

Conflict Weekly

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A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

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President Rajapaksa's resignation and the economic crisis in Sri Lanka, and the military's withdrawal in Sudan

Shavini de silva, Nimmi Jayathilake, and Padmashree Anandhan



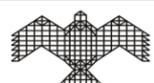
After President Gotabaya Rajapaksa flees Sri Lanka, as people continue to protest. (Image Source: REUTERS/Dinuka Liyanawatte)

SPECIAL

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Sri Lanka: The resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa

In the news

On 13 July, in a television briefing, Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena stated that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had confirmed his resignation via a phone call. He added: “With regards to an official document signifying it, I was told that it would reach me within the day today.” President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had left Sri Lanka to the Maldives. Hours after that, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe was appointed as the acting President.

On the same day, a crowd in Colombo from different parts of the island demanded that Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe also step down. The crowd chanted: “We don’t want the robber Ranil, the bank thief, the deal thief!. Sri Lankan forces used tear gas at a massive scale to disperse the crowds throughout the day. At least 30 people were injured and one dead. The protestors breached the gate of his office and occupied the place, and vowed to stay at the PM’s office till his withdrawal from the position.

On 14 July, Gotabaya Rajapaksa sent the resignation letter through an email. Since Gotabaya faced protests in the Maldives, he has now been allowed inside Singapore as a “private visit” without any appeal for asylum.

Issues at large

First, the long-term economic mismanagement and large-scale corruption. The politicians and businessmen have been influential in Sri Lanka’s deterioration for years. In 1977, when Sri Lanka opened its doors to an open economy, its imports kept increasing while the exports remained at the same limited industries depriving the country of creating new sources of income. Since the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa has been repeatedly accepting loans from China that led the country to fall into a debt trap.

Second, the failure of leadership. The political decisions taken by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa have been the key cause of Sri Lanka facing the dollar crisis. Since the government decided to hold the dollar at a fixed rate. Sri Lankan foreign employees began to send their remittances through unofficial means such as ‘undiyal’ and ‘hawala’. When Sri Lanka’s foreign currency shortages became a serious problem in early 2021, the government tried to limit them by banning imports of chemical fertilizer. Farmers were encouraged to use locally sourced organic fertilizers instead. This led to widespread crop failure. Sri Lanka had to supplement its food stocks from abroad, which made its foreign currency shortage even worse and led to an ultimate food crisis.

Third, quantitative easing and increased inflation rates. President Rajapaksa, in early 2019 introduced a tax cut in favour of top businessmen in Colombo; this made the government lose an income of more than 1.4 billion dollars a year. The government continued to print money to pay employees’ salaries and other state maintenance activities kept boosting its inflation rate and led to constant price hikes. Today, the citizens are deprived of their access to basic needs as the country does not have enough foreign currency to import fuel, gas and medicine. Essential services like public transportation and medical services do not function properly. Fuel and gas queues have been elongating for days.

In perspective

First, the need for a new system. In the short term, an interim government of political intellectuals should be appointed for six months to address the basic needs of Sri Lankan citizens with food, fuel, gas, and medicine.

Second, legal actions should be taken against the Rajapaksas on corruption charges to bring back the stolen money that belongs to the public. A new system should be introduced to end the corruption chain in Sri Lanka for years and pave the way for young educated leaders to take roles in the functioning of the government.

Third, after six months, an election should be held to bring in a new government to the parliament.

Sri Lanka: Continuing economic crisis

In the news

On 9 July 2022, an estimated 100,000 protestors demanding the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa gathered outside his official residence. They swarmed in by breaching the security barricades and entered the President's house.

The protestors also broke into the Prime Minister's official residence (the Temple Trees); his private residence was set on fire. Later, Sri Lanka's speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardene announced the decision of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resign.

Issues at large

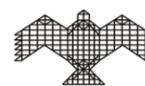
First, the compounded economic crisis. Allegations were mainly on mismanagement of economy and inflation. Beyond accusing the Rajapaksas of corruption, reports condemn the economic mismanagement by successive governments that has weakened Sri Lanka's public finances; this, in turn, has led to excess levels of national expenditure and a deficit in the production of tradable goods and services. The situation worsened when deep tax cuts were initiated when Rajapaksa returned in 2019. A few months later, the COVID-19 pandemic struck; the pandemic demolished most of Sri Lanka's revenue. The industry was affected the most, including the productive tourism. Besides, the remittances from abroad dropped; rising levels of the foreign exchange rate further compounded Sri Lanka's economic crisis.

