

# On the edge: How ongoing wars and rising tensions will shape 2025



The year gone by had been more geopolitically charged than the year before. And going by the trends, we expect the upcoming year to see many of these geopolitical events evolve further for good or worse. Pertinent among these are the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, the political-strategic change in US administration with Trump Presidency 2.0 and the shifts in policies and diplomacy it brings, and on the trade front, the geo-economic confrontation with Trump's potential tariff war and its impact on global trade, as well as the rising

technopolitical confrontation between countries leading to increased cyberattacks both in scale and scope and the consequent rising costs for states, industries, and corporations to build resilient and secure systems and networks to protect their assets.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict that is still raging has seen an even more grave intensity with the recent provocation of Russia's use of hypersonic ballistic missiles and the bombing of a train in Ukraine that came from Romania with British Storm Shadow missiles and the US-

made Army Tactical Missile System. The 34-month-old war seems nowhere near to subside in the next year and will continue to have wider geopolitical repercussions in the Eurasian region as well as in and across the Atlantic. If Ukraine sees several nations only offering lip service support, it may lead to territorial losses for the country and will see an emboldened Russia, which could renew its vision of the Soviet Union—keeping its balance of power in the region intact. On the other side, if we see greater US and EU military and economic support through NATO to Ukraine, it might further escalate the conflict, spilling over to Europe.

The result of the US elections will have widespread political-strategic ramifications globally. President-elect Donald Trump coming to office in January 2025 will add another dimension to the ongoing conflicts. He would use all means possible to see an end to the wars quickly. This will

relations, leading to reduced hostilities between them. This ongoing conflict can potentially disturb the geopolitical calculations, with Arab countries taking a hard stance against Israel and the US (the latter supporting the former) in the region where Iran is ardently backing the Palestinian cause. This can have serious consequences for the energy security and shipping routes in the regions that could see disruption. The recent developments in the Syrian civil war with the ouster of President Bashar al-Assad, which, although it brings an end to the iron-fist regime, leave uncertainty looming large, giving radical Islamists a free run in the war-torn country.

The year gone by and the year to come will see heightened trade tensions and their impact on trade facilitation across borders. Along with the rapid decline in EU-Russia trade, we will see a spike in US-China trade tensions. Tariffs on goods exchanged between the US and China have increased up to six times since 2017, and globally, trade interventions have surged 12-fold since

2010. With Trump expected to take a further hard stance towards China, it will have ramifications on global trade flows. While countries like Vietnam, India, and Mexico may likely benefit from this Sino-US rivalry on the trade front, increasing the cost of supply chain, sourcing, and transportation will ultimately have consequences for the consumers globally.

On the technology front, we can expect greater competition between China and the US. With the former decoupling its technological reliance on the US, while the latter is protecting its tech companies (like GAFAM) from threats of knowledge spillover and cyberwarfare. We will continue to see greater malware attacks towards specific countries and entities that could disrupt cyber infrastructure. Hence, marketplaces for hacking tools and data are growing.

In 2020, the economic cost of cybercrime, including direct, indirect, and upstream systemic costs, was

estimated to be in the range of \$4 to \$6 trillion. In that context, the cybersecurity industry could become an arena where cyberattacks are becoming more frequent, complex, and costly. In fact, it can be predicted that the warfare between the two countries may not be a kinetic warfare but instead could take the form of a trade war or cyberwar. Hence, governments and companies need to be more alert when it comes to cybersecurity and protecting their critical and strategic assets from cyberattacks. The coming years will see greater investments in building more resilient and secure networks to weather these threats. Studies have also identified generative artificial intelligence as one of the most significant technology trends unfolding today.

Specific focus will be on cybersecurity for the internet of things and operational technology, along with stress on two segments of data protection and network security. To sum up, the year ahead will see geopolitical risks further intensifying before parties eventually and hopefully choosing diplomacy over war. We expect greater US-China rivalry over trade and technology that will further reshape the dynamics between these and other nations. Trump's presidency may also pose challenges even with its traditional allies (the EU and UK) over NATO funding, trade, as well as different visions towards multilateral forums. This will entail 'decoupling', 'derisking', and 'reshoring' of trade and investment in a fragmented world order where trade reorients toward flowing between geopolitically aligned economies. Lastly, in the year ahead we expect a specific focus on technology-linked and -driven industries such as e-commerce, cloud services, electric vehicles, semiconductors, AI software and services, robotics, immersive reality, etc. This will drive greater investment and growth for the global economy.

