

Conflict Weekly

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

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(Ukrainian soldiers preparing to launch a drone at Russian fronts near Bakhmut.
Image Source: LIBKOS/AP Photo)

The Russia-Ukraine Drone Warfare, Violence in Kosovo, and a Separatists' Crisis in Cameroon

IPRI REPORT REVIEW

Hunger Hotspots: Five Takeaways of FAO-WFP report on food insecurity



An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

Gender | Environment | Ethnic Violence

External Interventions | Armed Conflicts | Peace Processes



Russia and Ukraine: A New Drone Warfare

Padmashree Anandhan

In the news

On 28 May, The Guardian reported on the “biggest drone attack” launched by Russia on Kyiv. The Ukrainian military confirmed countering 52 out of 54 Shahed drones. It reported Russia to have used the eastern coast of the Azov Sea using unconventional routes for importing drones from Iran. Kyiv's military administration head, Serhiy Popko, stated: “The attack was carried out in several waves, and the air alert lasted more than five hours.”

On 29 May, RT reported on the Russian Ministry of Defence’s claim of launching “multiple high accuracies strikes” on Ukrainian military “airfields” during 28-29 May. According to the report, Ukraine's command posts, ammunition storage, and aircraft were attacked in the frontline across the district of Luhansk, Donetsk, and Kharkiv.

On 30 May, several drone attacks were reported in Moscow. According to the Russian Ministry of Defence, eight drones hit Moscow. As per the report from Politico, the attacks were particularly launched in the western part of the city, in which predominantly the Russian elite community resides. According to one of the residents in the area, the attacks were “shocking and confusing.”

On 31 May, The New York Times reported: “The dueling strikes reflected the dialed-up tension and shifting priorities ahead of Ukraine's expected counteroffensive. Ukraine has increasingly been reaching far into Russia-held territory, while Moscow has been adjusting its tactics in an effort to inflict significant damage on Kyiv.” According to reports, the US is still collecting information on the Moscow attacks and denied supporting any strikes inside Ukraine.

Issues at large

First, the drone warfare in the Ukraine war theatre. Since the beginning of the war, drone attacks into Russian territory and Ukraine's West were rather sporadic. After 2023, the intensity gradually increased. This can be seen from the drone attacks in the airfields of the Ryazan and Saratov districts, which took place in December 2022, the Belgorod attacks (three to seven kilometres from the Ukraine border) that lasted for two days, and lastly in Moscow. Inside Ukraine, the attacks concentrated in the Donbas region have now converted into recurring attacks in the West, especially Kyiv and Lviv.

Second, the Bakhmut trigger. Despite the Bakhmut battle indicating strategic significance, it began to be perceived as a symbol of pride by Ukraine and Russia. It was to showcase who could fight long and still win the battle. The timing of the drone attacks can be equated with the Russian victory claims over the Bakhmut battle, as Russia despises Ukraine's ability to hold control.

Third, Ukraine's repeated demand to augment its airpower. Ukraine's demand for modern aviation and advanced air defence systems has been long waitlisted due to the concerns of the escalation of war across. The Council of Europe meeting in May was a breakthrough when the UK and Netherlands formed a coalition to train Ukrainian soldiers on the operation of fighter jets. Denmark and Portugal agreed to join the coalition, followed by the US agreeing

to support Ukraine with fighter jets upon training. In response, Russia has criticized the move, stating that despite such support, Ukraine lacks a conducive environment and enough maintenance personnel for fighter jet training. The larger strategy behind the surprise call to help Ukraine attain the capability remains unclear, while Ukraine's air defence is on track for a massive upgrade.

Fourth, the diplomatic offensive of Zelensky. The US, NATO, and the EU continue to support Ukraine by means of weapons, economic, and humanitarian aid, but it has never been responsive to all the demands claimed by it. Within the framework of the Arab League as well as on the sidelines of the recent G7 summit, allowed Ukraine to reach out to other international actors. Zelensky used it to gain diplomatic support from Japan, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia. South Korea agreeing to send artillery shells and Japan agreeing to humanitarian aid has helped expand its diplomatic support.