Second, the depletion of foreign exchange reserves, following deficit and bad credit ratings. The rating agencies grew apprehensive about government finances in Sri Lanka and its inability to pay large foreign debts; this, in turn, reduced Sri Lanka's credit ratings from 2020 onwards. Sri Lanka got locked out of financial international markets. To balance the economy, the government utilized its foreign exchange reserves consuming by more than 70 per cent within two years.

Third, the failure to take timely remedial. It failed to initiate productive measures to prevent the economy from deteriorating further, including the initial holding off talks with the IMF. The opposition leaders and financial experts urged the government to take measures since 2020; the government did not respond to them, hoping post-pandemic, the remittances would retrieve and tourism industry get revived. Later, when it was evident that the crisis was worsening, the government was compelled to seek aid from countries like India and China. India responded by distributing billions of dollars in loans to help pay for important supplies; China stated that it would help restructure the island nation's debt. Sri Lanka had to eventually open talks with IMF during its worst stage.

In perspective

First, people should elect a new government with a new constitution. The new government should comply with the basic needs of Sri Lankans and should stabilize ways to pay off the



country's remaining debts. The new government should negotiate closely with international institutions such as the IMF, G7 and World Bank, willing to help restructure the country.

Second, selecting the right people for the right job. The Rajapaksa regime was known for appointing people unqualified or those related to the Rajapaksas. The new government should appoint people with experience and the educational qualifications that are required.

Third, Sri Lanka should reconsider the Executive Presidency; power and functions should be distributed within the parliament.

Fourth, following up with the mistakes of the previous regime. The new government should recover the stolen funds and be used to pay off the country's outstanding debts.

Sudan: Military steps down, following protests

In the news

On 30 June, thousands of Sudanese gathered to mark the third anniversary of mass protests that took place when the former autocratic leader Omar al-Bashir was toppled in a coup. This led to the creation of a power-sharing agreement between the civilian groups and the military. Nine demonstrators were killed by the police forces.

On 04 July, Sudan's coup leader Lt Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan announced that the army would no longer involve in talks mediated by the UN or any regional bloc. He asked the revolutionary and civilian groups to henceforth engage in establishing the transition government. In a statement al-Burhan said: "I call on the various components of the people, especially the youth, to adhere to peace. Everyone has the right to express their opinion, and your sacrifices are appreciated, and your hopes for a democratic transition are fulfilled. Your armed forces will not stand in its way." On the same, UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet said: "I again stress to the Sudanese authorities that force should be used only when strictly necessary and in full compliance with the principles of legality, necessity, precaution, and proportionality."

Issues at large

First, military's tactical withdrawal. The announcement of the coup leader was aimed to convince and act as a cover to put down the increasing objection amongst the people and revolutionary groups against the military. On the sidelines, the military has vowed to step down only from the process of forming the transitional government while still having its clutches through government institutions such as the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, an alternative to the Sovereignty council and lucrative industries. The decision can also be seen as a way to shift the blame on the booming economic crisis, and political impasse and highlight the divisions within the civilian groups.

Second, the reaction of the protest groups. The protestors consist of pre-democracy groups, and resistance committees; some of the well-known include the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF), and Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC). They have been demanding that the military completely disengage from government institutions and Sudan's political and economic systems. Although the announcement gives an opportunity for them to form the transitional government, there is high uncertainty amongst the groups on the Sudan military's stand. Besides, there is a divide at the institutional level where they feel the decision was highly influenced by the hard left and communists, marginalising the conservative Islamic voices.

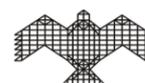
Third, international responses. The UN announced its withdrawal in 2021 in line with the African Union and Intergovernmental Authority on Development. It has been trying to mediate talks between civilian groups and the Military, but since its withdrawal, the mediation process has been weak. Apart from the international organization, the US, UK, and Norway have decided to launch a Sudanese dialogue, a three-way talk to initiate negotiation after the military withdraws.

In perspective

First, derailed process towards forming transition government. When the military overthrew Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok in 2021, it assured forming a democratic transition government and promised to stay until such transition government was formed with civilians and revolutionary groups.

Second, the political divide. The faultlines between the left, communist and conservative Muslims in the “Sovereignty Council,” has led the military to reason it to bring a new type of supreme council, therefore the split within the civilian groups have also barred Sudan from furthering its political impasse.

Third, the role of international powers. The UN withdrawal is a major setback for Sudan, especially when the military is using force and torture practices to put down the people protesting against its leadership. Other countries - the US, the UK and Norway have come forward to help Sudan establish its transition government, but only upon withdrawal of the military. With the military holding control over Sudan’s political and key industries, the success of such dialogue or mediation is narrow.



