

# Conflict Weekly

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

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(Ukrainian soldiers at the front line close to Bakhmut preparing to launch a rocket-propelled grenade into Russian positions.

Image Source: AP Photo, Libkos)

## Counter-Offensive and Drone Attacks in Ukraine, and Continuing Violence in Manipur



An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

Gender | Environment | Ethnic Violence

External Interventions | Armed Conflicts | Peace Processes



## Ukraine: Counter-offensive, Russia's drone attacks, and NATO's air drills

Padmashree Anandhan

### In the news

On 10 June, Reuters reported on Russia's missile and drone strikes in Odessa and Kyiv, in the northwest region of the Black Sea and in Poltava, a city in central Ukraine. The drone attacks are considered to be the largest conducted by Russia in Kyiv so far.

On 10 June, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced that the counter-offensive was "underway." He stated: "Counter-offensive and defensive actions are taking place in Ukraine, but I will not say in detail what stage they are at."

On 12 June, Ukrainian Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar claimed Ukraine's advances in several villages in the southwest and southeast of the Donetsk region and south-eastern Zaporizhzhia region. Ukraine's general staff stated: "Over the last week in the Bakhmut direction, the Russian invaders suffered significant losses."

On 12 June, NATO allies conducted the largest air drill exercise in its history, "Air Defender," in Germany. The drill involved 10,000 personnel from the allied countries and 250 aircraft. According to a NATO spokesperson: "Air Defender sends a clear message that NATO is ready to defend every inch of Allied territory."

On 13 June, Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that Ukraine's counter-offensive had begun on 4 June and was unsuccessful due to heavy casualties. He stated that due to Ukraine's dependency on the West's weapons, its ability to produce locally had diminished, resulting in heavy losses in its counter-offensive.

### Issues at large

First, Ukraine's long-delayed counter-offensive. There were discussions of Ukraine's counter-offensive in April, with little action until early June. During April and May, there were several announcements from the West in delivering advanced missile systems and tanks, initiating a coalition to deliver fighter jets, and pledging other military support. Despite that, Ukraine could not advance in Bakhmut and did not launch its counter-offensive.

Second, Russia's emphasis on drone attacks. Before Kyiv began its counter-offensive, Russia frequently used drones and missiles to target Ukrainian cities. It is believed that Russia was using drones and missiles to compensate for the troops' low on-ground presence and Moscow's inability to replace its forces with Wagner troops in Bakhmut. Moscow's inability to enforce mobilization within Russia is also a reason for its emphasis on air attacks.

Third, the European and transatlantic support to Ukraine. Compared with Ukraine's November 2022 counter-offensive, in June 2023, the West's support - in terms of quantity and quality - has increased. This can be evidenced by UK's support for Storm Shadow missiles, Germany's and Eastern European countries' Leopard tanks, and multiple military packages declared by the US and the Nordic countries to Ukraine. Besides the direct military support, the NATO countries' joint drills in the North Sea, Germany, including massive personnel and

advanced weapon systems, are seen as an indirect warning to Moscow. Russia's air attacks and the West's direct and indirect support seem to have been important factors in Ukraine's counter-offensive.

### In perspective

Ukraine's counter-offensive aims to make strategic gains. Losing Bakhmut to Russia has placed Ukraine in a disadvantageous position to launch its attacks from the North of Donetsk. This could be a reason why the offensive is concentrated in the southwest and southeast. Ukraine's counter-offensive can pressure Russia from the south to make strategic gains in the north.

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## SPECIAL COMMENTARY

### **India: Violence continues in Manipur**

Bibhu Prasad Routray

#### **Manipur: A brief update**

On 13 June, continuing violence in Manipur hit a new high when nine members of a raiding mob were killed by armed civilian village guards late at night in Imphal East district's Khamenlok village. The death toll from the ethnic violence between the non-tribal Meiteis and the Kuki tribes since 3 May has reached at least 109. Additionally, many have been injured, and over 50,000 have been displaced. A day later, on the evening of 14 June, unidentified people torched the official residence of Nemcha Kipgen, the only female minister in the state cabinet in the capital Imphal.

While Khamenlok, a Kuki village, has been the main battleground for the Kuki militants and the Meiteis, ethnic violence has engulfed at least 11 of the state's 16 districts, which continue to witness sporadic clashes, acts of arson, including the burning of houses. The long-existing schism between the two communities has widened every passing day and has reached a state where it appears completely unbridgeable. Several instances of this trend were visible in the past week.

#### **Efforts towards Peace**

On 9 June, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) formed a 10-member special investigation team (SIT) under a DIG-rank officer to probe six cases related to the Manipur violence referred to it by the state government. On 10 June, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) constituted a 51-member Peace Committee. Headed by the state governor, the Committee is tasked with initiating a dialogue process between the two communities to bring peace to the state.

