

Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

02 February 2022, Vol.2, No.45

One year of the coup in Myanmar, Taliban meetings in Oslo, and the Global hunger report

Aparupa Bhattacherjee, Abigail Fernandez, and Apoorva Sudhakar



On 1 February, Myanmar completed one year of military rule; despite internal protests and external sanctions, the military regime remains strong. (Image Source: File Photo/REUTERS/Stringer)

Myanmar: One year after the coup

In the news

On 1 February marked one year of the military coup in Myanmar that triggered a nationwide civil disobedience movement, political arrests, ethnic conflicts, and violence. On the first anniversary, while the protestors observed a "silent strike" for six hours, a few pro-military rallies were organized in Yangon, Mandalay, and Naypyitaw.

On the same day, the EU delegation to the UN in Geneva issued a joint statement expressing concern over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Myanmar and called for a "cessation of violence."

On 31 January, the US, the UK and Canada added new sanctions against the Supreme Court Chief Justice, Union Attorney General, and Anti-Corruption Commission Chairperson; Washington also sanctioned four businessmen supporting the military regime with arms.

On 30 January, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing called for public cooperation toward peace and stability. He said conditions must be created "to hold a free and fair multiparty general election," and the military would "accomplish the provisions of the state of emergency by August 2023." At the National Defence and Security Council meeting, the Acting President approved a six-month extension of the military rule; a decision was taken to hold a general election by 2023.

Issues at large

First, one year of the military regime. After the general elections in November 2020, the military consolidated its control by annulling the newly elected parliament. It declared a state of emergency, claiming the election fraudulent, though then election commission, the international community, and the UN claimed the elections to be free and fair. Suu Kyi, the former President and several leaders of the NLD, were later detained; the regime formed the State Administration Council (SAC) led by Senior General Hlaing. In parallel, an anti-regime government - the National Unity Government, was established by elected lawmakers and pro-democracy groups. The People's Defence Force (PDF) came to force, trained by ethnic armed groups; it had declared a "people's defensive war" against the regime in September 2021.

Second, one year of military repression and domestic resistance. Firing at street protesters, use of airstrikes, burning of houses, and detentions have remained the hallmarks of the last year. The military detained 1,800 civilians, levied four charges against Suu Kyi, ensuring a jail term of 15 years, and killed around 1,500 protesters.

During the last year, the resistance to military rule has continued. Also, several ethnic armed groups have resurfaced, resulting in open confrontations with the regime.

Third, inadequate and mixed regional responses. The ASEAN's response during the last year was mixed – between mild censure and taking concrete actions. The Five-Point consensus agreed during the ASEAN Summit was not abided by the Myanmar regime; the former envoy from Brunei Darussalam had not even visited Myanmar. On the other hand, the visit by the Cambodian Prime Minister in December 2021, who is also the ASEAN chair, was strongly questioned by a few ASEAN countries, for example, Malaysia and Singapore. Myanmar's Senior General Hlaing was not invited to the ASEAN foreign minister's summit.

Fourth, ineffective sanctions and international reactions. Several international groupings and countries such as the EU, the US, Canada, and the UK have imposed travel bans and sanctions. But with sustained support from Russia and China, the sanctions have proved ineffective against the regime.

In perspective

First, a mixed first year. Despite solid measures against the people and the NLD, it has not put down the resistance completely. On the other hand, civil society is nowhere near beating the regime into a retreat despite showing resistance. Second, the regime's promise of an election in 2023 would be a pretext for further consolidation of power. Third, an expanding ethnic conflict would further push Myanmar into poverty scarcity and hamper the education system. Finally, as the coup moves into the second year, the regional and international responses remain ineffective to transform what had happened on 01 February 2021.

Afghanistan: Oslo talks with Taliban conclude with no substantial agreement

In the news

On 23 January, a Taliban delegation led by acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan attended a three-day discussion in Oslo with Western officials and Afghan civil society representatives. These included envoys from the United States, UK, Germany, Italy, Norway, Qatar, the European Union, and representatives of Afghan women's rights and Afghan civil society.

