

# Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

*A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world*

12 January 2023, Vol.4, No.2

## **The new push in the Ukraine war, Ben Gvir's visit to al Aqsa, Mali's pardon to Ivorian soldiers, violent protests in Brazil and violence over Guzman's arrest**

Padmashree Anandhan, Mohaimeen Khan, Apoorva Sudhakar, Madhura Mahesh and Allen Joe Mathew



(Russian troops preparing for the attack. Image source: The New York Times)

## Ukraine: A new military push, worsening the situation

### In the news

On 1 January, the Russian Defence Ministry claimed a strike on Ukraine's unmanned aerial vehicles' (UAV) industrial facility using a "high-precision long-range air-based armament," killing over 350 Ukrainians and destroying air-defence missile systems. Simultaneously, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy claimed to have taken down 45 Shahed drones, killing 400 Russians in a missile attack in Makiivka; however, Russia's Armed Forces reported only 89 casualties.

On 4 January, French President Emmanuel Macron said France would provide "light AMX-10 RC armoured combat vehicles" to Ukraine. He said: "This is the first time that Western-made armoured vehicles are being delivered in support of the Ukrainian army."

On 5 January, the White House and Germany released a joint statement on supplying more weapons: "The United States intends to supply Ukraine with Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, and Germany intends to provide Ukraine with Marder infantry fighting vehicles."

On 5 January, Russia's President Vladimir Putin said: "I am instructing the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation to introduce a ceasefire along the entire line of combat engagement in Ukraine from 12:00 on January 6 until 24:00 on January 7 of this year."

On 8 January, a Russian Defence Ministry spokesperson claimed that a "massive missile attack" in Kramatorsk had killed 600 Ukrainian soldiers. The spokesperson said: "In response to an illicit strike inflicted by Kiev's regime on a temporary Russian military base in the settlement of Makeyevka...the command of the united group of Russian military forces conducted a retaliation operation."

On 10 January, the Russian mercenary Wagner group claimed to be fighting the war to capture Soledar as part of the Russian offensive in Donetsk. The same was confirmed by the UK Ministry of Defence which stated: "Soledar...likely continues to be Russia's main immediate operational objective."

### Issues at large

First, the intensification. The exchange of shelling between Russia and Ukraine, which was concentrated in Ukraine's southern and north-eastern regions, has expanded further into the eastern Ukraine, centre of Donetsk. The Ukraine military has shifted from attacking the frontline to shelling the Russian occupied Donbass area (Makiivka, Soledar), due to the upgradation of its military capabilities through the West's supply of long-range air defence systems and an equal push to the ground forces through tactical battle tanks. On the other hand, Russia has been challenged with logistical issues, weakened military, dependency on the Wagner Group and Iran's drones. Despite that, it aims to establish a strategic military base to attack Ukraine's infrastructure and bring Donetsk under its control.

Second, the battle for Soledar and the involvement of the Wagner group. The Russian Defence Ministry has not claimed the use of Shahed drones in the Kramatorsk attacks. However, the US and the UK intelligence have observed otherwise. Russia's control in the Donbass seems to be gradually fragmenting, accompanied by a need to involve the Wagner Group. The new year attacks in Kramatorsk and quick advances of the mercenary group into Soledar prove Russia's determination



to strengthen its posture, keep its weapons available at the right place (Soledar salt mine), and encircle Donetsk. However, increasing military support to Ukraine and the timing of the ceasefire announcement will further complicate the war strategies. The use of foreign drones, the involvement of the mercenary group, and the lag in striking back provide a glimpse into the growing vulnerability of the Russian military.

Third, strengthening air-defence systems and advancing ground mobility. The West's support to Ukraine has slowly improved since September, from giving air defence missile systems, drone technologies, and intense training. In November, the US and Germany denied Ukraine's request for patriot missiles and advanced ground mobility vehicles to counter Russia's firepower. This changed in January, with the US, France, and Germany agreeing to provide battle tanks. These infantry fighting vehicles provide ground troops the tactical mobility to launch attacks close to the enemy. The Bradley and Marder have been upgraded with chain guns making them more effective in the battleground.