In perspective

First, a possible escalation in two areas. At the ground level, the attack was concentrated in Donbas and Bakhmut. Since Russia's victory claim on Bakhmut, the attacks have expanded to further regions in the East of Russia and West of Ukraine, creating a risk for war escalation. The gap in Ukraine's air defence systems compared to Russia can be reduced through the fighter jet coalition. Through this initiative, Ukraine will benefit from its skilled air force and opens a possibility to receive fighter jet which has been long denied. While the coalition adds to escalation in air defence, Russia's deployment of tactical nuclear weapons increases the risk of nuclear escalation from Belarus.



Violence in Kosovo: Dangers of Escalation

Rishika Yadav

In the news

On 30 May, NATO's Joint Force Command Naples announced the deployment of reserve troops to reinforce the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), a peacekeeping force in Kosovo. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg confirmed the deployment of 700 soldiers following unrest and the injury of 30 KFOR peacekeepers on 29 May. US Commander of the Allied Joint Force Command Naples, Admiral Stuart B Munsch, emphasized the need for enhanced capabilities to maintain security according to the UN Security Council mandate. He stated: "An additional reserve battalion would also increase readiness for possible deployment and stop the unrest." The violence resulted in injuries to both protesters and KFOR soldiers. US Senator Chris Murphy urged an immediate end to the provocation.

On 27 May, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic placed the military on high alert and positioned units near the Kosovo border following clashes between the police and Kosovo's Serb minority. Violent confrontations erupted when residents gathered outside government buildings in the Serb-majority town of Zvecan. The incident took place after the police attempted to install a new ethnic Albanian mayor in Zvecan. The Chief of Staff of Kosovo's President, Vjosa Osmani, Blerim Vela, accused "illegal and criminal structures" in Serbia of escalating tensions.

Issues at large

First, the dispute with Kosovo over its independence and sovereignty. The Serbs living in the northern region of Kosovo, who identify with Belgrade as their capital, do not accept Kosovo's declaration of independence. Additionally, they are reluctant to work with the newly-elected ethnic Albanian mayor and further intended to create an association of majority-Serb municipalities operating with greater autonomy. Concerns were also raised by the UK, France, Italy, Germany and the US about Serbia's heightened readiness of its armed forces at the border.

Second, the discontent with the government in Kosovo. The Serb minority in Kosovo boycotted the April local elections in four municipalities in the north. The overall turnout was only at 3.47 per cent of voting. Earlier, in December 2022, a confrontation arised over license plates in northern Kosovo. Ethnic Serbs in the northern Kosovo's municipalities of Zvecan do not recognize Kosovo's independence, causing residents in Northern Kosovo to reject Kosovan vehicle lincense plates.

Meanwhile, in Serbia, protests and boycotts against Vucic's rule have been met with repression and intimidation. On 27 May, following these events, Vucic announced his resignation as a party leader and emphasized his role as President of all citizens.

Third, the setback to the West. The West has been attempting to resolve the conflict for years, but progress has been slow. Serbia and Kosovo have made only small advances since committing in 2013 to the EU-sponsored Belgrade-Pristina dialogue in 2013. The UK, France, Italy, Germany, and the US have jointly criticized Kosovo's decision to forcefully access municipal buildings in northern Kosovo. Germany and France have prioritized resolving the problems between Serbia and Kosovo in 2023. The proposed bilateral

agreement is aimed at mutual recognition between the two states and emphasizes fostering good neighbourly ties. Serbian President Vučić, however, opposes the proposal over the fear that it would serve as an acknowledgment of Kosovo's independence.

In perspective

Serbia and Kosovo have been unable to agree on major issues. The Serbian community demands the establishment of a Serbian municipality association, while ethnic Albanians fear it could lead to a pro-Serbian state. The conflict has led to tensions between the two sides and has the potential to escalate into violence.