On 24 January, the Taliban Foreign Ministry's spokesperson said: "The meeting focused on discussions about the economy, humanitarian aid, security, the central bank, health and other relevant issues," adding, "The discussions are in progress, a full report will follow." Additionally, a Taliban spokesperson stated that the talks with the civil society were "constructive," adding, "The participants of the meeting recognized that understanding and joint cooperation are the only solutions to all the problems of Afghanistan." Meanwhile, a Taliban delegate stated that the meetings with Western officials were "a step to legitimize (the) Afghan government."

On 27 January, in a joint statement released by the US Department of State, the Western participants called for urgent action to address the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. They highlighted necessary measures to help ease the suffering of Afghans. Additionally, the statement read that they "made clear that their meetings with the Taliban in no way implied any sense of official recognition or legitimization of the interim government announced by the Taliban in September 2021."

Issues at large

First, the Taliban's quest for recognition amid internal opposition. Since the Taliban took over in August 2021, it has sought to gain recognition from the international community to legitimize its rule. The Taliban has pushed for recognition on all platforms; however, there has been no positive response. Recognizing the Taliban has become an issue; without it, there cannot be an inflow of essential aid and unfreezing of Afghan assets. Meanwhile, the cash strapped Taliban faces internal opposition from civil society and other actors.

Second, the dilemma to recognize the Taliban. While there has been engagement with the Taliban, the international community is still hesitant to recognize the Taliban's rule. Although the international community has emphasized dialogue with the Taliban, it is still uncertain about recognizing and accepting its demands.

Third, the current humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Over twenty million Afghans are on the brink of famine, combined with a severe drought, the coronavirus pandemic and unemployment. While there has been pledges and assistance coming in from several countries, it has not been sufficient to address the humanitarian crisis. In January 2022, the United Nations made one of the "biggest-ever appeal" for humanitarian aid for a single country, stating that it requires USD 4.4 billion to prevent the "world's most rapidly growing humanitarian crisis" from deteriorating further.

In perspective

First, the Taliban's demand for financial assistance and political recognition. The Taliban is clear with what it wants - unfreezing assets and recognition. The Taliban has pushed these two demands to strengthen and legitimize its rule. However, both these issues were sidelined during the talks.

Second, an unclear international community. The Oslo talks are another example of the international community being unclear on engaging with the Taliban. Until now, there have only been calls for assistance and limited aid. If the international community seeks to assist Afghanistan, it must understand the importance of pushing for a political settlement rather than just addressing the humanitarian challenges.

Global hunger: WFP-FAO report lists 20 hotspots, 16 in Africa

In the news

On 28 January, the UN World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization released the "Hunger Hotspots. FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity: February to May 2022 Outlook." The report identifies 20 hotspots that require immediate attention, of which Yemen, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Nigeria are categorized as countries of the highest concern. The report says that populations in the hunger hotspots "are likely to face a significant deterioration of acute food insecurity", and those in countries of highest concerns may face starvation and death.

Of the 20 hotspots, 16 are in Africa; apart from the above three African countries, the other hotspots are in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Angola, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Chad, Niger, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Mozambique, and Madagascar. The rest of the hotspots are Haiti, Honduras, Lebanon, Syria, Afghanistan and Myanmar.

The report identifies the following as the drivers of food insecurity: organized violence and conflict risks, natural hazard risks, economic risks, animal and plant pests and diseases. These risks are further aggravated due to humanitarian access constraints.

Issues at large

First, the issue of global hunger. The FAO has been documenting the problem of hunger since 1974. Despite the number of hunger-stricken people falling, global hunger is nowhere close to being eradicated. In 2020, the FAO estimated that 720 to 811 million people experienced hunger. The number is extremely shocking given that in 2015, UN members pledged to eradicate the problem by 2030, as part of the Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Second, causes of hunger and inadequate humanitarian aid. Apart from the drivers mentioned in the WFP-FAO report, hunger prevails due to poverty, lack of access to healthcare systems, and issues of governance. The problem is also influenced by climate variability and unfavourable conditions to grow crops.

