

# Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

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

12 May 2021, Vol.2, No.06

## 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.

On 10 May, riots broke out in the Old City of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount as Israelis celebrated Jerusalem Day. On the same day, rockets were launched from the Gaza Strip by Hamas, targeting Israeli settlements in Jerusalem. A spokesperson for the Hamas said that they had launched "a rocket strike against the enemy in the occupied Jerusalem in response to their crimes and aggression against the holy city and its aggression against our people in Sheikh Jarrah and Al-Aqsa mosque." In an immediate response to the attack, the Israeli military attacked the Gaza Strip with airstrikes, killing nearly twenty. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also made a stern statement after the attacks saying: "Israel will respond very forcefully. We will not tolerate attacks on our territory, our capital, our citizens and our soldiers. Whoever strikes us will pay a heavy price."

During 11-12 May, the rocket attacks by Hamas and Israel continued, targeting each other, with casualties increasing. According to a BBC report, violence is being witnessed in many parts, with Benjamin Netanyahu, stating his plan to send in "military forces to help police maintain order in cities ruptured by violence."

### Issues at large

First, the immediate trigger behind the violent clash. Minor confrontations between Israeli security forces and Palestinians had started a month ago when the Israeli police erected barriers to stop people from sitting in the Damascus Gate Plaza and after the Israeli government imposed a 10,000-person limit for the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The attempt to evict Palestinians in East Jerusalem to expand Israeli settlements has also been a primary trigger. Palestinian residents of the Sheikh Jarrah area had been ordered by a district court earlier to vacate their homes which in turn fuelled protests. The simmering tension erupted into uncontrollable violence after Israeli forces entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque and began using stun grenades and rubber bullets to suppress protests. On 9 May, despite the Israeli Supreme Court's decision to delay the order for eviction, clashes between protestors and Israeli forces have only intensified.

Second, the long-term issues plaguing East Jerusalem. Since the 1990s, the Israeli settlement plans have allowed the government to build settlement blocs within Palestinian majority areas of Jerusalem pushing nearly 1,40,000 Palestinians out of the city. In 2020, 170 Palestinian structures were demolished, and 385 people were displaced by the Israeli government to accommodate Israeli settlements. This increase in Israeli settlements have left Palestinians vulnerable and threatened despite international law stating that an occupying power cannot confiscate private property in the occupied territory. Israeli citizens, on the other hand, are pushed into confrontations with Palestinians despite being legally entitled by Israeli law to own land in the East Jerusalem region.

Third, the Israeli and Palestinian position and politics on the matter. Prime Minister Netanyahu clearly stated that Israel would firmly resist the pressure put on it not to build or expand in Jerusalem. He went on to say that "just as every nation builds in its capital and builds up its capital, we also have the right to build in Jerusalem". Conversely, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has vehemently opposed the Israeli government's crackdown on the Palestinian population and has urged the UN Security Council to have a session on the ongoing

issue. Due to the recent attacks carried out by Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip, President Abbas had to cancel celebrations for Eid al-Fitr.

Fourth, the sudden escalation with the Hamas intervening with the rocket attacks and Israel responding with a larger force. What was a local issue, related to a neighbourhood in East Jerusalem has now expanded into a full-scale conflict between Hamas and Israel.

### In perspective

The recent escalation in violence has increased international support for the Palestinians living in Jerusalem. Countries such as Turkey, Jordan, Germany and France have shown concerns over Israel's policies towards Palestinians.

On a national level, the recent events could garner more support for PM Netanyahu, who needs public and political support to retain his position. PM Netanyahu could use the attacks by Hamas as an opportunity to increase Israeli presence in the Gaza Strip. On the local level, the confrontation between Jewish settlers and Palestinian residents in East Jerusalem would continue even after the large-scale clashes in the city subside.

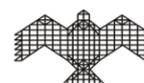
## Afghanistan: A week of violence, Taliban's three days ceasefire and the mirage of peace

### In the news

On 08 May, in a targeted massacre on the girl children, three bombs placed in front of a school killed more than 80 people, with most of the victims in their teens. The attacks took place in a Shia neighbourhood in Kabul; the School was having classes in two separate shifts for the girls and boys. Though the Taliban denied its involvement, President Ashraf Ghani has blamed the militants. According to a statement from the US State Department: "This is a pivotal moment for the Taliban and Afghan leadership to come together and take responsibility for the future of their country."

