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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

An early happy new year and happy finals season!! Christmas and in general new years celebrations have always been my favorite time of the year even though I grew up not celebrating it. So, I am hoping everyone is in the spirit of a great year coming. I truly hope 2026 is better for Türkiye, and I hope it brings more tranquility to all of us.

For this year's recap issue, as it can be understood from the cover, I checked what we have covered last year and it was extremely disappointing to see how we needed to cover same conflicts: War in Ukraine and Palestinian Genocide. Another new year wish of mine is to see the end of these crimes against humanity, to never see a genocide happening in front of our eyes and being completely useless.

Last year, 2024, was the "Year of Elections" as we have covered before, and I would argue that this year could be characterized as the "Year of Conflicts." From active clashes between Pakistan and India in Kashmir, to the recent tensions between Thailand and Cambodia, to Israel's escalating aggression leading to military confrontation with Iran, and rising tensions in the Taiwan Strait, conflict marked nearly every region of the globe.

IRS Journal will cover the ongoing war in Ukraine and what the current situation is right now, ceasefire works for Gaza, and the European governments that collapsed this year.

I would like to thank our writers for showing effort in such a busy time for all of us. I am also grateful to my fellow board members, whose hard work have been wonderful throughout the semester. We look forward to continuing to organize insightful events next semester, along with bringing you more of the IRS Journal!

I hope you enjoy this short summary of 2025 in global politics!



Aslısu Furtana

UKRAINE: THE FORGOTTEN WAR?



In the fourth year of war between Ukraine and Russia, negotiations remain without consensus, and it seems that there is no clear path for the war to end. Discussions under the Trump administration has given rise to cautious hopes, but the strikes in the field show the lack of concrete progress. As the new year approaches, Russian missile and drone attacks continue destruction of Ukrainian cities. According to news agencies, the strike on Odessa, which is a port city, has killed at least eight people and wounded many. The attack happened when negotiations were on the table in the diplomatic area, showing the reality of war.

At the same time, the sanctions on Russia are increasing. At the 18th December, the Council of the European Union announced that sanctions on 41 ships connected with the so called “**shadow fleet**”, a network accused of helping Russia to find a way around oil and trade restrictions. This decision makes diplomatic channels remain open, at the same time showing Europe will tighten sanctions.

Moreover, on the diplomatic negotiations, Trump administration has obtained a more visible role. American and Russian officials met in Florida on 20 December following the negotiations in Berlin. According to Reuters, discussions focused on potential security arrangements in Ukraine and explored new formats that may eventually require broader participation. Trump considered the process as “getting close to *something*” even though there is no polished agreement yet. One of the biggest conflict points is the territorial issue. Ukraine stated repeatedly that any peace deal must protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The US officials supported the idea of NATO-style security guarantees. Meanwhile, disagreements over what Ukraine would compromise for security slows the progress down. The Florida negotiations lasted several days without producing a final conclusion, as expected.

The humanitarian crisis remains the same beyond the diplomacy tables. As the weather is becoming colder and conditions worsening, the UN warned that millions of Ukrainian citizens might face displacement because of huge destruction in infrastructure in Ukrainian cities. Additionally, the UN suggests that humanitarian aid should increase in order to provide stronger protections for civilians.

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FAULT LINES IN PARLIAMENTS: THE EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS THAT FELL IN 2025



As 2025 approaches its end, the political agenda in multiple European governments has been displaying patterns akin to one another in regard to governmental instability, the struggling centrists, and widespread parliamentary disagreements. Several governments—say, those of France, Portugal, and the Netherlands—were mutually trapped in a stalemate while addressing the heated issues that occupied the legislature's agenda, such as financial actions and migration measures. Albeit the aftermaths carried resemblance, the mechanisms through which instability materialized varied across institutional and political contexts. In the case of the French, Portuguese and Dutch governments, however, the executives became increasingly impotent to reconcile fragmented parliaments, polarized electorates, and mounting societal pressures, which offers an insightful comparative case-study of recent European politics.