While several local and international organizations attempt to provide assistance and aid, it is inadequate. The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated the situation and the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2021 estimates that the total number of people who required assistance had increased to 234 million in 2020. However, during the same period, key funding

from the UK, UAE, and Saudi Arabia have reduced, thereby offsetting increased funding by other donors. Meanwhile, humanitarian aid recorded shortfalls even before the pandemic.

Third, Africa as the global hotspot. With 16 hotspots, Africa could be seen as the global hunger hotspot. The problems in Africa are manifold. As the report mentions, organized conflict is a major hindrance to addressing hunger in Africa. Decades-long conflicts and successive governments' role in fueling and prolonging these conflicts have resulted in the current situation. Apart from the governments' role, several rebel groups also control and restrict access to food and other humanitarian resources, leading to the prevailing reality. Meanwhile, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic have also pushed several million at risk.

In perspective

Hunger and famines can have several causes, but it is undeniable that the governments in power and international institutions have a role in letting the problem continue. The shortfalls in aid even before the pandemic implies that global hunger was never a priority for several governments.

On the other hand, humanitarian aid alone is unlikely to solve the issue; the drivers of hunger have to be addressed. This includes proactive measures by governments to end conflicts, instead of maintaining the status quo or aggravating them, ensuring access to clean and safe food, dealing with climate change. If the world continues to ride the current wave, global hunger will not be eradicated for a long time, let alone by 2030.

Also, from around the world

By Padmashree Anandhan, Sejal Sharma and Satyam Dubey

Peace and Conflict from East and Southeast Asia

China: The US accused of attempts to interrupt the Winter Olympics

On 30 January, China has accused the United States for trying to disrupt the Beijing Winter Olympics. It has accused that the US has offered a large amount in compensation to the athletes from some participating countries to provoke them to express discontentment towards the hosting nation. In response, the US embassy echoed that the athletes have the freedom to express under the spirit and charter of the Olympics games.

North Korea: Alarm raised due to the new launch of a ballistic missile

On 30 January, Japan and South Korea reported the recent launch of the biggest ballistic missile by North Korea, which reached a maximum altitude before touching down in the Sea of Japan. The North Korean state news agency KCNA said that the launch took place to test the accuracy, and the missile test was carried out only after considering the security of neighbouring states. South Korean President Moon Jae-in remarked that the frequent testing of missiles by North Korea reinvigorates the events of similar launches in 2017. Although the leader Kim Jong-un states the tests are to strengthen the country's defense, international organizations and neighbouring countries such as Japan, South Korea, and other East Asian countries have condemned the launches.

Peace and Conflict from South Asia

India: Two armed ethnic groups in Assam surrender arms

On 27 January, members of the Tiwa Liberation Army and the United Gorkha People's Organization surrendered and handed over their firearms, grenades and ammunition to the Assam government. The two ethnic groups were formed in 2017 to satisfy the needs of the Tiwa community who are found in Assam and Meghalaya. Chief Minister Hemant Biswa Sarma said: "We are focussed on peace. Today's surrender will go a long way in putting Assam on the road to more development."

Maldives: MDP proposes a bill to fine those involved in the India Out campaign

On 1 February, the Maldives Democratic Party (MDP) proposed a bill to criminalize protests which impact bilateral relations with India. The bill is observed to be targeting the "India Out" protests, which have intensified since the release of the Opposition leader. The draft is titled: "The Bill To Stop All Actions That Could Negatively Affect Relations Established By The Maldives With Foreign Countries." It is expected to be submitted by 3 February, when the legislative body resumes. As per the bill, for those involved in the protests, the fine amounts to MVR (Maldivian Rufiyaa) 20,000 and six months imprisonment or one-year house arrest.

Peace and Conflict from Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Yemen: UN reports the death of 2000 children recruited as Houthi rebels

On 30 January, in its annual report to the Security Council, the UN reported the killings of nearly 2000 children while fighting as recruits of the Iran-backed Houthis. A total of 1406 children died in 2020, and an additional 562 died between January and May 2021, their ages ranging between 10 and 17 years. Under the pretext of enrolment in cultural courses, the militia has been holding large recruitment and radicalization camps in schools and mosques. They receive weapons and military training in these camps before being sent off to the battlefield. Cases of sexual violence against women and children and coercion to join the military have been documented.