### In perspective

First, advantage for Ukraine. Despite its inability to position its military against Russia's concurrent attacks on its energy grid, Ukraine's military is steadfast on the frontline, recapturing lost territories. The Ukraine military's main challenge ahead would be to counter Russia's forces and push them further into the east of Donetsk.

Second, Russia's continued carpet bombing. Russia's targeted attacks on the energy infrastructure are expected to continue, along with surprise carpet bombing in particular zones to inflict severe damage. After the Christmas ceasefire, Russia's strikes on Ukraine indicate that troop deployment and weapons stocking was reworked. The same can be expected again allows another ceasefire through Turkey's mediation.

Third, new weapon systems to Ukraine. There are several reasons behind the West agreeing to upgrade its military support. The cost factor of the Patriot missiles compared to those used in the HIMARS could be one. Another reason could be the early prediction for Russian aggression coming to an end. The last concern could be the economic impact of heavy military spending. Although the increased military support helped Ukraine's successful counteroffensive, it raised the bar to launch into the Russian-occupied territories. The West's further upgrading to Patriot missiles and infantry vehicles means it is ready to stretch its military expenditure sheet.

## **Israel-Palestine: Itamar Ben Gvir's controversial visit to al Aqsa**

### In the news

On 5 January, Palestinian UN ambassador Riyad Mansour urged the UNSC to take measures against Israel in response to Itamar Ben-Gvir's visit to the al Aqsa mosque compound on 3 January, after which he tweeted: "The Temple Mount is open to all," using the Jewish name for the location. Mansour addressed the UNSC: "What red line does Israel need to cross for the Security Council to finally say, enough is enough?" Meanwhile, Israel's envoy to the UN criticised the UNSC meeting, terming it "pathetic" and "absurd."

On 6 January, the Israeli government approved several retaliatory measures for a Palestinian

attempt to have the International Court of Justice issue a ruling on the long-standing occupation.

The measures include a moratorium on Palestinian construction in the West Bank and the use of Palestinian funds to compensate the families of Israeli soldiers and settlers attacked by Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office statement said that these actions were a "response to the Palestinian Authority's decision to wage political and legal war against the State of Israel." The Palestinian Authority's foreign ministry termed these measures a "flagrant violation" of Israel's obligations as an occupying power and said it was part of the Israeli government's "racist colonial programme" against Palestinians.

On 8 January, Israel revoked the travel permit, allowing Palestinian officials to travel in and out of the West Bank.

On 9 January, Ben-Gvir ordered the removal of Palestinian flags from public locations and justified his decision by stating that displaying the Palestinian flag was a sign of "terrorism." The order came after anti-government demonstrations took place in Tel Aviv, where protesters waved the Palestinian flags.

### Issues at large

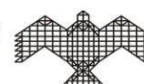
First, the importance of Jerusalem for both. Israel claims Jerusalem as its capital, while Palestinians seek East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the holy compound located in East Jerusalem is a critical site. From 1948 till 1967, Israel was ruling West Jerusalem, and Jordan was ruling East Jerusalem, and the Old City's important holy sites. In 1967, After a conflict with Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and other Arab states, Israel seized and annexed East Jerusalem. The international community does not recognise Israel's sovereignty over it, and majority of the Old City's residents are Palestinians. The Jerusalem Islamic Waqf, governed by Jordan, is in charge of the al-Aqsa mosque, the Dome of the Rock, and the Haram al-Sharif, the third holiest site in Islam. According to a 2014 agreement based on a long-standing understanding and mediated by the then US Secretary of State John Kerry, "Al-Aqsa is for Muslims to pray and for all others to visit." The Jews refer to it as Temple Mount and it is the holiest site in Judaism. Jews and other non-Muslims are permitted to visit the site but are not permitted to worship; Palestinians regard Jewish visits as attempts to disrupt the status quo.

Second, the return of the far-right nationalist party. The ruling far-right coalition consists of religious parties, ultra-nationalist and ultra-orthodox parties, with the exception of Netanyahu's Likud party. A two-state solution is not supported by any of the members of the far-right, nationalist coalition. Ben-Gvir, the head of the Jewish Power Party, sent a message with his visit as a National Security Minister that he intended to support extreme Zionist nationalism and religious Jewish fundamentalism that poses a threat to all prospects for peace.