## With territory rapidly being chipped away, can HTS and Jolani prevent fragmentation of Syria



The Syrian surprise is the latest episode of the war in Gaza which has now spread its tentacles all across the region and the repercussions of which threaten to alter the landscape of the region forever. It all started on 27 November when a coordinated assault was launched by a combination of terror groups from the north and northwest in Syria. The attack was led by the Sunni terror group Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) and was supported by the Syrian National Army (SNA), also known as the Free Syrian Army, and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) made up of Kurdish fighters, also known as the Peoples' Protection Units (YPG).

It is not as if these groups came out of nowhere and suddenly launched assault. Even before the assault, all three groups had firm physical presence along the north in Syria, especially in areas of Aleppo, Idlib and the northern borders shared with Turkey and skirmishes with the Syrian forces was a routine affair. However, this time the assault was better coordinated, capturing key territory rapidly. By 29 November, Idlib and Aleppo were in rebel control and by 8 December, the rebels had reached Damascus after taking over key cities of Homs and Hama. Syrian army did not offer any resistance and President Assad quickly flew out to Russia, abandoning the country which he and his family had ruled with an iron fist for over 50 years and had withstood repeated attempts

of overthrow of regime in the past 13 years, since the outbreak of 'Arab Spring'.

The Assad chapter was over and there was a spontaneous outflow of emotion and cheer on the street, having been freed of the dictator. While there is hope of a better life in the future, there are apprehensions too. HTS leader Abu Mohammad al Jolani, who is now the de-facto ruler of Syria, has a dangerous past, as the HTS is the new avatar of Al Nusra Front, an offshoot of Islamic State (IS) which was known for its brutality and terror. The IS had vowed to create the Islamic Caliphate and enforce strict implementation of Sharia in the land across Iraq and Syria. Although Jolani is trying to project a new and more moderate image by announcing that his regime will not enforce any dress or conduct code on women, form an inclusive government for the country and grant amnesty to the soldiers who lay down their arms, past precedents of similar

in midst of the Assad exit and HTS takeover in Damascus, what however escaped the attention initially, is the opportunity that many external players are exploiting to quietly chip away Syria's territory while confusion and chaos still prevails.

One of the first to take

advantage of the chaos was Israel. It immediately undertook a two-pronged strategy in Syria. On one hand, it sent its forces into the Golan Heights, a region established after the 1973 Middle East war. The UN immediately called it that Israel's move into demilitarized zone is a violation of the 1974 disengagement agreement between Israel and Syria.

On the other hand, Israel, which is already occupying Golan Heights illegally, having annexed it in 1981, for the first time entered even the demilitarized buffer zone in the Golan Heights, a region established after the 1973 Middle East war. The UN immediately called it that Israel's move into demilitarized zone is a violation of the 1974 disengagement agreement between Israel and Syria. However, Israeli officials stated that their incursion was a "limited and temporary" measure, and described the buffer zone operation as essential to creating a "defense zone free of weapons and terror threats in southern Syria." However, the most important capture in this operation has to be Syria's highest peak, the Mount Hermon summit which is the highest place in the region, giving Israel direct look into Lebanon and Syria. With reports of Israeli forces closing in areas in the South almost 25 km short of Damascus, Israeli forces would be tempted to retain what has been captured for keeps. Two statements, both coming from PM Netanyahu's office spell out clearly Israel's intention, of not vacating what has been captured.

### WESTERN RAILWAY - VADODARA DIVISION

#### E-AUCTION FOR THE CONTRACTS OF "ADVERTISEMENT", "PAY & USE" & "PARKING"

With reference to above, e-Auction for the contracts of "Advertisement", "Pay & Use" & "Parking" Contracts will be held on 10.01.2025. The e-auction will start at 11:00 hrs. on 10.01.2025. The catalogue has already been published on [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) website. The details are furnished as under:

Catalogue No.	Type of Contract	Lot No.	Contract Period
ADVT-BRC-100125	Advertisement	ADVT-EFF-132142-24-2 (Advertising Train Exterior (Full Face))	5 years
		ADVT-BRC-BRC-OSD-294-24-2 (Advertising On Station Premise (Digital))	5 years
		ADVT-BRC-OSD-271-24-1 (Advertising On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	5 years
		ADVT-BRC-GER-OSN-270-24-1 (Advertising On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	5 years
		ADVT-BRC-BH-OSN-269-24-1 (Advertising On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	5 years
		ADVT-BRC-AKV-OSN-268-24-1 (Advertising On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	5 years
		ADVT-BRC-BRC-OSN-259-24-1 (Advertising On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	5 years
		ADVT-IntEx-86019-24-2 (Advertising Train Interior and Exterior)	5 years
		ADVT-LCOO-BRC-BRCY-291-24-2 (Advertising Loco Exterior)	5 years
		ADVT-LCOO-BRC-BRCY-292-24-2 (Advertising - Loco Exterior)	5 years
C481-PRKG-1001	Parking	ADVT-LCOO-BRC-BRCY-295-24-1 (Advertising Loco Exterior)	5 years
		PARKING-BRC-MHD-TW-19-24-1 (Parking Two-Wheeler)	3 years
		PnU-BRC-GDA-Toi-12-24-4 (Pay and Use - Toilets)	3 years
		PnU-BRC-CYI-Toi-8-24-2 (Pay and Use Toilets)	3 years
		PnU-BRC-ANN-D-Toi-9-24-4 (Pay and Use Toilets)	3 years
C331-PrU-100125	Pay & Use	PnU-BRC-EKNR-Toi-13-24-4 (Pay and Use - Toilets)	3 years
		PnU-BRC-GDA-Toi-12-24-4 (Pay and Use - Toilets)	3 years
		PnU-BRC-CYI-Toi-8-24-2 (Pay and Use Toilets)	3 years
		PnU-BRC-ANN-D-Toi-9-24-4 (Pay and Use Toilets)	3 years
		PnU-BRC-EKNR-Toi-13-24-4 (Pay and Use - Toilets)	3 years

## How signing China's BRI may be a win for PM Oli but not for Nepal

Recently, Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli undertook a four-day visit to China from December 2 to 5. Analysts and media viewed this visit as a departure from tradition, as his first official trip abroad after being elected was to Beijing rather than India, which has traditionally been the case. This shift is significant given the tense relations between New Delhi and Beijing.

During the visit, the Nepalese prime minister met Chinese President Xi Jinping, and several agreements were signed. A notable development was the signing of the framework agreement to advance the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Nepal. Although the initial MoU was signed in 2017, its implementation had been stalled due to political disagreements in Kathmandu and the absence of an execution framework. Since being sworn in as prime minister for the fourth time in July, Oli had met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of a United Nations conference in September. Additionally, Nepal's foreign minister, Arzu Rana Deuba, visited New Delhi in August for talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. However, signs of strained ties between India and Nepal were evident. Issues such as the denial of overflight rights and New Delhi's objections to Chinese investments in India-Nepal projects may have contributed to a delay in an official invitation from New Delhi. This context partially explains Oli's decision to break with tradition and choose Beijing as his first international destination after assuming

office—a move that China was quick to capitalise on. There was stiff opposition from the Nepali Congress, the largest party in the ruling coalition, which firmly maintained that Nepal should not accept loans to execute BRI projects. While the projects under the Chinese initiative were to be implemented through "aid assistance financing", a Congress leader emphasised the need to clearly define the term. Arjun Narasingha KC, a senior

projects. While the projects under the Chinese initiative were to be implemented through "aid assistance financing", a Congress leader emphasised the need to clearly define the term. Arjun Narasingha KC, a senior

member of the prime ministerial delegation to China, stated that the delegation was unaware of the exact financial modality agreed upon for BRI cooperation. The Nepali Congress had already decided against accepting loans under the BRI framework, and a two-party task force (comprising Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (CPN-UML)) had endorsed this stance ahead of the prime minister's visit. After several rounds of discussions between the two countries, an agreement was reached to expedite BRI projects in Nepal under aid financing modalities.

