

Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

22 September 2022, Vol.3, No.25

Clashes between Armenia-Azerbaijan

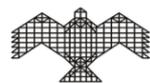
Abigail Miriam Fernandez



Over 100 troops killed as Armenia and Azerbaijan accuse each other of instigating cross-border shelling. (Image Source: World Atlas)

Cover Story and Special Report

Another Peace Accord in India's Northeast, and report review on EU's food waste 2022



Armenia-Azerbaijan: Over 100 troops killed in renewed border clashes

In the news

On 13 September, clashes broke out between Armenia and Azerbaijan as both sides accused each other of instigating cross-border shelling. In the two days of intense shelling, Azerbaijan launched a large-scale attack targeting 23 locations in several of Armenia's provinces, which are located south of the country along the border with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan also targeted military outposts and residential areas located in Armenian cities and local villages. The defence ministry claimed that the attack was a counter-response to Armenia's "large-scale provocation" against Azerbaijani troops.

On 14 September, the fighting ceased after both sides agreed to a ceasefire called on by Armenia. On 15 September, Azerbaijan's defence ministry reported that 71 soldiers were killed in the clashes, while Armenia said 105 of its troops were killed during the recent fighting.

Meanwhile, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan triggered mass protests after he revealed: "We [the government] want to sign a document, as a result of which many people will criticize us, many people will curse us out, and many people will call us traitors. Maybe the people will decide to remove us from power."

On 19 September, the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken hosted the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in New York where he "conveyed condolences for the lives lost and emphasized the need to prevent further hostilities, underscoring the importance of returning to the peace process." The US State Department spokesperson said, "They discussed next steps, and the secretary encouraged the sides to meet again before the end of the month."

Issues at large

First, the increasing frequency of clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In the recent past, the intensity of the clashes has increased. It began in May 2021, when the Azerbaijani military targeted Syunik and Gegharkunik provinces in Armenia. There have been several skirmishes along the southern part of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, as well as on the Armenia-Nakhchivan border and in Nagorno-Karabakh. More recently, clashes broke out in August 2022, with Azerbaijan claiming that the country's armed forces have taken control over the key town of Lachin, which links Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia.

Second, stalled negotiations over the demarcation of the southern part of the Armenia-Azerbaijan interstate border. One of the main points of contention between the two countries is the transport link. The refusal by Armenia to set up the transit link in accordance with Azerbaijan's plans has irked the latter. In recent months, Azerbaijani officials have publicly criticized Armenia for hindering the process of opening up regional transport routes. Additionally, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev claimed that several cities, including Yerevan, are historical Azerbaijani lands and said that Baku might use force to establish the corridor between these regions.

Third, the role of Russia and the United States as mediators. While the US has shown interest in mediating between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Russia has been careful not to get entangled in the conflict and scaled down its peacekeeping troops in the region, stressed the importance of de-escalation, and tried to negotiate a peace agreement.

Fourth, stalled negotiations. Armenian and Azeri diplomats have been unsuccessfully meeting to formulate a peace deal to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. However, several issues remain unresolved. These include delimiting the border between the two countries, the nature of new transportation corridors in the region, and the fate of Nagorno-Karabakh itself, along with its current ethnic Armenian population.

In perspective

First, Azerbaijan's aggression in the region. From the recent skirmishes, it is evident that Azerbaijan has become more aggressive and made substantial territorial gains in the region. While aggression is common on both sides, Armenia has been on the receiving end in most instances. However, whether Azerbaijan is preparing for a bigger offensive in southern Armenia or just trying to put pressure on Yerevan remains to be seen.

Second, previous ceasefires have not been able to hold due to failed negotiations. The inability of Azerbaijan and Armenia to reach a consensus on several issues relating to transportation links, border demarcations, ethnic populations, and the division of enclaves are some of the reasons why the ceasefire continues to be violated. Unless the ceasefire agreement is backed by substantial peace negotiations, the border incidents are likely to continue.

Third, the potential of this conflict to become a proxy war. Currently, all the external actors show no interest in escalating the issues into a proxy war. The US, Russia, the European Union, and Turkey, to some extent, have voiced their concern over the unresolved issues and expressed their resolve to de-escalate the situation and solve it. However, it remains to be seen if it Armenia and Azerbaijan can escape the proxy trap if the issues continue to fester.

Conflict Weekly Exclusive, 22 September 2022

Report Review: *EU's food waste 2022*

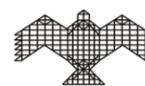
EU's food waste 2022: Three takeaways

By Padmashree Anandhan

On 20 September, environmental organization Feedback EU released a "No Time to Waste" report on how the EU's food waste exceeds its imports, thereby affecting food security in the EU. It reported that the EU imported 138 million tonnes of agricultural products, but nearly 153.5 million tonnes of food was wasted yearly. To address the issue, the European Environmental Bureau issued a statement urging the EU and European Commission to adopt a legal framework regulating the member states to cut down on food waste. It asked the "EU member states to collectively achieve a 50% reduction in EU food loss and waste by 2030."

