

IPRI Conflict Weekly

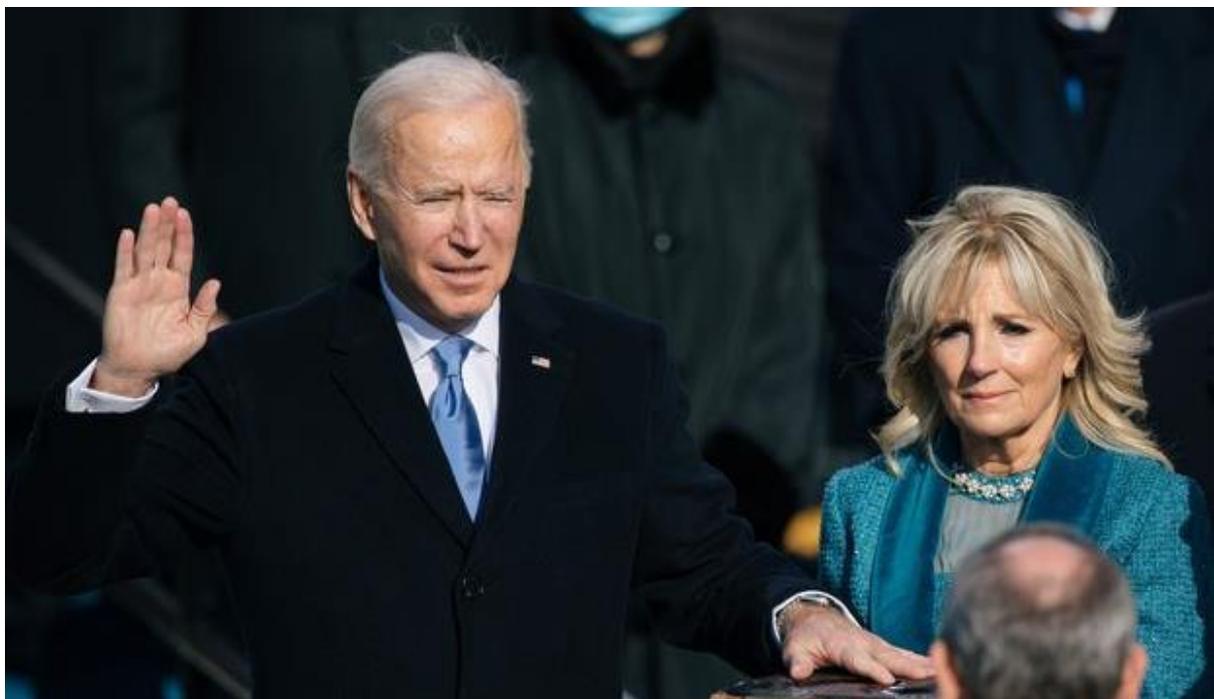
Research | Review | Forecast

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

IPRI Conflict Weekly #54, 21 January 2021, Vol.2, No.3

New President in the US, new Chinese Village in Arunachal Pradesh, new Israeli settlement in West Bank, and another massacre in Sudan

D Suba Chandran, Teshu Singh, Lakshmi V Menon and Apoorva Sudhakar



Change of Guard: Joe Biden becomes the 46th President of the United States. On 20 January 2021, he took oath, and issued 17 directives on the first day in office (Image Source: WSJ)

The US: The new American President Biden issues 17 executive orders on day one, from rejoining Paris Agreement to wearing masks

In the news

On 20 January 2021, Joe Biden became the 46th President of the United States. In an address towards healing and pursuing a practical approach, he declared: "Politics doesn't have to be a raging fire destroying everything in its path. Every disagreement doesn't have to be a cause for total war. And, we must reject the culture in which facts themselves are manipulated and even manufactured." He also pledged to the fellow Americans on the first day of becoming the President, "I will be a president for all Americans – all Americans. And, I promise you, I will fight as hard for those who did not support me as for those who did."

On the same day, Kamala Harris was sworn in as the Vice President of America, the first woman to occupy the office.

