leadership, with the potential to increasingly destabilize U.S. influence and dethrone the United States as a global power in aid.

# Germanomics: A Fork in the European Road

*New Chancellor Friedrich Merz could be a much-needed triumph – or the ultimate downfall – for a transitioning Europe.*

**Priyanka Iyer**

When the dust settled after Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government was dissolved, Christian Democrat Friedrich Merz poised to take control—with lofty plans. The former BlackRock executive will inherit a twenty-years-stagnant economy (and a middle class that has begun to take notice), fracturing relations with the United States, and a dire need for European unity (something the Union has not seemed to be able to find amid Russian invasions and the renewed threat of Trumpism looming above). What exactly has Merz been thrust into?



Friedrich Merz (Reuters)

## The German System

The German political system is set up much differently than the American government is used to. A representative body called the *Bundestag* (or parliament) is in charge of appointing a chancellor as the head of the federal government; the President of Germany leads the *Bundestag*, similarly to the American Speaker of the House. Where it can get murky is the multi-party system and the coalitions that form between them; the reason Friedrich Merz was elected in the first place was a loss of

confidence in Olaf Scholz, causing a decision to dissolve parliament by the President and subsequent general elections on February 23rd. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) was the favored party to block out the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), a faction that has rightfully set off long-dormant alarms across the *Bundestag* due to its populist nature, which has been its recipe for a slew of recent local successes.

## Tired Economy, Restless Populace

German and EU economic policies are in a precarious position after the massive step back that the US has taken from the global scene. Nationalism and populism are the tried-and-true tools to sedate the disgruntled masses, as we have seen firsthand in the United States during and after President Donald Trump's first term, and even earlier, in Berlin when Adolf Hitler took power. This is why the prospect of the AfD in power is unthinkable for the rest of the *Bundestag*. Hitler's rise was in the wake of one of the worst cases of hyperinflation the world has seen. The hope of much of the legislation is that replacing Scholz with Merz will keep the government from going in the same direction that the US is headed. However, it will not work forever.

For the biggest economy in the European Union, Germany's has been unremarkable, to say the least. Their GDP growth has been circling 0% since 2000, with two significant drops during the recessions of 2009 and 2020.

This seems contradictory to Germany's status as a powerhouse of innovation; however, as Merz said in 2023, the problem is that successful businesses almost always turn to the American markets when they outgrow the German ones. Further, the auto industry has been flailing for several years against cheaper and more reliable East Asian models. Somehow, stumbling behind has not pushed Germany's largest and longest-standing industry towards electric vehicles, but Merz has said that corporate bailouts are entirely out of the question.

An erratic Trump has threatened to impose aggressive tariffs, which could kill the economy for good. This brings us back to the middle class. The lack of growth in real wages, a direct effect of economic standstill, has caused a feeling of *déclassement*, or a population's potent disillusionment and dissatisfaction. The AfD knows how perilous this is, and hopes to capitalize on it. It is up to the new Chancellor to quell, which is a tall order that he may be unable to fulfill.

## Defense Spending

In the wake of Trump's declaration of a trade war with Canada (a close European ally) in late February, the soon-to-be-elected Merz voiced his plans to beef up Germany's military, citing the "possibility that [Trump would] no longer uphold NATO's mutual defense commitment unconditionally." It's hard to underestimate the gravity of the American departure from the interventionist role that they have played since the World Wars. From Berlin's standpoint, this could mean the estrangement of the largest importer of German goods, something that Merz is desperate to avoid. He and his party (including former Chancellor Angela Merkel) are staunch Atlanticists—advocates of strong military cooperation between Europe and the Americas.

On the other hand, migration away from the US could be what Europe needs. In fact, French President Emmanuel Macron has practically been betting on it. The idea of a sovereign Europe has been on Macron's to-do for the better part of his term, and the upcoming NATO summit in June may be just what he needs for it to come to fruition, especially because Merz has "no illusions" about the growing need for an autonomous European military. The question is, however, whether Germany can afford to bankroll this new military. Since the Great Recession, a debt break has been baked into the constitution, setting a universal ceiling for national debt. That is, until this March when it was loosened to make way for this ambitious expansion and to hopefully jump-start the sleepy economy. This is a sign of significant changes, but only if the Ministry of Finance can stop misusing and cutting up the defense budget to balance their books. Moreover, it's no secret what this military plan indicates; Europe is gearing up to protect itself because it has taken immediate notice of President Trump's behavior and fears what he may do next.

