

Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

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Protests return to Thailand, Taliban gains more in Afghanistan, Pandemic action triggers protests in Europe, and new Climate Change report warns Code-Red

Aparupa Bhattacharjee, Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Joeana Cera Matthews and Rashmi BR



Protests revive in Thailand, triggered by government's inability to handle the pandemic and its impact on the economy (Image Source: Gemunu Amarasinghe/Associated Press/NYT)

Thailand: Protests return to the streets, this time triggered by the pandemic

[In the news](#)

On 7 August, thousands of anti-government protesters clashed with the police in Bangkok. They were rallying against the government's failure to handle Covid-19 outbreaks and its impact on the economy. Some protesters were marching, and others formed a convoy of bikes

and cars towards the Government House-the office of the prime minister, Prayuth Chan-ocha and other leaders, demanding their resignation.

The police fired tear gas, water cannon and rubber bullets to disperse protesters and to stop them to reach their destination. The protesters also retaliated with violence and set two police booths on fire. The Deputy Head of Bangkok Police stated that nine police officers were injured but was unclear about the number of protesters injured.

Issues at large

First, Thailand's recent protests and its long history. Since 2019, there have been a series of protests. The protests started in February, after the unfair abolition of the opposition party. The protests largely depicted the youth anger against the current government and the monarch. Since the establishment of the constitutional monarchy in 1932, there have been 12 successful and seven attempted coups in Thailand; the country has also witnessed 20 Constitutions enforced by different governments. Prolonged political instability is one of the primary causes of protests.

Second, multiple protests with multiple actors. Protests by farmers, educated-uneducated youth, pro or anti-government, pro or anti-political parties, pro or anti-army, and royalists are some of the different actors of protests in Thailand. Until recently, anti-monarchy protests have been unheard of; however, 2019 changed it. The current monarch's policies and numerous arrests under the draconian Lèse-majesté law are seen as cause for the youth anger and the recurring protests.

Third, Covid-19 and the government's inability to recover the economy and ensure political stability. In 2020, the GDP fell by 6.1 per cent, the highest the country has witnessed since the Asian financial crisis. The Covid-19 is just one of the causes of this downfall, and the larger share of the blame goes to the inefficiency and corruption of the government. The rush for opening normalcy to recover the economy has led to the worsening of the situation.

Fourth, the precarious pandemic situation in Southeast Asia, outside Thailand. In Malaysia and Indonesia, there are serious questions on the ability of the government to handle, as the health and economic situation worsens. In Myanmar, the new regime's handling is acting as a catalyst for continuing the anti-government protest.

In perspective

First, since February 2019, anti-government protests have become a recurring event in Thailand.

Second, despite the pandemic restrictions, they have continued and now include people of all ages to join the protests.

Third, geographically, from being centred in Bangkok in 2019, the protests spread to the rest of Thailand. The protests, now in 2021, are centred again in Bangkok; the pandemic restrictions could be one of the reasons.

Afghanistan: Eight provincial capitals fall as the Taliban's offensive continues

In the news

On 10 August, the Taliban captured Pul-e-Khumri, the provincial capital of Baghlan province, 200 kilometres north of Kabul. This is the eighth provincial capital to fall during the last two weeks. On the same day, Farah city, the provincial capital of Farah in southwest Afghanistan, was also captured. The Taliban has claimed they were closing in on Mazar-i-Sharif, the region's biggest city in the north and a key area for the government's control. Since 6 August, the Taliban have overrun several provinces including, Aybak, the capital of the northern province of Samangan, Kunduz city, a strategic location close to the border with Tajikistan, Taloqan, the provincial capital of northeast Takhar, Sheberghan, the capital of northern Jawzjan province and Zaranj, on the border with Iran in Afghanistan's southern Nimroz province.

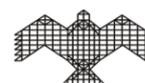
On 6 August, the UN Security Council meeting on Afghanistan was held during which the members strongly condemned the increase in violence in Afghanistan, asserting that the "Taliban must hear from the international community that we will not accept a military takeover of Afghanistan or a return of the Taliban's Islamic Emirate." This meeting comes days before the extended Troika meeting was held in Qatar on 11 August.

Issues at large

First, the Taliban's calculated offensive. Since May 2021, the Taliban has launched a large-scale offensive across the country and have seized control of much of rural Afghanistan since international forces began the last stage of their withdrawal. Over the recent weeks, the Taliban's offensive has focused on targeting Afghanistan's provincial capitals, urban city centres and border crossings. Additionally, the fighting has taken place in regions that are not traditionally Taliban's strongholds.

