

Conflict Weekly

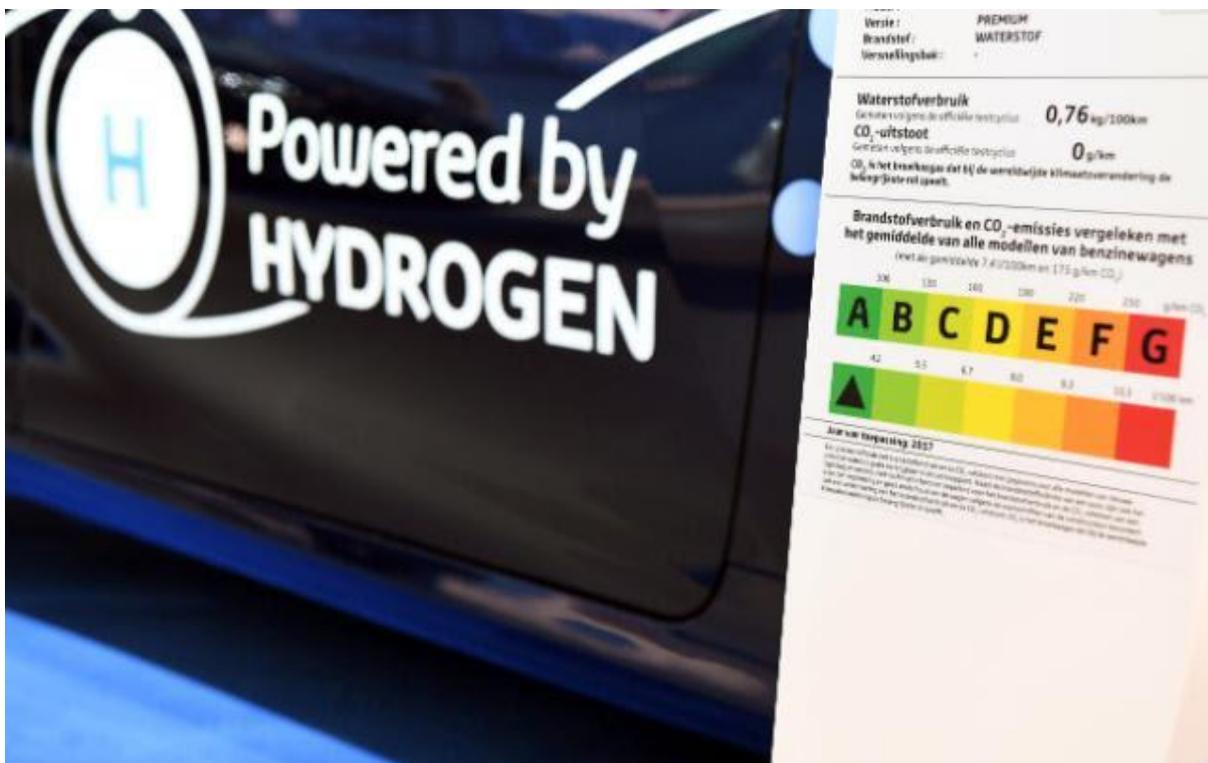
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A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

21 July 2022, Vol.3, No.16

Russia's gas warning to Europe, and Sudan's intra-tribal clashes

Sourina Bej and Apoorva Sudhakar



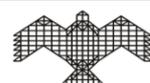
The EU will require to speed its clean energy transition to phase out from Russian fossil fuels. (Image Source: ec.europa.eu)

Europe: Amid fears of more cuts, Russia's Nord Stream I resumes gas supplies

In the news

On 21 July, the Nord Stream I gas pipeline resumed its gas supplies early morning after being closed for maintenance work for ten days, reported the Deutsche Welle. On 20 July, the European Commission published its emergency plans to reduce gas dependency on Russia to avoid a shortage during the winter months. The EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said that Russia was “using energy as a weapon” and that all members should voluntarily seek to reduce demand by 15 per cent between August 2022 and April 2023.

On 19 July, Russian President Vladimir Putin said: “the flow of Russian natural gas to European customers has dwindled due to the West’s own fault and warned that it could



continue ebbing.” The EU has been working under the assumption that Russia’s Nord Stream pipeline would not resume operation after 21 July. Eric Mamer, chief spokesman for the European Commission, the EU’s executive arm said: “What is the worst possible scenario—and this therefore has to be the assumption for our planning—that there will be a full disruption by Gazprom.”