JM Financial Asset Reconstruction Company Limited					
Corporate Identity Number : U67190MH2007PLC74287					
Registered Office : 7th Floor, Energy, Appasath Marg, Prabhadevi, Mumbai - 400025.					
Contact Person : (1). Dhanesh Varyia - 9225827126, (2). Vishal Ketele - 9584966553, (3). Jyoti Sawant - 022 - 6224 1676, Website - <a href="http://www.jmfinancialarc.com">www.jmfinancialarc.com</a>					
E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE - FRESH SALE					
That Piramal Capital and Housing Finance Ltd have assigned a pool of Loan (including below mentioned Loans) together with underlying security interest created thereof along with all the rights, title and interest thereon under Section 5 (1) (b) of the Securities and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 ("SARFAESI ACT") vide an assignment agreement dated March 29, 2023 ("the Assignment Agreement") in favour of JMFCAR - Aranya - Trust. It is to notify that PCHFL is authorized and appointed to act as Service provider / Collection agent to facilitate all operational and procedural processes vide Assignment / Service Agreement. Pursuant to taking possession of the secured asset mentioned hereunder by the Authorized Officer of Secured Creditor under the SARFAESI Act, 2002 for the recovery of amount due from borrower/s, offers are invited by the undersigned for purchase of immovable property, as described hereunder, which is in the possession, on 'As is Where is Basis', 'As is What is Basis' and 'Whatever is There is Basis', Particulars of which are given below:					
Loan Code / Branch / Co-Borrower/s / Guarantor/s	Demand Notice Date and Amount	Property Address_final	Reserve Price	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (10% of RP)	Outstanding Amount (23.12.2024)
04100010198, Surat - Majura Gate (Branch), Chirag Rameshbaib Sojitra (Borrower), Sejalben Chiragbhai Sojitra (Co-Borrower-1), Rakeshbhai Rameshbhai Sojitra (Co-Borrower-2)	Dt: 21-10-2021, Rs. 10,11,743/- (Rs. Ten Lakh Eleven Thousand Seven Hundred Forty Three Only)	All The piece and Parcel of the Property having an extent :- Plot No. 253, Dhara Residency, Majura Gate, Nr. Golokdham Residency, Shekhpur, Velingar, Surat Gujarat IN 394150. Boundaries As :- North : Plot No. 254, South : Plot No. 252, West : Plot No. 256, Society Internal Road, West : Plot No. 256.	Rs. 10,40,000/- (Rs. Ten Lakh Forty Thousand Only)	Rs. 1,04,000/- (Rs. One Lakh Four Thousand Only)	Rs. 13,34,681/- (Rs. Thirteen Lakh Thirty Four Thousand Six Hundred Eighty One Only)
041000084601, Surat - Majura Gate (Branch), Manish Moolchand Tanwar (Borrower), Rakesh Bajrani Saini (Co-Borrower)	Dt: 29-12-2022, Rs. 9,56,107/- (Rs. Nine lakh Fifty Six Thousand One Hundred Seven Only)	All The piece and Parcel of the Property having an extent :- Flat No. A-2/403, Golokdham Residency, Nr. Umang Residency, Opp. Railway Sta., (as Per Plan 3rd Floor) Surat, Gujarat IN 394230. Boundaries As :- North : Lift + TTS, South : Stairs, East : Margin, West : Passage + Flat No. 101.	Rs. 10,15,000/- (Rs. Ten Lakh Fifteen Thousand Only)	Rs. 1,01,500/- (Rs. One Lakh One Thousand Five Hundred Only)	Rs. 12,99,015/- (Rs. Twelve Lakh Ninety Nine Thousand Fifteen Only)
04100008430, Surat - Majura Gate (Branch), Rajkishor Ganesh Mahto (Borrower), Saritadeep Rajkishor Mahto (Co-Borrower-1)	Dt: 21-07-2021, Rs. 11,79,560/- (Rs. Eleven lakh Seventy Nine Thousand Five Hundred Sixty Only)	All The piece and Parcel of the Property having an extent :- Plot No. 308, Aradhna Platinum-1, Nr. Tulsi Paper Mill, Off. Karelipura, Manek Chowk, Surat, Gujarat IN 394237. Boundaries As :- North : Plot No. 307, South : Plot No. 309, East : Society Road, West : Other Property	Rs. 8,75,000/- (Rs. Eight Lakh Seventy Five Thousand Only)	Rs. 87,500/- (Rs. Eighty Seven Thousand Five Hundred Only)	Rs. 19,37,131/- (Rs. Nineteen Lakh Thirty Seven Thousand One Hundred Thirty Only)
041000090690, Surat - Majura Gate (Branch), Manoj Rajdev Singh (Borrower), Patal Manoj Singh (Co-Borrower-1)	Dt: 23-07-2021, Rs. 4,14,532/- (Rs. Four lakh Four Hundred Thirty Two Only) & Dt: 23-07-2021, Rs. 1,77,045/- (Rs. One lakh Seventy Seven Thousand Forty Five Only)	All The piece and Parcel of the Property having an extent :- Flat No. 1-501, Vraj Bhumi Residency, Nr. Old Unnati Jatka, Swapnashruti, Nr. Jyoti Bhavna Road, Bhestan, Surat, Gujarat IN 394210. Boundaries As :- North : Flat No. 508 & Stair Case, South : Flat No. 502, East : Open Area, West : Lift & Passage.	Rs. 10,95,000/- (Rs. Ten Lakh Ninety Five Thousand Only)	Rs. 1,09,500/- (Rs. One Lakh Nine Thousand Five Hundred Only)	Rs. 6,86,116/- (Rs. Six Lakh Eighty Six Thousand One Hundred Sixteen Only) & Rs. 3,15,285/- (Rs. Three lakh Fifteen Thousand Two Hundred Eighty Six Only)
041000090691, Surat - Majura Gate (Branch), Manoj Rajdev Singh (Borrower), Patal Manoj Singh (Co-Borrower-1)	Dt: 22-07-2021, Rs. 11,70,439/- (Rs				