Six takeaways

First, agricultural waste as a major contributor. The report categorized the sources of food waste into five groups. One, at the point of primary production, which includes harvest waste and post-harvest waste resulting from the farming process, storage, transport, disease, and poor harvesting methods. The food waste from this segment was found to be the highest, with close to 90 million tonnes from the EU farms, mostly from low-income countries than high-income countries (WWF-UK report 2021). Two, household food waste emerged as the second highest with 32.5 million tonnes. Three, processing units involving manufacturing, transport, distribution, and packaging which accounted for 15.4 million tonnes of food waste (Fusion 2016 report; no recent data available). Four, food services like restaurants, hotels, canteens, and caterers contributed to 10.5 million tonnes of food waste. Five, wholesale and retail centres,



such as supermarkets, supply chain lines, and distribution, contributed 5.3 million tonnes of food waste (UNEP 2021 report). A major reason for the huge volume of agricultural waste was cosmetic rejection, where buyers expect food products in the exact demanded size, shape and colour. However, under conditions beyond their control, such as weather and pest infestation, farmers are unable to meet these cosmetic demands. Such parameters narrow price fluctuation making it more difficult for farmers to prevent wastage.

Second, a lackadaisical approach to the food waste management framework. The report outlines the EU's steps in setting up a legal framework to reduce food waste, which has been sluggish. Efforts by the European Commission began in 2010 to set specific targets to bring down food waste. In 2012, the European Parliament asked the Commission to take measures to bring down the waste by half by 2025, upon which the Commission proposed the "Circular Economy Package in 2014," but withdrew the plan since it was felt to be ambitious. After several negotiations between the European Council, Commission, and Parliament, a poor set of waste reduction targets were set at attaining a 30 per cent cut by 2025 and a 50 per cent cut by 2030. The recent initiative was in 2018, when the European Commission decided to make changes to its "Waste Framework Directive (WFD)", enforcing its member states to measure and report on waste quantity beginning from 2020. All these processes have only slowed down the setting of targets.

Third, interlinked impact on climate and gender. For the EU, which is currently experiencing peak summer temperatures and heatwaves, reducing the contributing factors to climate change is critical. Food waste contributes to six per cent of the total emissions. Europe's Green Deal targets to regulate the food system to be more environmentally friendly and healthy, but the economic effect is becoming starker. The report finds that climate change affected the economies of eastern and northern Europe. With climate change, women are most affected without access to resources, especially from marginalized communities and low-income countries. Therefore, to beat the GHG emissions, achieve SDG goals (12.3), and embrace nature-based solutions, food wastage control measures are more important than ever for Europe.

Fourth, the applicability of the farm-to-fork reduction strategy. Despite the decelerated progress in addressing food waste, the report recommends the "farm-to-fork" strategy that will bind all the EU member states to the 50 per cent reduction target by 2030. Although there is less evidence of businesses and member states following the food waste reduction practices, with appropriate policies, the target is attainable as per the report. The major problem in implementing this are measurable indicators and ones that can ensure participation of related companies and regular reporting from the business sector. The "farm-to-fork" strategy suggests the following to meet the challenges. One, similar legislation like Directive 2002/96/EC, which curbs electrical and electronic waste that led to increased recycling. Two, imposing appropriate tax against wastage. Three, through a survey, to assess and ensure the compliance of the food waste contributors. There are many laws in place in France and the UK, such as "national-level regulation," "Right to Repair law," and "Groceries Code Adjudicator," which serve as models for other member states to adopt food waste reduction targets.

Cover Story

Another Peace Accord in India's Northeast: A review of the new agreement between New Delhi, Assam government and Adivasi insurgent groups

By Bibhu Prasad Routray

On 15 September, a tripartite agreement between the Assam government, the Central government and eight Adivasi insurgent groups was signed at North Block, New Delhi, the seat of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).^[1] Over 1100 cadres belonging to eight insurgent groups surrendered, after a decade-long wait since the signing of a ceasefire agreement, in 2012. These include cadres belonging to five primary groups—the AllAdivasi National Liberation Army (AANLA), the Adivasi Cobra Militant of Assam (ACMA), the Birsa Commando Force (BCF), the Santhal Tiger Force (STF), and the Adivasi People's Army (APA); and three breakaway/splinter factions of BCF, AANLA, and ACMA. The Accord has been hailed as historic and also, a major step towards establishing durable peace in the northeast, by the Union Home Minister and the Chief Minister of Assam.

On the face of it, signing of a peace agreement, more so after a ceasefire and negotiations that lasted nearly a decade, is a welcome step. However, whether the accord is indeed a 'historic' one and has the capacity to become the harbinger of peace in the state, let alone the northeastern region, is debatable. While politicians and government of the day are fully entitled to have their views and overemphasize significance of the event, security analysts and academicians have the liberty of taking a step back and use an analytical framework to assess the projected success of standalone peace agreements such as this one.