In the newly emerging world order, Germany can step into the spotlight. The economy's problem has been kicked down the street long enough, and President Trump's hawkish foreign policy will force Chancellor Friedrich Merz to act decisively. Whether or not he can be Emmanuel Macron's partner in bolstering Europe remains to be seen, but that is out of the question until he sets affairs in order at home.



Merz speaks during a session of the lower house of parliament; Tobias Schwarz/AFP/Getty Images

# The Ripple Effect

*United States Cuts to HIV/AIDS Funding Leave South Africa Vulnerable*

**Emma Choe**

*“Not long ago, we said by 2030, we want to see an HIV-free generation. But if things remain as they are, we will not achieve that. We will have to deal with deaths.”*

— Nozuko Ngcaweni, a South African woman living with HIV for nearly 30 years (AP News, 2025)

For decades, South Africa has stood as a frontline battleground in the global fight against HIV/AIDS. Now, that fight is in jeopardy. In early 2025, the Trump administration enacted sweeping cuts to U.S. foreign aid, including a dramatic rollback of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). As clinics close, treatments are interrupted, and prevention programs stall, experts warn that the progress made over the last two decades is at risk of unraveling—along with millions of lives.

## A History of United States HIV/AIDS Support in South Africa

PEPFAR, launched in 2003, has been one of the largest and most influential global health initiatives in history, investing over \$110 billion in efforts to combat HIV/AIDS worldwide. (PEPFAR, 2023) South Africa, home to the world's largest population of HIV-positive individuals, has been one of the program's key beneficiaries. With approximately 7.8 million people living with HIV in the country, PEPFAR funding has been essential in providing antiretroviral therapy (ART)---medications that reduce the viral load in people living with HIV to undetectable levels. ART not only prevents the progression of HIV to AIDS but supports community outreach, and strengthens local healthcare systems.

Over the years, the program has contributed to significant improvements in public health. Life expectancy has

increased, mother-to-child HIV transmission rates have fallen, and the number of HIV-related deaths has decreased substantially. For many South Africans, access to PEPFAR-funded healthcare has been the difference between life and death. The program has been an indispensable part of the country's HIV response, playing a vital role in both prevention and treatment.

## The Impact of Funding Cuts

The cuts to foreign aid from the United States, which include a reduction of nearly \$880 million from global vaccine initiatives and \$262 million from UNAIDS, will severely impact the efforts made to control HIV/AIDS. With reduced PEPFAR funding, South Africa has had to close clinics, interrupt ART distribution, and cease key prevention and outreach programs. These cuts threaten to reverse years of progress and place millions of lives in jeopardy.

Reports from health organizations indicate that without immediate action, South Africa could see an increase of over half a million new HIV infections and nearly 600,000 additional AIDS-related deaths over the next decade. The most vulnerable—especially young women and gay men—bear the brunt of the impact.

Already, many healthcare facilities are struggling to maintain services. Some have been forced to cut back on essential treatments, while others are operating with limited staff.

As a result, the most vulnerable populations are increasingly at risk of losing access to life-saving HIV medications and prevention efforts.

## Political and Economic Fallout

The United States' funding cuts have placed immense pressure on South Africa's domestic healthcare system, which is already grappling with economic constraints. The South African government, despite its commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS, lacks the financial resources to replace the lost funding. These limited resources lead public health infrastructure to be stretched thin. The additional burden of PEPFAR's retreat only further exacerbates the crisis.

[Moreover, the decision to reduce funding has strained diplomatic relations between the U.S. and South Africa. South African leaders have expressed frustration, viewing the cuts as a betrayal of the international commitment to combat HIV/AIDS.] The cuts not only threaten the progress made in South Africa but also undermine global health efforts, sending a dangerous message about the future of international cooperation in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

## Searching for Alternatives

In response to the crisis, global health organizations and advocacy groups have been scrambling to fill the gap left by PEPFAR's funding reductions. The Global Fund, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and regional governments have all sought to step in. Unfortunately, these efforts have been limited.

While some temporary funding has been secured, the loss of PEPFAR's long-term support remains a significant obstacle in South Africa's ability to sustain its HIV/AIDS programs. South African healthcare workers and activists are also

working to raise awareness of the situation and mobilize potential alternative sources of funding such as domestic budget reallocations and philanthropic foundations. As the health crisis deepens, there are concerns that temporary solutions will not be enough to reverse the damage caused by the funding reductions.