Cameroon: Anglophone, Francophone and a Separatist Insurgency

Jerry Franklin

In the news

On 24 May, separatists in Cameroon's Northwest region kidnapped around 30 women in Big Babanki, a village near the Nigerian border. According to a BBC News Africa report, the women were abducted for allegedly protesting against a curfew and taxes imposed by the separatists group, Ambazonia Defence Forces. The separatists regard the region as an independent state, calling it Ambazonia. AP news quoted the commander-in-chief of the separatist group, Ambazonia Defence Forces, Capo Daniel, that the women were being punished for “allowing themselves to be manipulated” by Cameroon's government. The Cameroonian military reported that they deployed troops to free the women.

Issues at large

First, long-standing clashes between Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians. The difference dates back to colonial rule when the Northwest and Southwest regions were under British control while the other areas were under French control. Until now, the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon are dominated by the English-speaking population whereas the French-speaking population dominates the rest of the country. The Francophone population constitutes the majority. The Anglophone crisis dates back to 2016 when the Francophone-dominated government repressed peaceful rallies and strikes demanding the protection of English-language educational and judicial systems in the Northwestern and Southwestern regions of Cameroon. The government's harsh response to the protests resulted in calls for secession and the rise of extremist groups that used violence and intimidation, intensifying the political crisis.

Second, the separatist insurgency. The historical marginalization led to calls for separatist movements. Many Anglophone separatist groups, including the Ambazonia Defense Forces, Ambazonia Self-Defense Council, and African People's Liberation Movement, comprise nearly 4,000 members supported by Cameroon's Anglophone diaspora. These groups seek independence for the Northwestern and Southwestern regions. Armed separatists have become increasingly violent, killing, kidnapping, and terrorizing populations while steadily asserting control over large parts of the Anglophone regions. On 1 May, at least 15 Anglophone separatists attacked a military post in the village of Matoukee. The rebels killed at least six people, including five soldiers and one civilian, and wounded several others.

Third, increasing violence and violations. The conflict between the government forces and armed separatist fighters have killed more than 6,000 people. The UN has been denouncing the government forces for committing “unlawful killings and widespread sexual and gender-based violence, burning Anglophone villages, and carrying out arbitrary detention, torture, and ill-treatment.” The separatists enforced a boycott on education that deprived children of their fundamental right to education. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that at least 628,000 people have been internally displaced.

Fourth, the inability of the government to resolve the issue. The government of Cameroon continues to deny the severity of the crisis and has not taken any meaningful action. It granted a special status to the Northwest and Southwest regions in 2019, making the regional councils regional assemblies. However, the move failed to resolve the conflict as the government pushed the changes without consulting Anglophone leaders and separatists.

In perspective

Anglophone grievances run deep and have remained unaddressed for a long time. According to the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, the current crisis, which began as a political dispute, has evolved into a “multifaceted security crisis and humanitarian catastrophe.” The reason for the prolonged crisis is the degenerated armed separatist groups, and an increasingly disorganized and competing collection of groups, making the possible ways to peace highly challenging. After the special status provided by the government to the northwestern and southwestern regions to resolve the crisis remained ineffective, it is evident that any efforts or negotiations to sustain it should be subjected to the popular will.



IPRI REPORT REVIEW

Hunger Hotspots:

Five Takeaways of FAO-WFP report on food insecurity

Varsha K and Nithyashree RB

On 29 May 2023, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) published a report titled “Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food Insecurity,” June-November 2023 outlook. According to the report, acute food insecurity will likely deteriorate in 18 hunger hotspots comprising 22 countries in six regions. The countries are Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Myanmar (Asia and the Pacific); Haiti, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua (Latin America and the Caribbean); Lebanon, Syria and Yemen (Middle East); Central African Republic, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Mali (West Africa and the Sahel); Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan (East Africa); Democratic Republic of Congo and Malawi (Southern Africa); and Sudan (North Africa).