However, by 12 June, both Meitei and Kuki civil society organizations distanced themselves from these initiatives. Meitei organizations have objected to the 'narco terrorism' of the Kukis, whereas the Kuki organizations have opposed the inclusion of Chief Minister N Biren Singh in the Committee. Further, several members—Meiteis and Kukis—have withdrawn, alleging they have been included in the Committee without their consent. It is unlikely the peace committee will deliver anything substantial. Subsequently, the constitution of the Peace Committee demonstrated the Union government's reluctance to play any significant role in bringing peace to the state, apart from providing relief and rushing in security force



personnel. The MHA primarily wants the BJP-led state government to remain in charge. However, the Chief Minister has lost his credibility among the Kukis. The Kukis and other Meitei political parties consider him biased, making him unsuitable for any initiative to bring order to the state.

The Kuki's clamour for a separate administration continues to grow, inviting calls for retribution from the Meiteis. Nemcha Kipgen, the minister whose official residence was burnt on 14 June, belongs to the ruling BJP party but is among the 10 Kuki Members of the Manipur Legislative Assembly who have raised the demand for a separate administration. In the last few days, hoardings with slogans such as 'Separation is the Solution' and 'Justice precedes Peace' have been erected in the Churachandpur district.

### **Three recent trends impinging on peace in Manipur**

While the above demands have existed for decades in the state, three trends make the present scenario extremely precarious. First, the ethnic polarisation has placed a stark division between the two communities, transforming them from reluctant but peaceful cohabitants to revenge-seeking adversaries. According to reports, the Imphal valley where the Meitei's are dominant, has been cleared of Kuki presence, and the Hills have become extremely dangerous places for the few Meiteis who still live there.

Second, there has been an outright 'ethnicization of politics as well as civil society activities' in the state. Politicians and leaders of community-based organizations have transmuted into self-seeking torchbearers of their own communities' interests, shunning the language of peace and embracing violence and separatism as justifiable means and goals, respectively. Roadblocks set up by women groups to prevent the movement of security forces and tribal groups to stop the supply of essential items from reaching Imphal Valley are examples of this trend. This has further opened up a vast space for the 'local volunteers'—armed men claiming to be defending their communities—and the dormant militant organizations to step in and use violence to gain interests. The expanded presence of security forces, therefore, has limited utility.

Third, since 3 May, free-floating weapons and ammunition either looted from or given away by the state police have made the atmosphere, where violence is the norm, have made the situation even more volatile. Despite the appeal made by the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, during his visit to the state between 29 May and 1 June and the launch of combing operations by the security forces since 4 June, only a quarter of the 4000 missing weapons, looted by the 'local volunteers', have either been surrendered or recovered.

On 13 June, about ten Meitei political parties demanded a separate session of the legislative assembly for a detailed discussion on the ongoing turmoil. However, the fact remains that ethnic violence has to stop completely for any peace-making efforts to begin and succeed. At present, that remains an elusive goal.

## Issues in Peace and Conflict This Week: Regional Roundups

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### East and Southeast Asia

#### **China: Ten warplanes cross the median line in Taiwan Strait**

On 11 June, Taiwan deployed fighters and ships and set up land-based missile systems when ten Chinese warplanes were detected crossing the median line of the Taiwan Strait. In a statement, the Taiwanese Ministry of National Defence said that 24 aircraft, including J-10, J-11, J-16, Su-30 fighters and H-6 bombers, were detected. China had previously stated that these missions were conducted to protect its sovereignty.

#### **China: Training vessel sets out for a friendly tour to the Philippines**

On 9 June, The Strait Times reported that a Chinese training vessel, Qi Jiguang, set out from Brunei to the Philippines for a forty-day tour. The vessel, larger than a destroyer, passed through the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, South China Sea, Gulf of Thailand and West Pacific and will stop in Vietnam and Thailand before reaching Brunei. According to the Chinese state media, Xinhua, the vessel carries 476 navy cadets and officers. The training would focus on navigation, anti-piracy and shooting exercises with lightweight weapons.

#### **South Korea: Seoul summons Chinese Envoy over controversial comments**

On 9 June, The Strait Times reported that the South Korean Foreign Minister, Chang Ho-Jin, summoned Chinese envoy Xing Haiming over his critical comments during his meeting with the opposition, Democratic Party (DP) leader Lee Jae-myung, on 8 June. Xing had stated back then that Seoul was making wrong judgments because of the external influence of the US. He stated: "I can assure you, those who bet on China's defeat will definitely regret it." He criticized Seoul for failing to respect Beijing's core interests, including Taiwan. The South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated: "Vice-minister Chang clearly warned Ambassador Xing... that he will be responsible for all the consequences."

### South Asia

#### **Bangladesh: Rohingya refugees demand swift repatriation**

On 9 June, a large group of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh requested to return to Myanmar due to the poor living conditions and overcrowding in their camps. These camps, located in southeast Bangladesh, comprise the largest refugee settlement globally, housing over a million Rohingyas. On 1 June, the World Food Programme reduced the monthly food provision from USD ten to USD eight per person. It followed a previous reduction from USD 12 to USD ten in March after a decrease in global aid for the refugees. They demand swift repatriation through the UNHCR data cards.