On 10 May, the Taliban announced a three days ceasefire for the Eid al-Fitr; depending on the sighting of the moon, the Taliban ceasefire, according to news reports, will start either from Wednesday or Thursday. The Taliban ceasefire was aimed at celebrating Eid; according to its spokesman Suhail Shaheen the ceasefire aims at the following: "to provide a peaceful and secure atmosphere to our compatriots ... so that they may celebrate this joyous occasion with a greater peace of mind." However, on the same day, there was an IED attack on a bus in the Zabul province that killed 11 people.

Also, on the same day, on 10 May, a meeting in Brussels amongst the foreign ministers of the EU discussed the nature of Europe's presence and support to Afghanistan. The Washington Post quoted the German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas stating: "After the terrible attacks of recent days, it is all the more important for the EU to make very clear that Afghanistan and the Afghan government can continue to count on Europe's support...We will continue to make



available sufficient funding for civilian reconstruction, and we will do everything we can so that the ongoing peace negotiations reach a conclusion." However, last week, the EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell was quoted to have stated: "The decision has been taken and what we have to do is to face the situation that is going to be created...The violence in Afghanistan is increasing, and it's clear that once the US will withdraw, the European Union troops will not be able to stay."

On 6 May, a journalist who was earlier a presenter with the Tolonews, and associated with the Finance Ministry's media office, was killed in a targeted assassination. A Taliban spokesman was quoted to have issued a warning against the Afghan journalists to face the consequences for providing "one-sided news in support of Afghanistan's intelligence." On 07 May, the New York Times, in its regular casualty report on Afghanistan, referring to the previous week (30 April-06 May), said: "At least 140 pro-government forces and 44 civilians were killed in Afghanistan the past week, the highest death toll in a single week since October."

### Issues at large

First, the surge in violence amidst the US troops withdrawal. Whether the massacre on the children is perpetrated by the Taliban or the Islamic State, it highlights the state of peace in Afghanistan, especially in Kabul. The targeted assassination of the journalist this week also highlights the efforts by the militants to silence the media.

Second, the responses from Europe and the US. It clearly shows that post-withdrawal, the international support is likely to be limited to expect that both the parties – government and Taliban reach an agreement amongst themselves.

Third, the Taliban ceasefire. One should not read too much into it. Perhaps, it is an exercise to ward off any negative publicity out of the attack on the School. Even otherwise, the statement from the Taliban spokesman clearly says that the ceasefire is aimed at the Afghan people celebrating Eid, than a part of political negotiations vis-à-vis the government.

### In perspective

Despite statements from the US and Europe, the future of the Afghan population is now left to themselves to defend. And it looks bleak, especially for the minorities – the Shias and the women. Second, despite the ceasefire announcement, the Taliban is unlikely to engage with the government. Its announcement should be seen as a public relations exercise, than a political roadmap.

## Scotland elections: SNP's win revives independence call, a united UK remains on edge

### In the news

On 9 May, the newly elected leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP) Nicola Sturgeon told British Prime Minister Boris Johnson that another referendum on independence was inevitable. Sturgeon was speaking after her party won another electoral victory for the fourth consecutive term. "The First Minister reiterated her intention to ensure that the people of Scotland can choose our own future when the COVID-19 crisis is over," the media office of Nicola Sturgeon said in a press statement. "(She) made clear that the question of a referendum is now a matter of when - not if," read the statement. However, a statement from Boris Johnson's Downing Street office after his talks with Sturgeon made no mention of the referendum. Johnson spoke to Sturgeon on the occasion of a summit where he invited the leaders of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland to discuss how the four nations, including England, can together overcome "shared challenges."

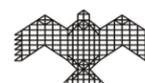
On 8 May, SNP emerged as the leading party with 64 seats, just one short of an overall majority. Together with its Green allies, who won eight and also favour independence, SNP is likely to control the agenda for independence in Scotland.