According to the report, the hotspots of the highest concern are Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen, Haiti, Sudan, Burkina Faso, and Mali. Hotspots of very high concern are the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Pakistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Myanmar.

The following are five takeaways.

1. Conflict is a primary driver of acute food insecurity

Asia and the Pacific: The duel between donor governments and de-facto authorities and social constraints in Afghanistan make it difficult to provide humanitarian aid to the vulnerable sections of the society. In Pakistan, acute food insecurity is likely to increase because of upcoming elections (October 2023), which can induce more political tensions and civil unrest. The dominating armed forces and further expansion of martial law in Myanmar resulted in movement restrictions, casualties and new displacement. In March 2023, around 5.33 million people were displaced.

Latin America and the Caribbean: In Haiti, the prevailing threat of armed forces associated with violence disrupts the market supplies, which affects agriculture activities. This eventually led to food insecurity in the region.

Africa: 12 African countries have conflict as a primary driver of acute food insecurity. Malawi was the exception. The presence of non-state armed groups in countries including Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo made food prices soar. Providing humanitarian assistance and aid to conflict-prone areas is also challenging. The conflicts have triggered internal displacement; 3.1 million people have been internally displaced in northern Nigeria and 3.95 million in the Democratic Republic of Congo as of February 2023. Two million will be internally displaced in Northeastern Burkina Faso and Northern Mali by the end of 2023.

Internal communal violence in South Sudan has displaced around 2.23 million as of December 2022. In Sudan, the conflict began in April and has displaced 730,000 civilians as of 5 May 2023. The displacement has led to a delay in agricultural activities. The regions

which are under the control of non-state armed groups' restrains maet activities.

2. Economic crisis leads to a spike in food prices

Asia and the Pacific: The reduction of humanitarian funds and currency appreciation in Afghanistan restricts imports, and food inflation remains inaccessible to vulnerable sections. The shortage of foreign reserves in both Pakistan and Myanmar diminishes the ability to import essentials. Pakistan is expected to repay USD 77.5 billion between April 2023- June 2026, which burdens the economy.

Latin America and the Caribbean: The impact of Covid-19 and the Ukraine war on Haiti and Central America threaten agricultural livelihoods. The report states that pre-existing food insecurity will likely increase in Latin America in the second half of this year.

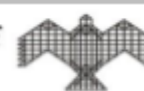
Africa: Currency depreciation, fuel shortages, a deteriorating economy and a lack of foreign investment and a lack of currency exacerbate the economic crisis, which leads to hikes in food prices, limiting the purchasing power of the people. The report says that the economic crisis will prolong in Yemen due to political instability and insufficient external revenues which in turn will lead to the rise of food prices. In Sudan, where acquiring basic services is difficult, the strain in markets and supply chains will increase the price of commodities by 40 per cent in 2023.

3. Floods and droughts exacerbate the food crisis

Asia and the Pacific: In Afghanistan, the drought conditions are likely to increase and could lead to further wheat deficits. The recent locust outbreak in Morocco severely affects food supply chains increasing food insecurity in the region. The 2022 floods in Pakistan and the dramatic scope of cyclone Mocha in Myanmar and Bangladesh (North Rakhine) drastically impacted lives and livelihoods, causing damages amounting to USD 30 billion in the agriculture sector in Islamabad alone. The effects are likely to continue in the upcoming months affecting food production.

Latin America and the Caribbean: Haiti is likely to experience average to slightly above-average hurricanes in the second half of this year, which could result in extensive flooding and crop damage. Meanwhile, increasing El-Niño in Central America is estimated to lead to dry conditions, diminishing food reserves and increasing the market dependency for 1.9 million farmers. Further, flood-prone areas are likely to experience a spike in food prices because of changing rainfall patterns.