Second, the Afghan government's response. In efforts to counter the Taliban's offensive, the Afghan forces have lead operations and counterattacks against the Taliban in several provinces. The Afghan government has the advantage of a functional air force as well as its special forces, even though are stretched quite thin have been able to counter the Taliban's offensive. Amid the Taliban's offensive, the Afghan refused to acknowledge the falling capitals and has continued to emphasize on the Taliban deaths and the strength of the Afghan security forces.

Third, the muted international concerns. Although several countries have raised concerns over the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, there has been no action from these countries. Similarly, in its previous meeting, the "extended Troika" which included Russia, the US, China and Pakistan, made it clear it would not support the restoration of an 'Islamic emirate' or the



old conservative order. However, the Taliban's relentless military offensive over the last few months has increased concerns about the Taliban ignoring the warning and the effectiveness of such regional groupings.

In perspective

First, the Taliban offensive has taken a new and bloodier turn. The Taliban's firm focus is now on Afghanistan's cities. The successful takeover marks a significant milestone in the groups relentless March to increase their control on the Afghan government and retake power in the country. Additionally, the Taliban's strategy of taking over the border regions shows that they plan on sealing the country, thus fighting from the outside in.

Second, the Afghan government's strategy. The Taliban's offensive has left the Afghan government in disarray. However, the government seems to be following strategically retreating in certain areas to help consolidate power in other key regions of the country.

Third, the questions of multinational efforts. The convergency of regional countries because of their common security concerns over Afghanistan's deteriorating situation makes the meeting such as the extended Troika extremely important. Platforms such as these could help in mitigating the problems in Afghanistan if the member countries bring the warring sides to the negotiating table.

Europe: Measures to curb pandemic trigger protests

In the news

On 7 August, widespread protests against the COVID-19 health pass were held across Europe. France saw its fourth consecutive weekend of demonstrations as 230,000 protesters participated in what the Interior Ministry reported as the largest turnout since July. Italy also witnessed similar protests. Efforts to fully inoculate their citizenry as the Delta variant spreads have triggered these protests.

On 6 August, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi said: "For things to get better, get vaccinated and respect the rules." On 4 August, French President Emmanuel Macron told in an interview: "A few tens of thousands of people have lost their minds to such an extent that they say we live in a dictatorship."

Issues at large

First, the health pass and related legislations. Hoping to contain the fourth wave of COVID-19, several European countries have implemented virus passes with different rules. The Green Pass or the health pass are extensions of the EU's digital COVID certificate which provides proof of a person's coronavirus status. The Pass would be required to enter public places like cinemas, museums, and restaurants. Though similar passes have been introduced across Europe, only France has adopted a blanket approach of imposing passes and a mandatory vaccination for health workers. Other countries which have adopted similar measures include Italy, Denmark, Austria, Belgium, Germany, and Britain.

Second, the consequent protests. The vaccine passes have spurred prolonged protests across Europe. Opponents claim that the Pass limits mobility making the vaccines obligatory. Considered a disguised blow to their fundamental freedoms, demonstrators condemn the 'oppressive rules'. French protestors accused Macron of infringing rights and segregating citizens. German protestors, on the other hand, clashed violently with the police. Protests continued in Poland as its government deliberated the need for restrictions.

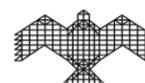
Third, the larger agenda of the protests. Few anti-vaccine groups seek to influence the public debate beyond coronavirus. Their online discourses show mobilization against migrants and allegations of potential lockdowns to fight climate change, while far-right activists consider the protests a recruiting ground. Querdenker, Germany's main anti-lockdown movement, has managed to spread conspiracy theories about the government's attempts to contain the pandemic, calling them fascistic and the campaign as a form of apartheid. In France and Germany, protestors have demonstrated alongside far-right activists comparing their governments to the Nazi regime.

Fourth, the division within the protesters. Heterogenous groups uniting against Macron have slogans reading - 'No to dictatorship' and 'Freedom'. Those directly affected by the new policies, like health workers and restaurant employees, are accompanied by those who are frustrated with the government's overreach. Hard-left anarchists, remnants of the "Yellow West" movement, and other anti-vaccine supporters form the protesters. Despite widespread protests, they still represent a minority opinion. Polls reveal limited support for the anti-mandate protests.

Fifth, the governments' response. European governments believe increased inoculation is the key to ensuring economic recovery. The visible success of their plans has further proved this point. Since Macron unveiled the plan, at least 7 million people have gotten vaccinated. Although he views the protestors as 'threatening democracy', French opposition leaders have voiced the need for 'respecting' protestors and their needs. Responding to the critics, minor relaxations were brought in the implementation. Amid fears of rising infections, Berlin had banned various anti-lockdown protestors from gathering.

