

Conflict Weekly

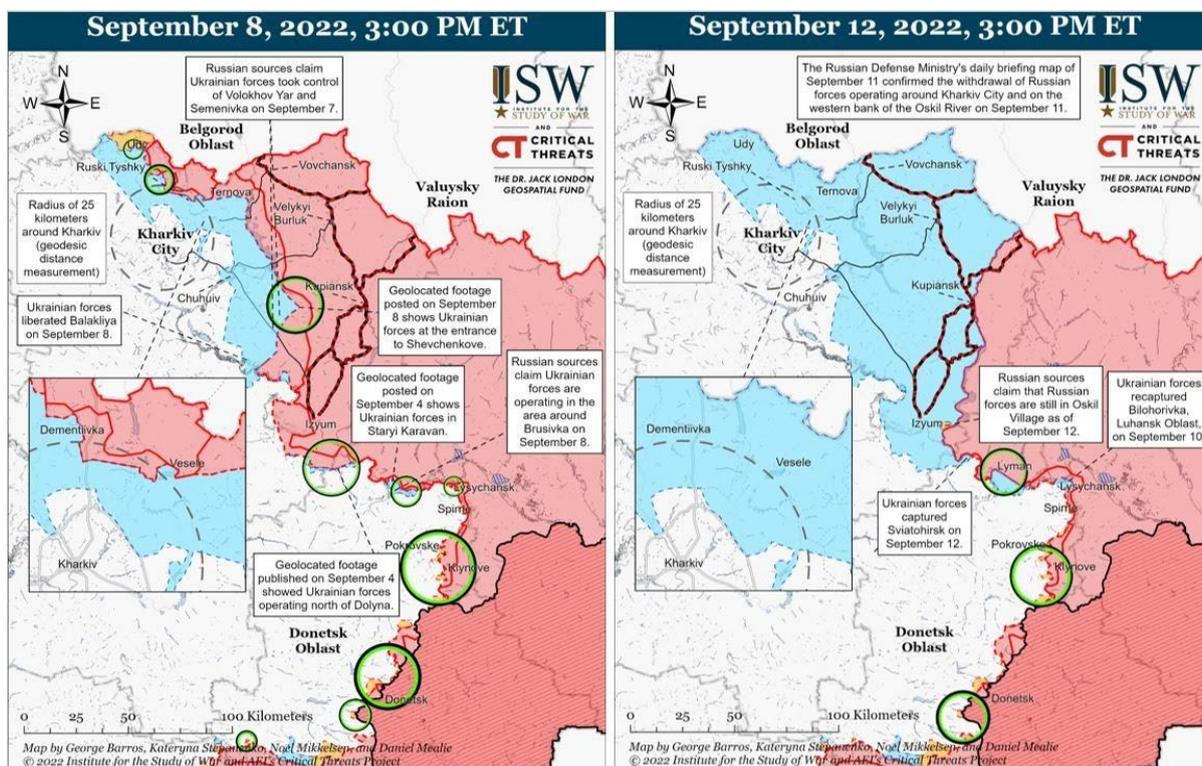
An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

15 September 2022, Vol.3, No.24

Ukraine's counter-offensive, North Korea's legislation on preemptive nuclear strike, and a report on Modern Slavery

Padmashree Anandhan, Avishka Ashok, and Madhura Mahesh

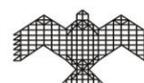


Map indicating the advance of Ukrainian troops in the northeast of Kharkiv and the ongoing fight in the frontlines of Donetsk region. (Image Source: Institute for the Study of War)

SPECIAL

Report Review

Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, September 2022



Ukraine: Counteroffensive in Kharkiv and Kherson

In the news

On 8 September, Ukraine Armed Forces Commander General Valerii Zaluzhnyi reported on the Ukraine counteroffensive in the northeast of Kharkiv where the forces had advanced 50 kilometres into the Russian-controlled area.

On 10 September, the Russian Defence Ministry brief on “special military operation” in Ukraine stated: “an operation was carried out to curtail and organize the transfer of the Izyum-Balakley group of troops to the territory of the Donetsk People's Republic.”

On 11 September, Ukraine’s top military commander, General Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, stated: “The Armed Forces of Ukraine continue to liberate territories occupied by Russia. Since the beginning of September, more than 3,000 sq km have been returned.”