On the same day, in a record during the recent decades, President Biden showed urgency and a well-planned strategy as he issued several directives on the first day of assuming office. These directives cover a wide spectrum of internal issues focussing on COVID-19 management to rejoining the Paris Agreement and relaxing the visa restrictions for people from Muslim and African countries.

Issues at large

First, a relatively smooth transition, despite the Trump tantrums and political uneasiness in the national and State capitals. The last two weeks, especially since the 6 January break-in at the Capitol Hill by a mob of pro-Trump supporters, there has been a tense situation in Washington and across the rest of the US. Within the Congress, the Democrats led by the House Speaker Nancy Pelosi passed a House resolution impeaching Donald Trump for the second time. This happened after former Vice President Mike Pence refused to relieve Donald Trump using the provisions under the 25th Amendment. Outside the Congress, there was a fear that the Trump supporters would violently intervene during 19-20 January 2021, disturbing the swearing-in of Joe Biden. Across the States and in Washington, security forces were strengthened to avoid any untoward incident.

Second, the fallouts of Trump's exit. Dealing with the domestic and global fallouts of Trump's actions during his Presidency, especially the last year would be a bigger challenge for the new President and his team. Internally, the nation stands divided. It is easy for Biden to say, as he did while swearing-in that through the "Civil War, the Great Depression, World War, sacrifice and setbacks, our better angels have always prevailed...we can do that now." Easier to say; the road ahead for Biden to ensure that better sense prevails needs larger support, greater dialogue and more importantly a bigger heart with patience to heal. The swearing-in of Kamala Harris, the first woman to be the Vice President of the US, should provide the social space that Biden is looking for. However, this should not become a false start; there were similar expectations when Obama became the President. After two terms of Obama, the US has to witness a "Black Lives Matter" movement, highlights structural issues within the US. The task before Biden and Harris is challenging.

Third, the long list of directives that Biden issued on day one of assuming his office underlines the urgency in which the US has to engage the rest of the world, with a positive framework. During his last four years, Trump ensured that the US broke or left international commitments – from the Paris Agreement to the WHO. Biden's first day efforts hint the changes to come. Rest of the world should welcome.

In perspective

For Biden, the challenge is not just rebuilding, but building better – both internally and externally. A vibrant and engaging democracy in the US is an international need of the day. With spaces for democracy and dissent shrinking across the world, what happened in the US was during the last few months was disappointing to those who believe in the values of democracy, and its process. Biden has to rebuild these values better so that the American democracy becomes a beacon again.

Internationally, Biden has to build a better US engagement with the rest of the world – both at the State and society levels. While Trump tried to engage with the authoritarians from Russia

to Saudi Arabia to North Korea, he let down the American allies in Europe. Biden has to rebuild ties across the Atlantic and also across the Pacific. His first-day directives on climate change and the migration shows his positive intent. He has to build further and consolidate.

Never before the rest of the world was looking at a new American President, with so much hope and expectations. Biden has this responsibility.

India: Chinese construct a new village in Arunachal Pradesh

In the news

On 18 January 2021, the NDTV published an exclusive report, highlighting that China has built a new village in Arunachal Pradesh. The satellite images reveal 101 houses constructed on the banks of Tsari Chu river in Upper Subansiri district between November 2019-November 2020. The images are taken on November 1, 2020.

On 18 January, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) acknowledged for the first time that China had been constructing village. The MEA has confirmed the news and said "We have seen recent reports on China undertaking construction work along the border areas with India. China has undertaken such infrastructure activity in the past several years."

On 19 January, the Global Times, published an article titled "Indian media hype village construction in South Tibet to stir anti-China sentiment: experts." The authors have criticized the Indian media and expounded that "they are hyping China's construction of a village in a 'disputed area,' saying the construction was built within Indian territory, which New Delhi is concerned about." Furthermore, the article states it is to stir "anti-China sentiment". According to the Global Times, "in recent years, China has attached great importance to the construction of comfortable villages which would fight poverty, enabling the people to live in good houses and have access to good roads."

Issues at large

First, yet another attempt to alter the border. According to Chinese official government maps, the area in which the village has come up has been in Chinese control since 1959. Earlier, there was only a Chinese military post, but now a full-fledged village has come up, approximately 4.5 km within Indian territory of the de facto border. During recent months, China has been attempting to change the border in the Ladakh sector; it has led to military standoff in the Galwan Valley.