### Issues at large

First, the rekindling of the idea of independent Scotland. SNP's win only brings to the fore the deep-seated demands for independence among the Scots from the UK. In its pre-election manifesto, SNP had pledged to hold a new Scottish independence referendum. In the 2014 plebiscite, Scotland voted by a margin of 55 per cent to 45 per cent to remain united with the UK. However, ever since the 2016 referendum in the UK, which culminated with Brexit, the desire for complete autonomy among the Scots have pushed the support for another referendum. The Scots had opposed the decision to move out of the EU in 2016 by more than 62 per cent.

Second, call for a second plebiscite and leadership of SNP. The call for the second plebiscite has become stronger under Boris Johnson, who is widely disliked in Scotland, and his steadfast persuasion of hard-line Brexit has dented the economy of Scotland. The resultant has been disruption to exporters, and in particular, Scotland's fish and shellfish industries lost the benefits of free trade with the EU. This has further angered the Scots, and the discontent received its political momentum with SNP's Nicola Sturgeon. She reiterated the high handedness of Westminster, represented by Boris Johnson, in denying them a second plebiscite under the 1998 Scotland Act. Sturgeon's leadership has borne her another public mandate which today has become the mandate for independence.

Third, Brexit rejuvenates Scottish nationalism. Johnson and his predecessors have long argued that the issue was settled in the 2014 referendum. However, the situation drastically changed with Brexit. The 62 per cent opposition votes towards the divorce in Scotland essentially rekindled a sense of being denied a voice in the Brexit process. The SNP had strongly argued that Scotland was being pulled out of the EU against its 'democratic will,' when in all reality, Britain chose its nationalist interest to be independent of the EU. The election outcome is likely to be a bitter clash between the Scottish government in Edinburgh and Johnson's administration in London, with the nationalists arguing on democratic authority and the conservatives siding with the law as a defensive tool.



### In perspective

First, in the long term, another referendum is probably a complicated and costly event for both Scotland and Britain. With the Scottish nationalists dominating the Parliament, it will be difficult for the British conservatives to duck the calls for a plebiscite. SNP has crafted its political argument for independence, urging that its legal sanctity is only a matter of time. But the British government is attempting to win the political argument for union through the legal lens. If Sturgeon forces the plebiscite, Johnson could settle it in the UK Supreme Court.

Second, the fears that call for independence in Scotland could tear through the UK may probably be an overstretch as the systemic rules are deep-seated (as one could observe in the post-Brexit scenario). The fears that Northern Ireland, which also voted to remain in the EU in 2016, may also witness similar support for reunification could most likely also remain rhetoric.

## Also, from around the world

By Apoorva Sudhakar and Abigail Miriam Fernandez

### Peace and Conflict from East and Southeast Asia

#### China: Slowest population growth in census raises worries about an ageing population

On 11 May, the government released the seventh national census data. The data showed that the population grew at 0.53 per cent over the decade from 2010, thereby bringing the mainland population to 1.41 billion as of 2020. This was the slowest growth rate recorded and is expected to decline in the coming years. The head of the National Bureau of Statistics attributed low fertility to social and economic development. However, he added: "Data shows the aging of the Chinese population has further deepened, and we will continue to face the pressure to achieve long-term balanced population development."

#### Australia-China: Global Times retaliates to report alleging China's interest in weaponizing coronaviruses

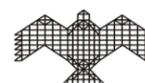
On 9 May, the Global Times responded to a news report published by The Australian. The latter referred to documents obtained by the US State Department in 2015, alleging that Chinese scientists were deliberating on weaponizing the coronaviruses. The documents linked to the People's Liberation Army (PLA), allegedly outlined the possibility of using the SARS virus as a bioweapon and suggested World War III be fought with similar weapons. However, Global Times rejected this and accused The Australian of "twisting the book's contents to support its own conspiracy theory that China was engaged in weaponizing the novel coronavirus." It said The Australian was criticized by Chinese netizens and experts "for losing its professional ethics by drawing any possible clues to back its own political narrative."