On 13 September, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy claimed that close to 8000 sq km were reclaimed by the Ukraine forces in the northeastern region of Kharkiv, and “stabilization measures” have half progressed. US President Joe Biden, when questioned about it, said: “It is clear the Ukrainians have made significant progress. But I think it's going to be a long haul.”

Issues at large

First, Ukraine’s counteroffensive. Eastern and Southern Ukraine are the key regions of the counteroffensive, with the offensive focused on the northeast, southeast of Kharkiv, Izyum-Slovyansk, Kupiansk in Eastern Ukraine, and northwest Kherson in the south. Although Ukraine has captured close to 2000 sq km this week, it had taken nearly 150 sq km in July, and 400 sq km in August. Commenting and speculating on these developments, the Institute for the Study of War asserted that the forward position of Russia appears to have receded and Ukraine, with its continued strong counteroffensive on the front lines, has been able to recapture the lost territories by targeting Russia’s forces, logistics, and ground level communication systems and by strategically deploying weapons delivered by its western partners. Another possible reason for Ukraine’s success in the counteroffensive can be the dual strikes in eastern and southern Ukraine where Russia faces a resource concentration dilemma.

Second, Russia’s withdrawal. Kharkiv (shelled by Russian forces in May) and Kherson (occupied since February) are now witnessing the withdrawal of Russian forces, a limited war, and a weaker military. Such sudden movements indicate two possibilities. One, Russia is unable to sustain the supply of its military weapons and personnel in Ukraine’s eastern and southern offensives. Two, Russia is focused on its larger objective of annexing the Donbas region through the capture of the cities of Luhansk and Donetsk. This can be achieved only by cutting down on unnecessary military operations and expenditures.

Third, geographic significance. Kharkiv is the second largest Ukrainian city and serves as its major communications centre. With its major large train junctions, truck highway systems, and highways, it connects Russia with Kyiv, western Ukraine, Zaphorzhzhia, Crimea, and the Caucasus. Kherson, on the other hand, serves as a fortress to the Black Sea and was once a Russian naval base. It has a strategic port on the west bank of the Dnieper River which controls the passage to Crimea and has become a major industrial area in shipbuilding, oil refining, and cotton-textile manufacturing. However, it is Donbas, compared to Kharkiv and Kherson, that has a large proportion of the population speaking Russian and who are ethnically Russian. A similar situation ensues in Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, and Odesa, but only in Crimea, do ethnic Russians have a majority. Therefore, Russia’s withdrawal does mean letting go of

valuable resources and an industrial rich zone in favour of Donbas, and the higher concentration of Russian speaking people it claims to be “protecting” there.

In perspective

First, Ukraine is regaining territory. Since the start of the war, Ukraine was able to only put up a strong defence against Russia in the Luhansk and Donetsk battle, with a few limited victories in Kyiv, taking down a Maersk ship, and signing a grain deal. On the ground, Russia has held the upper hand in this war of attrition, whereas Ukraine, despite the use of Western weaponry was able to reclaim only a few areas. Therefore, Russian troop withdrawal is a sign of Ukraine advancing in the war. However, the question remains if it can re-capture any more of the Russian-occupied territory.

Second, Kremlin’s nonchalant attitude. With Ukraine proclaiming its wins in a counteroffensive, the Russian military and media have kept maintained silence. On the ground, to achieve Russia’s larger objective of annexing the Donbas region, Izyum is the only hurdle that stands. Izyum serves as an entry axis into Donetsk and Luhansk and has emerged as an aggressive battle zone along with the Kharkiv offensive. And on the diplomatic front, Europe’s energy dependency and ability to block grain shipments will still be two trump cards for Russia to play.

Third, the future of western military support to Ukraine. Thus far the US has provided more than USD 15 billion, followed by Poland, the UK, Germany, and other EU member states who are committed to providing USD 0.25 billion to two billion each, boosted by the increase in their respective military budgets. Under pressure of a growing energy crisis accompanied by spiraling inflation, individual European countries, while securing alternate sources of energy, they are likely to reconsider their positions on military support to Ukraine. While overall, support from countries in Europe for Ukraine is strong and growing stronger today, in the longer term, affordability of energy in Europe and measures to control inflation can be factors that impact the flow of military aid to Ukraine and the degree of European political support for this aid.