Peace process: A framework of analysis

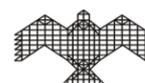
In theatres marked by multiple conflicts, success of peace processes with individual outfits or a group of outfits professing rather similar objectives, needs to be judged by two factors. Firstly, it needs to be assessed if a particular peace process can indeed contribute to achieving comprehensive peace in the entire region. Here, the term 'entire region' denotes the 'direct impact zone' comprising areas where these outfits were active and also, the 'extended spillover zones,' where the message of peace will eventually reverberate.

Secondly, it needs to be examined if the said peace process fulfills three essential conditions: durability; transformability from negative to positive peace; and the possible impact on the other continuing or unresolved conflicts in the region. Unless one or more of these conditions are fulfilled, it is difficult to hail the peace process as a significant success.

The following analysis would demonstrate that the recently concluded peace accord with the Adivasi insurgent groups fails to fulfil any of these factors and conditions.

A Minor Insurgency Ends

Assam, in the past four decades, has witnessed insurgency of the most violent kind. Groups like the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) represented major insurgent formations accounting for widespread violence and fatalities. In addition, a large number of smaller groups, numbering close to 50, mushroomed and operated for several years in the state. Some of them perished on their own or under pressure from COIN operations, and others opted for peace agreements with the government. Spillover insurgencies from neighbouring states like Nagaland and Manipur, and also, Islamist terrorism with roots in Bangladesh added to the specter of violence in the state. According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, between 1992



and 2021, at least 8368 civilians, security force personnel and insurgents were killed in the state.

The five Adivasi insurgent groups, whose 1182 cadres had moved to the designated camps, following the signing of the ceasefire agreement in 2012, represented a very minor strand of insurgency in the overall insurgent violence raging in the state around demands ranging from independence to autonomy. All of these Adivasi groups had originated between late 1990s and 2006. Their sparse violence and extortion activities were limited to upper and lower Assam districts including Sivasagar, Golaghat, Karbi Anglong, Kokrajhar, Udalguri, Bongaigaon and Dhubri. Not only were their violence potential extremely limited with only a minute fraction having access to weapons, their demands too pertained only to seeking development packages for the plantation workers of the tea gardens in Assam, whose ancestors were relocated from northern India by the Britishers. Their primary demand was to seek Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for the Adivasis in Assam and rehabilitation of the displaced members of the community. Unlike other Indian states, Adivasis do not enjoy ST status within Assam, which is reserved for the indigenous tribes of the state. Following the ceasefire agreement, all five groups constituted a committee known as Adivasi Ceasefire Coordination Organisation (ACCO) to pursue their demands.^[2]

The known cadre strength of these five groups was never more than 600, although it had dramatically swelled to 1182 during the 2012 surrender, probably to take advantage of the financial assistance of INR 3000 per month provided to each of them while being stationed in the designated camps. It is also surprising that the numbers remained constant even after three breakaway factions emerged in the last 10 years. Till August 2022, preparations were on for signing the accord with the original five groups and not the breakaway groups whose origin is somewhat shrouded in mystery. However, eight groups opting for peace makes better news than five groups and that seems to have been the factor why the little known three splinter groups too were included in the final accord.

Politics behind surrender of insurgents and peace accord is not unique to Assam. It has a very interesting and protracted history in Kashmir as well as the states impacted by left-wing insurgency. Notwithstanding the rather impressive number of outfits and their nearly 1200 cadres who gave up arms and are now part of the ‘mainstream’, it is undeniable that the peace per se did not get a fillip on 15 September. It was, at best, the culmination of political negotiations between the ACCO and the government. Hence to imagine that the Accord would contribute to the government’s vision of an insurgency-free northeast could be an exaggeration of the actual state of affairs.

Durability and Transformability

According to the Home Ministry, the Accord on 15 September provides for rehabilitation and re-settlement of armed cadres and measures for the welfare of the tea garden workers. Over a period of next five years, a special development package of INR 1000 crore—INR 500 crore each by Government of India and Government of Assam—will be provided for the development of infrastructure in Adivasi inhabited villages/areas. The Accord also provides for the setting up of an Adivasi Welfare and Development Council (AWDC) by the Government of Assam. The AWDC will have the mandate of fulfilling the political, economic and educational aspirations of Adivasis. It will also protect, preserve and promote their social, cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities.

While these promises appear to have been satisfied the eight insurgent groups/ACCO, the Accord does not mention anything on the primary demand—ST status for the Adivasis. The government can flag conclusion of the Accord as an outcome of tough negotiations, without

even appointing an interlocutor. However, fears that the ACCO is being forced to climb down from its original demand had already been expressed by leading Adivasi organisations like the All Adivasi Students' Association in Assam (AASAA) and Adivasi National Conference (ANC). [3] In August 2021, both organisations, with sizeable following among the Adivasis, had reiterated three core demands of the Adivasis – ‘ST status, fair wages for tea garden workers and an autonomous satellite council’. They had further underlined that the insurgent outfits alone do not subsume the development demands of the Adivasis.