## The Road Ahead

Although the future of PEPFAR funding remains uncertain, the consequences of the cuts could be dire not just for South Africa but for the broader global fight against HIV/AIDS. The reduction in funding has led to a slowdown in treatment and prevention efforts, and without a significant restoration of funding, the progress made over the last two decades could be lost.

Global health advocates have called for a reversal of the funding cuts, but political divisions in the United States have made it unclear whether these calls will be heeded. The outcome will have profound implications for not just South Africa, but for countries around the world where HIV/AIDS remains a significant threat to public health.

As South Africa faces this growing crisis, the international community must recognize the urgency of the situation. The progress made in combating HIV/AIDS is fragile, and any setback could result in catastrophic consequences. With millions of lives at stake, it is imperative that global support for HIV treatment and prevention continues, and that the lessons learned over the past two decades are not lost.

# Collateral Damage: The Future of the CSTO

*How has Russia's controversial decision to invade Ukraine impacted its regional alliances?*

## Megan Woodward

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is a regional military alliance between Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Tajikistan. Although Ukraine is not officially a part of the CSTO, Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine—the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics—are considered to be Russian and therefore a part of CSTO. Its current Secretary General is former Kazakh Prime Minister, Imangali Tasmagambetov, and its headquarters are situated in Moscow, Russia.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the then Soviet Armed Forces turned into the United Armed Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Once individual states re-established themselves, their own armed forces took over and some countries left the alliance. In 2002, the alliance was formally restructured and renamed to the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

CSTO is very similar to NATO in that aggression toward one signatory state would be perceived as an aggression against all of the CSTO states. However, the use of unnecessary military force is discouraged. Furthermore, member states are not allowed to join other military alliances. It often finds itself in opposition with the GUAM alliance (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova).

The CSTO alliance encompasses multiple aspects of defense, including annual military exercises, operational procedures, peacekeeping, and the Collective Rapid Reaction Force (KSOR). CSTO also holds a Parliamentary Assembly and presidency to approve of any actions by the member states. Included in these assemblies is the

peacekeeping force, which is often deployed in high-conflict areas. In addition, KSOR teams collectively work across states to handle high-risk situations, such as anti-terrorism operations, transnational crime, drug trafficking, and responses to natural disasters.

## Russia-Ukraine War Updates

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022, there has not been official CSTO involvement in the matter. Its fellow member states have made statements on their individual opinions, but the CSTO has not collectively come out to support Russia or Ukraine. However, Russia's invasion has not come without reactions from its fellow CSTO members.

Kazakhstan, Russia's neighbor and close ally, has expressed disapproval of the invasion<sup>5</sup> and refuses to recognize pro-Russian separatist states, such as the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. Belarus also expressed uncertainty of CSTO's future, especially if Russia loses the war against Ukraine ("Collective Security Treaty Organization").

When Russia failed to support Armenia during its conflict with Azerbaijan, Armenia reconsidered its CSTO membership. Russia was then busy in Ukraine and did not send aid to Armenia even though Russia was expected to under mutual aggression pacts. Armenia also condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Armenia froze its participation in the CSTO and promised to withdraw altogether at a later date (unspecified).

## Looking to the Future

Russia's decision to invade Ukraine, despite international warnings, reveals it to be an unpredictable (and potentially dangerous) ally. Many CSTO states have distanced themselves from Russia, with Armenia going as far as to pull out of CSTO. At this moment, a complete dissolution of the CSTO is unlikely since member states are heavily reliant on each other economically, particularly so on Russia. For example, Kazakhstan's currency, the tenge, lost 20% of its value since the beginning of the Russian-Ukraine War (Jones), leading to high inflation rates. Additionally, the close geographic proximity of many CSTO member states to Russia makes them more vulnerable to potential aggression. As a result, even if they're frustrated with Russia, their location and security concerns make it hard for them to fully leave the alliance.

As the war continues, Russia's allies are steadily losing confidence in the declining world power. The future remains uncertain—not just for Russia, but for the entire CSTO alliance. Many countries, including CSTO members, are actively working to diversify their economies and reduce their reliance on Russia's unstable economic and political systems. This trend is likely to continue, regardless of the war's outcome. A Russian victory might demonstrate military capability, but it won't undo Russia's reputation for unpredictability. Rebuilding trust will require far more than winning a war—it would take long-term diplomatic efforts, transparency, and a consistent commitment to cooperative international behavior—none of which seem likely under the current regime.