#### New Zealand: Open to a mature relationship with China, says Foreign Minister

On 7 May, the Foreign Minister said New Zealand looks forward to a mature relationship with China that provides space for disagreement, especially on human rights issues. Her statement comes after all parties unanimously supported a motion on 5 May stating that several human rights abuses took place against the Uighurs in China's Xinjiang province. However, the Chinese embassy refuted the accusations and said: "Using Xinjiang-related issues to pressure China is futile and will only undermine mutual trust between the two sides." The embassy also termed it an interference into China's internal affairs.

#### Myanmar: Military leadership declares NUG a terrorist group

On 8 May, Reuters referred to state-controlled media and reported that the military government in Myanmar had declared the National Unity Government a terrorist group. Additionally, the CRPH, which is a committee of ousted lawmakers, will be charged under the anti-terrorism law. Reuters cited the state television MRTV announcement: "Their acts caused so much terrorism in many places...There were bombs, fires, murder and threats to destroy the administrative mechanism of the government." Meanwhile, a Myanmar Teachers' Federation member said at least 11,000 academics and university staff had been suspended following their opposition to the military rule.



### **Indonesia: Supreme Court reverses hijab ban in school**

On 11 May, The Australian reported that the Supreme Court had struck down a government order which banned "schools from enforcing the hijab as part of their uniform" in February. However, after the SC's ruling on 5 May, girls who removed their jilbab were warned of "nationwide bullying and threats." The decision came after the Minangkabau Customary Institution challenged the ban imposed in February citing that it went against the customs of the region.

### **Taiwan: The US calls for inclusion of Taiwan in WHA forum**

On 7 May, a press release from the US State Department pushed for the inclusion of Taiwan in the World Health Assembly. The statement called on "the WHO Director-General to invite Taiwan to participate as an observer at the WHA – as it has in previous years" before the Chinese government raised objections. However, the Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman termed this move a "political manipulation" by the US. Further, she said: "I want to emphasize once again that the Taiwan issue concerns China's core interests. China has no room for compromise."

### Peace and Conflict from South Asia

#### **Bangladesh: Beijing threatens Dhaka against joining Quad**

On 11 May, Times of India reported that Chinese ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming stated that bilateral ties would be "substantially damaged" if Bangladesh engaged with the Quad saying: "We do not want any form of participation of Bangladesh in this alliance." Further, he added that Beijing sees the Quad as an anti-China grouping. In response, Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said: "It is absurd to answer these questions. It's up to us whether we do it or not. And none of us were invited to the Quad, nor did we show interest; None of us told. They (China) can only give their opinion as an independent and sovereign state."

#### **The Maldives: Former president Nasheed injured in a blast**

On 6 May, former President of the Maldives, Mohamed Nasheed was injured in a suspected bomb blast in Male. The attack has been termed as an act of terrorism. According to the police, a homemade explosive device planted on a motorbike was detonated as Nasheed was about to get into a car outside his home. Further, a team from the Australian Federal Police (AFP) force is set to help in the investigation.

#### **India: WHO classifies COVID variant in India as "variant of concern"**

On 10 May, the WHO stated that it is reclassifying the highly contagious triple-mutant COVID variant spreading in India as a "variant of concern," indicating that it has become a global health threat. This variant, B.1.617 was first designated as a variant under investigation (VUI) on 1 April by the UK health authorities who requested India to send samples of the strain to carry further studies. Previously, the Government of India said that this variant could be linked to a surge in the cases of coronavirus seen in some states.

### **Nepal: PM Oli loses the vote of confidence in Parliament**

On 10 May, Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli lost the vote of confidence in the House of Representatives. PM Oli secured 93 votes in favour and 124 against in the 271-member House of Representatives. Previously, Oli said that it was "unfortunate" that a government that "tirelessly worked for the country's development and nation-building" is being "targeted for narrow and partisan interests." This comes after the CPN (Maoist Centre) led by Pushpakamal Dahal "Prachanda" withdrew support to his government saying that the Oli government had breached the Constitution and that its recent activities posed a threat to the democratic process and national sovereignty.

### **Pakistan: Attacks along the Pak-Afghan border**

On 7 May, a soldier was injured after terrorists opened fire from across the Pak-Afghan border in the Bajaur district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after suspected terrorists opened fire on a military check post. Previously, on 5 May, four Frontier Corps soldiers were martyred while six others were injured after "terrorists from Afghanistan ambushed" them during a fencing activity along the Pak-Afghan border in the Manzakai sector in Balochistan's Zhob.