UAE: Houthi missile intercepted

On 31 January, the country's Defense Ministry reported intercepting and destroying a ballistic missile set off from Yemen in the third such attack in recent weeks. The Houthi group confirmed firing several of these missiles on Abu Dhabi and launching a number of drones at Dubai. The ministry also claimed to destroy a launch site for one of the missiles. The tensions are on the rise between the two countries, with the Houthi militia issuing warnings about repeated attacks in the near future. This comes in light of Israeli President Isaac Herzog's first visit to the Gulf state, who plans to continue his trip despite the attack.

Syria: Fresh clashes in Hassakeh

On 30 January, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and ISIL (ISIS) fighters resumed fighting near the Ghwayran prison complex. The SDF attacked ISIL hideouts with an estimated 60 to 90 fighters still hiding inside the prison. At least 270 people have been killed so far. In addition, the violence has forced 45,000 people to flee Hassakeh since it broke out on 20 January.

Syria: Missiles targeting Damascus intercepted

On 30 January, the Syrian air force blocked a barrage of Israeli missiles targeted on the outskirts of the capital. It was part of an aerial attack by Israel that targeted military stations and a weapons depot owned by Hezbollah, near Qutayfah, which endured substantial damage.

Burkina Faso: Coup leader made as the President

On 31 January, following ECOWAS, the African Union (AU) suspended Burkina Faso from its ranks and warned of imposing sanctions in response to the military takeover. The military government (officially called the Movement for Preservation and Restoration), announced coup leader Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Sandogo Damiba as the President. The government claims to have restored the constitution by approving a fundamental act that ensures upholding the tenets of democracy in the state. The MPSR will have two vice presidents who are yet to be named. The AU, ECOWAS, and UN continue to press demands for establishing civilian rule.

Mali: French envoy expelled

On 31 January, the French ambassador Joel Meyer received a 72-hour ultimatum from the military government to leave Mali in response to the comments made by French foreign and defence ministers. The remarks called the government illegitimate and considered calling back the French troops due to rising instability.

Peace and Conflict from Europe and the Americas

Ukraine: Fierce debate in the UNSC

On 1 February, the US move to call for a discussion on the Ukraine crisis that was encountered by the Russian envoy in the UN Security Council. Russian ambassadors attempt to block the open session ends with no result after they were outnumbered by 10 votes to two. A Russian official in the UNSC reiterated Putin's statement that Moscow was not planning any military confrontation and said that the US should better mind its own business than intervene in the internal matters of others. In response, the US spokesperson said that the US believes in diplomatic talks and with no doubt shall act definitively in case of a Russian incursion.

Russia: Military exercise to be held away from the Irish coast

On 30 January, the Russian live-fire military exercise which was due to take place on the Irish shores, upon the protests of fishermen and warnings from the Irish government will now be relocated. The Russian Ambassador to Ireland said that the decision was made considering the effect on fishing activities. Earlier, a group of fishermen cautioned by staging a protest against Russia's military exercise. The Irish Junior Minister had also issued a warning previously concerning the consequences on marine species and whales.

Russia: Media outlets threatened to remove controversial content

On 1 February, ten media outlets in Russia confirmed that Kremlin admonished them to delete reports of Putin's critic Alexei Navalny's investigations. The media outlets such as independent Dozhd broadcaster, the Ekho Moskvy radio station, the Meduza, and Svobodnyie Novosti received a threat, to remove the content involving the former Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev case in 2017 and high-level scandals of Kremlin officials.

Venezuela: The US sends back Venezuelan migrants using pandemic laws

On 1 February, Colombia expelled two Venezuelan migrants under Title 42 who came from the US. Title 42 refuses asylum seekers of due process and sends them back to the country they fled; the US invoked the law to curtail the covid infections. The US said it will send Venezuelans back to Colombia, where they came from, by crossing the border from Mexico. They will be sent back invariably, however the frequency hasn't been mentioned. In December, discussions related to these deportations were held between the two authorities. They seek to deport an unstated number of Venezuelans following due protocols who have been granted temporary residency in Colombia.