Issues at large

First, energy dependency dilemmas of the EU. The EU currently imports 38 per cent of natural gas from Russia within its 50 per cent hydrocarbon energy requirements. The shift to natural gas and with it the Nord Stream pipelines were set to meet domestic, economic, and climate-friendly energy goals for the EU. Domestically, the EU consumers rely on gas more than other renewables to reduce their carbon footprint and fit the carbon taxation system. Economically, Germany imported 59.2bn cubic meters of gas through Nord Stream I in 2021 and had hoped to double it with Nord Stream II to meet the energy demands in its automobile, farming, and aerospace industries. Lastly, to achieve net zero emissions by 2030, pledged in the European Green Deal, the countries have replaced their fossil fuel plants with gas imports. The slow investments and taxing permits for renewable energy grid systems have only taken the green energy transition for the long haul.

Second, Russia’s gas market monopoly and geopolitics. With 47.55 trillion cubic meters of natural gas, Russia possesses 27.5 per cent of the world’s reserves and has remained the dominant actor supplying 40 per cent of Europe’s natural gas. Apart from the Nord Stream 1 pipeline which supplied 55 billion cubic meters of gas per year to Western Europe through the Baltic Sea, the Gazprom-owned Yamal--Europe pipeline supplied 37 million cubic metres per day of gas across Belarus to Western Europe. Post Ukraine invasion and the EU sanctions, Russia has maintained strategic pressure with gas reductions. After Poland, Bulgaria, Finland, Denmark, and the Netherlands suspended their Russian gas deliveries in March when they demanded to pay in Roubles. Putin tightened its grip by reducing gas supplies through the Nord Stream I by 40 per cent, citing maintenance issues.

Third, lack of a contingency plan and expansion of the EU’s green energy basket. As fears mount of sudden gas halt from Russia, the EU is simultaneously witnessing heat waves and forest fires triggered by climate change. While countries aim to reduce gas exports from Russia, the EU is facing one of their highest domestic energy demands and increased gas prices with transport and individual households switching to air conditioning at the high temperatures. The EU recognized natural gas and nuclear energy as green, but with plans of Germany, Poland, Austria, and Denmark to phase out the life of nuclear power plants after the Fukushima disaster, the EU’s green energy basket remains heavily dependent on hydrocarbons.

In perspective

First, a geo-economic shift to the Middle East. To meet the immediate emergency, the EU countries have sought to replace Russia with Middle eastern gas reserves. The MOU on gas exports between Egypt, Israel, and the EU at the East Mediterranean Gas Forum or Germany’s finance minister’s visit to Saudi Arabia and Qatar to deal with hydrogen reserves is all to contain the shortage. But the return to the Middle East, this time trading with gas, keeps the fear of cartels intact with an adverse impact on currency rates.

Second, the devil in the details on green energy taxonomy. With only emergency plans and stop-gap plans like the EU green tags on nuclear and gas, questions remain on radioactive waste and whether plants can make do with low carbon emissions.

Sudan: Another interethnic violence claims 79 lives

In the news

On 14 July, a Hausa farmer was reportedly killed over a land dispute between the Hausa, Birta and Funj tribes in the Blue Nile state, after the Birtas rejected the Hausas' request for a "civil authority to supervise access to land." The incident led to violence between the groups in the Qaisan area, along Sudan's border with Ethiopia. Clashes between the groups, allegedly sparked by revenge, also took place in Roseires and Damazin towns.

On 18 July, the death toll from clashes rose to 79, leaving another 199 injured. The Federal Health Ministry said ten people had been airlifted for treatment after they were seriously injured. On the same day, Sudan Tribune reported that the Hausa community had issued a statement pledging revenge in the Blue Nile State. The Blue Nile governor accused the former military government of militarizing the region and arming civilians.

On 19 July, thousands of Hausas protested across different cities, including the capital Khartoum, calling for justice for the Hausa victims; in some cities, government buildings and offices were reportedly set on fire. The UN said over 17,000 people had fled and were sheltered in different local schools.

On 20 July, the death toll rose to 105. The State health minister said calm had been restored after the army deployed on 16 July.