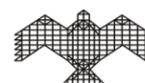
### Peace and Conflict from Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

#### **Iran-Saudi Arabia: Tehran confirms talks with Riyadh aimed at de-escalation of tensions**

On 10 May, Iran confirmed its talks with Saudi Arabia; the Foreign Ministry spokesperson said: "De-escalation of tensions between the two Muslim countries in the Persian Gulf region is in the interest of both nations and the region." Previously, on 7 May, the head of policy planning at the Saudi Arabian Foreign Ministry had conveyed a similar sentiment but cautioned against definitive conclusions saying "it is too early, and premature" to do so. He added: "Our evaluation will be based on verifiable deeds, and not proclamations." Prior to this, on 5 May, the Iraqi President had said that Iraq had hosted officials from both countries more than once for talks.

#### **Iraq: Report submitted to UNSC confirms ISIL role in the genocide of Yazidis**

On 10 May, an investigative report submitted to the UNSC said "clear and compelling evidence" against the ISIL confirmed its role in the genocide of the Yazidi minority in 2014. The Yazidis are an ethno-religious minority, mostly settled in northwest Iraq. The head of the investigating team said the ISIL had also developed chemical weapons and used mustard gas with an intention of destroying the Yazidis "physically and biologically." He said: "Thousands more were enslaved, with women and children abducted from their families and subjected to the most brutal abuses, including serial rape and other forms of unendurable sexual violence...often leading to death."



### Turkey: Turkish forces kill 19 PKK terrorists, say ministries

On 9 May, the Interior Ministry and the Defense Ministry announced that Turkish forces had killed 19 PKK terrorists in separate operations in northern Iraq. The Defense Ministry said the Turkish Armed Forces and the National Intelligence Organization coordinated an operation in which eight were killed. Similarly, eight were killed in the Claw-Lightning operation. The Interior Ministry said three were killed in Operation Eren-14. Operations targeting the PKK hideouts and bases began on 23 April.

### Turkey-Saudi Arabia: Turkish Foreign Minister arrives in Riyadh

On 10 May, the Turkish Foreign Minister arrived in Saudi Arabia for a two-day visit "to discuss bilateral relations and important regional issues, especially the attacks at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the oppression against the Palestinian people." This is his first visit to Riyadh following Jamal Khashoggi's murder in 2018, after which relations between the two countries deteriorated. Daily Sabah reported: "A foreign diplomat in Riyadh told Reuters that the Saudis wanted to use the Turkish drones against Iran-aligned Houthi fighters in Yemen, and would discuss buying Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drones."

### Yemen: PM visits Marib; the UN envoy warns of continuing conflict

On 5 May, the Prime Minister visited Marib city to boost the confidence of government troops amid attacks by the Houthis. He met government and military officials and said: "History is being written now in Marib. All of Yemen is following Marib and we came to Marib to be part of this important moment ... the state and its capabilities are with you." On the same day, the UN envoy for Yemen expressed doubts over reaching an agreement to cease the fighting. He acknowledged the support from the international community but reiterated that "the war continues unabated and causes immense suffering to the civilian population."

### South Sudan: President reconstitutes assembly as per 2018 peace agreement

On 10 April, the President reconstituted the Transitional National Legislative Assembly with 550 representatives to implement the 2018 peace deal. On 8 May, the President had announced the dissolution of the previous Parliament, therefore, paving the way for an inclusive government. The new assembly will include 332 members from the ruling party, 128 from the vice president's party, and the rest from other parties across the country. Various organizations and activists have welcomed the move; Aljazeera quoted the South Sudan Civil Society Forum's head: "It is a welcome development and we hope that the dissolution [will] also open the way to a lengthy process towards reconstituting the parliament."

### **Ethiopia: Head of Orthodox Church accuses the government of genocide in Tigray**

On 8 May, Aljazeera reported accusations of genocide in the Tigray region, made by the head of the Orthodox Church against the Ethiopian government. The patriarch's accusations were conveyed through a video recorded in April in which he said he was previously blocked from speaking out against the atrocities in the region including the attack on churches, massacres, starvations and so on. He said: "They want to destroy the people of Tigray...It is not the fault of the Tigray people. The whole world should know it." The video was shot by the head of a US-based organization Bridges of Hope. A former foreign minister of Ethiopia appreciated the patriarch's video and said his statements "hold 'huge weight' inside and outside Ethiopia."