On the other hand, a Russian defeat could signal more than just military failure. It may trigger internal political unrest, expose deep economic weaknesses, and leave Russia vulnerable to both domestic dissent and international retribution.



(Paratrooper descending with CSTO flag; CSTO)

If Putin were to step down in the aftermath, the resulting power vacuum could lead to a period of instability—marked by infighting among political elites, uncertainty about succession, and the potential rise of nationalist or extremist factions. Such instability would shake the confidence of CSTO members even further, making continued alignment with Russia a strategic liability rather than a benefit.

While the CSTO will likely remain intact, a Ukrainian victory could be the end to Russian dominance in Eurasia. Russia is too far in to quit now. Its only option is to plan wisely and reduce as much damage and backlash as possible. As for the other CSTO members, they should continue to distance themselves politically and economically from Russia. A Russian defeat could mean damage to them too. Three years in, the outcome is still uncertain. But what is certain is that Russia is in a very precarious position that could throw off the regional balance, and possibly world order.



President Putin and Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan; Getty Images

# U.S. and China: A Global Rivalry in the Making

*How Decades of Engagement Gave Way to Global Competition*

**Antonio D'Alesio**

The U.S.–China relationship has evolved dramatically over the past several decades, tracing its origins to the Cold War and progressing through periods of cautious rapprochement, deliberate disengagement, and, more recently, intense rivalry. In the early Cold War years, the United States adopted a containment policy designed to curb the spread of communism, viewing China as part of a broader bloc of ideologically driven adversaries. This approach was rooted in the belief that the spread of communism threatened the established [liberal order].<sup>1</sup> However, the geopolitical landscape shifted dramatically when President Richard Nixon conducted a groundbreaking visit to China in 1972. This historic trip, underpinned by a secret diplomatic initiative led by Henry Kissinger, laid the foundation for a strategic realignment that would transform U.S.–China relations.

## **The Unraveling of U.S.–China Cooperation**

Nixon's visit opened a new chapter in bilateral engagement. [Over the following years,]<sup>2</sup> China embarked on gradual economic liberalization under Deng Xiaoping. Deng's pragmatic reforms introduced market mechanisms into the Chinese economy and set the stage for China's eventual accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. This milestone signaled China's integration into the global economic system and fundamentally altered the financial landscape worldwide. For a time, many policymakers believed that increased economic interdependence would eventually lead to political liberalization within China. However, the reality proved to

be far more complex as China's rapid economic and military modernization has instead spurred a deep-seated rivalry with the United States.

## **Competing on All Fronts: Trade, Technology, & Territorial Tensions**

Economic competition now stands as one of the most visible dimensions of this rivalry. [The trade conflict, which escalated markedly during the Trump administration in 2018,]<sup>3</sup> saw the imposition of tariffs on billions of dollars worth of Chinese goods. These measures were aimed at countering practices such as intellectual property theft, forced technology transfers, and unfair subsidies that many American officials argued distorted global markets. While the Biden administration has retained many of these tariffs, it has also sought to rebuild alliances in the Indo-Pacific region to help balance China's growing influence. At the same time, U.S. policymakers have grown increasingly aware of vulnerabilities in their economy—most notably, the heavy reliance on Chinese-controlled critical minerals. Experts warn that China's near-monopoly over rare earth elements and other strategic materials can disrupt global supply chains and pose a severe national security risk, spurring lawmakers to explore alternative sources through increased domestic investment and partnerships with resource-rich allies such as Canada and Australia.

On the security front, the U.S.–China relationship is defined by several high-stakes flashpoints, most notably in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. The United States has long maintained a commitment to defending Taiwan, a policy that directly clashes with

China's unwavering determination to eventually reunify the island with the mainland. This tension and the U.S. practice of conducting "freedom of navigation" operations in the South China Sea underscore the high stakes and deep-seated rivalry that define bilateral ties.

## Realignments and Rivalries

Diplomatic alliances have intensified to seek to secure their influence in a rapidly multipolar world. In recent years, the United States has strengthened its bonds with traditional European partners and Indo-Pacific allies. Initiatives such as AUKUS—a security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) involving the U.S., Japan, India, and Australia represent coordinated efforts to deter Chinese military expansion. Conversely, China has been building its network of alliances through multilateral organizations like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, expanding its influence across Africa, Latin America, and Asia. This realignment of global partnerships contributes to a multipolar world order in which economic statecraft and soft power become critical levers of influence.