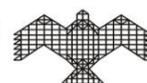
North Korea: New legislation hinders denuclearization talks

In the news

On 8 September, North Korea’s Supreme People’s Assembly passed legislation to replace the 2013 law that defined its nuclear status. According to the new law, the country retains the right to use preemptive nuclear strikes to protect its national security and establish itself as a nuclear power. According to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, “The utmost significance of legislating nuclear weapons policy is to draw an irretrievable line so that there can be no bargaining over our nuclear weapons.”

On 9 September, the US White House Spokesperson, Karine Jean-Pierre, responded, “We continue to seek diplomacy, and are prepared to meet without preconditions. The United States remains focused on continuing to coordinate closely with our allies and partners to address the threats posed by DPRK.”

On 13 September, South Korea’s Defence Ministry’s Deputy Spokesperson Col. Moon Hong-sik responded to the change in North Korea’s legislation, saying: “We warn that should North Korea attempt to use nuclear arms, it would face the overwhelming response from the South Korea-US alliance, and its regime would enter a path of self-destruction.”



Issues at large

First, the need for an irreversible nuclear status. The nuclear negotiations between North Korea and the US can be traced decades back to 1985 when Kim Il-sung ratified the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Although the talks to denuclearize went smooth initially, North Korea's frequent violations followed by the nuclear tests stalled any further success of the talks. In 2001, US President George Bush adopted a harsher stance against North Korean nuclear activities. And in 2008, South Korea elected a hardliner, Roh Moo-hyun, as President. In more recent years, Trump and Biden have emphasized the need for denuclearization talks. The recently elected South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol is also known to have a strong position on the issue. However, for North Korea, the possibility of denuclearization has been closed for some time now and is perhaps a result of the consistent pressure imposed by the international community.

Second, the missile tests. In 2022 (until June 2022), North Korea has already conducted 31 missile tests, a steep increase from the previous year when eight missiles were tested. The country has been preparing for a nuclear test in 2022. The sixth and last nuclear test was conducted in 2017. In April 2022, North Korea allegedly excavated a new entrance 50 meters from the South Portal, which was previously demolished. The new portal is capable of containing 50 to 120 kilotons of explosion, similar to the test conducted in 2017. Despite the sanctions and the COVID-19 pandemic, the North Korean nuclear programme has not lost momentum and has continued with its independent scientific program. In 2021, Kim Jong-un announced six goals for the nuclear weapons programme which included producing super-sized nuclear warheads, reducing the size of the warheads, increasing the precision rate, working on hypersonic technologies, making advancements in the fuel industry, and working towards a nuclear-powered submarine.

Third, the changing South Korean attitudes towards North Korea. Under the presidency of Yoon Seok-yeol, South Korea adopted a far different and less tolerant stance toward Kim Jong-un's nuclear ambitions. With Yoon's entry into South Korean politics, the country has, after a long time, voted to bring in a conservative leader who promised to take a harsher stance on North Korean issues.

In perspective

The new law that annuls North Korea's previous position on the No-First-Use Policy endangers the fragile peace in the Korean Peninsula. The possibilities of an accidental attack or an attack caused by a misunderstanding have also increased with the passing of this law. Moreover, it could roll back all advances made on nuclear disengagement as the US will now increase its missile deployments in the region.

North Korea's preemptive nuclear strike policy is a cause for concern for neighbouring countries and the US because of its unusual understanding of a threat. North Korea has, on numerous occasions, accused military drills of being a provocation to war. It is hard to say what counts as a threat and what doesn't for Kim Jong-un.

Conflict Weekly Exclusive, 15 September 2022
 Report Review: *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery 2021*
Global Estimates of Modern Slavery 2021: Six takeaways
 By Madhura Mahesh

The International Labour Organization published the “Global Estimates of Modern Slavery 2021: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage” in September 2022. The report estimates that there are 50 million people living in conditions of modern slavery on any given day out of which 12 million are children. It outlines the conditions and trends in modern slavery and then provides policy solutions to meet the goals set by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end forced labour and forced marriage by 2030.

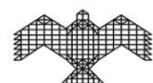
Six takeaways

First, an increase in the number of modern slavery cases in Asia and the Pacific. The data shows an increase (since 2016) of 2.7 million in forced labour, and 6.6 million in forced marriages; forced labour went up from 24.9 million in 2016 to 27.6 million in 2021, and forced marriages went up from 15.4 million in 2016 to 22 million in 2021. The data highlight how the problem is not restricted to one region or low-income countries alone, but prevalent worldwide irrespective of income levels or development. According to the report, Asia and the Pacific had the highest numbers (30 million) of people in some form of modern slavery, be it forced labour or forced marriage. It was followed by Africa (seven million), Europe and Central Asia (six million), the Americas (five million), and the Arab States (two million). However, on the prevalence of modern slavery in terms of proportion of the population, the Arab States have the highest with 10.1 cases per 1,000 population.