### **Nigeria: Gunmen kidnap ten people in Katsina state**

On 10 May, police said gunmen had kidnapped ten people, including women and children, from a mosque in Katsina state. Initially, 40 people had been kidnapped but the 30 were rescued. Meanwhile, on 5 May, 29 students were released from captivity after they had been kidnapped from a forestry college in Kaduna state in early March.

### **Nigeria: G7 pledge USD 389 million for Nigeria's northeast**

On 11 May, the G7 countries pledged USD 389 million assistance to those affected by Boko Haram in Nigeria's northeastern regions. Britain will be leading the initiative and will extend support to organizations like the UN for the same. A statement from the UK High Commission in Nigeria called for safe access of humanitarian agencies to the affected area where millions are suffering due to the instability. The British High Commissioner to Nigeria said: "It is vital we act now to avert further deterioration in the food security situation of millions of people affected by the conflict."

### **The Nile Dam: AU President's meeting on GERD fails again**

On 10 May, Anadolu Agency reported that Ethiopia had vowed to follow the African Union-led negotiations on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The development comes after the AU President's visit to Sudan, Egypt, and Ethiopia on 8 May did not achieve a breakthrough. The Foreign Ministry spokesman opined that though the US, EU, and the UN can join as observers, the AU will suffice to lead the negotiations. He said: "The impasse can be overcome by agreeing on the filling and operation of the dam. Then we can proceed to the other issues, including a comprehensive agreement."

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## Peace and Conflict from Europe and the Americas

### **Italy: Over 1000 migrants arrive on the island of Lampedusa**

On 9 May, several boats carrying over 1000 people was intercepted near the Italian island of Lampedusa, one of the main landing points for migrants and refugees to enter Europe. The Mayor of Lampedusa said: "migrants' arrivals are resuming alongside good weather," adding, "We need to restart discussions about the immigration issue." According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), since 2015, almost 530,000 migrants have reached Italian shores, with the majority arriving between 2015 and 2017. Further, according to the Ministry of the Interior, around 11,000 migrants landed on Italy's coasts from the start of 2021 to 7 May.

### **France: Macron leads a ceremony to commemorate National Day of the Abolition of Slavery**

On 10 May, President Emmanuel Macron led a ceremony in Paris to commemorate the National Day of the Abolition of Slavery and to pay tribute to the victims of the slave trade. The ceremony was also attended by members of the government's cabinet, including the interior minister, culture minister and others. Further, the country is also celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Taubira law, which in 2001 officially recognized slavery as a "crime against humanity."

### **Belarus: EU to impose a new round of sanctions**

On 10 May, EU High Representative Josep Borrell stated that the bloc will impose more sanctions on the Belarusian government for its persecution of the country's Polish minority. He said: "The Belarusian regime is continuing to use repressive means and to intimidate its citizens. Today the sights are set on the Polish minority. We are working on a new package of sanctions." Further, he said: "We are working on the next sanctions package, which I hope will be adopted in the coming weeks."

### **Russia: Putin vows to 'firmly' defend Russian interests on 76th WWII Victory Day**

On 9 May, President Vladimir Putin vowed to "firmly" defend national interests and denounced the return of "Russophobia." Putin was making this statement as the country marked the 76th anniversary of victory in World War II. He said: "Russia consistently defends international law. At the same time, we will firmly defend our national interests to ensure the safety of our people." Commemorating the day, more than 12,000 military personnel took part in the parade along with 190 pieces of military equipment and 76 fighter jets and helicopters.

### **Colombia: Protesters and government hold the initial meeting, but no progress**

On 10 May, a meeting between Colombian protest leaders and President Ivan Duque ended with no substantial progress on curbing nearly two weeks of anti-government protests. The protest leaders stated that the government had not shown empathy for their demands. However, the government said that the meeting was exploratory and that it wanted to reach agreements with demonstrators. On the same day, the defence blamed illegal armed groups for looting and vandalism during the street protest.