In perspective

First, the issue of responsibility. The worsening pandemic creates an imperative need for governments to take substantial measures. Thus, the strict unilateral moves seem justified given the results. Second, the protraction of protests increases the risks the protestors intend to avoid. The health pass is by no means a cure-all to the pandemic, but it is definitely a good place to start. Third, the upcoming elections in Germany and France. Despite a key leadership test in the picture, the governments are not seen to be backing down in their efforts.



Code Red: Key takeaways from the IPCC report 2021 on Climate Change

In the news

On 9 August, Working Group I of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released the report "Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis", the first of the reports as released as part of the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), 2022. The report has been approved by 195 member countries of the IPCC. The UN Secretary-General António Guterres said that the report is a "code red for humanity. The alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable."

The report puts across the physical science of the climate crisis, talking extensively about the human influence over the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere, land and biosphere at large. In a first, it also covers region-wise issues and analyses. Following are the key takeaways:

First, the global warming. There have been well observed anthropogenic-induced GHG concentrations since 1750. With four successive warmer decades, the estimated range of global surface temperature increase is between 0.8oC- 1.3oC, and the best estimate stands at 1.07oC. IPCC predicts that 1.5oC of global warming leads to increasing heatwaves, longer warm and shorter cold seasons, and a 2oC warming would affect agriculture and health severely.

Second, changes in the ocean and precipitation patterns. The report points to ocean acidification and increasing maritime heatwaves. Rainfall in the higher latitudes is predicted to increase, whereas it will decrease in the subtropics. At the global level, changes in the water cycle will lead to heavy rainfall and flooding and contrasting droughts simultaneously. Due to the rapid warming of the Indian Ocean, the littorals will experience changes in monsoon patterns, increased heavy rainfall in a shorter span of time, thereby giving rise to flooding.

Third, effects on the cryosphere. IPCC has observed that there is substantial thawing of the permafrost, a decrease in Arctic summer sea ice, seasonal snow cover and significant glacial melt. The greatest shrink in the Arctic Sea ice occurred between 2010 and 2019, though the intensity of melt has been observed since 1979. Data points to the human influence on the surface melting of the Greenland ice sheet over the past 20 years. It must be noted that scientists did not record significant decadal trends in the decrease of the Antarctic Sea ice area cover between 1979-2020 directly in proportion to the anthropogenic activities. The report also predicts a continuing shrinking of the mountain glaciers in all the places where they are present. In regions like the Hindukush-Himalayan region, there will be a rise in precipitation and a decrease in snow cover.

Fourth, irreversible changes. The study shows that many changes that the planet has undergone due to GHG emissions are irreversible. This is particularly applicable to the changes in the ocean, ice sheets and global sea level.

Issues at large

First, studies on climate change. IPCC, as an important body of the UN assessing climate change, provides a plethora of scientific data and analysis to the policymakers, helping them take necessary actions. It creates a massive ripple through the detailed "Assessment Reports" prepared by its working groups. Along with the IPCC, numerous scientific bodies and NGOs warn the governments across the world about the impending climate crisis, calling on them to undertake mitigation measures.

Second, lack of action. IPCC and other prominent organizations and scientific bodies have released multiple reports and issued warnings to states to take adequate action. Multiple international agreements and treaties have not brought the countries on the same board about the need to curb unsustainable activities.

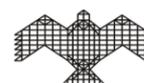
Third, differences on the basics. Since the time of the Kyoto Protocol to the Paris Agreement, basics are the bones of contention. Debates on carbon credits, common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), development and climate change, transfer and access to green technologies continue to brew. Additionally, the developed countries continue to search for new sources of non-renewables both domestically and globally. Countries like the US, Norway and Russia have a substantial portion of their GDP drawn from the export of oil and gas.

In perspective

First, more evidence on the Anthropocene. In comparison to the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) of the IPCC, the Working Group-I report of the AR6 emphasizes the "unequivocal human influence" on the earth's system. This provides more impetus to already loud calls to formally recognize the end of Holocene and the beginning of the Anthropocene epoch.

Second, COVID-19 and its impact. The pandemic has severely affected the global economy and pushed millions into poverty. It is not a surprise if countries prioritize economic compulsions and sideline climate change. However, the pandemic has shown that the world is unprepared for a climate crisis. Responsible rebound adhering to sustainable development goals is the need of the hour.

Third, the report is a desperate call for action; however, translating it into action is a serious challenge. It sets a stage for the forthcoming COP-26, to be held in November 2021, and is sure to draw more attention to this report and pressure on countries to walk the talk.