Also, from around the world

By Avishka Ashok, Sruthi Sadhasivam, Vijay Anand Panigrahi, Akriti Sharma, Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Rashmi BR, Apoorva Sudhakar, Padmashree Anandhan, Sejal Sharma, and Lavanya Ravi

East and Southeast Asia

China: Foreign Minister addresses the Secretariat, calls for open regionalism and stability in Taiwan

On 11 July, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi addressed the ASEAN Secretariat and spoke about the country's achievements in partnership with the regional organization and proposed for jointly upholding regionalism in Southeast Asia. Wang Yi referred to China's relationship with the ASEAN countries and noted: "We are always good neighbors, good friends and good partners with a shared future." On the issue of maritime issues in the South China Sea and the question of sovereignty over Taiwan, Wang Yi said that positive progress was being made through the implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. On Taiwan, Wang Yi said: "History and past experience prove that when the one-China principle is fully recognized and followed, there will be able to achieve peaceful development across the Taiwan Strait. And when the one-China principle is challenged or even undermined, there will be tension in the Taiwan Strait."

Japan: China urges to remember past mistakes as LDP wins a two-thirds majority in elections

On 11 July, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin called on Japan to revisit its history and draw lessons from its past after the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan achieved a two-thirds majority in the upper house of the Diet. The LDP has been advocating a change in the post-war constitution of Japan and urging the country to give more power to its defence forces. Wang Yi reiterated China's willingness to cooperate with Japan and promote beneficial relations but urged the country against going back to its Imperialist past. Wang said: "Because of historical reasons, the change of Constitution in Japan is followed closely by the international community, especially Japan's Asian neighbors."

China: Police arrest criminal gang for fleeing with depositors' money

On 10 July, a large crowd of bank depositors' protests turned into a faceoff with the police authorities as some were forcibly taken away to prevent further mobilization of the demonstrations. The protestors held banners and chanted slogans in front of the Central Bank in Zhengzhou province. One of the protestors said: "We came today and wanted to get our savings back, because I have elderly people and children at home, and the inability to withdraw savings has seriously affected my life." The protestors are victims of a bank scam who are now unable to withdraw their deposits from six local banks as the head of the bank's parent company had run away with the money. Soon after the protests, the police arrested members of a criminal gang for their involvement in the scam. The police said: "We came today and wanted to get our savings back, because I have elderly people and children at home, and the inability to withdraw savings has seriously affected my life."

Taiwan: Chief of Staff demands the US stop colluding against China

On 8 July, the Asahi Shimbun reported on a virtual meeting between the Chinese and US military where the former demanded the latter to stop its collaborations with Taiwan. The meeting was attended by the Joint Chiefs of Staffs of the two countries. China's Chief of Staff Gen. Li Zuocheng addressed the US Chief of Staff Gen Mark Milley and said: "China demands the US to cease reversing history, cease US-Taiwan military collusion and avoid impacting China-U.S. ties and stability in the Taiwan Strait." Li took a stand against the US interference

in its core interests and explained that China has no room for compromise. Li further warned that the country would firmly counterattack any actions from foreign countries and resolutely safeguard its national sovereignty.

Thailand: Blinken criticises ASEAN for its minimal response to repression in Myanmar

On 10 July, Blinken lashed out at Myanmar's Junta leaders for suppressing the opposition and exacerbating the "grim humanitarian situation" in the country. He also censured ASEAN for not being proactive in pressurising the Junta government to embrace democratic transition in Myanmar. Blinken reproached ASEAN countries' failure to hold the military regime accountable and make the latter adopt the "five-point plan." With Thailand, Blinken sought to enhance strategic cooperation and supply chain resilience by signing two cooperation agreements with the latter. The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, said: "U.S. and Thailand share the same goal of a free, open, interconnected prosperous, resilient and secure Indo-Pacific." Lastly, Blinken is expected to visit Japan to express condolence over the death of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

China: Discusses on abuse against indigenous groups at 50th session of Human Rights Council

On 7 July, the Global Times reported that the Chinese Permanent Representative to the United Nations had taken up the issue of mutilation and abuse against indigenous children at the 50th session of the Human Rights Council. China called for a thorough investigation into the crimes against indigenous groups on behalf of Belarus, Bolivia, Burundi, Cameroon, North Korea, Iran, Myanmar, Russia, Sierra Leone, Syria, and Venezuela. The representative called for justice and expressed its concerns over the human rights violations in certain countries. The joint statement read out by China said: "Some countries have conducted mass killings of indigenous people in history. They forcibly took indigenous children away from their families and communities to the so-called "residential schools," where indigenous children were deprived of their identity and cultural recognition with bans on traditional costumes, language and culture, and many died of hunger, disease, corporal punishment or sexual violence."