Second, the domination of the private sector. Eighty-six percent of all forced labour happened through private agents of which 63 percent were categorised as forced labour exploitation and 23 percent as forced commercial sexual exploitation. About 14 percent of the remaining could be classified under State-imposed forced labour. From 2016 to 2022 private manufacturing and services (excluding domestic work) had the highest number of reported cases (three million and 5.5 million respectively) of forced labour.

Third, victims of forced labour and forced marriages. Conflicts, crises, poverty, debts, and other factors force people into modern slavery. First, labourers are those who are forced to work more than the agreed amount of time or to work involuntarily for someone. Second, children are employed the most with 3.3 million involved in domestic work, forming a gateway for child trafficking and sexual exploitation. Third, migrant workers, who are the most vulnerable of all, end up in forced labour. Forced labour is a result of “irregular or poorly governed migration, or unfair and unethical recruitment practices.” The 2021 Global Estimate found that of all adults in forced labour exploitation, 15 percent were migrants.

Fourth, causes of modern slavery. Coercion plays an important role, especially migrants, in instances of forced marriage and labour. Threats to one’s family and sexual and physical violence compel people into modern slavery. Due to the patriarchal system present in society, gender disparity exists when it comes to forced marriage. Conflict-prone areas are another source for forced labour and forced marriages, as highlighted by the report. People are recruited in these conflicts against their will, especially children, who are used as child soldiers. They are used as human shields, bodyguards, and spies, and women and children are sexually exploited and are forced into marriages during times of conflict; and even in post-conflict periods many see marriage as a way of alleviating poverty and as a means of survival.



Fifth, pandemic-induced forced labour and marriage. When the pandemic began there was a rise in child labour to compensate for labour loss and demand due to restrictions placed by the countries on the manufacturing sector, in general, but pushing specific industries to meet the demand of medical and protective equipment. The pandemic exposed the already vulnerable to even more hardships with a lack of job and steady income, pushing them into debt traps and eventually into forced labour and debt bondages. With education and helpline programmes coming to a halt, it prevented people from accessing support services and identification measures, thereby exposing those vulnerable to forced labour.

Sixth, the report outlines recommendations to achieve Agenda 2030. The ILO calls for a coordinated approach to tackle the challenge of modern slavery by addressing violent conflicts, the patriarchal nature of society, and poverty. It suggests offering assistance and protection to those who are already in forced labour and marriage through identification and granting aid. It recommends a legal framework within which this economic and social protection should be undertaken to prevent vulnerable people from becoming a part of the cycle again. The report also suggests legislative measures to be gender inclusive that address the gender disparity and protection of the rights of workers, migrants, and minorities to prevent forced labour and marriage.

Also, from around the world

By Avishka Ashok, Joel Jacob, Sai Pranav, Vijay Anand, Rashmi BR, Anu Maria Joseph, Harini Madhusudan, Padmashree Anandhan and Ankit Singh

East and Southeast Asia

China: Diplomats counter report along with 20 other countries at Geneva Council

On 13 September, Chinese diplomats and diplomats from 20 other countries criticized the UN report on the human rights violation in the Xinjiang Autonomous region. The Strait Times noted that the support for China's joint statement countering the report was not as high as observers had initially expected. The report also foresaw a possible motion against China, calling for an investigation into the region and its education camps. As the Geneva council discusses the report for the first times, the US, Canada, and the European Union are in the forefront of countries who accepted and welcomed the outcomes of the report. However, China's ambassador to the United Nations Chen Xu has rejected the report and called it an erroneous smear.

Taiwan: Ambassador hosts parliamentarians; urging them to sanction PRC

On 14 September, the Strait Times reported that the US was considering a plan to sanction China as a deterrent from attacking Taiwan while Taiwanese officials attempt to pressure the European Union into doing the same. Meanwhile, Taiwan's Ambassador to the US, Ms Hsiao Bi-khim, hosted over 60 international lawmakers and parliamentarians who backed the sanctions China for the military aggression shown towards Taiwan in the past couple of months. The delegates included parliamentarians from Europe, Asia and Africa and are assembling in the US to push for a pledge to adopt a greater deterrence against China for its actions in the Taiwan straits. The draft pledge said: "Economic and political measures, including meaningful sanctions, should be considered to deter military escalation, and to ensure trade and other exchanges with Taiwan can continue unimpeded."