Details regarding setting up of the AWDC have not yet been made available. The mentioned mandate for AWDC is also a source of confusion. Assam already has an Adivasi Development Council (ADC). [4] Whether the ADC would be abolished and make way for the AWDC or will be merely refurbished to placate the sense of achievement of the Adivasi insurgencies is unclear. In any event, performance of most of Assam's 33 Autonomous Development Councils, created in response to the demands of various communities has been below par. State governments—the present and its predecessors—had found setting up such Councils a convenient way of deflating larger demands of aggrieved communities. However, due to the intricacies of local politics and lack of provision of regular funds, such councils remain largely dysfunctional, incapable of serving the interests of their constituencies.

It is clear, therefore, that the 15 September Accord does little to put to rest the sense of marginalization among the Adivasis, who constitute a significant 20 percent of Assam's population. After the dust settles, the Adivasis are bound to figure out that they have been left in the lurch, once again. In August 2021, AASAA and ANC had threatened to launch movements seeking ‘alternatives within the constitutional framework’ if their core demands are not fulfilled by the Accord. [5] Irrespective of whether the threat would translate into new bouts of agitation or not, it is almost certain that the Accord will not pacify a very large community of people of the state. That would remain a potentially source of instability in the future.

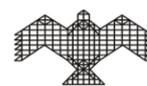
On the scale of durability prospects, therefore, the 15 September Accord does not fare well.

Johan Galtung distinguishes [6] between negative peace, which merely indicate the absence of violence, like a ceasefire, and positive peace, which builds on the absence of violence to progress towards harmony. If peace is to be understood as “a relation between two or more parties,” in negative peace, relations between the affected communities and the dominant communities are not only indifferent, but disharmonious. Positive peace, on the other hand, denotes presence of harmony. It is unlikely that the INR 1000 crore package alone would transform the prevalent negative peace among the Adivasis into a state of positive peace. With regard to transformability prospects, the 15 September Accord does not fare well either.

Over the Horizon Impact

As argued before, success of a peace process needs to be judged not just by its capacity to bring positive peace to the ‘direct impact zone’, but also to the ‘extended spillover zones’. In other words, peace accords must have the capacity to reduce violence in the areas where the outfit was active. In addition, it should contribute to resolving other continuing conflicts in the broader region. Not surprisingly, therefore, politicians and government functionaries speak of the ramifications of one peace process on the prospects of peace in the entire northeast. Does the Accord with the Adivasi groups any such potency? Unlikely so.

The Home Minister used the occasion to rightly flag that with the conclusion of the Accord with the Adivasi groups, only two insurgent groups—the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) and the ‘Independent’ faction of the ULFA—are active in Assam. The KLO is a much smaller outfit and is operationally irrelevant. The Myanmar-based Paresh Baruah-led ULFA-I,



on the other hand, still retains significant nuisance value. In the past years, back channel processes to bring Baruah to the negotiating table have failed. He continues to insist that ‘sovereignty of Assam’ must figure in any negotiation with the government.^[7] This is unacceptable to the government in Dispur as well as in New Delhi. Hence, there is little possibility of ULFA-I joining the peace process in the near future, even after the ‘historic’ Accord with the Adivasi groups. ULFA-I’s intransigence coupled with its diminished, yet significant potency to carry out violence as well as recruit cadres in select Assam districts does not augur well for the stability project in Assam and the northeast.

The government’s inability to conclude yet another long-standing peace process, i.e. with the oldest outfit in the northeast, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) is far more vexatious. Ceasefire agreement with the group dates back to 1997. However, like Baruah, Thuingaleng Muivah, the last remaining patriarch of the NSCN-IM, remains defiant and is unwilling to give up the demand for a separate flag and constitution for Nagaland. These demands fly in the face of the government in New Delhi, which insists on complete and unequivocal integration of all Indian states into the Indian union. However, to implement a Kashmir project in Nagaland has been unsuccessful so far. Since the 2015 signing of the framework agreement with the NSCN-IM, New Delhi has been trying to project that the Naga conflict is on the verge of a final resolution. Range of measures to weaken the NSCN-IM and make it fall in line include orchestrating splits in the outfit, creating a group of rival pro-agreement Naga outfits called the Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs), and also threatening to sign a final agreement without the group. And yet, the ‘mother of all insurgencies’ remains unperturbed and keeps on harping on its disinclination to compromise on key demands. Thus, while the MHA flags the Adivasi Accord as a stupendous success, its seven-year old effort to bring peace to Nagaland remains an unfinished project and is unlikely to be impacted by developments in Assam.