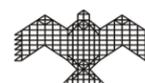
South Asia

Nepal: India imports cement from the neighbour for the first time ever

On 9 July, Nepal exported its first-ever cement consignment of 3000 bags to India. Nawalparasi district's Palpa Cement Industry shipped the first batch through the Sunauli border after completing all the governmental procedures. The industry produces cement under the brand name Tansen and has the capacity of making 3,000 metric tonnes of the same every day. Since the Indian government announced an eight per cent subsidy on cement export, many Nepali cement industries have become keen on exporting their cement to India. Nepal, which has the potential to export cement worth NPR 150 billion, faces problems due to a lack of market. However, this new export opportunity can help Nepali products to compete in the international market.

India: Flash floods in Jammu and Kashmir

On 9 July, the authorities in the J&K had to halt the Amarnath pilgrimage in the Himalayas due to the landslide and flash floods triggered by heavy rains. Sixteen people were killed, and thousands were shifted to makeshift camps. Civilian and military helicopters were deployed for rescue operations. Indian military, paramilitary forces, and disaster management officials were deployed to look for missing pilgrims.



Afghanistan: Ahmad Massoud stresses on political dialogue to solve the current Afghan problems

On 12 July, *Tolo News* reported that the leader of the Resistance Front, Ahmad Massoud, stressed the need for a political dialogue to help address the current Afghan problems. He said, “We have shared our concerns with all western and eastern countries regarding Afghanistan. The situation in Afghanistan needs serious assessment, it needs serious attention. Afghanistan needs to reach political stability through any kind of pressure. The Taliban or any other group should find a political solution in cooperation with the region and the world to solve the problems of Afghanistan, otherwise, the problems in Afghanistan can once again reach out to the region and world.” Further, he stated that until an agreement is reached with the Taliban government, they have no other option than to stand against them.

Pakistan: 160 people killed due to torrential rains across the country

On 12 July, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) warned of urban flooding and landslides as new weather forecasts of vigorous monsoon and torrential rains are set to hit the country. This comes, as 150 people have been killed in rain-related incidents over the last month across Pakistan. The NDMA has asked the federal and provincial governments to take the necessary arrangements to ensure the pre-placement of emergency equipment and timely evacuation of people from low-lying and flood-prone areas in case of blockage, road closure and damage.

Middle East and Africa

Lebanon: Government plans repatriation of the Syrian refugees

On 6 July, Lebanon caretaker Minister of the Displaced said that the country is planning to repatriate thousands of Syrian refugees. He stated that the government is “serious about implementing this plan” and they “hope to do so within months.” The UN High Commission for Refugees and human rights organizations have long opposed the forced repatriation which will expose millions once again to conflict and war. However, Lebanon, which hosts approximately 1.5 million Syrian refugees, one of the highest numbers in the world, states the domestic economic and security conditions for repatriation.

Syria: Russian veto chokes millions in Northwest Syria

On 8 July, Russia vetoed the UNSC resolution on extending the cross-border aid at the Bab al-Hawa in the Syria-Turkey border. Agreement on the resolution would have allowed passage of aid to approximately four million Syrian refugees and internally displaced, without the consent of President Bashar al-Assad, a close Russian ally. At the request of the UN, the aid agencies, and Turkey’s President Erdogan, Russia agreed on a six-month extension, a proposal that was initially unacceptable to the West. The war-torn Northwest part of Syria suffers from a severe humanitarian crisis and survives on the food provided by the UN and humanitarian organizations, which is also much below the requirements.

Syria: The US says it killed an important ISIL leader in Syria

On 12 July, the US CENTCOM released a statement on killing Maher al-Agal, one of the top five ISIL leaders, and seriously injuring another leader of the group by conducting drone strikes in Northwestern Syria. CENTCOM chose not to name the latter. It said that al-Agal was involved in expanding ISIL’s networks beyond Iraq and Syria and posed a threat to the US and its partners.

Yemen: UN removes Yemeni army from the list of violators of child rights

On 12 July, the Yemeni army of the internationally recognized government was removed from the list of child rights violators in war-torn countries. The UN Chief said that “In Yemen, the

government forces, including the Yemen Armed Forces, have been delisted for the violation of recruitment and use of children owing to progress in the implementation of their action plan, and to the significant decrease in the number of cases of this violation.” The government welcomed this move and said that it is “full of keenness to protect children” and take measures to end recruitment of children in armed conflicts. The report continued listing the Houthis, for violating child rights and recruiting them in large numbers for their fight.