### In perspective

First, concerns regarding an uprising. Twenty years ago, the then-Israeli opposition minister visited al-Aqsa mosque which led to the Second Intifada. Ben-Gvir's call for changing the status quo of the site is a major cause of concern as tensions could escalate. The Israeli government's policies are expected to negatively impact the West Bank's and Gaza's already precarious political, economic, and security situation.

Second, tensions in the region. The visit by Ben-Gvir provoked a wave of anger in the Muslim world, who harshly denounced the visit. The first official visit by Netanyahu to the UAE has been rescheduled for February. Hamas issued a statement warning that this behaviour will lead to a "big clash." The rivalry is accelerated and potentially destabilising the Middle Eastern region. It may turn into a wider conflict if the Middle Eastern states attempt to get assistance from other state and



non-state actors.

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## Ivory Coast: Mali releases 46 Ivorian soldiers after over five months

### In the news

On 6 January, Mali's president Assimi Goïta pardoned 49 Ivorian soldiers who had been arrested in July 2022 for allegedly being mercenaries. The military government's spokesperson said Goïta's pardon "demonstrates once again his commitment to peace, dialogue, pan-Africanism and the preservation of fraternal and secular relations with regional countries, in particular those between Mali and Ivory Coast." The Mali government also thanked Togo's President Faure Gnassingbe "for his tireless efforts and constant commitment to dialogue and peace in the region"; the government criticised the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) chairman Umaro Sissoco Embaló for his "aggressive position" on the issue.

On 7 January, President Alassane Ouattara received the 46 soldiers at the airport in Abidjan. Ouattara said: "Now that this crisis is behind us, we can resume normal relations with the brother country of Mali."

### Issues at large

First, the 2022 crisis over Mali's arrest of Ivorian soldiers. In July 2022, Mali detained 49 soldiers, including three women, on accusations of arriving in Bamako from Ivory Coast, without permission; Mali also alleged that the soldiers were mercenaries. Ivory Coast disputed Mali's claim and said the soldiers were backing up a UN peacekeeping mission and that Bamako was aware of the same. However, the UN, too, observed "procedural dysfunctions" in the notification sent to Mali and held that "certain measures have not been followed." In September 2022, Mali released the three women on humanitarian grounds. Meanwhile, the ECOWAS threatened Mali with sanctions if the military government failed to come up with a plan by 1 January to release the soldiers. In December, a week before pardoning the soldiers, the Appeals Court of Bamako sentenced the 46 soldiers to 20 years in prison for reportedly undermining state security.

Second, the larger differences between Bamako and Abidjan. Mali maintains that Ivory Coast has been providing asylum to Malian political leaders that Bamako wants, including former president Ibrahim Keita's son and other former ministers. When Ivory Coast was negotiating for the soldiers' release, Goïta hinted at asking for the return of these leaders "as opposed to a one-way solution that consists of acceding to the Ivorian demands without any compensation for Mali." These contentions are part of the larger strained relations between the two countries since August 2020 when Mali witnessed a military coup that overthrew Ibrahim Keita. Ivory Coast has been critical of the coup and the political developments in Mali over the last two years.

Third, Mali's deteriorating regional and international relations. While Togo has been mediating between Mali and other countries, Mali's relationship with its neighbours and the regional body ECOWAS has been rough since 2020. Besides Ivory Coast, France, Germany, and the UK, announced their withdrawal from the UN mission in Mali recently. Further, Mali and France terminated their relations after the latter, which was leading the counter-terrorism operations since 2013, claimed working with Bamako had become unfavourable. In July, Mali also expelled the UN mission spokesperson and suspended new rotations of the peacekeepers.

### In perspective

First, Mali's pardon to the soldier is a welcome move, however, it is unlikely to rekindle friendly relations with the Ivory Coast or the rest of West Africa. With several countries announcing their withdrawal from the peacekeeping mission, Mali will be the hotspot for rising insecurity. Therefore, a lack of regional cooperation will only fuel the situation.

Second, Bamako has been defensive and unwilling to compromise on its decisions. This has resulted in Mali's isolation within West Africa and also from the rest of the world, except from a few powers like Russia.