Also, from around the world

By Apoorva Sudhakar and Abigail Miriam Fernandez

Peace and Conflict from East and Southeast Asia

Japan: Increased Russian movement in airspace upsets Tokyo

On 10 August, The Asahi Shimbun reported that in June, Japan's Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) scrambled against Russian aircraft more than against those of China for the first time in nine months. The ASDF reportedly scrambled 35 times, and this has been attributed to Russia's military exercises and political manoeuvring. The spike comes after the Russian Prime Minister visited the Northern Territories on 26 July with the aim of strengthening economic cooperation with Japan. However, the Japanese Foreign Minister had said that the visit would not boost cooperation; in reference to the spike in scrambles, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary said: "Japan cannot accept it because it represents a strengthening of the Russian military capability in the four islands off Hokkaido."

North Korea-South Korea: Pyongyang warns of security threat as Washington, Seoul begin run-up to joint military drill

On 11 August, The Korea Herald quoted from the statement of North Korea's United Front Department wherein he said that Pyongyang would pose a serious security threat to Washington and Seoul for their joint military drills. He said: "The price of answering our good intentions with hostile actions must be shown clearly," adding, "As South Korea and the US have chosen conflict with us, it is clear that we cannot make a different choice." Further, amid the above development, it was reported that North Korea had not answered South Korea's calls through the liaison and military hotline for two consecutive days. Meanwhile, the US State Department spokesman said that Washington had "no hostile intentions," adding that the drills were "purely defensive in nature."

Indonesia: Army to not conduct virginity tests on women anymore

On 11 August, the Chief of Staff announced that Indonesia would no longer conduct the two-finger test or the virginity test for women applicants to the armed forces. The development comes after the Chief of Staff, in July, had maintained that selection tests for men and women should be equal, adding that the tests were "irrelevant to the purpose of recruitment and must not be administered." Previously, Human Rights Watch had documented the practice and condemned it.

Malaysia: King asks PM to bring forward vote of confidence

On 9 August, opposition parties wrote to King Sultan Abdullah Ahmad Shah reiterating that they do not support Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin and said that the Perikatan Nasional (PN) government had lost its majority. Following this, the King asked Yassin to bring forward a vote of confidence which was previously scheduled for September. Meanwhile, the PN allies reportedly flew to Kuala Lumpur to convene at the Yassin's Office. As many as 105 opposition lawmakers were represented in the letter to the King; the Parliament has a total of 220 lawmakers. Therefore, the PN needs at least 111 lawmakers on its side.

Myanmar: Suu Kyi's lawyer barred from talking to the media

On 6 August, police and other local officials forced Aung San Suu Kyi's lawyer to sign a pledge that "she would not talk to both domestic and foreign media, foreign diplomats and international non-governmental organizations." This was revealed by another lawyer; however, other members of Suu Kyi's defense team said that they faced no such warning. Meanwhile, on 10 August, The Irrawaddy referred to the National Unity Government and reported that over 700 junta soldiers had been killed and 370 wounded in clashes with civilian groups in July. The NUG also reportedly said that in the same month, 200 civilians had been killed and 47 injured. In another development, on 9 August, The Irrawaddy reported that fighting had broken out between ethnic groups and the military in Shan State, close to the border with China, on 3 August.

Peace and Conflict from South Asia

India-China: Troops disengage from Gogra

On 6 August, the Indian Army and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) completed their disengagement from the Gogra area (Patrolling Point 17A) in eastern Ladakh. According to the Indian Ministry of Defense, the two sides dismantled "all temporary structures and other allied infrastructure" erected in the area and "troops of both sides are now in their respective permanent bases." This comes after the 12th round of military commander-level talks which took place on 31 July; additionally, the pullback from the Gogra area is the third friction area from which soldiers from the two sides have disengaged.

India: Assam-Mizoram border issue settled, for now, says CM Sarma

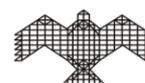
On 9 August, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stated that as of now, the issue with the Mizoram border had been resolved, adding that there cannot be an overnight resolution of the border dispute between the states as it is a very complex issue. He said: "The governments of Assam and Mizoram have issued a joint statement urging for peace and tranquility. As of now, things are normal; traffic is moving to Mizoram as usual. I can say as of now the situation is normal, peaceful and there is no tension."

Pakistan: Government restores vandalized temple, hands it over to the Hindu community

On 9 August, the government completed the restoration of the Hindu temple, which was vandalized by a mob in Punjab. According to the District Police Officer, "The government has completed the restoration work of the temple and handed over to the local Hindu community." On 4 August, hundreds had attacked the temple at Bhong city of Rahim Yar Khan district in protest over the release of an eight-year-old Hindu boy, who was arrested for urinating in a local seminary.