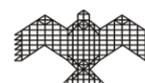
Issues at large

First, a brief background on the Blue Nile state in Sudan. It is located in Sudan's southeast, bordering Ethiopia and South Sudan. The state has rich agricultural and grazing land, minerals and livestock, with agriculture and mining being the fastest growing sectors. With a population of more than a million, the Blue Nile state is home to forty ethnic groups and tribes, namely the Funj, Birta, Uduk, Ganza, Maban, Ingessana, and so on.

Second, the Hausa demands in Sudan. The Hausa constitutes one of Africa's largest ethnic communities, with ten million people spread across several countries. An estimated three million Hausas live in Sudan. The Hausa, significantly a Muslim agricultural community, has its roots in West Africa but migrated and settled in Sudan by the end of the 19th century. However, even as recently as the late 2010s, Hausas are considered outsiders. They demand the rights to supervise access to land in Sudan and inclusion in the regional administration. Sudan Tribune explains that the Hausas aim to establish a chiefdom in the Blue Nile; the regional administration has rejected these demands, especially after the Hausas chose a leader to represent them earlier in 2022.

Third, increased instances of violence across Sudan's border regions. Apart from violence in the Blue Nile, similar instances have been recorded in West Kordofan and South Kordofan states and border states of the Darfur region in the west. The ICRC estimates that of the three million people displaced in Sudan, 80 per cent live in Darfur. Similarly, Sudan has been facing problems along borders with South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Chad.

Fourth, the general unrest in Sudan. The country has been witnessing a nationwide uprising since the military coup in October 2021. The protesters have been calling for an end to the military government and the installation of civilian rule. However, protests have been met with force, and in late June, nine protesters were killed during demonstrations. As of 20 July, more than 100 protesters have died during the protests.



In perspective

First, the violence in the Blue Nile state indicates the failure of successive governments and administrations to address the tribal grievances in the state, leading to a feeling of alienation among the Hausas in the state.

Second, the increasing instances of violence can be attributed to the instability created by frequent shifts in the federal government, from the fall of longtime dictator Omar al Bashir in 2019 to the subsequent civilian rule, which was toppled by the military in October 2021. The violence and anger among people add to the mistrust of the Sudanese in the ruling military government. Repeated violence will likely worsen the unrest sparked by the political crisis and the reeling economy.

Also, from around the world

By Avishka Ashok, Arshiya Banu, Akriti Sharma, Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Rashmi BR, Apoorva Sudhakar, Harini Madhusudan, Rishma Banerjee and Padmashree Anandhan

East and Southeast Asia

China: Foreign Ministry condemns report on Xinjiang

On 18 July, China's foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin commented on the US report on the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and advised the US and the West to stop interfering in China's internal affairs. Wang said the issues in Xinjiang were not related to human rights violations, ethnicity or religion but were connected to countering terrorism and deradicalization. On the US report, Wang said: "The U.S. report distorts and smears the human rights conditions in Xinjiang and wantonly attacks China's Xinjiang policy, tramples on international law and basic norms in international relations and lacks factual basis. It is nothing more than a repetition of U.S. lies on Xinjiang-related issues." Wang further highlighted the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act and called it a smear campaign of the US.

China: Eastern Theatre Command tracks and follows US Navy in Taiwan Strait

On 20 July, the Chinese military's Eastern Theatre Command stated that it tracked and closely watched the US destroyer Benfold when it crossed the Taiwan Strait. The military said: "The frequent provocations and showing-off by the United States fully demonstrate that the United States is a destroyer of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and a maker of security risks in the Taiwan Strait." According to the US Navy's 7th Fleet, the USS Benfold made a regular passage of the Taiwan Strait on 19 July, "through international waters in accordance with international law." The Fleet said: "The ship transited through a corridor in the Strait that is beyond the territorial sea of any coastal state." About once a month, the US has been making these trips across the body of water between Taiwan and China; Beijing perceives this as the US support for the island and disapproves of the trips.

South Korea: COVID-19 cases reach more than 40,000 in one day

On 17 July, Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency released data showing that the number of new COVID-19 infections in South Korea doubled on Saturday compared to a week earlier, primarily because of the highly contagious BA.5 Omicron subvariant and diminishing immunity among the population. Given the rate of transmission already in place, health experts predicted that the number of daily infections may rise more than the government had anticipated. Another danger stems from the appearance of the more recent Omicron strain BA.2.75, also referred to as "Centaurus." The data showed that during the 24 hours on Saturday, there were 40,342 daily COVID-19 instances in the country.