## **Brazil: Bolsonaro supporters storm the democratic institutions**

### In the news

On 8 January, loyalists of former President Jair Bolsonaro stormed Brazil's Congress, Supreme Court and the Presidential Palace. Around 3,000 protesters vandalised buildings and property, and also set floor fire to a carpet in the Congress building; the sprinkler system was activated and eventually flooded the floor. They looted the building, simultaneously posting videos online recording their actions. The three-hour long attack ended when the police and the military took control. Six hours after the attack, Bolsonaro issued a statement on Twitter saying "...depredations and invasions of public buildings as occurred today, as well as those practised by the left in 2013 and 2017, escape the rule."

On 9 January, Brazilian Justice Minister Flavio Dino said 1,500 people had been detained, 300 of whom have been arrested and will be tried in court. The Supreme Court suspended Brasilia's Governor Ibaneis Rocha for gross failure in maintaining security.

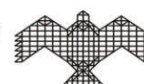
United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres tweeted: "I condemn the assault on Brazil's democratic institutions that took place today. The will of the Brazilian people and democratic institutions must be respected." US President Joe Biden tweeted: "I condemn the assault on democracy and on the peaceful transfer of power in Brazil. Brazil's democratic institutions have our full support and the will of the Brazilian people must not be undermined." German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said, "The violent attacks on democratic institutions are an attack on democracy that cannot be tolerated."

President Lula said: "He (Bolsonaro) spurred attacks on the three powers whenever he could. This is also his responsibility. There is no precedent for what these people have done, and for that, these people must be punished." He issued a federal law in Brasilia until 31 January.

The Brazilian Supreme Court issued an order directing social media platforms to block users from spreading anti-democratic propaganda. Meta, YouTube, and Telegram announced they will remove all content promoting anti-democratic activities in Brazil. This includes videos of the attack and those praising the violent demonstrators. Meta "designated Brazil as a temporary high-risk location" and are removing any such content. YouTube and Telegram issued similar statements saying they are removing violent content from their respective platforms.

### Issues at large

First, Bolsonaro's polarising campaign and subsequent actions. At the start of campaigning for



Brazil's national elections, Jair Bolsonaro had begun speaking about the electoral system being compromised. He sought to undermine people's faith and trust in the electoral process. He sought to divert attention from the failures of his government to fight COVID-19. His speeches were geared towards ranking up religious and social issues, such as LGBTQA+ and women's rights.

Bolsonaro's actions all led to the polarisation of Brazilian society on political lines. When the election results were declared on 30 October 2022, Bolsonaro maintained silence and did not issue any statement about his loss. This added to the conspiracy theories and fake news being spread on social media. Bolsonaro flew to Florida before his term ended and did not attend the inauguration on 1 January, breaking the tradition of handing over the baton to the new president. Finally, on 8 January, this culminated in the violence at Three Powers Square.

Second, Lula's unifying campaign. President Lula and his party, on the other hand, focused on Lula's past record in governance and the bread-and-butter issues being faced by people. He also promised to stop the destruction of the Amazon, which had increased during the Bolsonaro years. He made coalitions with various other groups and reached out to unite as many people as possible. This gave people hope as they saw in him, a hope for a renewed Brazil.

### In perspective

First, the attack on Brazil's institutions and the preceding violence comes as the first challenge in Lula's presidency. He has handled it well and managed to not let Brazil's democratic institutions fall into the hands of the rioters. Brazil's military establishment, too, stood faithfully behind the elected government and did not respond to the calls for a coup by Bolsonaro's supporters. Going ahead, Lula's biggest challenge is to govern over a fractured Brazil, where politics has seeped into the everyday lives of people. He has taken the right decision to take stringent action against the protesters and the former president himself.

Second, the question over Bolsonaro's return. Bolsonaro needs to be brought back and be made answerable for his crimes. He is the sole person responsible for creating such a vicious environment that culminated in the attack on three pillars of Brazil's democratic institutions. This was an act against democratic values and democracy itself, which thankfully has been thwarted by Lula's careful management of the situation.