Africa: In drought-prone areas of the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, the loss of livelihood, livestock, and crops are prevalent. In Ethiopia, the improved rate of rain did not contribute much to crop production. In Kenya, a three-year-long drought has amounted to a humanitarian crisis with poor harvests and acute malnutrition. The report forecasts that some areas in Kenya would be subjected to flash floods, further negatively impacting crop production. Somalia has faced six consecutive below-average rain seasons, which lead to 43,000 deaths in 2022, in which 2.8 million livestock died, and 1.3 million people were displaced. Not only in Malawi, also in Madagascar and Mozambique, Cyclone Freddy killed 1.4 million livestock in March of this year. The report predicts that the Lake Victoria basin, western areas in Nigeria, southern and central Mali, and Sahelian regions of Burkina Faso will flood in the rainy season in 2023.



4. The statistics of acute food insecurity and malnutrition rate

Asia and the Pacific: In Afghanistan, approximately 18.1 million people are predicted to face acute food insecurity, and over 11.7 million children and pregnant women are malnourished between November 2022-April 2023. This shows the 10 per cent increase in Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) in the region. In Myanmar, 2.2 million children and women are acutely malnourished in 2023. Pakistan's condition is likely to deteriorate in the upcoming months, which affects more than 43 per cent of its population.

Latin America and the Caribbean: In Haiti, around 6.7 million people are likely to face acute food insecurity during March-June 2023 and over 2.59 million children are in need of nutrition assistance. The rural poverty rate in Central America is likely to increase by at least 50 per cent due to dry conditions.

Africa: In West Africa and the Sahel-32.4 million, in East Africa-39.9 million, in Southern Africa-28.3 million and in Northeast and Northern Africa- 2.3 million people are expected to face acute food insecurity. The report also provides statistics on how many people are expected to undergo malnutrition. In West Africa and the Sahel-4.5 million, in the East Africa-15.7 million, Southern Africa-5.4 million, and in Northeast and Northern Africa-8.9 million of women and children are expected to be malnourished.

5. The anticipatory and emergency responses to face the crisis

All the countries mentioned include providing subsidies for small gardening packages containing small (drought-tolerant) seeds for vegetable cultivation and ruminants to farmers, and locust-control operations. Expanding market and price-monitoring systems in high-risk areas. Installing early warning information systems in flood-prone areas.

Issues in Peace and Conflict This Week: Regional Roundups

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East and Southeast Asia

China: Pentagon releases video of aggressive Chinese jet manoeuvre

On 30 May, the US military accused the Chinese air force of executing an "unnecessarily aggressive manoeuvre" during the interception of a US spy plane in the international air space over the South China Sea. The video released by the Pentagon captures the moment when a Chinese fighter jet approached a distance of 121 metres to the US Air Force RC-135 surveillance plane in the South China Sea causing the US plane to pass through the turbulence created by the Chinese jet. The US Indo-Pacific Command stated: "The RC-135 was conducting routine operations in the international airspace." China's military responded by claiming that the US spy plane had "deliberately intruded" into their training area, objecting to the US's accusation of aggressive behaviour.

Taiwan: Chinese aircraft carrier sails through Taiwan Strait

On 27 May, the Taiwanese Ministry of National Defence reported that the Chinese aircraft carrier Shandong sailed through the Taiwan Strait accompanied by two ships. The Shandong, commissioned in 2019, followed the median line of the strait, an unofficial boundary between the two sides while moving in a northerly direction. Taiwan's military closely monitored the group and responded using their ships and aircraft. The Chinese Ministry of National Defence has not responded to the Taiwanese statement yet. The Taiwanese Ministry of National Defence also reported that eight Chinese fighter jets had crossed the strait's median line within the day of 27 May.