South Africa: 19 killed in two separate shooting incidents

On 9 July, 19 people were killed in two different mass shootings in Soweto township and KwaZulu-Natal province. In the first incident, four people were killed and eight injured in a shooting at a bar in KwaZulu-Natal province. The local police said two suspects entered the bar and started shooting randomly. Later, 15 people were shot dead and eight wounded at a tavern in Soweto township near Johannesburg.

Togo: Seven children die in a blast in Tone Prefecture

On 10 July, seven children were killed in a blast in Togo’s northernmost region, Tone Prefecture. The army said two more were injured. This is the second major attack since the first one in May wherein eight soldiers were killed in an attack on a security outpost near the border with Burkina Faso. Stating the insecurity from “terrorist attacks,” on 13 June, the president signed a decree to declare a state of emergency in the northern region.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Clashes with M23 rebels intensify in the east

On 7 July, clashes between the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s army and M23 rebels intensified in the east. The development comes a day after presidents of DRC and Rwanda, Felix Tshisekedi and Paul Kagame agreed to de-escalate tensions. The M23 spokesperson termed the agreement irrelevant and said: “We are Congolese, not Rwandan. If there's a ceasefire, it can only be between us and the Congolese government.”

Democratic Republic of Congo: 24,000 grave violations against children recorded in 2021, says UN report

On 11 July, the UN released its report on "Children and Armed Conflict" focusing on the impact of conflict escalation and protraction, military coups, and violation of international law. The report says there were 24,000 grave violations against children in 2021; the violations include killing and maiming of children, recruitment into armed forces and armed groups, and restrictions on humanitarian access. In 2021, children from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Israel and parts of Palestine, Somalia, Syria and Yemen faced the highest number of grave violations. However, 2021 also witnessed some progress; 12,214 children were rescued from armed forces and armed groups in Myanmar, Syria, Colombia, the Central African Republic and the DRC.

Europe and the Americas

Europe: Protests in North Macedonia over French proposal on a compromise deal with Bulgaria

On 8 July, protests were reported in North Macedonia, against a proposed compromise deal with Bulgaria that would allow the country to begin the process for EU membership. Hundreds of people took part in the protest by parking their vehicles around government buildings and blocking regional roads too. The proposal by France is expected to be debated by North Macedonia next week. However, the leader of the largest opposition party VMRO-DPMNE, which supports the protest, Hristijan Mickoski said: "We will never, never accept this treaty because it is contrary of our national interest and it is contrary to our identity.”



Europe: Morocco and the EU release joint statement on border control

On 9 July, the EU and Morocco issued a joint statement on anti-trafficking efforts. The agreement comes after thousands of migrants crossing from Morocco to Spain's Melilla rushed to the border, where 23 died in the chaos. Spain's interior minister, Fernando Grande-Marlaska, Morocco's interior minister Abdelouafi Laftit and the EU commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson met in Rabat to discuss the issue. According to the statement, the new agreement will include border management support, strengthening of police cooperation. Cooperation between Moroccan and the EU agencies working with the issues will also be strengthened.

Europe: Leak of Uber files expose unethical operations of the firm during 2013-2017

On 10 July, a hoard of confidential files was leaked to the Guardian and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists revealing the US firm's mobility service provider Uber's illegal operations and lobbying politicians for its aggressive expansion. The leaked trove consisted of more than 124,000 documents known as Uber files, covering its unethical operations across the 40 countries it serves between 2013 and 2017. One of the documents stated that Uber allotted USD 90 million in 2016 to amend taxi and labour laws by lobbying politicians. The document also claims the firm brought academicians to produce research that supports the benefits of its economic model. The leak also exposed conversations between the co-founder of Uber Kalanich and Emmanuel Macron who was the economy minister at that time. The conversations revealed that Macron extensively helped Uber's lobbyist and executives by framing laws favourable to the firm. The files also revealed the informal support former vice-president of European Commission Neelie Kroes had with Uber.

Europe: Heatwaves across cause distress

On 11 July, climate change led to increased temperatures across western Europe. Spain, Italy, France and recently the southern part of the UK have been facing heat waves since June. The heatwaves have caused a lot of physical and mental health issues to the people of Europe. The UK has been experiencing the hottest period and might surpass its highest record of 38.7 degrees Celsius. The Iberian peninsula consisting of Spain and Portugal has been on alert for wildfires as the temperature has risen above 40 degrees Celsius. Europe has recorded its second warmest June with 1.6 degrees Celsius above average. Extreme temperatures were recorded in Spain, France and Italy. The heatwave has caused fears of getting heatstroke and dehydration that may lead to severe health issues, particularly for children and elderly people. The UK is unprepared for the exponential rise in temperature at present as it is the first time in ages that they have experienced such a heatwave.