Second, the salami-slicing strategy by China. In 2005, India and China signed 'the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question'. Article VII of the agreement mentions, "in reaching a Boundary settlement, the two sides shall safeguard due interests of their settled population in the border areas". China is mindful of the clause and is working towards creating 'settled population'. The larger Chinese strategy along India-China appears to be of 'salami tactics' or the 'step by step approach' towards territorial expansion. It implies acquiring land inch by inch. This is the larger Chinese approach along the spectrum, as is evident in the South China Sea.

Third, the Indian position. The MEA has explained that "Government keeps a constant watch on all developments having a bearing on India's security and takes all necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity." The MEA reiterated India has also fastened

its border infrastructure that provided "much-needed connectivity to the local population along the border."

In perspective

This is the first time that China has established a full-fledged village. China refers to Arunachal Pradesh as 'South Tibet'. It is of immense importance for China to give easy access to all the Northeast states of India and Bhutan from the east. In 2018, China issued standardized mandarin name for six places in 'South Tibet'/Arunachal Pradesh. These moves are to reinstate Chinese claims in the region from time to time. The construction may not lead to confrontation but will definitely raise the level of tension at the India-China borders.

Israel: Benny Gantz approves a new settlement in West Bank

In the news

On 17 January 2021, Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz approved the construction of approximately 800 new settlement housing units in the West Bank. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had previously promised the same. To offset a potential blowback, Gantz also approved some preliminary steps for Palestinian construction projects. Settler leaders, such as Samaria Regional Council head Yossi Dagan, hailed the move as a "historic achievement" and called for the recognition of homes in the illegal outposts.

On the same day, the Palestinian Authority called the move "a pre-emptive attempt" to undermine the Biden administration's efforts to "relaunch the stalled peace process". Meanwhile, Israeli anti-settlement campaign/monitoring group Peace Now, Jordan, Egypt and UK condemned the hurried move. European Union hinted it may jeopardize the 'Abraham Accords'.

Issues at large

First, Netanyahu's expansionist policies. On 28 May 2020, Netanyahu publicized his commitment to annex the occupied West Bank. On 14 October, Israel approved 2,166 new settler homes across West Bank. It signals Israel's dismissal of Palestinian statehood. Settlements are considered illegal under international law and are considered a hurdle for a two-state solution. Palestinians identify the swelling settler population (over 500,000 people) as an obstacle for achieving independence.

Second, the last-minute push. The Israel-friendly Trump administration will be leaving the office on 20 January. With a Congress that has been deeply divided between Democrats and Republicans, Biden is expected to restore the US stance against settlement construction. The recent approvals seem to be Netanyahu's way of utilizing the pro-settlement Trump administration's final days.

Third, the normalizations. After decades of conflict, Arab states such as the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman and Morocco normalized relations with Israel by concluding the US-sponsored Abraham accords in the latter end of 2020. Sudan also signed an agreement with Israel. The settlement approval makes it difficult for the Arab signatories to justify their normalization decisions.

In perspective

First, annexation policies, of which settlement construction is a part of, will redraw the eastern frontiers of Israel and push the asymmetric conflict into novel territory. As per reports, the earmarked areas would encompass 30 per cent of the West Bank. Although over 4.5 per cent

of Palestinians living in West Bank, would come under the annexed territory, Israeli sovereignty will not apply to Palestinians. The latter would only be subject to Palestinian laws and Israeli military orders.

Second, for decades, US administrations and the global community opposed settlement construction. But the Trump administration derailed. Instead of criticizing Israeli settlement announcements, Washington in 2018 announced that it no longer recognized the illegality of Israeli settlements under international law. Thus, during Trump's tenure, Israel approved over 27,000 settler homes' construction. Besides, on 14 January, the Palestinian Authority's head Mahmoud Abbas announced Palestine's first national vote since 2006. If Biden restores Washington's traditional stand, the elections may worsen the impending friction between Biden and Netanyahu.