Le Centre Fatigué: President Macron's Efforts to Restore the Government

Inasmuch as faltering regimes and ambivalent governments have been inherent to French politics since the turn of the 19th century, witnessing the fall of yet another trembling cabinet in 2025 came as no surprise. While unresolved disputes during the budget discussion of the Assemblée nationale did not immediately bring down the government led by François Bayrou, they served as a façade of growing dissatisfaction with the centrist rule, persisting through Sébastien Lecornu's arrival, perceived by a substantial fraction of both the public and the parliamentary opposition as technocratic and increasingly detached from everyday socioeconomic issues, be it inflation or the lingering legacy of pension reform. As the National Assembly had been divided into three antagonistic segments (a left bloc, a weakened centrist core in power of the country, and a right-wing opposition contesting elite technocracy, the Bayrou government was impotent in constructing durable legislative coalitions, relying instead on procedural endurance rather than political persuasion. Consequently, parliamentary fragmentation and the consistent dependence on Constitutional bypassing mechanisms in the legislature undermined the legitimacy of centrist executives and foreshadowed their eventual collapse.

There were certain moments in the lifetime of two French governments when the woeful aftermath somewhat loomed on the horizon. Irrespective of the endeavor to design an ever-stronger executive next to critically weakened legislature in Charles de Gaulle's Fifth Republic, a number of constitutional procedures jeopardized the system they were meant to secure. The major breakpoint upon accumulated institutional tensions and parliamentary deadlock was, again, the failure brought by such power that the other chief of the dual executive possesses: Although functioned as an impetus for passing bills in parliamentary deadlocks, Article 49.3, a powerful yet controversial tool of enactment at the potential risk of the entire cabinet, brought the government to the brink of falling, and ultimately backfired in the hands of the French *primus inter pares*. While a righteous competence by the Constitution, the frequent recourse on Article 49.3 provoked intense controversy as it reduced parliamentary deliberation to a largely formal exercise without effective decision-making power. Although Bayrou survived multiple motions of no confidence following the invocation of Article 49.3 on the budget, being the another paragon in a long history of fallen governments, former Prime Minister François Bayrou invoked the constitutional instrument twice on the same day, during which the French radical left, in particular, sought alliance in the Parliament to overturn Bayrou's insistent efforts for the state and the "Sucé" budget.

Following Bayrou's fall, the President appointed Lecornu to prime ministry from his centrist camp for the "stability of the country," while the arrival of the new Prime Minister reinforced perceptions of executive exhaustion, signaling elite circulation without substantive political renewal. Yet, the lifespan of the new executive was destabilized almost immediately; Lecornu resigned only hours after announcing his cabinet, before being re-appointed days later by Macron; among the parliamentary upheaval to bring a solution to the country's ongoing economic problems, the new centrist rule was concluded after a sudden resignation: Blaming the inside-parliament antagonism, "partisan attitudes," and "certain egos"³ for casting stones in the way to address the country's ongoing economic issues, Lecornu stepped down after 26 days in office and hours later the cabinet formation, becoming the shortest-lived prime minister in modern French history, only to be re-appointed by Macron and continue his term after this short break.

FAULT LINES IN PARLIAMENTS: THE EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS THAT FELL IN 2025



Schoof's Government Falls with Wilders's Farewell, as Jetten Carries the Democrats to the Top

After a long array of disputes over the asylum and migration policy, Geert Wilders, the popular far-right figure of Dutch politics, withdrew his Party for Freedom (PVV) from the ruling coalition in the beginning of June, ultimately compelling Prime Minister Dick Schoof to resign. Coupled with populist pressure, the intransigence within the Dutch parliament outweighed the accommodationist nature of the polder model that counted on centrist parties to absorb and reorient political conflict via coalition bargaining. Nonetheless, as the post-2020 trajectory had already put pressure on the consensus-based government model and the Tweede Kamer fragmented into multiple political bodies, the coalition composed of PVV, VVD, NSC, and BBB struggled to maintain compromise, that delayed attaining compromise, the far-right emerged as a reshaping actor in the parliament after its recent electoral triumph. Even though excluded from participation, Wilders exerted pressure on the right-leaning coalition to position it toward his rightist agenda with no prominent inclination to negotiation, but rather threats of leaving the coalition in case, for instance, his migration measures were not implemented. Simultaneously, opposition actors such as D66 and the GroenLinks-PvdA alliance resisted such shifts, viewing them as incompatible with constitutional commitments, international legal obligations, and the Netherlands' self-image as a liberal, rights-based state. Central to the right-wing politics that follow a mutually positive trend in Europe, mapping out a new package of migration and asylum measures hence appeared as a final straw, which signified beyond a mere political controversy and pointed to the disagreements on maintaining the liberal-democratic image of the country or to erect it anew with a more exclusionary, sovereignty-centered posture.