## **Mexico: Violence in Culiacan triggered by the arrest of cartel leader**

### In the news

On 5 January, security forces captured drug cartel leader Ovidio Guzman in Culiacan, Sinaloa and transferred him to the Altiplano prison. The arrest triggered violence in Culiacan, killing 29 people, 19 cartels members and 10 members of the military personnel. The cartel members reportedly set fire to 250 cars which were used to block roads and tried to take over the city's airport where a civilian plane was caught in the crossfire; casualties were reported.

On 6 January, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador praised the military's success in capturing Guzman and added: "That the presence of elements of the Ministry of Defence, the National Guard, the state police, that is collaborating, will be maintained, and that this protection will be maintained so that there is no damage to the civilian population throughout Sinaloa."



On 8 January, AP News called the operation a “display of muscle” ahead of US President Joe Biden’s visit to Mexico. It also quoted Mexican security analyst Alejandro Hope who said that the arrest was mostly due to pressure from the US. Obrador denied these claims saying: “There is cooperation, and there will continue to be, but the decisions are made as a sovereign, independent government, and these decisions are made in the Security Cabinet.

### Issues at large

First, the drug cartels and violence. Guzman, the son of Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman, belongs to the Sinaloa cartel, one of the most powerful cartels in the world. In 2019, when Guzman was first arrested, the cartel members opened fire using machine guns and burned buses and cars in Culiacan, killing many civilians. This has also been the case whenever a cartel leader is arrested across Mexico. Cartels in Mexico control large territories which form their sphere of influence and base of operation. These cartels have developed good relations with local politicians and security personnel to prevent any investigation and a potential suspension of their activities.

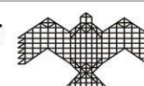
Second, the government response to cartel violence. When Obrador came to power in 2018, he promised to restructure Mexico’s response to drug cartels and cartel violence. He has been critical of prior governments and the use of heavy military assault on drugs which started the turf war in Mexico. Obrador’s government has followed a “do not fight fire with fire” policy and focused on addressing the root causes of such violence and homicide. One of Obrador’s strategies was decriminalising certain drugs such as marijuana to prevent illegal cultivation and sale by cartels in Mexico. This strategy largely failed as Obrador has not been able to tackle drug cartels and Mexico has seen an increase in gang-related violence in recent years. Obrador has also been accused of going soft on cartels due to his frequent visit to Sinaloa and his close interactions with some of the cartel leader’s family.

Third, the role of the US. In 2019, a Manhattan district court sentenced El Chapo to a lifetime detention order for abetting in the opioid crisis that led to the deaths of thousands. The US and Mexican authorities have always collaborated in the arrest of cartel leaders and drug and arms traffickers. In 2021, the two countries signed a new Bicentennial Framework for Security, Public Health and Safe Communities which outlined a new holistic approach to deal with drug trafficking and violence. This was largely unsuccessful due to the lack of bilateral discussions and funds and the US’s kingpin approach to dealing with cartels. The US has always extradited cartel leaders hoping to curtail cartel operations, but the arrest of cartel leaders has always led to an increase in violence and operations.

### In perspective

First, a win for the Obrador administration. After the release of Guzman in 2019, Obrador faced a lot of backlash from the military and the public. With the arrest of Guzman, Obrador gained back the support of the military. The timing of the arrest coincided with the North American Leader’s Summit between Biden, Obrador and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau held on 9 and 10 January; the three leaders discussed illegal drug trafficking was discussed.

Second, no change in the structure and function of the Sinaloa Cartel. When El Chapo was arrested and sentenced to prison there was no change seen in the functioning of the cartel. The US authorities noted an increase in the number of drugs trafficked. Hence Guzman's arrest will not lead to any significant change in the cartel’s operations.



## Also, from around the World

Avishka Ashok, Abigail Fernandez, Rashmi Ramesh, Apoorva Sudhakar, Anu Maria Joseph, Madura Mahesh and Padmashree Anandan

### East and Southeast Asia

#### **China: Workers protests against unfair removal and delay in salary payments**

On 8 January, The Strait Times reported that workers at the Zybio COVID-19 test kit factory protested against the company for not paying their salaries. There were allegations that the company had fired workers who were recruited in the last few weeks. The Agence France-Press (AFP) however could not clarify the location and the timing of the videos. The videos showed brown-and-white buildings which matched the company's facility in Dadukou District Jianqiao Industrial Park.