North Korea: Satellite launch ends in failure

On 31 May, The Strait Times quoted Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), the North Korean state media, that North Korea's satellite launch failed, with the rocket and payload falling into the sea. According to KCNA, the launch of the rocket, "Chollima-1," failed due to instability in its engine and fuel system. The incident triggered emergency alerts and evacuation warnings in parts of South Korea and Japan but no danger or damage was reported. The Seoul military initiated a salvage operation to recover parts of the space launch vehicle after sharing images of a cylindrical object floating in the sea. The US, Japan and South Korea strongly condemned the launch. North Korea's National Aerospace Development Administration (NADA) stated that it will investigate the technical failures and aim for a second launch after addressing the defects.

Philippines: To conduct joint-maritime drills

On 29 May, Nikkei Asia reported that in a display of increased strategic cooperation against China's assertive actions in the South China Sea, the coast guards of the Philippines, the US and Japan are set to hold their first-ever joint maritime exercises from 1 to 7 June. The drills will involve around 400 members of the military, for law enforcement exercises, search and rescue operations and communication exercises. The Philippine coast guard clarified that the exercises are unrelated to the ongoing tensions in the West Philippine Sea. The joint drills come after aggressive tactics by Chinese vessels in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.



South Asia

Pakistan: Pakistani American community organizes Capitol Hill meeting to address the political crisis

On 29 May, the Dawn reported that the Pakistani American community is organizing a bipartisan meeting in June to address the deteriorating political situation in Pakistan. The purpose of the meeting is to raise awareness about the situation and push for action at the highest levels of government. Dr. Asif Mahmood, a California Democrat, is spearheading the effort with the support of the lawmakers Brad Sherman and Jim Costa. They have also drafted letters to the Secretary of State Antony Blinken and plan to send another letter signed by prominent US Senators.

India: Union Home Minister appeals for 15-day peace in Manipur

On 29, Union Home Minister Amit Shah began his three-day visit to Manipur. He appealed for a 15-day ceasefire period in Manipur during his meeting with the Kuki civil society groups in the Churhandpur district. The Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum's (ITLF) General Secretary, Muan Tombing, said that the union government is likely to announce a judicial inquiry commission headed by a retired Supreme Court judge to investigate the violence. Separate teams will visit the cities of Imphal and Churhandpur to assess the ground situation. In a meeting held between Shah and the State's Council of Ministers, decisions were taken to give compensation to the next of kin of each person killed during the violence. The home minister also met members of various civil society groups and women leaders from the Meitei community in Imphal and Kuki-Zo groups in Churhandpur. He stated: "They expressed their commitment to peace and assured that they would go together to contribute to paving the way to restore normalcy in Manipur."

Nepal: Government sends a diplomatic note as a response to the US religious freedom report

On 15 May, the US published the "Report on International Religious Freedom," calling out Russia, China, Iran, Afghanistan and India for religious freedom violations. On 27 May, in the meeting of the House of Representatives, Prime Minister Renu Dahal said that the government had sent a diplomatic note to the US, responding to its latest religious freedom report. The report alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the ruling party in India, has been providing funds to politicians from major parties in Nepal, such as the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), to speak in favour of a Hindu statehood.

Bhutan: 12th Expert Group Meeting held with China

On 27 May, Kuensel Online reported that the 12th Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on the Bhutan-China boundary issue was held in Thimphu from 24 to 25 May. In the meeting, the two countries reviewed the positive consensus reached in the previous meeting and held discussions to take forward the implementation of the Three-Step Roadmap, which was signed in October 2021 to expedite the Bhutan-China boundary negotiations. They also emphasized increasing the frequency of their meetings.

Bangladesh: Growing Chinese efforts in Rohingya repatriation

On 30 May, The Daily Star reported that China is appearing to be active in turning the Rohingya repatriation into a reality. On 27 May, during the Bangladesh-China Foreign Office Consultation (FOC), the Chinese Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sun Weidong, stated that an early repatriation would benefit Bangladesh, Myanmar, and the entire region. Recently, on 5 May, a 20-member Rohingya delegation visited a model village in Rakhine at the request of the government of Myanmar.