[At the heart of the current strategic competition is a race for technological supremacy.]<sup>4</sup> The United States has sought to maintain its technological edge by tightening export controls on advanced technologies, including semi-conductors, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing. These measures are designed to prevent the transfer of critical capabilities to China and to protect national security. In parallel, China has launched ambitious initiatives such as "Made in China 2025," aiming to transform its economy from reliant on low-cost manufacturing to one driven by innovation and high technology. Despite significant progress in tele-communications and consumer electronics, China faces challenges in semiconductor manufacturing

and aerospace, which remain strategic vulnerabilities. [Moreover, both nations engage in cyber espionage and debates]<sup>5</sup> over data security, creating an environment where the lines between economic, military, and technological competition become increasingly blurred.

## The Road Ahead

Looking forward, experts envision several potential scenarios for the future of U.S.–China relations. Some analysts caution that the deepening rivalry could solidify into a new era of strategic competition reminiscent<sup>6</sup> of the Cold War. Under this scenario, economic decoupling could become a reality, with each side retreating into self-sufficient supply chains, while intensified military posturing and technological rivalry would further entrench hostilities. In such a scenario, the risk of miscalculation would be high, potentially leading to regional instability or even a broader conflict. On the other hand, a more cautiously optimistic perspective suggests that managed coexistence may still be possible. They<sup>7</sup> might avoid the worst-case outcomes if both sides can engage in sustained, constructive dialogue and collaborate on pressing global challenges, such as climate change, pandemics, and nuclear nonproliferation.

Nevertheless, there is growing concern that a fragmented global order could emerge, with regional blocs forming based on shared economic and security interests, complicating international governance and increasing the potential for localized conflicts.

In recent years, the evolution of U.S.–China relations has also influenced how international news is reported. Journalists and policymakers have adopted the inverted pyramid structure to ensure that the most critical points—such as strategic imperatives and potential global

impacts—are presented upfront. Detailed context and analysis follow, connecting themes across historical evolution, economic competition, military flashpoints, and technological challenges. This approach not only facilitates clearer understanding among readers but also enhances credibility by carefully attributing data and expert insights.<sup>8</sup>

The importance of this integrated reporting cannot be overstated. As the two countries continue to shape global norms and rules, their relationship will influence everything from international trade, technological innovation, security architecture, and environmental policy. Thoughtful, accessible reporting is crucial in demystifying these complex dynamics for the public and policy-makers alike. By breaking down the historical, economic, military, and technological facets of the U.S.–China relationship, analysts and journalists help foster a more informed discourse, which is essential in a rapidly evolving international landscape.

Ultimately, the dynamic between the United States and China is a microcosm of the broader changes in global politics. The shift from Cold War-era bipolarity to a more complex, multipolar world challenges traditional notions of security and economic governance. It forces policymakers to grapple with the reality that strategic engagement with a rising China is not merely about competition but also about finding ways to manage interdependence and mitigate risks as both nations pursue policies that reflect their divergent political systems: democratic governance and free-market capitalism in the United States vs. state-led economic planning in China—<sup>9</sup> the international community watches closely, aware that the decisions made by these two powers will reverberate far beyond their borders.

Overall, the evolution of U.S.–China relations over the past half-century reflects a

complex interplay of history, economics, security, and technology. From Nixon's historic visit that broke decades of isolation, through the rapid economic liberalization under Deng Xiaoping and China's accession to the WTO, to the current era of strategic competition, the relationship has continually reshaped global affairs. Whether the future holds a return to managed coexistence or a descent into intensified rivalry remains uncertain<sup>10</sup>. However, the world will be profoundly affected by the trajectory of U.S.–China relations—a relationship that is as multifaceted as it is consequential for international peace, prosperity, and stability.



Maxim/Adobe Stock

# The Modern Isolationist Sentiment

*How Shifting Global Ideologies are Affecting Foreign Policies*

Brenna Mancini

Isolationism refers to a policy that promotes independence and disengagement from foreign affairs. With a largely negative connotation, this ideological shift may indicate the collapse of certain international relationships. The term gained prominence in early 20th-century U.S. policy debates, particularly prior to World War II. Isolationist sentiment in the United States was prevalent until the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Even then, the United States' future involvement in WWII was primarily reactionary.