Third, the settlement construction may make normalizing ties with Israel harder for other interested Arab states. Particularly in the absence of the Trump administration that on 16 January termed UAE and Bahrain as "major security partners"; an incentive for Israeli normalization. However, as Palestinian statehood has lost its charm in the Arab world, the new approvals may prove inconsequential for further Arab-Israeli normalizations.

Sudan: Another intertribal massacre in another African country

In the news

On 18 January, 55 people were massacred and 37 injured as clashes between the Arab Rizeigat tribe and the non-Arab Fallata tribe ensued in Sudan's South Darfur state. A week before this, members of the Fallata tribe had allegedly killed a person from the Rizeigat tribe.

On the same day, the UN Secretary-General condemned a similar attack in West Darfur. It urged the Sudanese government to ensure that the National Plan for Civilian Protection was in place and bring an end to the violence.

On 16 January, a scuffle between two men belonging to different ethnic groups spiralled into deadly violence which left at least 129 dead (as of 19 January), including armed forces personnel, and 198 injured in the West Darfur state. One of the men, belonging to an Arab tribe, was stabbed to death resulting in retaliatory attacks on the non-Arab Masalit tribe.

On the same day, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok said he had directed a high-profile delegation to visit West Darfur to review the situation.

Issues at large

First, the nature of inter-tribal conflicts in Africa. The current instances of conflict in Darfur between Arab tribes and non-Arab tribes are often traced to a lack of access to resources. For example, in recent months, the Arab herders and non-Arab farmers have often clashed over water and land. However, this is not peculiar to Darfur or Sudan. Other examples of intertribal conflicts in Africa include the following: Hutu-Tutsi conflict in Rwanda; Fulani-Tuareg conflict in western African countries like Nigeria and Mali; and the latest - Tigray conflict in Ethiopia.

Second, the failure of the State. Sudan is currently being governed by a transitional government led by Hamdok after former ruler, Omar al Bashir, who helped arm the Arab tribes and was ousted in 2019. Under al-Bashir, the non-Arab tribes were targeted, and Hamdok came to

power with the promise of improving the security conditions. However, Hamdok has been unable to do so, and in 2020, protests demanding the resignation of the entire government broke out. Further, the transitional government provides power-sharing between military and civilian leaders; however, tensions between the two have been simmering for a while.

Third, the fragile peace deal. In October 2020, the Sudanese government signed a peace deal with a coalition of rebel groups to end the violence that had been continuing for years. However, two groups - one being the Darfur-based Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) - refused to sign the peace agreement.

Fourth, the withdrawal of the UNAMID. The recent spate of violence comes merely days after the African Union-UN mission, known as the UNAMID, officially withdrew from Darfur on 31 December 2020 after it was established in 2007. Though the mission was not perceived as a success by the local population, its withdrawal has sparked fears that it would cause a vacuum. The National Plan for Civilian Protection has been framed to succeed in the UNAMID.

In perspective

First, the persistent conflict in Sudan is a reflection of the failure of successive governments. Further, unless the government strikes a balance between the military and civilian officials in the power-sharing agreement, it would be difficult to collectively address the problems - ethnic, economic or otherwise.

Second, peacebuilding will be difficult without the SLM as it had been a key force against the government since 2003. Further, the exit of the UNAMID, is likely to retain the violent status-quo, if not worsen it until the government begins to implement the National Plan for Civilian Protection soon.

Also, from around the world...

By Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Apoorva Sudhakar and Sourina Bej

Peace and Conflict from East and Southeast Asia

China: WHO team visits Wuhan to investigate the origins of COVID-19

On 20-21 January 2020, a delegation from the World Health Organization (WHO) conducted a field visit to Wuhan to probe into the origins of COVID-19. The mission was part of the ongoing collaboration between WHO and Chinese national, provincial, and Wuhan health authorities in response to the pandemic. Meanwhile, the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, a WHO established panel in an interim report stated, "We have failed in our collective capacity to come together in solidarity to create a protective web of human security."

China: US State Department calls detention of Uighur's as "genocide" and "crimes against humanity"

On 19 January, the US State Department in a press statement determined that the detention and repression of Uighur Muslims by China amounts to "genocide" and "crimes against humanity." In what is seen as the last action against China before President Donald Trump leaves office, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said, "In addition, after careful examination of the available facts, I have determined that the PRC, under the direction and control of the CCP, has committed genocide against the predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang. I believe this genocide is ongoing, and that we are witnessing the systematic attempt to destroy Uyghurs by the Chinese party-state."