Myanmar: Junta bombards Maungdaw after Arakan army captures military base

On 11 September, Myanmar military junta bombarded the northern Rakhine state's Maungdaw township in response to the Arakan Army's takeover of another military base in the area. Kyien Chaung tactical base's residents' accounts suggest a possibility of around six airstrikes. The Arakan Army assumed control of the military base near Kyien Chaung town and seized a large amount of ammunition. They also killed several junta soldiers and held some as captives. Hostility between the junta and the Arakan Army has resumed recently after a break of almost two years.

South Asia

India: Statement on Sri Lanka's lack of progress in solving Tamil ethnicity issue

On 12 September, India on Monday issued a statement on promoting reconciliation, accountability, and human rights in Sri Lanka and noted with concern the lack of measurable progress by the government on their commitment of political solutions to the Tamil issue. Since the end of Sri Lanka's civil war, there have been continuous concerns raised by the human rights over increased militarization, repression and contracting space for dissent in Tamil majority areas. Speaking at the interactive dialogue on the report of OHCHR at the 51st session of the Human Rights Council, the Indian delegation said: "India has always believed in the responsibility of States for promotion and protection of human rights and constructive international dialogue and cooperation guided by the principles of the UN Charter."

India: First air force exercise with Japan unveiled during 2+2 dialogue

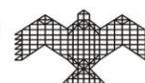
On 8 September, India and Japan decided to organize the first-ever air force exercise in an attempt to enhance their defence capabilities. The two countries agreed upon the new plan during their second 2+2 dialogue held in Tokyo. The delegates from either side discussed the possibilities of improving defence and security cooperation and the need to resolve existing disputes peacefully without hampering the status quo in the region. The concerns increased owing to the recent military showdown by China in Taiwan and an accidental missile drop in Japan's exclusive economic zone.

India: Troops in the Himalayan border region disperse ahead of talks

On 9 September, the Chinese and Indian troops receded from the Gogra-Hot Springs border area, a high friction region of the western Himalayas. The tensions in the area reached their peak when clashes emerged two years ago, consequently hampering diplomatic ties between the two sides. The concerned ministries of both countries confirmed the military disintegration in the region ahead of a summit in Uzbekistan where Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping would be present. The disengagement is aimed at maintaining peace in the border areas.

Afghanistan: Girls' schools shut just days after reopening

On 10 September, protests erupted after four girls' schools in the Paktia province of Afghanistan were ordered to shut again just days after resuming operation. A dozen girls in the city of Gardez took to the streets to show their discontent against the actions of the authorities. The schools were reopened in the region by tribal elders and school principals without formal authorization by the administration. Later, the Taliban administration disallowed the girls to enter the school, backing down again on their promise to encourage education and create job opportunities for women in Afghanistan.



Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Yemen: Houthi offensive in Taiz

On 7 September, Yemen's army officer in Taiz, Abdul Basit Al-Baher, said that 42 people have been killed and 185 injured in Houthi attacks across Taiz over the last five months. The attacks occurred despite the UN-brokered ceasefire in place. The officer added that the Houthis have committed 4,450 ceasefire violations since April, killing 30 soldiers and 12 civilians and injuring 131 soldiers and 54 civilians.

Yemen: Forces take control of the Al-Qaeda safe havens in southern Yemen

On 11 September, security forces including the Yemen military and the Southern Transition Council (STC) Forces took control over the valleys and mountainous areas acting as hideouts for Al-Qaeda, in Shabwa and Abyan, southern Yemen. The Giant Brigades and the Shabwa Defence Forces are fighting Al Qaeda and pushing them out of the Al-Musainah region and Mouthab valley. The operation is seen as retaliation for the Al-Qaeda attack on 6 September that killed 20 soldiers from the Yemeni forces.