Myanmar: Around 30 junta forces killed in resistance attacks

On 29 May, the Irrawaddy reported that at least 30 junta forces were killed in clashes between the People's Defense Forces (PDFs) and Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs) on one side and the junta forces on the other in the past three days. The attacks were reported in the Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay regions and the state of Karen. Further, according to the Black Wolf Army, at least two regime soldiers were killed in a drone attack targeting the school in the Bwet village near the Yangon region .

Central Asia, The Middle East, and Africa

Palestine: Israeli forces attack Qusaya, a Lebanese town

On 31 May, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC) official, Anwar Raja, alleged that Israeli forces attacked the Lebanese town of Qusaya, near the Syrian border, where five Palestinians were killed. However, Israel did not make an official statement on the attack. The Israeli forces' near-nightly raids have been continuing resulting in multiple arrests.

Iran: Three killed in clashes with Afghanistan over water rights

On 27 May, three people, including two Iranian border guards and one Taliban fighter were killed in an ongoing clash between Iran and Afghanistan over a water rights dispute. Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) news agency later said that two Iranian civilians were injured. The clashes came against the backdrop of Iran accusing the Taliban of violating a 1973 treaty by blocking the water flow from the river Helmand to Iran's eastern regions. However, the Taliban has denied the allegations. The Taliban Ministry of Defence spokesperson Enayatullah Khwarazmi stated: "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan considers dialogue and negotiation to be a reasonable way for any problem. Making excuses for war and negative actions is not in the interest of any of the parties." Meanwhile, Iran accuses Taliban forces of starting the fight by shooting first.

Mali: The US sanctions the head of the Wagner Group

On 26 May, the US Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) imposed sanctions on the head of Wagner Group, Ivan Aleksandrovich Maslov, for supporting Russia's war against Ukraine. The US accused the Wagner Group of trying to exploit the abundance of arms in Mali. The Treasury Department imposed sanctions by accusing Maslov of acquiring military equipment for the war in Ukraine through the operations of the Wagner Group in Mali. The US Treasury Department stated: "The Wagner Group's presence on the African continent is a destabilizing force for any country that allows for the deployment of the group's resources into their sovereign territory."

Sudan: Clashes continue despite the extension of the ceasefire

On 30 May, Al Jazeera reported that the intense clashes continued on the outskirts of Khartoum after military factions agreed to extend the ceasefire for an additional five days. The residents reported intense fighting in Khartoum, Omdurman, and Khartoum North hours before the ceasefire extension was signed and resumed on the outskirts of Khartoum. Army leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan stated that the army had agreed to the ceasefire extension to ease citizens' access to service. Additionally, he stated: "The army hasn't used its full deadly power, but it will be forced to do so if the enemy does not obey or listen to the voice of reason."



Europe and the Americas

France expresses concerns over Iran's ballistic missile test; Ukraine sanctions Tehran

On 25 May, the French Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Anne-Claire Legendre, said Iran's test-fire of ballistic missiles concerns its nuclear programme. The comment comes as a response to Iran's test firing of a 2000 kilometres range ballistic missile on 25 May. She accused Iran of violating the UN Security Council's 2231 resolution which limits Iran from pursuing "any activity" relating to ballistic missiles with nuclear capability. Legendre stated: "Iran's activities pose serious and increased non-proliferation risks without any credible civilian justification." On 28 May, President Volodymyr Zelensky introduced a bill to sanction Iran for 50 years in response to Tehran's weapon supplies to Moscow. According to a statement from Zelensky's Chief of Staff, the bill would impose trade and technology-related as well as financial sanctions against Iran and its citizens. It would also stop the transit of Iranian goods through Ukraine and the use of its air space.