The US: Alberta border blocked over trucker protests

On 1 February, unvaccinated truckers operating on the US-Canada border protested as a part of the 'Freedom Convoy' protests forming a vehicle blockade. The protests come in view of Canada's new vaccine rules on cross-border motorists, which the people have received rather aggressively calling for a nationwide end to all such rules. The restrictions are being viewed as the government manipulating covid rules. The blockade has caused significant disruption to logistics and has affected facilities in the nearby towns. Authorities have warned of police action and penalties if the blockade persists.

About the authors

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26 January 2022, Vol.2, No.44

Coup in Africa, Continuing violence in Yemen, and an ISIS attack in Syria

Mohamad Ascel Ummar, Rashmi BR, and Jeshil Samuel

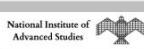


The people of Burkina Faso celebrating the coup. (Image Source: AFP/BBC)

Burkina Faso: Another coup in Africa

In the news

On 24 January, in a televised broadcast, a group of soldiers representing the Patriotic Movement for Safeguarding and Restoration (MPSR) informed that they had detained the President, citing the worsening insecurities in the country. The government has been dissolved and the constitution suspended, but the group assured that a constitutional order would be retained in "reasonable time". The whereabouts of the President and other members of the government have not been disclosed yet. The coup unravelled a week after the arrest of 11 soldiers accused of plotting to overthrow the government, led by President Roch Marc Christian. The statement released by the coup leaders informs that the putsch had taken place "without any physical violence against those arrested, who are being held in a safe place, with respect for their dignity." The coup comes after days of tensions and public unrest in the capital - Ouagadougou. On 22 January, people gathered in large numbers to protest against the government and its failure to fight the growing threat of Islamist Insurgency in the country.



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12 January 2022, Vol.2, No.42

Unrest and crackdown in Kazakhstan, Another jail term for Aung San Suu Kyi, Two years after Qasem Soleimani, and Canada's reconciliation with the indigenous people

Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Vibha Venugopal, Ankit Singh and Sarasi Ganguly



While the cases from Omicron have been increasing across the world, new reports on the nature of Omicron threat is cautious. (Image Source: WHO)

Kazakhstan: Bloody unrest and a brutal crackdown

In the news

On 2 January, protests broke out in the western town of Zhanaozen after a sudden spike in fuel prices when the government lifted price caps for LPG. Protests spread to other parts of the country, including Almaty and quickly turned violent, resulting in the death of over 160 people and over 1000 injured. On 4 January, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev restored the price cap on fuel; however, protests continued. Demonstrators pulled down a statue of former President Nursultan Nazarbayev, burning buildings and vehicles.

On 5 January, Tokayev declared a state of emergency, issued a "shoot-to-kill" order terming the protesters as "bandits and terrorists." He also called for Russian assistance to curb unrest. The following day, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) deployed over 2500



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19 January 2022, Vol.2, No.43

Threat of War over Ukraine, a Syrian trial in Germany, and Protests in France

D Suba Chandran, Ashwin Immanuel Dhanabalan, and Padmashree Anandhan

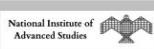


The US Secretary of State is in Europe and is meeting the Russian foreign minister over the threat of war in Ukraine. (Image Source: The Economist)

Ukraine: Threat of Russian invasion

In the news

On 19 January, the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken reached Kyiv, as a part of his three-day tour to Kyiv, Berlin and Geneva, to discuss what the US sees as an imminent threat of Russian invasion of Ukraine. He met with Ukraine's President, a US State Department release claimed: "Secretary Blinken emphasized again that if Russia chooses the path of further aggression against Ukraine, the United States, together with our Allies and partners, will impose crippling costs on Russia's economy, reinforce NATO's presence in frontline Allied states, and increase defensive assistance to Ukraine above and beyond what we are already providing."