Through the fall of the government, the dissatisfaction among the electorate was translated into the interpretation of the polder model as an elite gridlock, which failed to formulate effective action plans for the pressing issues, such as cost of living, asylum governance, and housing shortages. The efficacy of the centrist politics diminished as the electoral polarization became undeniably acute, while the in-coalition disputes heightened by mid-2025. The tension inside the coalition group was inflamed by the far-right pressures, reflecting, arguably, the disruption caused not only by a poor operation of consensus-oriented governmental tools but also the extremist dictations on policy-making. All in all, the collapse of the Dutch government unraveled divisions over immigration, climate, and welfare that centrist party platforms had struggled to reconcile. With that being said, even if the government collapsed with PVV's elimination, the elements of Wilders' strict asylum policy continued to be supported by the remaining coalition parties.

In the aftermath of the fall and restoration of Schoof's government, on the other side, Rob Jetten, the leader of the D66, has been successfully managing the party politics in tandem with its popular appeal. After the glory in 2021 national elections, his pan-European liberal camp did not emerge as the leading force in the 2024 European Parliament elections, but gained renewed momentum in the domestic political landscape of late 2025. Allowing D66 to distinguish itself from both conservative coalition partners and right-wing populist challengers, Jetten stands now as a charismatic political leader that successfully answers to the as an inclusive and liberal-democratic alternative primarily to the right-wing competitors that have recently been gaining popularity across the world.

FAULT LINES IN PARLIAMENTS: THE EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS THAT FELL IN 2025



Stalemate of Credibility in the Portuguese Parliament

Depending on conditional parliamentary tolerance and informal tolerance in lieu of stable legislative backing, Prime Minister Luís Montenegro's government faced the consequences of eroding political credibility under a minority rule, during which the governmental legitimacy relied overtly on legislative confidence and accountability. Different from the scenarios of a policy deadlock or constitutional overreach in the Dutch and French cases, the Portuguese executive confronted the aftermath of its susceptibility to reputational shocks, while the country's political system, which was sensitive to issues of corruption and ethical probity, did not absolve the allegations, although unconfirmed, after a series of judicial investigations that stemmed from conflict-of-interest allegations around Montenegro's family consultancy firm. Subsequently, the opposition obtained a substantial chance to deal a death blow on the government faltered upon the slippery ground of moral vacuum and lack of confidence.

Being one of the prominent opposition parties, the far-right Chega, instrumentalized the revealing of investigation details in the form of "corrupted-elite" and systematic decay narratives. As an expected consequence of minority governments, which are vulnerable to abrupt legislative overthrows, in parliamentary systems, Montenegro and his social democratic camp (PSD) were brought down after a vote of no confidence, exemplifying another centrist collapse that was nevertheless differentiated from the other two cases with the irreparable questions of accountability and corruption. Despite this collapse, though, Montenegro restored his position as the Prime Minister with his Democratic Alliance upon a snap election in May.

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Derya Güneş

ESCALATION WITHOUT WAR: THE TAIWAN STRAIT TENSIONS IN 2025



An island 180 kilometers away from China with the population around 25 million have remained the center of tensions since the aftermath of World War 2. With its crucial interconnectedness to global technology, Taiwan has a significant impact from Silicon Valley to all over Asia. There has been dozens of skirmishes, missiles, or threats originating from China to the island. In order to understand the current situation of Taiwan and China crisis the historical background of this conflict is remains overlooked.

Taiwan is an island settled by KMT (The Kuomintang is a major political party in the Republic of China) who fled to Taiwan in 1949 against the succession of Mao Zedong and his Maoist party. During the Cold War period, Republic of China got recognized by the United Nations as the representative of China. This situation was connected to interests of United States in the region and its rivalry with Soviet Union, as a result of Mao Zedong's Communist party initially getting excluded and not recognized while being treated as a rebel group.

By the 1970's, People's Republic of China, were invited to UN Council as the representative of China. On the other hand, by the end of 1970's USA established "Taiwan Relations Act". This act, while endorsing the officials as "Authorities of Taiwan" USA underscored that they would not diplomatically recognize and the People's Republic of China would be the single China. Whereas USA cut relations diplomatically, they endorsed that economic and cultural relations would remain and emphasize that they would help Taiwan in the case of Chinese threat.