Japan- South Korea: Japan asks South Korea to drop wartime compensation demands

On 18 January, Motegi Toshimitsu foreign minister of Japan accused South Korea of worsening the tensed relation by making "illegal" demands for compensation for comfort women and use of forced labourers during World War II. He added, "We strongly urge South Korea to correct the violation of international law as soon as possible" and restore healthy relations. Previously, on 8 January, the Seoul Central District Court ruled that the Japanese government must give 100 million won to each of 12 elderly women who filed lawsuits in 2013 over their wartime suffering as "comfort women."

The Philippines: Protests break out over permission for security forces to enter university

On 19 January, faculty members and students at the University of the Philippines (UP), as well as activists, protested a government decision to nullify a 1989 agreement banning police and soldiers from entering any of the state institution's campuses without prior notice. On 18 January, the government announced this decision after authorities accused the university of becoming a "breeding ground of intransigent individuals and groups whose extremist beliefs have inveigled students to join their ranks to fight against the government."

Thailand: Thai woman sentenced to 43 years in jail on lese-majeste charges

On 19 January, the Bangkok Criminal Court sentenced a former civil servant to 43 years and six months on lese-majeste charges and violation of the Computer Crimes Act. The defendant was arrested in January 2015 for sharing an audio clip considered to be critical of the monarchy. The court had originally sentenced the accused to 87 years but was reduced by half after a guilty plea was entered. The sentence is supposed to be the toughest ever imposed under the country's lese majeste laws and comes after more than 43 young protesters have faced similar charges in recent months.

Myanmar: A tripartite agreement with Bangladesh and China agrees to the repatriation of Rohingya

On 19 January, at a tripartite meeting facilitated by China, Myanmar agreed to start repatriation of Rohingya in the second quarter of this year. Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh, Masud Bin Momen said, "We pushed to initiate the repatriation in the first quarter, but Myanmar sought more time for logistical arrangements and some physical arrangements. So we asked to start repatriation in the second quarter, and they agreed on it." Further, he said China and Myanmar also understood and agreed on the proposal initiated by Bangladesh to maintain international community presence in Myanmar's Rakhine State when the repatriation occurs.

Peace and Conflict from South Asia

India: Government proposes to suspend farm laws for 18 months

On 21 January, after the tenth round of talks between the government and protesting farmer leaders ended, the Centre proposed to suspend the three farm laws for one and half years and set up a joint committee to discuss the Acts to end the stalemate. The proposal comes a day after the Supreme Court-appointed committee proposed to set up a portal for farmers to share their views about the recently passed farm laws. The farmers have protested against these laws calling it an undue attempt at liberalizing the farm economy. The decision to form the panel was taken at the first meeting of the panel. On 12 January, the Supreme Court had stayed the implementation of the three laws, against which tens of thousands of farmers are protesting along the borders in New Delhi.

India: Largest vaccination drive against coronavirus begins

On 17 January, as India began its nationwide coronavirus vaccination drive, 1,91,181 healthcare and frontline workers were the first to receive the jab. In India, the pandemic has caused 1,52,093 deaths and more than a million affected. The Health Ministry said that the massive inoculation exercise was done during 3,352 sessions conducted by 16,755 vaccinators, marking it a historic and biggest inoculation drive. Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan had virtually interacted with the health ministers of all states and Union Territories and said the two coronavirus vaccines, Covaxin developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech and Covishield by the Serum Institute, would be used to fight against the virus. The Indian drug regulator, DCGI, had approved SII's Covishield and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin for emergency use on 2 January.