### **The US: Drought emergency declared across California**

On 10 May, the Governor of California, Gavin Newsom, declared a drought emergency in most of the state. The state of emergency covers about 30 per cent of the state's population across 39 additional counties. The drought is expected to worsen the fire season in the state, decrease available water for agriculture and present threats for fish and wildlife habitats. This comes after Newsom first declared a drought emergency in Sonoma and Mendocino counties due to the severe lack of rainfall.

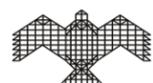
### **The US: Cyberattack on gas pipeline**

On 7 May, the Colonial Pipeline, one of the nation's largest pipelines, said that it had temporarily shut down all its operations after learning it had been hit by a ransomware attack. According to the FBI, the attack was carried out by an organized crime group called DarkSide. The shutdown of such crucial pipelines, however, highlights the vulnerability of ageing infrastructure that has been connected, directly or indirectly, to the internet.

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### **About the authors**

Jeshil Samuel J is a postgraduate scholar from the Department of International Studies, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) currently enrolled at the NIAS Online Certificate Course on Contemporary Peace Processes, Thinkers and Theories. Sourina Bej is a doctoral candidate at the University of Bonn, Germany. D. Suba Chandran is Professor and Dean; Apoorva Sudhakar and Abigail Miriam Fernandez are Research Associates at the School of Conflict and Security Studies in NIAS.



**IPRI Conflict Weekly**  
Research | Review | Forecast

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

IPRI Conflict Weekly #52, 07 January 2021, Vol.2, No.01

**GCC lifts Qatar blockade, Iran decides to enrich uranium, Argentina legalizes abortion, French soldiers targeted in Mali, and the AFSPA extended in India's Northeast**

Poornima Balasubramanian, Lakshmi V Menon, Aparajita Pandey, Apoorva Sudhakar, Sourina Bej, and Abigail Miriam Fernandez



A Gulf rapprochement: A step towards solidarity and stability as Arab leaders move to thaw relation with Qatar (Image Source: Al Jazeera)

**The Gulf Reconciliation: Blockade against Qatar lifted but the GCC crisis far from over**

*In the news*  
On 5 January, the Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani headed to Al-Ula in Saudi Arabia, accepting an invitation from the Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz to attend the 41st Gulf Summit. On 4 January, the Abu Samra border between Qatar and Saudi Arabia was opened after more than three years of blockade.

The summit witnessed the 'solidarity and stability' deal (also referred to as the Al-Ula statement) that calls for the end of the diplomatic blockade with Qatar and paves the way to wider negotiation space to extinguish the tensions with Doha. The deal was welcomed by

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IPRI Conflict Weekly#53, 14 January 2021, Vol.2, No.02

**Trump impeached by the US House, Hazara miners buried in Pakistan, Farm laws stayed in India, and the Crisis escalation in CAR**

D Suba Chandran, Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Alok K Gupta, Apoorva Sudhakar and Sourina Bej



Is there a light at the end of the Trump presidency? The House has impeached President Trump for the second time; security is getting strengthened with more troops being sent to secure the Capitol Hill (Image Source: WSJ)

**The US: Trump impeached by the House, as a disorderly transition looms large**

*In the news*  
On 13 January 2021, the US House impeached President Donald Trump for the second time. The vote was passed with a majority with 232-197; ten Republicans joined the Democrats in passing the vote. Nancy Pelosi, the House Speaker, was quoted stating: "We know that the

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

IPRI Conflict Weekly #55, 28 January 2021, Vol.2, No.04

**Farmers' protests in India, Vaccine Wars, another India-China border standoff, and Navalny's imprisonment**

Alok Gupta, Sourina Bej, Sukanya Bali and Harini Madhusudan



Farmers' protest in India turns violent: On 26 January 2021, the farmers who have been protesting on the outskirts of New Delhi, decided to organise a tractor rally; it turned violent later. (Image Source: The Indian Express)