Pakistan: Blast near Serena hotel in Quetta leaves two policemen dead and 12 injured

On 8 August, two policemen were killed while 12 others were injured in an explosion near Quetta's Serena Hotel. No group took responsibility for the incident, but the Baloch nationalists who are active in the province are suspected to be behind the blast. Similarly, On 9 August, one person was killed, and four others were injured in a grenade attack at the Sher Jan stop in Quetta. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the blast.



Pakistan: Three soldiers injured in firing across the Afghan border

On 8 August, three soldiers were wounded in a landmine explosion and firing from across the Afghan border in South Waziristan and North Waziristan. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Pakistan had consistently been requesting Afghanistan to ensure effective border management, adding, "Pakistan strongly condemns the use of Afghan soil by terrorists for activities against Pakistan." Meanwhile, on 6 August, Prime Minister Imran Khan was briefed about the ongoing stabilization operations and fencing along the Pak-Afghan border.

Peace and Conflict from Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Tajikistan: Joint military drills with Russia, Uzbekistan concludes along the Afghan border

On 10 August, Tajikistan, Russia, and Uzbekistan concluded a joint drill near the Afghanistan border in anticipation of security threats. As many as 2,500 troops and 500 military vehicles were present at the drills at the Harb-Maidon firing range. Associated Press quoted the Russian military that the drills were held "against the background of the destabilization of the situation in neighbouring Afghanistan, in order to work out the issues of repelling possible threats and practical interaction to ensure security and maintain stability in the Central Asian region." Similarly, the Russian Defense Minister said: "It's very important for us that the armed forces of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan will be ready to fend off potential threats, even though the Taliban leaders say they will not make any incursions across the border and attacks on neighbours."

Lebanon-Israel: Hezbollah fires rockets in retaliation to Israeli air raids

On 5 August, Israel conducted air raids on Lebanon for the first time since the last one in 2014, and Hezbollah retaliated with fire rockets on 6 August. Following this, Israel warned Hezbollah of retaliatory shelling but maintained that it had no intentions to "escalate to a full war." Similarly, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah echoed the above and said: "We are not looking for war, and we do not want to head towards war, but we are ready for it." Meanwhile, on 6 August, the US called on the Lebanese government, urging it to prevent Hezbollah from attacking Israel.

Lebanon: Three killed in clashes over fuel shortage

On 9 August, at least three people were killed in violence which was sparked by the country's fuel shortage. Two deaths were reportedly caused by a gunfight over a disagreement over a fuel sale deal. Al Jazeera cited local news reports which said the violence erupted in Badawi and spread to Tripoli in the north. Similarly, the third death took place in the northern Dinniyeh region when the man was shot during a fistfight at a petrol station. The news report explains that the fuel shortage in Lebanon has left people dependent on private generators.

Syria: UN rights chief outlines grave picture in Daraa neighbourhood; four children killed in shelling

On 5 August, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said: "The stark picture emerging from Daraa al-Balad and other neighbourhoods underscores how much at risk civilians there are, repeatedly exposed to fighting and violence, and in effect under siege." The statement comes in the backdrop of escalation of hostilities between the government and armed groups in the region. Arab News reported that the escalation had forced around 18,000 people to flee; in July, 28 people had died amid the fighting between the two sides. Meanwhile, on 8 August, The White Helmets tweeted that four children of a family were killed and five others injured in the government shelling in Qastoun village.

Yemen: US to provide USD 164 million humanitarian aid

On 9 August, the US special envoy to Yemen announced that Washington would provide USD 165 million additional humanitarian aid to the country through the USAID. The USAID, after one year, in March, resumed operations in northern Yemen which is controlled by the Houthis. The development comes after the US State Department, in July, said: "Now is the time to stop the fighting and enable Yemenis to shape a more peaceful, prosperous future for their country."

Ethiopia: As conflict worsens, PM asks civilians to join armed forces

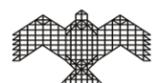
On 10 August, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed called on civilians to join the armed forces as multiple conflicts raged on across the country, especially in the Tigray region. Al Jazeera quoted from the statement: "Now is the right time for all capable Ethiopians who are of age to join the Defence Forces, Special Forces and militias and show your patriotism." In another development on the same day, a medical officer said that 12 people were reportedly killed and around 50 injured in Afar in an attack on displaced civilians on 5 August. Meanwhile, on 11 August, Amnesty International released a report outlining rape and sexual violence in Tigray. The Secretary General of Amnesty International said: "Hundreds have been subjected to brutal treatment aimed at degrading and dehumanizing them...The severity and scale of the sexual crimes committed are particularly shocking, amounting to war crimes and possible crimes against humanity."