Europe: Royal Navy hosts two-day workshop for NATO on maritime security

On 08 July, the NATO military committee conducted two-day workshop on maritime discussions in the KMS Prince of Wales battleship of the Royal Navy in the UK. The committee was briefed by the UK strategic command on "Multi-Domain" operation, the future commando force, risks of maritime warfare and the Madrid summit's influence on NATO's maritime strategy. The chair of NATO military committee Admiral Bauer stated that: "NATO'S maritime thinking has always been based around three pillars – the maritime contribution to collective defense, co-operative security, and crisis management... The decisions from the Summit will enable us to build on existing measures and further strengthen our overall Deterrence and Defence Posture."

Europe: James Webb Space Telescope brings the first fully coloured images of the universe

On 11 July, NASA revealed the first full-coloured image of the universe through the James Webb Space Telescope. The images released were live-streamed on the European Space

Agency webpage that can be viewed by anyone. These were the first deepest images of the universe. The images consist of two nebulas, two galaxy clusters, two vast interstellar clouds that form stars, a gaseous exo-planet revolving around a star outside our solar system and Stephan's Quintet. After the Hubble telescope, James Webb Space Telescope is the second most powerful device used to study cosmology. It uses infrared thermal cameras to sort through space dust clouds to view extra-terrestrial objects. The advancement of the telescope will further widen human knowledge and understanding of the universe.

Europe: Euro falling to parity with the dollar for the first time in 20 years

On 12 July, the euro became equal to the dollar for the first time in twenty years. The last time the euro was valued less than the dollar was at the time of its nascent period. The euro has lost more than ten per cent of its value against the dollar since the beginning of 2022. The unprovoked Russian aggression against Ukraine has led an economic slump in the Eurozone nations. Supplies from the Nord Stream 1 pipeline have been cut off for 10 days of maintenance. This has further impacted the economy of the countries that depended on Russian gas amidst fear that the suspension would be permanent. The rising energy prices, cost of living crisis, and inflation will intensify further by the euro reaching parity with the dollar.

Chile: Continuing currency depreciation raises the alarm for recession

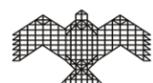
On 11 July, Chile's Finance Minister Mario Marcel while referring to the ongoing inflation, said that Chile's market-oriented model and free-floating exchange rate meant that while the currency could be more volatile, it does not reflect wider strains. He added that "Because Chile has a floating exchange rate, it is more volatile than other Latin American countries, but the difference is that we have an economy that is not dollarized." The runaway inflation is a result of the vulnerable global economy due to the slowing demand of China, pulling the global price of copper and the ongoing Russian invasion in Ukraine, which distorted the global supply chains in terms of energy and minerals. This led to the Chilean peso depreciating more than 15 per cent in June, briefly hitting 1,000 pesos per dollar sparking alarms in the Latin American region and pushing for tax reform bills to fund ambitious social programs in Chile.

Cuba: Relations with the US on the one-year anniversary of protests

12 July, marked one year of the country's largest protests in decades, where the economic crisis and strained relations with the US continue. During the unrest last July, at least 1400 people were arrested, and hundreds were sentenced to up to 25 years in prison on account of disrupting public disorder and sedition. While the protestors sought to fight economic and political frustrations in the country, the government called the protests as one orchestrated by the US. In effect, there have been increased migrations to the US, and the economy continues to be strapped in sanctions despite Biden's promises to end them. In an official address referring to the anniversary, the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the country stands in solidarity with the people and their cause. In response, Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez remarked on the statement being one confirming the US involvement to destabilize order in Cuba.

Colombia: At least 10 people killed in security operation

On 12 July, a joint police and military operation was carried out targeting Iván Mordisco, leader of a breakaway faction of FARC rebels. The operation named Jupiter had been reportedly underway for the past two months. The Air Force first bombed the camp in the Southern Caqueta region, following which almost 300 soldiers and police moved in, killing six men and four women. However, they remain unidentified. Ivan Mordisco is considered to be one of the most influential rebel leaders in the region since he took over the command of another group



whose leader, Gentil Duarte, was killed in Venezuela in May. Ambiguity remains around whether Mordesco has been killed in operation or not.