#### **Taiwan: China conducts military and combat drills around the island**

On 9 January, Taiwan's Defense Ministry condemned China for conducting military combat drills and reported that 57 aircrafts had trespassed into the country's Air Defense Identification Zone. The Eastern Theatre Command of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) announced that it conducted joint combat readiness patrols and combat drills in the sea and the airspace around the Island. The PLA statement said: "The aim was to test joint combat capabilities and resolutely counter the provocative actions of external forces and Taiwan independence separatist forces." China's Taiwan Affairs Office also referred to the drills and said that it was a warning against Taiwan's collusion with the US. The office also claimed that there was an increase in the military collusion between Taiwan and the US.

#### **Philippines: At least 11 people died in heavy rain and landslide**

On 10 January, at least 11 people died in the heavy rains, landslides, and serious flooding across the Philippines. Heavy rain and landslides in disaster-prone areas are expected to continue. The bad weather conditions have been wrecking central and southern islands since December and continue to cause havoc.

#### **Australia: "Once-in-Century" flood**

On 9 January, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese visited Kimberley which is still experiencing the 'once-in-100-year' flood. The flood came as a result of heavy rains that followed cyclone Ellie. This caused major damage the infrastructure, including the breakage of the Fitzroy River Bridge, which delayed the supply of essential products. The Australian Defense Force helped to airlift food and medicine in West Australia. They also evacuated over 100 residents in Fitzroy Crossing, one of the worst affected areas. So far, 280 people have been displaced, 175 of whom have remained in evacuation centres. Complaints against the evacuation centres not being well-equipped are also coming in. Albanese in his recent visit has promised to grant ASD 10,000 for the redevelopment of the flood-affected areas, although the utilisation of that fund is yet to be awaited.

### South Asia

#### **Afghanistan: Clerics and humanitarian agencies call girls' access to education and work**

On 10 January, a delegation of Muslim clerics during their visit to Kabul called on the Taliban to ensure the right to education for every Muslim, particularly the need for girls' access to education in Afghanistan. Following the meeting, the head of the delegation said: "Education is necessary, therefore we call on the Islamic Emirate to pave the ground for the education of women as soon as possible." Similarly, on 9 January, the Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugees Council, Jan Egeland during his visit to Kabul said that without female staff, they cannot work and will not work in Afghanistan. He said: "I am here in Afghanistan to meet Taliban leaders and try to find a way to

get out of the current ban on our female workers, which is paralysing all our humanitarian work in Afghanistan.” Meanwhile, on 7 January, the UN deputy special envoy for Afghanistan, Markus Potzel in a meeting with the Acting Minister of Higher Education, Neda Mohammad Nadim, called for the “urgent lifting of the bans” on women's education and jobs in non-governmental organisations.

### Central Asia, Middle East, and Africa

#### **Armenia: Authorities arrest anti-Russian protesters in the city of Gyumri**

On 8 January, the Armenia police arrested over 60 people near Russia's 102nd Military Base in Armenia's second-largest city, Gyumri. The protesters demanded that the government cut ties with Moscow as the standoff with Azerbaijan worsened over Nagorno-Karabakh and claimed that the Russian peacekeeping forces were colluding with Azerbaijan and Turkey to keep the Lachin Corridor which is the only road linking the region with Armenia blocked. They also called for Armenia's withdrawal from the Collective Security Treaty Organization. The protest was organised by the National-Democratic Axis, a bloc of opposition groups claiming to be a pro-Western political force in Armenia.

#### **Iran: UN Rights Chief statement on executions**

On 10 January, Volker Turk, the UN Human Rights Chief said that the death sentences issued in Iran amount to “state-sanctioned killing”, and is creating fear among the population and erasing the space for dissent. He also said that “the weaponization of criminal procedures to punish people for exercising their basic rights- such as those participating in or organising demonstrations” is unacceptable. On 7 January, Iran hanged two more men for allegedly being involved in the killing of a member of security forces during the course of the protests.

#### **Syria: UNSC extends critical aid to Syria**

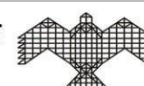
On 10 January, the UN Security Council voted unanimously to extend a critical border crossing between Turkey and northern Syria to transfer aid to the rebel-held area. Syria opposes the aid flow, however, its close ally Russia voted in favour of the UNSC resolution. The UN Secretary-General said that the vote came at a juncture where the “humanitarian needs have reached the highest levels since the start of the conflict in 2011 with people in Syria grappling with a harsh winter and a cholera outbreak.”