Mali: Gunmen kill at least 51 people during raid on villages

On 9 August, the army spokesperson confirmed that gunmen had raided several villages but restrained from giving any details of the same. News reports suggest that at least 51 people were killed in retaliation to the arrest of two rebel leaders who were denounced in the villages. The attacks were carried out on 8 August in villages bordering Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. No group has claimed responsibility. Associated Press quoted a local official who said that the victims were either in their houses or were on the way to the mosque in the evening.

Mozambique: Troops recapture key port with help of Rwandan soldiers

On 8 August, Rwandan soldiers who had been deployed in Mozambique said they, along with Mozambican forces, had recaptured a key port of Mocimboa da Praia from the armed rebels. The Rwanda Defense Forces tweeted: "The port city of Mocimboa da Praia, a major stronghold of the insurgency for more than two years has been captured by Rwandan and Mozambican



security forces." The spokesman of the Forces said the port "was the last stronghold of the insurgents, marking the end of the first phase of counter-insurgency operations which is dislodging insurgents from the stronghold." Rwandan troops were deployed in Mozambique in July.

Algeria: Death toll from wildfires climbs to 65

On 11 August, state television reported that the death toll from raging wildfires had reached 65 on the second day, including 28 soldiers. On 10 August, the President called the deceased soldiers "martyrs." The wildfires occurred in Kabyle region which has limited water and is threatened by rising temperatures. The Interior Minister said: "Thirty fires at the same time in the same region can't be by chance," thereby echoing the Prime Minister's belief that the wildfires were possibly the result of "criminal acts."

Somalia: UN reports highlight an 80 per cent increase in sexual violence

On 5 August, UN News reported on the Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and the Report of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, which outlined that there was an 80 per cent rise in sexual violence in Somalia compared to 2019. The reports link the prevalence of sexual violence to political tensions, inter-communal clashes, an increase in al Shabaab's operations, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, the UN representatives raised concerns that 15 per cent of instances of sexual violence were attributed to government forces, including the Somali National Army, Somali Police Force, and regional forces.

Peace and Conflict from Europe and the Americas

Lithuania: Parliament votes to build a fence on the Belarus border

On 10 August, the Parliament in Lithuania voted to build a four-metre metal fence topped with razor wire on 508 km of the 670 km border it shares with Belarus. Additionally, the Parliament also voted to allow the military to patrol the border alongside frontier guards and to send people who have crossed illegally. The interior minister stated: "Without this physical barrier, it is impossible to protect our borders, it is very clear." In 2021, over 4,000 migrants have entered EU member Lithuania illegally from Belarus.

Belarus: You can choke on your sanctions in the UK, says President Lukashenko

On 9 August, President Alexander Lukashenko in response to the sanctions imposed by Britain on Belarus's potash and petroleum product said: "You can go choke on your sanctions... You are American lapdogs!" Meanwhile, the UK's Foreign Secretary said: "The Lukashenko regime continues to crush democracy and violate human rights in Belarus," adding, "The products of Lukashenko's state-owned industries will not be sold in the UK, and our aerospace companies will not touch his fleet of luxury aircraft."

Poland: Protest against changes to broadcasting law

On 10 August, thousands across Poland protested in defence of media freedoms. The demonstrators raised objections to draft legislation that critics say could shut down a US-owned broadcaster critical of the government. Additionally, the controversial bill forbids non-European-Union citizens and companies from possessing a controlling stake in Polish media outlets. Amid the protests, the prime minister sacked Deputy PM Jaroslaw Gowin who opposes the law change, disrupting Poland's coalition government.

Czech Republic: Illegally sterilized Czech women to be offered compensation

On 4 August, The Guardian reported that President Miloš Zeman signed a bill into law by which women sterilized without their consent are to be offered compensation in the Czech Republic. The report states that the women, most of whom were Roma, will be awarded 300,000 Czech crowns from the government as compensation.

Colombia: FARC recruited more than 18,000 children, says the Transitional Justice Court (JEP)

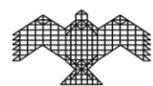
On 10 August, Colombia's Transitional Justice Court (JEP) said that the now-demobilized Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebels had recruited more than 18,000 children into their ranks across a 20-year period. Terming it as "one of the most terrible acts that could have happened during the conflict," the court accusing the group of subjecting the children to abuses and treatment that amounts to war crimes. The JEP magistrate leading the case stated that the tally came from analyzing 31 databases compiled by victims' groups and the state, as well as testimonies from 274 people who were forcibly recruited.