South Asia

India-China: Sixteenth round of LAC talks

On 17 July, India and China held the sixteenth round of corps commander-level talks at LAC. On 18 July, according to a joint statement issued by the two sides, they agreed to maintain “security and stability” on the ground. The two sides agreed to stay in close contact and maintain dialogue through military and diplomatic channels and work out a “mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest.” The talks were held at the Chushul-Moldo border for twelve hours. However, the stalemate continues between both sides.

Sri Lanka: Members of the Parliament elect Ranil Wickremesinghe as President

On 20 July, Rajapaksa’s ruling party backed prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe to become the new president. Amidst the booming economic crisis and mass protests, Wickremesinghe will serve till November 2024. He aims to bring back political stability and continue talks with the IMF. The Sri Lanka Podujana Peramnua (SLPP) party believes that the president was chosen mainly due to his experience, and confidence in the handling of the economic crisis. After the vote decision, a few protests were observed against the decision asking Ranil to go back home.

Pakistan: Sindhi-Pashtun differences spur violence in Sindh

On 13 July, tensions continued for the second consecutive day over the killing of a man allegedly by restaurateurs of Afghan origin. The incident triggered a strong reaction as mobs took to the streets forcing shops of Pashto and Persian-speaking people to close in Hyderabad and other cities across Sindh. Following the incident, political leaders continued to curb the tensions and urged people not to believe conspiracies aimed at creating disharmony among Sindhis and Pashtuns.

Afghanistan: UNAMA releases report on the human rights situation since the Taliban takeover

On 20 July, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) released its findings on the human rights situation in Afghanistan over the ten months since the Taliban takeover in August 2021. The report cites that despite an overall reduction in armed violence, between mid-August 2021 and mid-June 2022, 2106 civilian casualties were recorded. Most civilian casualties were attributed to targeted attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province. The report also highlighted that the deterioration of women’s rights had been one of the most notable aspects of the Taliban administration to date.

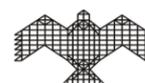
Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Armenia-Azerbaijan: Yerevan to withdraw troops from Nagorno-Karabakh by September

On 19 July, Secretary of Armenia’s security council, Armen Grigoryan said that Armenia would withdraw all troops from the contested Nagorno-Karabakh region by September. He said, “The units of Armenian armed forces have been returning to Armenia after the ceasefire, the process is nearing completion and will end in September.” However, he added that local Armenian separatist forces “will remain there.” Previously, on 16 July, the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan held their first bilateral talks since the war in 2020. The two sides discussed issues related to normalizing relations between the two countries and the progress of fulfilling previous commitments.

Iran: Putin’s visit to Iran and Russia-Iran-Turkey trilateral dialogue

On 19 July, Russian President Putin visited Tehran and participated in the Russia-Iran-Turkey trilateral dialogue with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Turkey’s President Erdogan. The trilateral dialogue, also known as the Astana Peace Process, is a mechanism created by the three countries to discuss the Syrian War and end the 11-year-old conflict. Iran and Russia are



strong allies of the Assad regime and oppose Turkey's activities targeting the Kurdish groups in the Syrian territory, stating violation of sovereignty. During the talks, Erdogan stated that Turkey plans to create a 30 kilometres "safe zone" from the country's southern border with Syria, to prevent any terrorist activity. Ankara considers the armed Kurdish outfit, People's Protection Group (YPG), as a terrorist organization and is ready to conduct a new operation in Syria. Iran and Russia have strongly opposed Turkey's plans to launch any new operation without the approval of the Syrian government.

Syria: Daesh attack kills six police personnel near Baghdad

On 20 July, six Iraqi police personnel were killed and seven others wounded, in an attack by the Daesh, in Al-Jillam, a village north of Baghdad. Military sources said that around 10 to 15 terrorists were involved in attacking the federal police forward position, and the attack lasted for an hour.

Sudan-Ethiopia: Khartoum reopens Galabat border crossing

On 17 July, a Sudanese army spokesperson said the Technical Committee of the Security and Defence Council had decided to reopen the Galabat border crossing after it was closed on 26 June. The statement from the committee said the decision came after leaders from both sides agreed to resolve the border problems "in return for the goodwill measures shown by the Ethiopian side to prevent the infiltration of armed elements into Sudanese territory."