Isolationism is not a modern issue. China experienced centuries of isolationist ideals during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912), imposing policies known as 'Haijin' that banned sea trade. Taiwan has been experiencing diplomatic isolation since the 1990s as the country fights to maintain its democracy. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea utilizes isolationism to maintain control over its citizens.

Isolationism is defined by its six distinct characterizations and goals. Isolationist countries focus heavily on their military and domestic security. They also look to act as redeemer nations—nations that work towards returning to what they deem a "simpler time." Isolationism also focuses on liberty, both nationally and abroad. Preserving the nation's status quo policies and promoting peace are two other major goals of isolationist countries.

## What Explains This Shift?

One of the greatest explanations for this isolationist shift is the overarching ideological migration in international relations. As the individualistic mindset became more

accepted, isolationism was no longer the scarlet letter it once was. Furthermore, it is virtually impossible for a country to unilaterally act on a foreign policy issue. This creates the illusion that global superpower states no longer exist. When a country feels that it lacks the independence and decision-making it once had, it feels threatened. In the case of the United States, there is a core belief that the country is not focused enough on itself. There is a shifting belief that globalization and heavy involvement in foreign affairs take away a state's power. While independence is extremely important for sustaining a state's sovereignty, too much independence is possible.

The United States is one of the foremost examples of an isolationist shift. With the recent inauguration of President Donald Trump, the country has seen many foreign policies implemented that show signs of this. The US-China trade war is currently being exacerbated as President Trump imposes high tariffs, stating he has no intention of repealing them. The United States has recently approached diplomatic relations aggressively, further pushing away countries and straining alliances. While the United States is often considered to be the world's greatest superpower, the country still has its economic and diplomatic limits.



Democracy Paradox

One example of this occurred during the 2008 Financial Crisis. Many countries experienced a massive recession, threatening their financial systems and economies. To help alleviate this issue, China assisted many countries through financial aid. This caused great concern within the United States, with many feeling that China's economic assistance proved its might over the United States. Although the United States would never have the ability to solve this crisis on its own, many interpreted China's intervention as a failure of the United States to solve the issue unilaterally.

Public opinion is also shifting largely towards an isolationist mindset. Across many countries in North America and Europe, people are concerned about immigration. There has been a recent rise in anti-immigration sentiment. In the United States, consumers have expressed concern about an over-reliance on foreign production, specifically from China. Additionally, concerns grow over the amount of national spending allocated to international issues rather than domestic necessities.

With the country experiencing extreme inflation rates, citizens are left feeling ignored and abandoned.



Jam Sta Rosa/AFP via Getty Images /AFP

## How Will This Affect International Relations?

One of the largest actions taken by the United States was its freezing of USAID. This has massively moved the country towards isolationist tendencies, with many countries already feeling the effects. African countries like Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Kenya have already expressed the disastrous effects this has had and the public health crises it will exacerbate. Many programs like HIV research can no longer continue without the financial support of the United States. With the tens of billions of dollars being ripped away from African countries, it is unknown what long-term effects this may have and how many lives will be lost because of it. Ukraine has experienced one of the greatest losses, heavily relying on financial support as its war with Russia continues. The withdrawal of USAID is deeply felt on an individual level as healthcare and research programs across the globe have been slashed.

In Europe, many countries are shifting away from a European identity and solely basing it on their nationality. This is evident in the United Kingdom's 2016 decision to leave the European Union. This came as a shock to the rest of the world, but nobody is more shocked than those in the United Kingdom. While the Brexit decision was based on a vote, many failed to consider how leaving the European Union would harm them. This isolationist move significantly harmed the United Kingdom's economy. Many citizens lost their jobs and the economy became significantly smaller. The harsh reality of the Brexit decision has encouraged many countries to remain in the European Union, not because of their loyalty to it, but rather economic concerns.

# Closing Remarks

As we bring this edition to a close, we want to extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed their voices, stories, and creativity to these pages. Whether you're a writer, artist, editor, or one of our readers, your support continues to shape this publication into a space for growth, dialogue, and expression.

Student voices matter—and we're proud to showcase the passion, insight, and resilience that define our community. As always, we hope this issue leaves you inspired, reflective, and maybe even a little more connected to those around you.

Until next time, keep writing, keep questioning, and keep creating.

**With appreciation,**  
**The *Global Eyes* Team**

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