Way Forward

The Northeast today is a far more peaceful region compared to the past years. At the same time, in most states where insurgencies have either been resolved or guns have fallen silent, discontent and disenchantment remain. Negative, rather than positive peace, prevails. This is perhaps to do with India’s imperfect and resource starved governance architecture in general, which in the past decades, have failed to fulfil the basic needs and growing aspirations of its people. Complexities around contests over limited resources have further inhibited the official policies and their implementation. These fault lines are far starker in insurgency-affected states. It is, therefore, important that peace accords stay clear of quick fixes and politicization. The agreements must fulfil the immediate as well as broader objectives of moving towards positive peace. Galtung wrote, ‘Peace is not a property of one party alone, but a property of the relation between parties.’^[8] A hasty and largely bureaucratic Accord with the Adivasis falls short of establishing durable peace.

Peace and stability in the northeast remain critical requirements for India’s Act East Policy. Festering of unresolved conflicts and discontent can be exploited by external powers to try push the region again into an abyss of violence. They may find active accomplices in the active insurgencies as well as discontented groups. The Government of Assam and New Delhi can still exhibit a sense of victory after the Adivasi Accord, owing primarily to the low violence potential of the insurgencies. However, sufficient care should be taken to avoid the repeat of the same in the future, in the event of peace agreements either with the NSCN-IM and/or the ULFA-I.

^[1] “Centre signs tripartite peace deal with 8 tribal outfits, Shah says important day for Assam”, *Hindustan Times*, 15 September 2022, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india->

[news/centre-signs-peace-accord-with-tribal-outfits-shah-says-important-day-for-assam-101663243705575.html](https://www.timesofindia.com/centre-signs-peace-accord-with-tribal-outfits-shah-says-important-day-for-assam-101663243705575.html).

[2] Statement of Mullappally Ramachandran, Minister of State for Home Affairs, Government of India in the Rajya Sabha, 19 February 2014.

[3] Kangkan Kalita, “Govt forcing ceasefire adivasi rebel groups to drop ST status demand: All Adivasi Students’ Association of Assam”, *Times of India*, 28 August 2021, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/govt-forcing-ceasefire-adivasi-rebel-groups-to-drop-st-status-demand-all-adivasi-students-association-of-assam/articleshow/85722081.cms>.

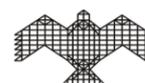
[4] “Development Councils”, Department of Tribal Affairs (Plain), Government of Assam, 6 August 2022, <https://directorwptbc.assam.gov.in/frontimpotentdata/development-councils>.

[5] Kangkan Kalita, “Govt forcing ceasefire adivasi rebel groups”, op.cit.

[6] Johan Galtung, “A Mini Theory of Peace”, Galtung Institute, <https://www.galtung-institut.de/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Mini-Theory-of-Peace.pdf>.

[7] Karishma Hasnat, “‘Truth about ULFA, my childhood & why I’ll keep fighting’: rebel Paresh Baruah on his memoir”, *The Print*, 11 April 2021, <https://theprint.in/india/truth-about-ulfa-my-childhood-why-ill-keep-fighting-rebel-paresh-baruah-on-his-memoir/637059/>.

[8] Johan Galtung, “A Mini Theory of Peace”, op.cit.



Also, from around the world

By Avishka Ashok, Joel Jacob, Abigail Fernandez, Rashmi BR, Apoorva Sudhakar, Anu Maria Joseph, Harini Madhusudan, Rishma Banerjee, Padmashree Anandhan and Ankit Singh

East and Southeast Asia

Taiwan: Foreign Ministry calls Russia-China ties a threat to international peace

On 16 September, Taiwan's Foreign Ministry condemned Russia for supporting China's claims over Taiwan. The statement said that Taiwan "severely condemns Russia for following the Communist Party of China's authoritarian expansionist government to continue to make false statements at international venues that demean our country's sovereignty." The statement further stated that the Russia-China ties were a threat to global peace and urged the international community to resist the "expansion of authoritarianism."

South Korea: Military returns caskets of 88 Chinese soldiers

On 16 September, the South Korean honour guards returned the remains of 88 Chinese soldiers killed during the Korean War. The ceremony was the first since President Yoon Suk-yeol took office in May 2022, bringing the number of returned soldiers to 913 since 2014. The South Korean second Vice-Foreign Minister said: "Our yearly handovers of the remains of Chinese troops are held on a humanitarian basis, but also symbolize friendly cooperation between South Korea and China."

Taiwan: Visiting Lithuanian Minister highlights the importance of opening office

On 16 September, Lithuania's Minister of Economy and Innovation Karolis Zemaitis visited Taipei and addressed a press briefing and said that intense preparations were taking place to open the Taiwan office in the country. Zemaitis said: "The opening of the Lithuanian trade office in Taiwan is a 'very important step' for both democracies and the two are on a good track for economic cooperation." He noted that opening the office was an important step for both democracies.