Netherlands: 1579 arrested in a protest organized by Extinction Rebellion

On 27 May, BBC reported that about 1579 climate protesters heeding a call by the Extinction rebellion, a non-partisan climate action group, were arrested by police for blocking the A12, a major motorway in the Hague. The central demand was an end to fossil fuel subsidies. According to the police, most protesters were released except 40 people, who would be prosecuted. The Extinction Rebellion accused the police of using water cannons; however, the police refuted the claim by saying that the protestors were allowed to move before firing water cannons. It is the seventh time the Extinction Rebellion protestors are blocking the A12, which is prohibited for protests under the new rules by the Hague city government.

Sweden: Russian spy whale spotted in Hunnbostrand

On 28 May, a beluga whale, accused of espionage, was spotted in Hunnbostrand in western Sweden. In 2019, the whale was found wearing a camera harness which had "Equipment St Petersburg" printed on a tag on the camera. The beluga whale was named Hvaldimir by the Norwegians. According to the Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries, the whale escaped from a Russian training facility. The directorate added that it will go towards the ships as it was accustomed to the company of humans.

Ukraine: Russia and Ukraine neglect to protect the Zaporizhzhia plant, says IAEA Director General

On 30 May, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, expressed his concerns over the protection of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant by Russia and Ukraine. Grossi urged both Ukraine and Russia to adhere to the following principles. No attack on or from the plant, and no heavy weapons, artillery systems and munitions, tanks and military personnel should be harboured in the plant. He also announced that off-site power will be provided for the plant. According to the Russian Ambassador to the UN, Vasily Alekseyevich Nebenzya, Russia is following the same. The Ukrainian Ambassador to the UN, Sergiy Olehovych Kyslytsya, called for the "demilitarization and deoccupation" of the power plant.

Russia: No lectures on nuclear weapon deployment, Russia to the United States

On 25 May, Russia dismissed criticism by US President Joe Biden over Moscow's deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus. Russia has been pushing ahead with the first deployment of tactical weapons outside its borders since 1991. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko stated that the arms were already on the move. Biden had an

“extremely negative” reaction to reports that Russia had moved ahead with weapon deployment in Belarus. Russia's embassy in the US called the US criticism of Moscow's deployment hypocritical. It also stated that the US had maintained a large arsenal of nuclear weapons in Europe for decades. Russia's president Putin has warned that Russia will use all means to defend itself and stated that the US has hundred B61 tactical nuclear weapons deployed in Europe.

El Salvador: Former President Mauricio Funes given a 14-year prison term

On 29 May, the judge sentenced former El Salvador President Mauricio Funes to 14 years in prison for negotiating with gangs in his administration from 2009 to 2014. His former Security Minister, David Mungua Payés, was also sentenced to 18 years for his involvement in the negotiations. The Attorney General's Office (FGR) stated: “Former officials allowed the gangs to strengthen themselves economically and, in the territory, in exchange for reducing the homicide rate between 2011 and 2013, to benefit the government in power and favour it in the elections.” Former President Mauricio Funes sought refuge in Nicaragua and was arrested for illicit enrichment, embezzlement, illegal negotiations, and influence peddling.

Canada: A new wildfire prompts a call for evacuation in Nova Scotia

On 30 May, Canadian emergency officials issued a mandatory evacuation order in parts of Bedford, Nova Scotia, due to a wildfire and the potential for a leak of Ammonia. A state of local emergency was declared in Halifax, Nova Scotia, after the wildfire caused evacuations and power outages, impacting 18,000 people. Forest fires led to the evacuations of about 400 homes in New Brunswick and Alberta.

The US: Nine people were injured in a shooting on Memorial Day in Florida

On 29 May, on Memorial Day, six adults and three children were injured when gunfire erupted at a beachside promenade in Hollywood, Florida. Yanet Obarrio Sanchez, a spokesperson for the Memorial Healthcare System, stated that the victims were in a stable condition. Overall, 20 mass shootings were reported across the US on Memorial Day. Meanwhile, the police arrested an individual responsible for the shooting but have been looking for more suspects. So far this year, there have been more than 260 mass shootings in the US.

About the authors

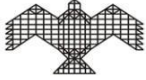
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About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative(IPRI)

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.

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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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