Nicaragua: Ortega recalls envoys to Mexico, Argentina, Colombia and Costa Rica

On 9 August, the Nicaraguan government recalled its ambassadors to Mexico, Argentina, Colombia and Costa Rica for "consultations." This move comes in response to similar moves by the four countries against Nicaragua. Previously, Mexico, Argentina and Colombia recently recalled their ambassadors to Nicaragua to protest against the repression of dissent in the country. Costa Rica suspended its ambassador's appointment to Nicaragua.

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Ceasefire in Ethiopia, Berlin Conference on Libya and the World Drug Report

Apoorva Sudhakar and Jeshil Samuel J



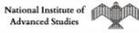
The TPLF rebels returned to Tigray and took over its capital last week in Ethiopia. The government has announced a unilateral ceasefire. (Image Source: BBC)

Ethiopia: Federal government declares unilateral ceasefire after TPLF recaptures Mekelle

[In the news](#)

On 29 June, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) spokesperson vowed to clear the Tigray region off all "enemies." BBC quoted the spokesperson's remarks to CNN: "We will not stop until Tigray has been cleared of any and all enemy forces. We will do whatever it takes." On the same day, Tigray residents reportedly celebrated the recapture of Tigray by the TPLF. Meanwhile, the US State Department warned that if hostilities continue in Tigray, Ethiopia and Eritrea should be prepared for actions from the US.

On 28 June, TPLF troops seized the regional capital, Mekelle, forcing Tigray's interim authority appointed by the federal government to flee. Following this, the federal government

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23 June 2021, Vol.2, No.12

The US Juneteenth, UN resolution on Myanmar and Global Peace Index

Vishnu Prasad E, Anju C Joseph and Abigail Miriam Fernandez



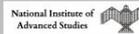
Juneteenth has become more than a day just to commemorate the end of slavery in the US. (Image Source: Reuters)

The US: Juneteenth approval a step in the right direction

[In the news](#)

On 17 June, President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, which made 19 June an official federal holiday to commemorate the end of slavery in the country. Biden said: "I have to say to you, I've only been president for several months, but I think this will go down, for me, as one of the greatest honors I will have as president. By making Juneteenth a federal holiday, all Americans can feel the power of this day and learn from our history — and celebrate progress and grapple with the distance we've come (and) the distance we have to travel." It became America's first new holiday since Martin Luther King Day in 1983.

On 19 June, the holiday celebrations were marred by acts of violence across the country that left at least five people dead. In Oakland, California, seven people were shot at a Juneteenth

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16 June 2021, Vol.2, No.11

Three new reports on Child labour, Ethiopia and Xinjiang, Tensions in Belfast, and the Suu Kyi trial

Apoorva Sudhakar, Mohamad Aseel Ummer, Dincy Adlakha, Sourina Bej and Vibha Venugopal

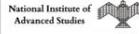


12 June was observed as World Day Against Child Labour, marking 2021 as International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour. According to the latest report of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) "160 million children – 63 million girls and 97 million boys" were engaged in child labour in 2020. (Image Source: UNICEF)

Child labour: 160 million children, one in ten, are engaged in labour, says the new ILO-UNICEF report

[In the news](#)

On 12 June, countries observed World Day Against Child Labour marking the 2021 International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour.

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09 June 2021, Vol.2, No.10

The UN report on Taliban-al Qaeda links, Denmark on relocating refugee camps, Burkino Faso massacre, Arctic melt, and Afghan trilateral dialogue

Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Sourina Bej, Apoorva Sudhakar, Rashmi BR and Sarthak Jain

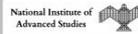


According to the latest report of the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team "the Taliban and Al-Qaida remain closely aligned and show no indication of breaking ties." (Image Source: BBC)

Afghanistan: Taliban still closely aligned to al-Qaida, says UN report

[In the news](#)

On 1 June, the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the UN, in its twelfth report, has observed: "the Taliban's messaging remains uncompromising, and it shows no sign of reducing the level of violence in Afghanistan to facilitate peace negotiations with the Government of Afghanistan and other Afghan stakeholders. The Taliban's intent appears to be to continue to strengthen its military position as leverage." The report maintained as earlier: "the Taliban and Al-Qaida remain closely aligned and show no indication of breaking ties. Member States report no material change to this relationship, which has grown deeper as a

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02 June 2021, Vol.2, No.09

Continuing protests in Colombia, another mass abduction in Nigeria and a controversial election in Syria

Vishnu Prasad, Apoorva Sudhakar and Jeshil Samuel J



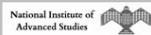
Street protests returned in Colombia, as the negotiations between the government and protesters failed. The UN has called for an independent investigation. (Image Source: BBC/Reuters)

Colombia: The protests continue

[In the news](#)

On 28 May, at least four people died in Colombia after police took on protesters who attempted to lift roadblocks. Protesters were back on the street after talks between the government and protest groups had broken down. On the same day, President Ivan Duque announced that he was deploying the military to the town of Cali, which had been hit by violence.