Singapore: Coastal cities on the verge of sinking fast, says a study

On 21 September, a study conducted by the Asian School of the Environment and the Earth Observatory of Singapore noted that many coastal cities in Southeast Asia are now sinking the fastest globally, which could amplify the impact of massive flooding and imminent sea level rise. Satellite images of 48 coastal cities processed from 2014-2020 show that the median sinking speed was 16.2 mm per year.

Myanmar: Military firing on school kills 11 children

On 16 September, Myanmar's military killed 11 children when it rampantly fired on a temple school in Let Yet Kone village in the Sagaing region. The military claimed it as an operation to wipe out insurgents hiding inside the school. Along with the children, six adults were also killed during the operation.

South Asia

India: Eight cheetahs from Namibia to end extinction

On 17 September, India brought eight cheetahs from Africa and ended 70 years of extinction of the species in the country. The cheetahs were given a new home in the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh. Cheetahs in India were declared extinct in 1952 due to excessive hunting and loss of natural habitat.

Afghanistan: US Secretary-General on the closure of girl schools

On 19 September, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, while addressing the summit on Transforming Global Education, called on the Taliban to immediately lift all restrictions on girls' access to education. He said: "From this platform, I appeal to the authorities in Afghanistan: lift all restrictions on girls' access to secondary education immediately. Schools must be open to all without discrimination. We must recover the years of education lost around the world because of the pandemic. Quality education for all means tackling the crises in foundational learning and ensuring it is lifelong and placing a greater focus on education in crisis hotspots." Similarly, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said: "This is a tragic, shameful, and entirely avoidable anniversary...The ongoing exclusion of girls from high school has no credible justification and has no parallel anywhere in the world. It is profoundly damaging to a generation of girls and to the future of Afghanistan itself." 18 September marked one year since the Taliban closed schools for girls beyond grade six.

Afghanistan: Taliban denies the presence of JeM Chief Maulana Masood Azhar

On 14 September, Tolo News reported that the Taliban denied claims that Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) Chief Maulana Masood Azhar was in Afghanistan. A Taliban spokesperson said: "The leader of the Jaish-e-Mohammad group is not here in Afghanistan. This is an organization that could be in Pakistan. Anyway, he is not in Afghanistan and we have not been asked anything like this. We have heard about it in the news. Our reaction is that this is not true." Further, the Taliban's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said that such allegations could affect the relations between Kabul and Islamabad. Earlier the Pakistani media reported a letter sent by Pakistan's foreign minister to the Taliban seeking Azhar's arrest, allegedly hiding in the eastern provinces of Nangarhar or Kunar.

Afghanistan: UNAMA raises concerns over human rights violations in Panjshir

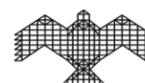
On 14 September, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) stated that it was deeply concerned about the allegations of human rights violations in the Panjshir Province. The UNAMA called the recent incidents in Panjshir a crime and demanded the prosecution of the perpetrators. Meanwhile, the UN special rapporteur for Afghan human rights, Richard Bennett, about the Taliban's decision to investigate the reports of extra-judicial killings in Panjshir, said: "investigations and any prosecutions must be conducted genuinely and according to international standards...noting that MoD has opened an investigation into reports of extra-judicial killings in Panjshir, I remind Taliban that they bear responsibility for the actions of their forces."

Pakistan: Federal Shariat Court to hear petitions challenging transgender law

On 21 September, Dawn reported that the Federal Shariat Court (FSC) would be taking up a set of petitions that challenged the transgender law, enacted in 2018, because it was "repugnant to Islamic injunctions." TV anchor Orya Maqbool Jan, one of the petitioners, contended that the transgender law was flawed since, in the "garb of the transgender rights, an attempt was being made to encourage advocates of LGBT (lesbian, gays, bisexual and transgender)." In response, Bubbli Malik, a transgender person, explained to the court the difference between a transgender and an LGBT person, suggesting the court seek expert opinion before concluding. This is seen as a blow to the legislation that was put in place in 2018.

Pakistan: 19th case of polio reported in 2022

On 15 September, Pakistan reported the 19th case of polio for 2022 after a new one was reported from South Waziristan, making it the first case from the area after a gap of two years. According to the Dawn report, all cases reported for 2020 have been from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with two belonging to Lakki Marwat, 16 from North Waziristan, and one from



South Waziristan. Federal Health Minister Abdul Qadir Patel said, "The humanitarian crisis, in the wake of floods, poses grave challenges to polio eradication efforts as we grapple with the displacement of millions of people," adding, "This mass displacement will lead to the spread of wild poliovirus, making it even more important to vaccinate children against polio."

Pakistan: Threat of water-borne diseases in flood-hit areas

On 20 September, Pakistan reported nine deaths from water-borne diseases, highlighting another growing concern. The accumulated stagnant water spread over several hundred kilometres gives rise to diseases like dengue, malaria, acute diarrhoea, and skin infections. The new risk of such infections and diseases is concerning, as around 1500 lives have already been lost due to the catastrophic floods. Many have fled their homes and are living in open areas with scarce medical support.

Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan: Over 100 people killed in border clashes

On 14 September, clashes broke out between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, leaving over 100 dead as both sides accused the other of provocation and opening fire. The fighting involved the use of tanks, aviation and rocket artillery along a disputed section of the border in Kyrgyzstan's Batken province. Later, on 20 September, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed a protocol to establish peace. The Kyrgyzstan's National Security Committee, President said: "I really hope that today's signed protocol of mutual understanding, which we started at our commission with the respected Saimumin Satarovich, will bring peace to our countries. I am sure that peace is always better, peace will persist and we will always strive for this peace." Similarly, Tajikistan's National Security Head said: "real peace will come to our borders" terming the two countries as "brother nations."

Iran: Protests over a young woman's death in custody

On 20 September, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Nada al-Nashif said: "Mahsa Amini's tragic death and allegations of torture and ill-treatment must be promptly, impartially, and effectively investigated by an independent competent authority." Her arrest by morality police and her death in custody has sparked widespread protests in Iran and brought back the issue of targeting women on the pretext of inappropriate methods of wearing hijab. Women have taken off their hijabs defiantly, cut their hair, and are protesting in large numbers. During the protests, six protestors reportedly died. While the activists and protestors said that Amini was beaten and tortured by the moral police, the Iranian authorities have reiterated that she collapsed due to a cardiac arrest and died in the hospital after slipping into a state of coma.

Yemen: Houthi violence against women

On 20 September, the Human Rights Association addressed the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva and said that the Houthis kidnapped 1700 women in Yemen, mainly from Sanaa between 2015 and 2022. The address also highlighted the plight of women 'arrested', who are subjected to mental and physical torture and illegal trials that jeopardize their safety and well-being. The Association urged the UNHRC to exert pressure on the Houthis to release the women and stop violence against them.

Yemen: Forces take control of Al-Qaeda strongholds

On 19 September, Yemeni forces took control of a military facility and mountainous areas from Al-Qaeda, in the Abyan province. Mohammed Al-Naqeeb, a military spokesperson of the Southern Transition Council said that the area is an "international military facility of the Al-Qaeda... with mortar shells, ammunition, and IEDs hidden in camps." On 20 September, the forces made further advances and announced that they had taken control of the Omaran valley

in Abyan and were working towards diffusing landmines and explosives planted by Al-Qaeda. Al-Naqeeb announced that the forces "have removed all terrorist elements from the valley, forcing them to flee to other mountains." He also said that the forces will stay put, to prevent any resurgence, facilitating the people to return to the villages.

Syria: Israeli air strike on Damascus

On 17 September, Syria's Ministry of Defence said that Israel launched air strikes on the International Airport in Damascus and other positions. The missiles were fired from the northeastern direction of Lake Tiberias, targeting the airport and the city. The attacks resulted in the death of five soldiers and material damage to the airport facility.

Nigeria: More than 300 killed in heavy rains since July

On 20 September, BBC reported that since July, over 300 people had died and 100,000 people were displaced in torrential rains. The rains had impacted 29 of the 36 states; the National Emergency Management Agency said Nigeria is likely to experience more floods in the upcoming weeks and therefore, called on state governments to evacuate people from flood-prone areas. The news report said that along with heavy rains, the floods were caused by the release of excess water from dams within Nigeria and neighbouring Cameroon.

Nigeria: At least 50 villagers abducted by gunmen

On 16 September, BBC reported, at least 50 villagers were abducted from Nigeria's Katsina state. According to the residents, the attackers rode in on motorcycles and started shooting, leaving one person dead and at least seven others injured. A police spokesperson said the security forces clashed with the gunmen, but failed to prevent the kidnapping. The authorities said that actions were being taken to track down the assailants and free the captives.

Ethiopia: TPLF accuses Eritrea of launching an offensive in Tigray

On 20 September, a spokesperson from Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) said that the Eritrean troops have launched a full-scale offensive in Ethiopia's Tigray region. He said: "Eritrea is deploying its entire army as well as reservists. Our forces are heroically defending their positions." Meanwhile, the US has condemned the Eritrean presence in Tigray. The US envoy to the region, Mike Hammer said: "They're extremely concerned and we condemn it. The presence of Eritrean troops in Ethiopia only serves to complicate matters, and inflame an already tragic situation." Both the Eritrean and Ethiopian governments have not yet commented on the accusations.

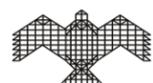
Somalia: More than 100 militants killed in army operations

On 19 September, a press release from the Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism said that the Somali National Army (SNA) had killed over 100 members of Al Shabab. As per the press release, the recording of casualties during the SNA's operations was conducted with the US's air support, in Yasoman and Aborey in Hiran region. On 18 September, the army said over 75 militants had been killed in a joint operation with clan militia. In response, an Al Shabab spokesperson said the group would retaliate to the involvement of clan militia.