Since China grew exponentially by the 1990's technological advancements, they consequently had more power in the realm of East Asia. As more developed armed forces was used, domination within the surrounding regions were needed to be sustained. However, USA and its allies in the Pacific have surrounded the East China Sea with two branches of island chains. In order to weaken China to yield power in the seas, chains were placed alongside the smaller island, starting from South Korea up to Phillipines. Moreover, American bases located in South Korea, Japan, and Philippines outnumber other bases and establishing a direct threat and intimidation for China. Thus, even though not explicitly told, bases there imply that if there would be any dispute, armed forces are ready to take action.

Currently, Taiwan has monopoly in producing electronic chips which has been globally required. In order to become a counterweight to the United States, China views economic development as a primary means of accumulating power. This competition in high-tech industry tightens the relations between China and Taiwan and its allies (USA and other countries in Pacific Ocean)

China has repeatedly signaled its willingness to use force against Taiwan, since it does not recognize Taiwan's sovereignty thus it is against Taiwan maintaining close relationships with USA. Moreover when American officials visited Taiwan in 2022, China responded by violating the airspace of Taiwan. Exercising its army close to the island; using air sorties, missile launches. Taiwan's military forces aggressive responses. In 2025, China's new aircraft carrier passed through the Strait of Taiwan and a drill conducted by the Chinese forces, showing an attitude of strength. Additionally, newly announced 10 billion dollars package of arm sales to Taiwan escalated the tensions. Since then China occasionally signals threats against Taiwan. At this point, reunion seems invalid and barely possible since only the 2% of the citizens of Taiwan call themselves "Chinese".

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CEASEFIRES IN GAZA: PEACE AS A STRATEGY OF DELAY



It Did Not Start on October 7

The violent and destructive attacks against the Palestinian people did not begin on October 7. Long before this date, Israel had pursued policies aimed at establishing and expanding its presence on Palestinian land through displacement, psychological pressure, and physical force. These conditions led Palestinians to engage in different forms of resistance, one of which was the October 7- operation Al-Aqsa Flood. This long-standing struggle over land and existence between the two sides has been accompanied by repeated ceasefires, which have sought to pause the violence without resolving its deeper causes.

Nakba and the First Ceasefire: 1949

The first ceasefire followed the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the war that broke out soon after. During this period, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced to leave their homes. Palestinians describe this mass displacement and loss of statehood as the Nakba, meaning “catastrophe,” which they see as an ongoing process rather than a single historical event.

The 1949 ceasefire agreements were brokered by the United Nations and signed between Israel and neighboring Arab states. These agreements did not bring an end to the occupation; rather, they merely stopped active military hostilities. The ceasefire established the de facto boundaries known as the “Green Line,” which came to define Israel’s territorial control. Far from producing a permanent resolution, this agreement functioned primarily to freeze the conflict and manage violence, without addressing the political and humanitarian consequences of displacement and dispossession.

1967: Ceasefire as Legalized Occupation

With Israel’s occupation of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights in 1967, the focus of the conflict shifted from broader Arab territories to Palestine itself. This occupation, known as the Six-Day War, ended with a ceasefire brokered by the United Nations. According to the United Nations Security Council resolution adopted after the war, Israel was expected to withdraw from the territories it had occupied, while all states in the region would be able to live within secure and recognized borders.



However, the territories claimed by Israel as its own overlapped with lands that Palestinians had inhabited for centuries. The ambiguity in the language of the resolution created space for differing interpretations, which Israel has used to justify the continuation of its occupation. As a result, the ceasefire did not bring the occupation to an end; instead, it provided a political and legal framework that allowed it to persist. Following this ceasefire, Egypt and Syria launched the Yom Kippur War with the aim of reclaiming the occupied territories. Once again, the conflict ended with a ceasefire mediated by the United Nations Security Council.

CEASEFIRES IN GAZA: PEACE AS A STRATEGY OF DELAY



Stones Against Guns: The First Intifada

While the United Nations and Israel were promoting a so-called peace process that effectively legitimized the occupation and enabled the expansion of Israel onto non-Israeli land, the Palestinian people were struggling to defend their land and homeland. In the occupied Gaza Strip, Israel imposed strict military rule, enforced curfews, and allowed Israeli settlers to enter Palestinian areas without consent. These conditions of constant pressure and control pushed the Palestinian population to unite and resist.