Uganda: At least 200 die of hunger across two districts in the northeast

On 19 July, Reuters reported over 200 people had died of hunger caused by drought and insecurity, in July in Uganda's northeast. The head of Kaabong district's local government said 184 people had died in the district and at least 22 had died in Kotido district. The news report attributes the starvation to lack of development and increasing raids on cattles by armed groups. A spokesperson from the prime minister's office did not mention the exact death toll but said the government had sent food trucks to the region earlier in July.

Niger: EU announces EUR 25 million assistance; launches operational partnership to tackle migrant smuggling

On 18 July, the European Council announced assistance of EUR 25 million to Niger "to strengthen the capabilities and resilience of the Nigerien Armed Forces" for civilian protection and defending territorial integrity. The assistance would be directed to constructing an Armed Forces Technician Training Centre and a military operating base in the Tillaberi region on the border between Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. In another development, on 15 July, the EU and Niger launched an operational partnership to address migrant smuggling. Niger's interior minister said the partnership would protect and improve the living conditions of migrants and their hosts.

Europe and the Americas

Russia: Reconstruction of Donbas to be done with North Korean labour

On 19 July, the Russian ambassador to Pyongyang suggested that North Korea could send their builders to eastern Ukraine's separatist regions and aid the reconstruction of Donbas that has been devastated by the months of the war. Last week, North Korea became the third country to formally recognise the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republic, following Syria and Russia.

Russia: Putin thanks Erdogan for mediation in grain talks

On 19 July, the Russia's president Vladimir Putin thanked Turkiye's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan for mediating the talks on the issue of the export of grains from Ukraine. Putin said that there was some progress on the issue. The Russian military intervention in Ukraine

hampered the shipments that originated from Ukraine, which is one of the world's biggest exporters of wheat and other grain, sparking fears of global shortages, which led to the need for a mediation by Türkiye.

North Macedonia: Passes a resolution in parliament to resolve the dispute with Bulgaria

On 17 July, North Macedonia and Bulgaria signed a bilateral protocol, which is part of the EU negotiating framework. This follows weeks of violent protests in Skopje against agreeing to the compromises listed in the framework. Out of 120 members of North Macedonia's parliament, 68 members voted in favour of the same. There were zero abstentions or votes against, but the opposition, who had supported the protests boycotted parliament. The agreement with Bulgaria signals the beginning of the accession procedure for North Macedonia and Albania's membership of the EU.

Europe: Nordic countries dominate the gender parity list by World Economic Forum

On 13 July, the World Economic Forum released its Global Gender Gap Report 2022. It states that to reach gender parity, the world will need 132 years, as only 68 per cent of the gap has been closed. For the 12th year in a row, Iceland has been named the most gender equal country out of the 146 economies, where 90 per cent of the gap has been closed. The other Nordic countries, Finland, Norway and Sweden, dominate the top five, and Ireland stands at the 9th position. Only four countries in the top 10 are outside Europe: New Zealand, Rwanda, Nicaragua, followed by Namibia.

The US: Deal with Russia to send astronauts to ISS

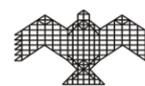
On 15 July, NASA from the US and Roscosmos, Russia's Space Agency, signed a deal to send each country's astronauts to the International Space Station. The deal will serve as a break between the two amidst the war. As per the agreement, US astronauts Frank Rubio, Sergey Prokopyev, Dmitry Petelin, and Anna Kikina will fly in September. According to the Nasa administrator and former space shuttle astronaut Bill Nelson: "Despite all of that, up in space, we can have a cooperation with our Russian friends, our colleagues. The professional relationship between astronauts and cosmonauts, it hasn't missed a beat. This is the cooperation we have going on in the civilian space program." As per the statement from Roscosmos, it said that the agreement was signed due to the interests of both parties and to help in promoting cooperation within the ISS framework.

The US: President Biden announced USD 2.3 billion to counter climate disasters

On 21 July, US President Joe Biden revealed a climate action plan for USD 2.3 billion. The plan aims to fund to "expand flood control, shoring up utilities, and retrofitting buildings." It will also help families to stand against extreme weather scenarios and disasters. The funding will be sent from the budget of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, it also targets to develop offshore wind energy capacities. According to Biden: "If we don't keep [climate change] below 1.5C, we lose it all. We don't get to turn it around."

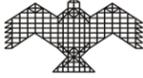
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About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI)

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 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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