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New reports on the Omicron threat, and lifting sanctions on humanitarian aid to Afghanistan

Akriti Sharma and Ashwin Immanuel Dhanabalan



While the cases from Omicron have been increasing across the world, new reports on the nature of Omicron threat is cautious. (Image Source: WHO)

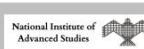
COVID-19: Omicron rapidly spreads across countries

In the news

On 22 December, the UK reported 1,061,122 cases recording the highest number of daily cases reported. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Omicron has spread to 106 countries.

On 22 December, according to the New York Times, a South African study highlighted that risk of hospitalization was 70 per cent lesser among people infected with Omicron as compared to other variants. On the same day, according to CNHC, a Scottish study suggested that the Omicron is two-thirds less likely to result in hospitalization in comparison to the Delta. Additionally, a study from England shows that omicron infection was 15 to 20 per cent less likely to lead to hospitalization than Delta.

On 20 December, the WHO said that Omicron cases doubled in one to one-and-a-half days, making it more transmissible than the Delta variant of COVID-19. It added that Omicron is



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28 October 2021, Vol.2, No.30

Coup in Sudan, Pressure on Myanmar's military regime, and the Migrant game by Belarus

Mohammad Asael Ummer, Aparupa Bhattacharjee, and Jocana Cera Matthews



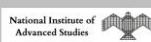
Military dissolves civilian leaderships of the transitional government in Sudan. (Image Source: The Guardian/Mohammed Abu Obaid/EPA)

Sudan: Tensions flare-up as the military dissolves the civilian government

In the news

On 25 October, General Abdel Fattah Burhan, head of Sudan's armed forces, in a televised broadcast announced that the civilian leadership of the transitional government has been dissolved due to political infighting which can lead to a civil war. Prior to the announcement, various news sources reported heavy deployment of security forces in the capital - Khartoum and key civilian leaders like Prime Minister Abdella Hamdok being detained from their residences.

Government supporters who had been demonstrating since last week as a response to a call for a military coup took to the streets in Khartoum and other major cities demanding an immediate release of detained leaders and reinstating the civilian government back to power. The armed



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21 October 2021, Vol.2, No.29

One year after Samuel Paty's killing, Kidnapping in Haiti, and Instability in Sudan

Sourina Bej, Porkodi Ganeshpandian, and Mohammad Asael Ummer



France remembers Samuel Paty, a school teacher beheaded in October 2020 by a radical. (Image Source: Reuters/Eric Gaillard)

France: One year after Samuel Paty's beheading

In the news

On 16 October, the French Prime Minister commemorated in Paris the schoolteacher, Samuel Paty, who was beheaded one year ago after he exhibited cartoons of Prophet Muhammad as part of his history lessons on free speech. At the commemoration, the French government unveiled a plaque at the Education Ministry in Paty's honour, and renamed the capital's Latin Quarter after him. The French Prime Minister Jean Castex noted, "Here is a man who wanted to do his job... a man who only aspired to transmit the values of freedom, secularism, tolerance, free will." "We will not forget Samuel Paty," added the Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer on a visit to a school in Paris.



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14 October 2021, Vol.2, No.28

ISIS violence in Afghanistan, and Targeted killings in J&K

Abigail Miriam Fernandez and Akriti Sharma



A series of targeted killings in J&K, attacking members of the minority communities. (Image Source: AP-TheHindu)

Afghanistan: Over 50 people killed in ISIS-K suicide bomber attack

In the news

On 8 October, a suicide bomber attacked a Shiite mosque in the northern Afghan city of Kunduz, killing over 50 people and wounding more than 150 others. The Islamic State Khorasan (ISIS-K) claimed responsibility for the attack. In a statement carried by the IS-linked Aamaq news agency, the group said that the attacker was an ethnic Uyghur and that the attack targeted both Shites and the Taliban for their supposed willingness to expel Uyghurs to meet demands from China. Following the attack, the Taliban's chief spokesman, Zabihullah

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7 October 2021, Vol.2, No.27

Anti-Bolsonaro protests in Brazil, UK-France fishing row, Talks with the TTP in Pakistan, and Anti-abortion law protests in the US