The First Intifada, which lasted for nearly five years, marked the first large-scale collective uprising of the Palestinian people against occupation. During this period, many Palestinians lost their lives. Lacking access to conventional weapons, they defended their homes with the most basic means available: stones. The First Intifada came to an end with the acceptance of the Oslo Accords.

Oslo as a Turning Point

The 1993 Oslo Accords were presented as a breakthrough for peace but ultimately institutionalized an unequal power relationship. While the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formally recognized, Israel retained control over land, borders, and security. The accords promised that core issues would be resolved within five years through negotiations and that limited Palestinian self-rule would be established in the meantime.

Under Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian Authority assumed administrative responsibilities in parts of Gaza and the West Bank, even as around 60 percent of the West Bank remained under full Israeli control. Rather than leading to sovereignty, the Oslo framework shifted governance responsibilities to Palestinians while allowing occupation and settlement expansion to continue. The failure of the Camp David talks in 2000 exposed these contradictions and marked the effective collapse of the Oslo process.

The Second Intifada and the Militarization of the Conflict

The visit of then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, combined with the deep disappointment created by the failure of the Oslo process, released the accumulated anger of the Palestinian people. As a result, the Second Intifada, which lasted from 2000 to 2005, began.

In response to Palestinian resistance, Israel relied heavily on military force, deploying tanks and large-scale operations in Palestinian areas. During this period, Israel also began the construction of the separation wall, further entrenching territorial fragmentation and restricting Palestinian movement.

The 2003 Ceasefire

The ceasefire reached in 2003 between Israel and Palestinian resistance groups that had emerged from mass popular resistance particularly the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) was based on the principle that both sides would halt military operations, assassinations, and attacks. However, later in 2003, Israel violated the agreement, prompting Hamas's military wing to carry out attacks on Israeli cities. Israel responded with targeted assassinations, leading to the collapse of the ceasefire.

CEASEFIRES IN GAZA: PEACE AS A STRATEGY OF DELAY



2008-2014: Cycles of Ceasefire, Cycles of Destruction

The period between 2008 and 2014 was marked by repeated ceasefires followed by repeated breakdowns. These agreements functioned less as peace mechanisms and more as tools for managing recurring violence. Each collapse resulted in heavy civilian casualties, particularly in Gaza. By prioritizing short-term containment over addressing structural causes, occupation, blockade, and political inequality, these ceasefires contributed to the normalization of mass violence. The cumulative failure of political leadership and the absence of accountability ultimately pushed the conflict toward its current stage of large-scale civilian destruction that we face today.

Where Are We Today?

After the October 7 Al-Aqsa Flood operation, Israel's response went far beyond military retaliation. The conflict shifted into a genocidal campaign, as Israel directly targeted civilian life. Homes, hospitals, schools, and public spaces were attacked, turning Gaza into a site of systematic destruction rather than a battlefield.

Recent Ceasefire Negotiations

In October 2025, ceasefire talks mediated by the United States proposed Israeli withdrawal and the disarmament of Hamas. Although Israel stated that it accepted the first phase of the agreement, its attacks on Palestinians continued. Even after the first phase was completed, violence did not stop. The second phase, scheduled for 29 December 2025, now faces serious doubts, raising questions about whether the ceasefire is being used to manage violence rather than end it.

Ceasefire as Survival, Not Justice

For Palestinians, who have endured decades of displacement, destruction, and forced movement, ceasefires offer only a basic hope: the chance to live without constant bombardment. Yet despite global condemnation of the ongoing genocide, Israel has continued its attacks, treating Palestinians as disposable on their own land.

Ceasefires and the two-state solution have been repeatedly presented as solutions, but they have failed because they do not address the root causes of the conflict; occupation, inequality, and denial of Palestinian rights. Even as defending Palestinian rights, showing solidarity, or attempting to deliver humanitarian aid is treated as a crime by Israel, global support for the resistance of the Palestinian people facing genocide continues to grow. Still, the growing global awareness and public pressure may begin to challenge this reality and force a reconsideration of policies that have long normalized Palestinian suffering.

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