**India: Farmers' protest turns violent with a political game of double-speak**

*In the news*  
On 26 January, the farmers' protest turned violent on New Delhi's streets, after two months of their commencement. The outrage was massive and unprecedented; reportedly, 200,000 tractors were mobilized against the permission of 5,000 tractors for the rally and flouted the routes specified by the administration. The protestors and the police clashed after protestors removed the barricades to enter Central Delhi. They successfully entered Delhi, destroyed

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IPRI Conflict Weekly #60, 4 March 2021, Vol.2, No.09

### From Myanmar and Hong Kong in Asia to Nigeria in Africa: Seven conflicts this week

Aparupa Bhattacharjee, Apoorva Sudhakar, Harini Madhusudan, Sukanya Bali, Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Joshil Samuel J and Diney Adilaka



This week witnessed violence in Myanmar, as the security forces retaliated with force; more than 50 were killed during the last seven days. (Image Source: DW/Reuters)

#### Myanmar: Deadliest week since the Coup

[In the news](#)

On 28 February, according to the United Nations, Myanmar's security force killed 18 and injured 30 in their attempt to clampdown the protest.

On 27 February, the government removed Myanmar's ambassador to the United Nations for his speech in the General Assembly where he had sought international assistance to restore democracy.

On 2 March, in a video conference court hearing, there were two more new charges against Aung San Suu Kyi. These charges will extend Suu Kyi's prison term to a total of nine years.

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IPRI Conflict Weekly #61, 11 March 2021, Vol.2, No.10

### Women's Day, Swiss Referendum, Myanmar Violence, George Floyd Trial and Lebanon Protests

Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Harini Madhusudan, Aparupa Bhattacharjee, D Suba Chandran and Apoorva Sudhakar



Women's Day was observed across the world; different regions/countries focussed on different issues relating to women. Protests continue in Myanmar against the military regime. (Image Source: Reuters/BBC)

#### International Women's Day: Women across the world #ChooseToChallenge

[In the news](#)

On 8 March, the world commemorated International Women's Day, celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women while calling for action for accelerating gender parity. The campaign theme for International Women's Day 2021 was 'Choose To Challenge.' The theme explains a challenging world as an alert world, as a society one can choose to challenge and call out gender bias and inequality as well as choose to seek out and celebrate women's achievements. Thus, collectively helping to create an inclusive world. The theme highlights that from challenge comes change, thereby urging society to #ChooseToChallenge.

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IPRI Conflict Weekly #62, 18 March 2021, Vol.2, No.11

### Gender Protests in Australia, Expanding Violence in Myanmar and Anti-protests bill in the UK

Avishka Ashok, Aparupa Bhattacharjee and Sourina Bej



Australian women assemble in thousands to protest against sexual violence and demand the removal of perpetrators (Image Source: NYT)

#### Australia: Women fight against sexual violence

[In the news](#)

On 15 March, close to 80,000 people participated in the March4Justice protests, which took shape in 40 local events spread across Australia. The organization urged the public to sign a petition which demands four actions from the government: independent and timely investigation into all cases of gendered violence; complete execution of all recommendations in the Australian Human Rights Commissioner's Respect at Work report; lift public funding for addressing gendered violence; and enactment of a federal gender equality act that will audit parliamentary practices.

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IPRI Conflict Weekly #63, 25 March 2021, Vol.1, No.12

### Sanctions on China, Saudi Arabia ceasefire in Yemen, the UNHRC resolution on Sri Lanka, and a massacre in Niger

Harini Madhusudan, Poornima B, Akriti Sharma and Apoorva Sudhakar



The war in Yemen (Image Source: BBC)

#### The US and allies sanction China; Beijing retaliates

[In the news](#)

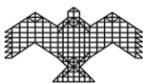
On 22 March, the US, UK, European Union, and Canada announced sanctions against four officials, former and current, in the Xinjiang province for alleged human rights abuses. The US had placed sanctions on two of the officials back in July 2020. The sanctions have also been placed on the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, an economic and paramilitary organization from the region. On the same day, China announced the imposition of sanctions on 10 European Union citizens, and four EU entities, calling the sanctions a "gross interference" in its internal affairs and a violation of international law.

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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.



### 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. 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.



**Editor:** D. Suba Chandran

**Assistant Editors:** Abigail Miriam Fernandez & Apoorva Sudhakar