Porkodi Ganeshpandian, Sourina Bej, D Suba Chandran, and Sambavi Parthasarathy



Protests against President Bolsonaro in Brazil. (Image Source: Reuters-BBC)

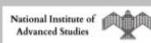
Brazil: Anti-Bolsonaro protests across the country

In the news

On 2 October, thousands of Brazilians gathered across Brazil to protest against President Bolsonaro. The protests were peaceful, displaying messages on posters and inflatable gas canisters. The protests spanned across more than two hundred Brazilian cities, including São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. The protesters highlighted their unhappiness over the handling of the pandemic, dwindling economic opportunities and called for the impeachment of President Bolsonaro.

Issues at large

First, the pandemic mishandling. Brazil has lost over 600,000 lives during the pandemic, the second-highest death toll after the US. Bolsonaro has been accused of promoting crowds at the



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30 September 2021, Vol.2, No.26

The Chinese White Paper on Xinjiang, and the Haitian migrant crisis in the US

Avishik Ashok and Vaishnavi Iyer



"Uyghurs accounted for 83.74 per cent of the population in the four prefectures in southern Xinjiang," says the White Paper titled "Xinjiang Population Dynamics and Data." (Image Source: Global Times)

China: The first White Paper on Xinjiang's demographic and economic development

In the news

On 26 September, the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China released its first white paper focusing on the population dynamics in the Xinjiang region. The 20-page report displays the fast demographic development over seven decades and boasts of a 99.96 per cent enrolment rate in primary education in the region.



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15 September 2021, Vol.2, No.24

Protests in Europe and Brazil, and an impending humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan

Joana Cera Matthews, Lokendra Sharma, and Abigail Miriam Fernandez



Brazil has been witnessing pro and anti-Bolsonaro protests during the recent weeks. (Image Source: EPA-EFE-SCMP)

Europe: Protests triggered by COVID-19, climate change and homophobia

In the news

On 11 September, a multitude of protests and marches took place across Europe. Polish healthcare workers marched in Warsaw demanding better pay and work conditions. In response, Health Minister Adam Niedzielski said: "...if at this moment we have a budget for health that is 120 or 130 billion zlotys and there is a demand to increase that by 100 billion... it goes completely beyond the bounds of good sense and reason."



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22 September 2021, Vol.2, No.25

Pride marches in Europe, Jail term for Hotel Rwanda hero, and continuing Houthi-led violence in Yemen

Joana Cera Matthews, Mohammad Asael Ummer and Jeshil Samuel J



Annual Pride Marches in Kyiv and Belgrade during 18-19 September 2021. (Image Source: REUTERS/Valentyn Ogirenko)

Europe: Pride Marches in Serbia and Ukraine

In the news

On 18 September, hundreds joined Serbia's annual Pride parade in Belgrade. Celebrating 20 years since their first parade, organization committee member Marko Mihajlovic said: "In the past 20 years the situation has improved LGBT noticeably but not decisively... (The participants of) this year's Pride demanded a law on same-sex unions. We want this to be the last Pride that we don't have this law."



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8 September 2021, Vol.2, No.23

Texas' abortion ban, Return of the Thai protests, the Taliban government, and the Guinea coup

Vaishnavi Iyer, Vibha Venugopal, Abigail Miriam Fernandez and Apoorva Sudhakar



Women rally against the new abortion legislation by the state of Texas in the US. (Image Source: JayJanner/USA Today)

Abortion Rights: Texas bans abortions, while Mexico decriminalizes it

In the news

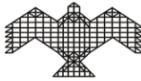
On 1 September, a Texas law banning abortion at six weeks took effect. On 7 September, Mexico decriminalized abortion. The laws passed reflect a stark difference in securing the rights of women. The Texas law is based on the detection of a foetal heartbeat and provides incentives to people who prevent abortion through cash rewards of up to USD 10,000.

Governor Abbott signed the bill when the US Supreme court was hearing a case regarding Mississippi law banning abortions after 15 weeks. Abbott praised the legislature saying:





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