On 30 May, the United Nations called for an independent investigation into the number of casualties that had happened since the protests began on 28 April. UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet voiced 'deep concern' over the violence.



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26 May 2021, Vol.2, No.08

Ceasefire in Israel, NLD ban in Myanmar and a new Belarus crisis

Lakshmi V Menon, Aparupa Bhattacharjee and Sourina Bej



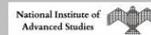
"We see the cease-fire not as an end, but as a beginning — something to build on" commented the US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken in his first visit to the Middle East. (Image Source: Al Jazeera)

Israel-Hamas ceasefire: The long road to peace

[In the news](#)

On 21 May, Israel's Cabinet voted to approve Egypt-mediated ceasefire with the Hamas in the Gaza strip, following 11 days of airstrikes and rocket attacks. Palestinians conducted celebratory gatherings in the occupied territories, and Israel removed emergency restrictions in rocket-hit areas. While both parties have claimed victory, they also maintained that the holding of the ceasefire would depend on ground circumstances.

During 25-27 May, Antony Blinken, as a part of his first visit as the US Secretary of State to the Middle East, met the leaders of Israel, Palestine, Egypt and Jordan. On 25 May, in a statement in Jerusalem, he said: "I traveled here at the request of President Biden, who asked me to come to pursue four basic objectives. First, to demonstrate the commitment of the United States to Israel's security. Second, to start to work toward greater stability and reduce tensions



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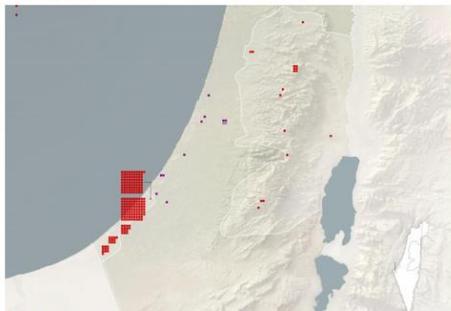
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19 May 2021, Vol.2, No.07

Elusive ceasefire in Israel-Palestine conflict, a migration crisis in Spain, three weeks of protests in Colombia, and the rise of Ransomware reign

Udbhav Krishna P, Mohammad Aseel Ummer, Vishnu Prasad, and Jeshil Samuel J

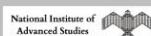


The clashes between Hamas and Israel continue into the second week, as there is no end to the rocket attacks. Casualties are increasing across Israel, as could be seen from the above image by the New York Times. (Image Source: The New York Times)

Israel-Palestine: Who wants what?

[In the news](#)

On 18 May, a White House statement stated that President Joe Biden had extended his support for a ceasefire in the Israel-Palestine conflict during the phone call with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. As of 18 May, Gaza health officials reported that at least 212 Palestinians had been killed, including 61 children and 36 women, in more than a week of fighting. Meanwhile, ten people have been killed in Israel, including two children. Around 3,350 rockets



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Escalating Israel-Palestine violence, an attack and a ceasefire in Afghanistan, and the fallouts of Scotland election for the UK

Jeshil Samuel J, D. Suba Chandran and Sourina Bej

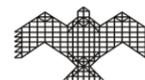


Following clashes between the Israeli police and Palestinians last week in East Jerusalem, the violence escalated further as Hamas and Israel exchanged rocket attacks. (Image Source: Agence France/Getty Images/The New York Times)

Israel: Surge in violence, as the Hamas and security forces engage in rocket attacks, escalating the conflict

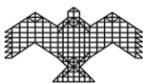
[In the news](#)

On 07 May, a series of skirmishes started between the worshippers and the Israeli police in the Al Aqsa mosque compound, with an exchange of stones, stun grenades and rubber bullets. The Palestinians had been protesting against any possible eviction in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem that would follow a Court verdict and the Israeli government's settlement policies.





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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 research are published as briefs, reports and commentary.



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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. With 16 regional offices in Germany and over 120 offices abroad, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is committed to achieving and maintaining peace, freedom and justice through political education. KAS promotes and preserves free democracy, social market economy, and the development and consolidation of the value consensus. KAS also focus on consolidating democracy, the unification of Europe and the strengthening of transatlantic relations, as well as on development cooperation.

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

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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