#### **Afghanistan: Mosque explosion kills more than 11**

On 8 June, Al Jazeera reported an explosion near Nabawi Mosque, Faizabad, killing 11 people, including a former Taliban police official, and wounding 30 civilians. The explosion happened during the memorial service of the Taliban's Badakhshan deputy governor, Nisar Ahmed Ahmadi. He was killed in a car bombing, for which the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) armed group claimed responsibility. The former Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, condemned the attack as an act of terrorism against human and Islamic standards. The



Taliban administration carried out raids against the members of the ISIL in response.

### India: Beijing declines visa renewal for Indian journalists

On 12 June, The Hindu reported on Beijing declining the renewal of visas to two Indian journalists. Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Wang Wenbin, stated: "In recent years, Chinese journalists in India have been accorded unfair and discriminatory arrangements. We hope that India will continue to issue visas for Chinese journalists and remove the unreasonable restrictions and create favourable conditions for media exchanges." Earlier, on 2 June, Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi stated: "The Indian side supports foreign journalists in India. At the same time, there should be no deviations from normal journalistic behaviour and activities or the provisions governing journalist visas."

### India: Supreme Court delay intervening in the internet ban in Manipur

On 9 June, a vacation bench of the Supreme Court stated that it did not find any reason to urgently entertain a petition issued on 6 June, challenging the internet ban in Manipur. Advocate Shadan Farasat, appearing for the petitioners, said that the ban has been continuing for over 35 days and is infringing the constitutional right to access the internet. The vacation bench affirmed that the case would be listed before the regular bench after the summer holidays.

### Central Asia, The Middle East, and Africa

#### Yemen: Al-Qaeda attacks a military outpost in Shabwa

On 11 June, Arab News reported that Al-Qaeda militants assaulted a military outpost in the Al-Musenah region of Shabwa. Two Yemeni soldiers were killed, and three others sustained injuries. According to a Yemeni counterterrorism expert, Saeed Obeid Al-Jemhi, the attack's purpose was to demonstrate that the group still possessed significant power and convince those who believed that the organization was losing influence. He added: "The war against Al-Qaeda in Yemen is still in its infancy, and there are exaggerations to persuade outsiders and the region that they have won."

#### Sudan: Attack on Saudi Arabian embassy

On 8 June, BBC reported that the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the armed groups for invading and vandalising its embassy in Khartoum. Saudi Arabia and the US have been involved in peace talks with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) since the clashes erupted in mid-April. The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the kingdom rejects all forms of violence and vandalism against diplomatic mission representations. The US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, visited Saudi Arabia on 7 June where both countries pledged to continue efforts to end the fighting in Sudan.

#### South Sudan: Ethnic fighting causes the death of 13

On 9 June, Al Jazeera reported a clash between two ethnic communities in the camp for displaced people located in Malakal, Upper Nile. The killing of a man from the Shilluk community on 8 June sparked the riots. More than 50,000 people are residing in the camp. UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) spokesperson, Ben Malor, stated that 13 people were reported dead. Furthermore, Malor said that UNMISS and South Sudan's army have increased security around the camp. Violence has been prominent in these areas despite the peace deal in 2018.

### Democratic Republic of Congo: More than 45 people killed in a displacement camp

On 12 June, Al Jazeera reported a coalition of militia groups called the Cooperative for the Development of the Congo (CODECO) killing more than 45 displaced people at the Lala displacement camp in the Djugu region. The UN Peacekeeping mission stated: "This attack constitutes a serious violation of international law and wishes to recall that deliberate attacks against civilian populations can constitute war crimes." Additionally, the mission extended its condolences to the victims' families.

### Europe and the Americas

#### Colombia: ELN and the government agree to a six-month truce

On 9 June, it was agreed that a six-month ceasefire would be put into effect on 3 August following an agreement between Colombia and the National Liberation Army (ELN), the country's largest guerrilla group. Almost six decades of regional armed warfare in Colombia have wreaked havoc, killing at least 450,664 people and forcing millions to flee their homes. The truce was finalised after six months of private peace negotiations held in Cuba, Mexico, and Venezuela. Both parties agreed to have talks in Venezuela in August. The guarantors of the peace negotiations include Cuba, Mexico, Norway, Venezuela, the United Nations, and the Colombian Catholic Church. The agreement differs from the 2016 peace agreement between the government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), which was dismantled in 2017.

#### The US: First climate action lawsuit to go to trial

On 12 June, a trial for *Held vs State of Montana*, the nation's first youth-driven constitutional climate lawsuit, was held. The claim made by 16 plaintiffs is that their right to a clean and healthy environment is violated by Montana's fossil fuel-based energy system. Professor of Natural resources and Environmental law at the University of Montana, Michelle Bryan, stated that this would mark the first time that both youngsters and scientists have testified on the witness stand on the effects of climate change and the role that the government can play in mitigating it.

### About the authors

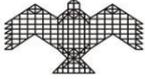
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### About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative(IPRI)

National Institute of  
Advanced Studies



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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