India: Two journalists from Manipur arrested under UAPA, released

On 20 January, two editors of a Manipur based web portal, The Frontier Manipur, booked on sedition charges and helping unlawful organisation are released and all charges against them have been dropped. The two editors had earlier been charged under IPC Sections 124A (sedition), 120B (criminal conspiracy), 505(b) (causing alarm to induce offence against the state), and 34 (common intention), as well as the UAPA's Section 39 (supporting terror organization) for publishing an article. The article titled, 'Revolutionary journey in a mess', has been written by M Joy Luwang which led to a suo moto FIR registered by the Manipur Police. The state has seen a number of arrests in the past including in 2020 when a sedition case was labelled against a Manipuri activist Erendro Leichombam for a Facebook post.

Sri Lanka: Navy launches rescue operation to find sunken trawler with Indian fishermen

On 19 January, Sri Lanka Navy launched a Search and Rescue (SAR) operation to find an Indian fishing boat and its fishermen that sank in Sri Lankan waters in the seas off Delft Island. The Navy said the incident took place on 19 January when the fishermen resisted arrest. The Sri Lankan Navy units on patrol carried out an operation to seize Indian fishing trawlers trespassing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). As the operation was panning out, one of the Indian fishing trawlers in an attempt to evade collided with the SLN Craft and sank. Following the incident, Sri Lanka Navy commenced a search and rescue operation in search of the fishers on the sunken trawler.

Nepal: Prachanda picks up fiery stroke as he talks of counter-revolutionaries amid conflict with Oli

On 18 January, Nepal Communist Party(MC) faction leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal (famously known as Prachanda) ratcheted up his fiery rhetoric, when he said, "vegetarian struggle is not going to work now." Prachanda was addressing a function organized by All Nepal National Independent Students Union, a wing of the Dahal-Nepal faction, insinuating that a violent movement is the need of the hour. "We have anger and hatred for the counter-revolutionaries and we are eager to attack," said Prachanda. Since the political fallout with NCP(UML) chief and Prime Minister Oli's subsequent dissolution of the House, Prachanda has been amassing support for his protest against Oli. Ever since the Maoist party joined mainstream politics in 2006, peace has, by and large, returned to the society, despite the country facing political instability. "The wounds of many of the injured in the past are still fresh. We don't need any violent movements again," said Narayan Wagle, a former editor who is part of the Brihat Nagarik Aandolan.

Pakistan: 98 per cent of polio vaccination complete

On 17 January, the Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) said that 98 per cent targets have been achieved from the five-day national polio immunization drive. According to an interview of an official of PEI in the News, the immunization drive started on 30 November to vaccinate over 39 million children under the age of five years across the country. Around 2,85,000 polio frontline workers visited each house, observing strict SOPs for the COVID-19 and conducted the vaccination off the children.

Peace and Conflict from Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Iran: Holds fifth military drill after US bombers fly over the Middle East

On 19 January, Iran conducted a military drill along the coast of Makran and the Sea of Oman. This is the fifth military drill in two weeks and was conducted a day after the US flew its bombers over the Middle East. On 18 January, the US flew in B-52 bombers over the region; the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said the exercise was "a key part of CENTCOM's defensive posture." On the same day, Iranian Foreign Minister condemned the attack.

Qatar: Iran's top diplomat welcomes Qatar's call to thaw diplomatic relation with Gulf states

On 20 January, top diplomat in Iran, Mohammad Javad Zarif in a social media post, welcomed Qatar's call to the Gulf countries to engage in a dialogue with Iran and broker negotiations. "As we have consistently emphasized, the solution to our challenges lies in collaboration to jointly form a 'strong region': peaceful, stable, prosperous & free from global or regional hegemony," said Zarif on Twitter. Zarif's comments came after Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani on 19 January said that his government was "hopeful" Iran and its Arab neighbours could resume talks.

Yemen: FTO designation of Houthis comes into effect

On 19 January, the US' designation of the Houthi rebels as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation came into effect after the US released details of limited licensing exemptions to the restrictions. The exemptions include official activities of the US and international organizations and "export of agricultural commodities, medicine, and medical devices." However, aid agencies have expressed concerns that the designation would hinder humanitarian work in the country. On the same day, in view of these concerns, the nominee for the next US Secretary of State said he would propose to review the designation.