Mali: Dozens killed in jihadist attack

On 9 September, Africanews reported that local officials said that dozens of civilians were killed in an attack in Talataye, a town in north-eastern Mali. The attack was reportedly carried out by Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (EIGS) fighters who have ties with the Islamic State organization. A local official said that 45 civilians were killed, while a Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MSA) fighter said the death toll is 30. The exact casualties remain unknown. Since 6 September, militants from the EIGS group, the al-Qaeda-affiliated group JNIM/GSIM and armed organizations including the Tuareg dominated MSA have been allegedly fighting in the region. It is the first time Talataye town has suffered a large-scale attack by Islamic State.

Ethiopia: TPLF accuses the federal forces of conducting drone strikes in Mekelle

On 14 September, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) accused the Ethiopian government of conducting drone strikes in Mekelle. A TPLF senior official said on Twitter that civilians were killed in the strikes, though he didn't confirm the number of casualties. The government has not responded to the accusation. The latest air strikes came a day after the TPLF agreed for peace talks led by the African Union. The fighting which resumed the previous month after a five-month truce seems to be continuing despite calls by the international community for de-escalation.

Tunisia: At least 11 migrants died after a shipwreck off the coast

On 11 September, BBC reported that at least 11 people are thought to have died and 12 missing after a shipwreck off the coast of Tunisia. The boat which set off from the Sfax region carrying 37 migrants to Italy sank around 40 miles further up the coast near Chebba, Mahida. According to the UN agency of the International Organization for Migration, this year alone, nearly 1,033 migrants have been categorised as dead or missing and 960 are thought to have drowned while crossing the Mediterranean. The Sfax coastline has become a major departure point and the Italian island of Lampedusa is often a destination for those attempting to reach Europe from north Africa. According to EU border agency Frontex, between January and August, there were 52,000 "irregular entries" mainly from Tunisia, Egypt, Egypt and Bangladesh.

Nigeria: at least nine people died in flooding in northern Jigawa state

On 12 September, BBC reported on the death of 9 people and two others missing followed by severe flooding in northern Jigawa state of Nigeria. The local leaders said that many homes and farms have been destroyed by the flood which affected at least seven villages in the Ringim region. The floods followed by the torrential rains has displaced hundreds. The Nigerian government said that more than 500,000 people have been affected by a series of floods across the country.

Europe and the Americas

Ukraine: Publishes a security guarantee proposal

On 13 September, Ukraine presented a set of recommendations for security guarantees that would legally and politically bind its guarantor states and Kiev in a strategic partnership called the “Kiev Security Treaty.” The proposal was developed at the request of President Zelensky, and drawn up by an advisory group led by former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen. The proposal suggests countries including the US, the UK, Australia, and Turkiye would act as security guarantors for Ukraine with a multi-level approach with a core group of allies making clear commitments to support the Ukrainian military. There would also be a broader group that would provide non-military guarantees based on sanctions. Former NATO Secretary General Fogh stated that the “immediate priority” was to achieve victory for Kiev. He stressed that Ukraine would require decades of support from its Western partners.

Russia: Lavrov speaks of a hybrid war being waged against his country

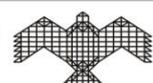
On 13 September, the Russian Foreign Minister said that the West aims to destroy the Russian economy and push it away from international politics and stated that the hybrid war that the West has been waging against Russia for many years has now scaled up to an “unprecedented” level. Lavrov laid emphasis on the ministry’s priorities to promote sustainable relations based on “mutual respect and cooperation.”

Europe: Court fines Google EUR 4.125 billion for violating antitrust laws

On 14 September, the General Court in Luxembourg ruled against Google for the forceful and unlawful imposition of their software in Android. Google was slammed with an antitrust violation by the European Commission for dominating Android devices and illegally restricting competition in the market. It was asked to pay a fine of EUR 4.125 billion by the Court for the violation. The Commission imposed EUR 4.34 billion fine on Google in 2018, which the General Court reduced. Google now wants to challenge the Court’s rulings.

Europe: WSJ report on supply of howitzers and artillery to Ukraine

On 9 September, the Wall Street Journal reported on the range of Howitzers and artillery received by Ukraine so far from US, its allies and NATO. Starting from Soviet-era artillery, German Panzerhaubitze which are one of the high-end howitzer model with the ability to aim with precision, and automated loading, France’s Caesar howitzer which can travel 600 kilometres without refuelling, the US’s 155mm self-propelled howitzer, Austria’s M109A5Ö which was supplied by Latvia, and the UK’s M109A4BE. Apart from this Poland and Czech Republic have also given 2S1 Gvozdikas artillery systems to Ukraine.