Europe and the Americas

Russia: Putin urges restraint in the Armenia-Azerbaijan fighting

On 20 September, President Vladimir Putin said that Russia was worried about fresh confrontations between the former Soviet countries Armenia and Azerbaijan. He called on the two countries who are historic foes, to negotiate solutions to the disputes. Putin said: "I want to underscore that any conflict scenarios between countries close to us cause us serious concern." The statement came a day after the comment by Blinken urged peace between the



two rival countries as he brought together their top diplomats for the first time since the deadly border clashes. This is in the context of the flare-up in the fighting last week which left more than 200 dead.

Russia: Lawmakers approve long jail terms for military surrender or refusal to serve

On 20 September, the Russian lawmakers passed sweeping legislation that introduced jail terms of 15 years for wartime acts, including surrendering. The legislation stated that voluntary surrender and looting would be punished by 10-15 years of prison respectively, and desertion during mobilization or wartime would be punished by up to 10 years. The bill introduces the concepts of "mobilization, martial law and wartime," which were not mentioned earlier in the Russian Criminal Code. The law also revealed that the soldiers who refuse service could be jailed even without martial law. The State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, voted unanimously in favour of the bill.

Serbia: Police arrests activists after clashes reported in EuroPride

On 17 September, Serbia's police made over 64 arrests of the people taking part in Belgrade's EuroPride march. The event, which is the pinnacle of the EuroPride programme, was banned by Serbia's Interiors Ministry due to security concerns. However, LGBTQ+ activists said that they would conduct the march unofficially, even after right-wing groups threatened to hold protests. Despite the ban, the demonstrators marched from the constitutional court to a nearby park, which was a much shorter route than the original route planned by EuroPride.

Estonia: Defence budget to exceed 2.7 per cent of its GDP says Defence Minister

On 21 September, ERR reported on the remarks of Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur on defence spending. In his recent interview, Pevkur said that Estonia's defence spending which was at 2.7 or 2.8 per cent was expected to increase. He said that there was no immediate need for anti-ballistic missiles, but in the future Estonia will improve its air defence with anti-ballistic missile capability.

Europe: NATO's Military Committee annual conference 2022

On 16 September, the NATO Military Committee met in Tallinn, an annual conference organized by Estonia. Leaders discussed on the nuanced security posture of NATO on the Ukraine war and ways to implement the decision taken during the 2022 Madrid Summit. The conference was attended by Chiefs of Defence of all allied nations including Finnish and Swedish Defence Forces. In a statement released by the NATO, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Christopher Cavoli briefed on the present and future posture in the eastern flank and how NATO aims to establish a 360-degree security alliance.

Hungary: New law amidst EU's plan to suspend funding

On 17 September, Victor Orban's Chief of Staff, Gergely Gulyas told reporters that Hungary will submit a legislation to the parliament in the coming week to tackle corruption and a lack of transparency in government spending. The legislation will be to unlock the funding for Hungary from the EU's cohesion fund. Gulyas said that in some areas, the government has accepted the European Commission's recommendations. In other areas, it has reached a compromise with the Commission that is suitable for both parties. Gulyas also mentioned that if approved by the Parliament, the legislation could become valid from November 2022. However, on 18 September, the Commission recommended that the EU should suspend EUR 7.5 billion of Hungary's funding over persistent rule of law issues, violations of fundamental rights, and possible mismanagement of EU funds. The EU Budget Commissioner Johannes Hahn spoke about how despite Hungary's proposals to address the deficiencies, no concrete action had been taken.

Mexico: Earthquake hits the western region

On 19 September, an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.6 was recorded in the border area of Michoacan and Colima. The press release from the Mexican government mentioned two deaths and more than 200 buildings were damaged. Mexico witnessed earthquakes on the same day in the years 1985 and 2017.

Caribbean Islands: Hurricane Fiona declared a category 4 hurricane in the north-west

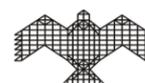
On 21 September, US National Hurricane Center (NHC) declared Fiona as a category four storm as it headed north parallel to US's eastern coast. Hurricane Fiona made landfall in the Dominican Republic on 19 September after slamming Puerto Rico with heavy rain, life-threatening flooding, and an island-wide power outage. On 21 September, the National Hurricane Center said Fiona's sustained winds are raging as high as 130 miles per hour with gusts reaching 155 miles per hour, it is still expected to strengthen as it moves away from Turks and Caicos and makes its way to Bermuda by the week's end. According to the US President, a state of emergency was declared in Puerto Rico.

Haiti: Protests due to spike in gas prices

On 20 September, Prime Minister Ariel Henry appealed for "calm and reconciliation" in Haiti as the country continues to be beset by increasing social insecurity, water shortage, and inflation. Many residents of Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince have been forced to shelter at home as gunfire broke out during protests over fuel price hikes and crime. On 21 September, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will discuss with the Haiti advisory group on the crisis and look for ways for seeking the international community's help.

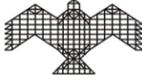
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About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI)

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.

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