Tunisia: Thousands protest a day after country marks 10th anniversary of Arab Spring

On 19 January, President Kais Saied urged Tunisians to not "let others take advantage of their anger and poverty." He was appealing to the protesters who had been calling for the dissolution of the Parliament since 15 January citing deteriorating economic and social conditions. The protests broke out a day after Tunisia marked its 10th anniversary of the pro-democracy movement which led to the collapse of Ben Ali's dictatorship in 2011 and gave rise to the Arab Spring. On 16 January, the Interior Minister arrested more than 600 protesters; however, violence continued as protesters looted shops and threw Molotov cocktails and security personnel responded with tear gas.

Libya: UN calls on foreign fighters to leave by 23 January

On 20 January, the UN Secretary-General called for the departure of all foreign mercenaries by 23 January according to the ceasefire signed between the UN-recognized government and the rival group in October 2020. The Secretary-General also appreciated that the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, on 19 January, had approved a mechanism for presidential and parliamentary elections to be held in December.

Peace and Conflict from Europe and the Americas

Russia: Navalny detained in Sailor's Silence jail

On 18 January, Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny was detained after flying back to Russia. Since he was poisoned with a nerve agent, Navalny would now be spending his days under strict control in a VIP cell inside one of Moscow's most infamous jails. The prison, called Matrosskaya Tishina or Sailor's Silence, occupies a block in Moscow's north-east and has housed high-ranking prisoners, the authorities would want to cut off from the outside world. "I'd read about it (the prison) in books and now I'm here," Navalny had posted in an Instagram post. "Russian life."

Italy: Prime Minister wins vote of confidence by a narrow margin

On 19 January, the Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte won the support of the upper house of parliament, giving him a chance to be in power but with a weakened and minority government. Conte won a majority in a vote of confidence in the Senate, but fell short of an absolute majority. A political instability arose after former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi triggered the vote of no confidence and pulled his centrist Italia Viva party out of the governing coalition. Renzi blamed differences over the country's post-coronavirus economic recovery plan for the no-confidence motion. Conte, who is not a member of a political party but leads a coalition of the anti-establishment Five Star Movement and the leftist Democratic Party, won the Senate vote by 156 to 140, after appealing to senators to ensure stability as the country struggles through an economic and health crisis. He would have needed 161 votes for an absolute majority.

France: Macron rules out any official apology for colonial abuses in Algeria

On 20 January, the office of the French President Emmanuel Macron issued a statement that Macron has ruled out issuing an official apology for France's colonial abuses in Algeria. There will be "no repentance nor apologies" for the occupation of Algeria or the bloody eight-year war that ended French rule, said Macron's office, adding that the president would instead take part in "symbolic acts" aimed at promoting reconciliation. Macron has been the first French president to make an effort in 2017 to recognise French crimes in Algeria. Before his election, in February 2017, Macron acknowledged France's colonisation of Algeria as a "crime against humanity", in an interview with an Algerian TV channel.

Honduras: Migrants moves towards Mexico to reach the US

On 17 January, the Guatemala security forces confronted a caravan of migrants from Honduras on a highway near Chiquimula in southeastern Guatemala. After a tense standoff, migrants scattered but several threw stones at police who responded by firing tear gas and tried to push back the group back in the direction of the Honduran border. Amid the tense situation, President of Mexico Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador urged the US to make major reforms to its immigration policy. This comes as tens of thousands of Central American migrants try to reach the US in groups known as "caravans" in an attempt to escape poverty, persecution and violence.

Venezuela: The US imposes sanctions on a network of oil trading entities

On 19 January, the Trump administration-imposed sanctions on three individuals, 14 business entities and six ships that have assisted the Venezuelan state-run oil company Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) to sell crude mainly to Asia, to evade earlier sanctions intended to stop the president from profiting from crude sales. Further, the Treasury Department stated that the network helped the administration of President Nicolas Maduro broker the sale of hundreds of millions of dollars in Venezuelan oil.

About the authors

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The IPRI undertakes research on varied issues affecting a peace process and conflict regions every year. The research by IPRI is regularly published as issue briefs and analyses looking at larger trends in contemporary conflict regions in the world.

As part of its capacity building activities, the IPRI organizes Peace Lectures of eminent academicians, leaders and advocates of peace. The Young-IPRI platform is a network of young scholars working on peace initiatives and conflict resolution programmes across South Asia.

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