Europe: NATO and the US meet at Ramstein to discuss military support to Ukraine

On 9 September, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed the US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, to the NATO headquarters for the North Atlantic Council meeting. Stoltenberg appreciated how the US is leading the way in terms of aid to Ukraine. He thanked the US for the recently announced USD 2.7 billion package of additional support. In his address, Stoltenberg referred to the decisions taken by the US-led Ukraine Defence Contact Group in Ramstein and reiterated the ramping up and continuing the military support for Ukraine.

Latvia: Installs fence on the border with Belarus to prevent illegal crossings

On 14 September, the State Real Estate of Latvia announced the border fence being constructed on the Latvia-Belarus border to prevent the illegal border crossing. Till now, five kilometers of the fence has been erected and construction work in 28.1 kilometers of the 57 kilometers long deforested border has been completed. It is expected that as the deforested areas increase, the rate of building the fence will also increase to up to one kilometer per day. Additionally, four bridges have also been built over several shared rivers that run along the border and the technical specifications for the third phase called Daugava is being developed.

Latvia: Passes law to restrict movement of Russians into Europe through its borders

On 8 September, Latvia's Cabinet passed and adopted the decision to impose travel restrictions on Russian citizens. This is to prevent Russians from using Latvia as a transit point for tourism into other areas in Europe. A similar stance has been taken by Lithuania, Latvia and Poland too. The decision takes effect from 19 September 2022. On the same issue, the EU also suspended the visa travel agreement that they had with Russia, thus making it more difficult and expensive for Russian traveling into the Schengen Area. The suspension will take effect from 12 September.

Ukraine: UN reports the number of civilian casualties in war

On 9 September, the Head of the UN human rights mission in Ukraine, Matilda Bogner, spoke at a press briefing about the human rights situation in Ukraine. Joining from Odessa, she said that 14,059 civilian casualties have been corroborated, though actual numbers are estimated to be higher. On the issue of prisoners of war, Bogner claimed that Russia is not allowing access to the prisoners held at facilities controlled by them. She said UN monitors had found evidence of torture and ill-treatment of the prisoners, alleging that some of the torture could amount to war crimes.

Albania: North Atlantic Council promises to support against future cyberattacks

On 8 September, the North Atlantic Council released a statement regarding the cyberattack against Albania. The council acknowledged Iran as the perpetrator of the attack and condemned the efforts to destabilize the security of any member-states or allies. It promised to assist Albania in strengthening its cyber defence capacities so that they can overcome such attacks in the future. The Council said that they promote a free, open, peaceful and secure cyberspace and thus will support each other to defend and counter the "full spectrum of cyber threats."

Argentina: Environmentalists concerned over green hydrogen project

On 12 September, Al Jazeera reported on the potential impact of a green hydrogen project funded by the Australian company Fortescue Future Industries. Maria Fabina Vega, an indigenous activist said: "I understand the need for green hydrogen that the First World might have ... there's an expectation of replacing the gas that Russia and others provided with another kind of energy, now and in the future." Explaining that there is lack of demand of green hydrogen in the country, the activist said that most of the hydrogen produced would probably be exported to first world countries. Green hydrogen is produced by using renewable electricity to split water into hydrogen and oxygen. The hydrogen can power vehicles, heat homes and replace natural gas in fertiliser production. It is considered an emissions-free energy source because hydrogen produces water, rather than the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, when burned. The project is also home to Andean condors, which are considered a threatened species in Argentina.

The US: Nurses begin a three-day strike over low payment

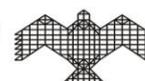
On 12 September, over 15,000 private sector nurses in Minnesota launched a three-day strike as they push for higher pay and better staffing in a healthcare system which has been overstretched since the pandemic. Holding a banner of "Patients Before Profits" the nurses walked off from their regular tasks and marched through the city. The hospital union has been pushing the demands of the nurses for the last five months.

The US: Bill to give permanent citizenship to Afghans introduced

On 7 September, a bill to safeguard Afghan evacuees and ensure them permanent citizenship was introduced by lawmakers in the US. The bill is concerned with Afghan citizens brought to America during the evacuation period and the years that followed. The bill allows them to acquire permanent resident cards legally and eliminate the uncertainty of their future. It also plans to provide aid to an estimated 100,000 Afghans.

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

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