Panama: Petrol prices reduced after protests breakout

On 12 July, President Laurentino Cortizo announced a reduction in petrol prices after eight continuous days of protest. The protestors demanded relief from the rising inflation which in effect had raised the cost of basic amenities like food, medicine and electricity. The cost of fuel for private vehicles is expected to be lowered to USD 3.95 per gallon marking a 24 per cent drop, at the end of July, while the same had been implemented for public transport at the beginning of June. Additionally, the cabinet would cap the price of ten basic products; however, those haven't been specified. In a statement, Cortizo said that the hike in prices was a consequence of the Ukraine crisis and the aftermath of the pandemic.

The US: Executive order signed by Biden to protect abortion access rights

On 08 July, Biden signed an executive order as a damage control measure amid pressure from the people and government officials. The order directs the health department to expand access to abortion pills, expand the Obamacare birth control mandate and set up pro bono lawyers to assist people who are criminally charged for attempting abortion. The order also directs period tracking apps to ensure the privacy of users is protected. The order also asks for updating of the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labour Act to provide protection for doctors. The president, however, stated that the order would not restore abortion rights to people who lost them, and that is possible only during the November mid-term election. The overturning of Roe v Wade has led the democrats to codify the protections offered by the judgement into law, which is on the mid-term elections ballot. Biden urged voters to make decisions that would protect abortion rights in the country.

The US: Intelligence accuses Iran of supplying drones to Russia

On 17 July, the US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan stated that the US has received intelligence that suggested Iran was supplying and training Russian forces to use drones in the ongoing Ukraine war. It remains unclear whether the drones are delivered yet. Iran stated: "cooperation with Russia precedes the war and there has been no special development in this relationship recently." The usage of drones has been integral in tipping the balance of the Russia-Ukraine war. The US and its allies have been supporting Ukraine in terms of weapons and funding. Sullivan further stated: "the US would continue to sustain the effective defence of Ukraine."

Conflict Weekly Exclusive, 14 July 2022

Report Review: *Annual report on Children and Armed Conflict 2021*

UN report on Children and Armed Conflict: Five takeaways

By Emmanuel Selva Royan

On 11 July, the UN released its annual report on Children and Armed Conflict. The report provides a list of threats, which includes conflict escalation, military takeovers, prolonged wars, and breach of international law's impact on children during the year 2021. The protection of children was also impacted by intercommunal violence and cross-border conflict. The report lists nearly 24,000 confirmed grave crimes against minors, which accounts for 65 violations on average each day. The most serious breach that had been confirmed to have taken place was the death and maiming of children, followed by the recruitment of children and the obstruction to access human rights.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba stated: “Those who survived will be affected for life with deep physical and emotional scars. But we must not let these numbers discourage our efforts. They should serve as an impetus to reinforce our determination to end and prevent grave violations against children. This report is a call to action to intensify our work to better protect children in armed conflict and ensure that they are given a real chance to recover and thrive.” She further called on both state and non-state armed actors, to give child protection activists and humanitarian workers rapid access to save lives and to provide humanitarian access to children in armed conflicts urgently.

Five takeaways

First, increase in grave violations. Children in armed conflict witnessed a tremendous number of grave violations in 2021. A total of 23,982 grave violations were verified by the UN, of which 22,645 were committed in 2021 and 1,337 were committed earlier but only discovered in that year. Children were held for their alleged or actual involvement with armed groups, including those that the UN or the respective countries have labelled as terrorist organisations. Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Israel and Palestine, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen had the highest verified rates of grave violations. The number of kidnapping incidents increased by more than 20 per cent, and the number of incidents of sexual assault against children also increased by more than 20 per cent.

Second, escalating threats in schools. In a backdrop of school closures, school campuses were militarized and disregard for children's rights to education and health, attacks on schools and hospitals increased by five per cent. Schools were also used to recruit children in the militias. In or on the way to school, children are kidnapped, killed, maimed, and exposed to sexual violence. Targeted attacks on girls' schools and the denial of access to education, particularly in Afghanistan and the Lake Chad basin region, have obstructed the education of girls. In the long term, these incidents further restrict the right to education for girls.

Third, increased participation of non-state actors in the violations. A total of 55 per cent of violations were perpetrated by non-state armed groups, 25 per cent by state forces, and the remaining ten per cent were either the consequence of crossfire, the usage of improvised explosive devices, explosive remnants of war, landmines, or by unidentified perpetrators. These violations account for more than 25 per cent of all child fatalities.

Fourth, implications of the coronavirus pandemic. Children's existing vulnerabilities were made worse by the pandemic, which also made it more difficult for them to exercise their rights. The pandemic's socioeconomic effects exposed children to serious abuses and reversed recent advancements in child protection, human rights.

Fifth, new regions for concern. The report has added Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Ukraine as situations of concern due to the severe effects of hostilities on children there. The Secretary-General also asked for more thorough monitoring of crimes against children in the Central Sahel Region, just as he had done in 2020 for the Lake Chad Basin.