#### **Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 56 per cent of under-five deaths, says UN report**

On 10 January, Africanews reported that a latest report by United Nations Inter Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation says that nearly five million children under the age five died in 2021 alongside 2.1 million aged between five and 24. The report also says at least 1.9 million stillborn births are estimated during the same period. Besides, sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 56 per cent of all under-five deaths. The report adds that nearly 59 million children and youth will die by 2030 and nearly 16 million will be lost to stillbirth if proper action is not taken to improve the health services.

#### **Sudan: UN launches second phase of negotiations**

On 9 January, BBC reported that the UN mission in Sudan launched a second phase of negotiations between military and civilian groups on 8 January. The United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (Unitams) said the four-day conference will discuss five major issues in the political framework of the agreement. Civilian and military leaders, civil society groups, academics, private sector representatives and religious leaders are attending the conference



## Europe and the Americas

### **NATO and the EU sign the third joint declaration**

On 10 January, NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen signed the third joint declaration. The aim of the declaration is to boost the "strategic partnership" between the EU and NATO, keeping the 2016 and 2018 declarations as a base. The declaration stated: "We recognize the value of a more capable European defence that contributes positively to our security and is complementary to, and interoperable with, NATO." The discussion focused on addressing the "geostrategic competition, resilience issues, and the protection of critical infrastructures," along with priorities on space and disruptive technologies.

### **Peru: Inquiry opened into the government over the handling of protests**

On 10 January, Peru's attorney general's office announced that it had opened an inquiry into President Dina Boluarte and her cabinet members over the handling of the anti-government protests. This comes as 17 people were killed and 68 people were injured in Juliaca, Puno on 9 January in an anti-government protest. Prime Minister Alberto Otarola announced an overnight curfew in Puno after the protestors cleared the streets.

### **The US: Storm and rainfall inundate California with flash floods**

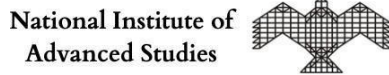
On 9 January, about 90 per cent of California's population was under water due to widespread rains and a 'bomb cyclone' which has been developing around the west coast over the past week. The storms are called "atmospheric rivers" because they are essentially a conveyor belt of concentrated moisture in the atmosphere emerging from the warm waters of the Pacific Ocean. A similar storm unleashed rains, deadly floods, debris flows and hurricane-force winds, particularly in Northern California including the Bay Area, over the weekend. The California state is bracing itself for mudslides and power outages in the upcoming week. Earlier this year, the state witnessed an extreme drought and that reduced the absorption capacity of the sand in the state which has aggravated the impact of flash floods.

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### About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative(IPRI)



The International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI), initiated in 2018 at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), is a part of the Conflict Resolution and Peace Research Programme at the School of Conflict and Security Studies.

IPRI undertakes research on various issues relating to peace with special emphasis on radicalisation, sustainable peace, gender roles in peacebuilding and global protest movements. IPRI researches are published as briefs, reports and commentary.

### About Konrad Adenauer Stiftung



The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as “Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education,” in 1964, the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. KAS cooperates with governmental institutions, political parties and civil society organizations, building strong partnerships along the way. In particular, KAS seeks to intensify political cooperation in the area of development cooperation on the foundations of its objectives and values. Together with the partners, KAS makes a significant contribution to the creation of a global order that empowers every country to determine its own developmental priorities and destiny in an internationally responsible manner.

KAS has organized its program priorities in India into five working areas: Foreign and Security Policy; Economic, Climate, and Energy Policy; Rule of Law; Political Dialogue focused on Social and Political Change; and Media and Youth. The India Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation takes great pride in its cooperation with Indian partner institutions that implement jointly curated projects and programmes.

### About Conflict Weekly



The Conflict Weekly an academic endeavour to bring every Wednesday/Thursday a weekly analysis of the conflict and peace processes in the world; aiming to look at the larger peace picture. It is published by the NIAS-IPRI in collaboration with the KAS India Office.

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