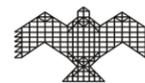
Conflict Weekly Exclusive, 14 July 2022

Report Review: *The world population prospect report 2022*

World Population Prospect 2022: Three takeaways

By Joel Jacob

On 11 July, the population division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations published “The world population prospect report 2022.” The report highlights



the understanding of population trends and anticipating the demographic changes which are becoming crucial for the national development planning and the ways to achieve the target of 2030, which is towards achieving sustainable development. It also attempts to analyse the global trends of population ranging from 1950-2050 and presents how the second half of the century is changing.

Three takeaways

First, the slowest growth rate since the 1950s. The world population is expected to reach eight billion by November 2022 from the 2.5 billion people in 1950, adding 1 billion each after 2010. Over the last 100 years, the population was observed to be growing fastest between 1962-1965 with an average of 2.1 per cent; by 2020, it fell below one per cent. Fertility and mortality have been the two main components of the population which showed a shift after the COVID-19 as the life expectancy rate dropped to 71 from 73. The measures are taken by governments to curb the population also had a minor effect in the mid of century. Thus, the continuing fertility decline will lead to population decay in the next half-century.

Second, a dense population in eight countries. From 2022 to 2050, eight countries are expected to have the highest concentration of population; this includes the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Pakistan, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria, the Philippines and the United Republic of Tanzania. While the population of sub-Saharan Africa amounts to a doubling of individuals due to the average fertility level being three per woman. Europe and North America are reaching a maximum level and are observed to slow down after 2030 due to reduced fertility levels.

Third, increasing population and demographic variations demand countries comply with the SDGs. The rapid growth of a country's population challenges eradicating poverty (SDG 1) and handling of migrants (SDG target 10.7). With COVID-19, the problem has intensified the problem due to limitations in data collection. The provision of inclusive and equitable quality education is critical for achieving SDG. Mainly in Sub-Saharan countries, with an increasing level of youth, the demand for education and employment opportunities increases mandated to fall under the SDG 2030 agenda.

About the authors

Shavini De Silva and Nimmi Jayathilake are Programme Officers at the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka. Emmanuel Selva Royan is a Research Assistant at the School of Conflict and Security Studies, NIAS. Joel Jacob is a Research Intern at the School of Conflict and Security Studies, NIAS. Rashmi BR, and Harini Madhusudan are Doctoral Scholars at the School of Conflict and Security Studies, NIAS. Avishka Ashok, Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Apoorva Sudhakar, and Padmashree Anandhan are Project Associates at the School of Conflict and Security Studies, NIAS. Arshiya Banu is a postgraduate scholar at Women's Christian College, Chennai. Lavanya Ravi and Shruti Sadhasivam are Post Graduate scholars from Christ (Deemed to be) University, Bangalore. Sejal Sharma and Vijay Anand Panigrahi are Post Graduate Scholars from Pondicherry University.

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The battle for Donbas

Guardian graphic. Source: The Institute for the Study of War with AEI's Critical Threats Project.
Graphic representation of the Luhansk region, a territory newly occupied by Russia in the Ukraine war. (Image Source: Guardian graphic: The Institute for the Study of War with AEI's Critical Threats Project)

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People pay tribute to victims of the shooting at the London Pub wherein two people died. (Image Source: Haskon Mosevold Larsen/NTB via REUTERS)

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Global temperature changes

Guardian graphic. Source: ERA5, ECMWF as part of The Copernicus Programme. Note: Data taken from average surface air temperature anomalies for May, 1980-2022.
A graphic representation of rising global temperatures from 1989 to 2022. (Image Source: ERA5/The Guardian)

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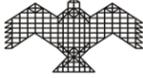
Sourina Bej and Ashwin Dhanabalan

Political parties of Denmark conduct the Yes Campaign in Copenhagen. (Image Source: EPA/BBC)

SPECIAL Report Review
SIPRI report on nuclear arsenal/weapons



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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. KAS cooperates with governmental institutions, political parties and civil society organizations, building strong partnerships along the way. In particular, KAS seeks to intensify political cooperation in the area of development cooperation on the foundations of its objectives and values. Together with the partners, KAS makes a significant contribution to the creation of a global order that empowers every country to determine its own developmental priorities and destiny in an internationally responsible manner.

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



About Conflict Weekly

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

Editor: D. Suba Chandran

Assistant Editor: Padmashree Anandhan

Editorial Team: Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Apoorva Sudhakar, Sruthi Sadhasivam, Vijay Anand Panigrahi, and Sejal Sharma