

Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

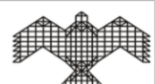
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Six months of the war in Ukraine

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The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) has been pursuing the war on a regular basis; the above map of the ISW provides the status as on 25 August 2022. (Image Source: ISW)



Six months of the war in Ukraine

War on the ground

24 August marked six months of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In the last six months, the war has taken a heavy toll on Ukraine. Currently, the frontline stretches close to 2500 kilometres from southern Ukraine, through eastern Donetsk, into the northeast Kharkiv region. In the initial days of the war, Ukraine resisted the Russian blitzkrieg attacks in the north and central regions efficiently. Russia then moved its offensive to the east, shifting its focus on the Donbas region. On 24 February, when Russia first ordered its troops to attack Ukraine, it controlled around 14,000 square kilometres of Ukraine's territory. In the last six months, that has increased to 47,000 square kilometres; Russia now controls around 20 percent of Ukraine. In the Donbas, the entire Luhansk region and over half of Donetsk is under Russia's control, along with important port cities, like Mariupol and Odesa. According to the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, 41,170 Russian personnel have died or have been injured in the war. Russia has lost an estimated 3000-4000 armored vehicles, 730 UAVs, 250 MLRS, 220 warplanes, 175 cruise missiles, around 100 artillery systems, and 15 warships amongst other military equipment.

Forcing Russia's troops to retreat from north and central Ukraine were major victories for Ukraine's troops. The sinking of Russia's Moskva warship, the flagship of Russia's Black Sea fleet, was a strategic win for Ukraine, similar to its regaining control over the Snake islands. Even though Ukraine has not taken responsibility for explosions and attacks in Crimea, it maintains that victory means regaining its control of Crimea. Russia's relentless attack in Ukraine has had a devastating impact on the country's population and economy. The official civilian death toll, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, is 5,587 civilians who have been killed since the war began. However, the organisation disclaims that the number could be a considerable under-count. Around 9000 of Ukraine's soldiers have lost their lives. 200 healthcare facilities have been attacked. Ukraine's government estimates that around 140,000 homes, apartments, and civilian institutions have been destroyed. So far, it is estimated that destruction has already cost Ukraine approximately USD 113.5 billion, and it may need more than USD 200 billion to rebuild. Ukraine's GDP is also expected to shrink by 40-45 per cent, which will make reconstruction efforts even more difficult.

The war in Ukraine has displaced over 11.2 million people, which is Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II. This has contributed to the rise in global refugee numbers to beyond 100 million. The UNHCR said that around 6.6 million have been forced to flee the country, while 7 million have been internally displaced. Most of the international refugees from the war initially entered Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova. 2.3 million Ukrainians are alleged to have forcibly taken refuge in Russia. The next largest diaspora is observed to be in Poland with 1.3 million, followed by Germany with one million. As per UNHCR reports, close to 4.5 million Ukrainians have returned to Ukraine since the war began. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has rallied tremendous support for the West, and it has been unwavering in nature. He has been successful in gaining the support and solidarity of the international community. Since the invasion, grants, loans, and aid from the west have facilitated the success of Ukraine's troops in resisting Russia's forces. The US provided around EUR 44.5 billion in bilateral financial, humanitarian, and military aid to Ukraine. The second highest value of commitments was recorded from the EU institutions, such as the European Commission and the EU Council, at approximately EUR 16.2 billion. In terms of humanitarian aid, international organisations like the International Committee of the Red Cross and Amnesty International have also sent aid to Ukraine and arranged for personnel to assist in the evacuation of civilians from war-torn parts of Ukraine.

The Moscow View

Moscow has sustained and resisted the Ukrainian and the collective Western response, so far. In February, Russia began its offensive with the aim of a lightning war to seize Kyiv and decapitate the Ukrainian government. This attempt did not work in Moscow's favour due to the stiff Ukrainian resistance. Following this, the Russian offensive faced a few setbacks but continued to attack the country from three sides- the East, South East and the North. While the prolonged war has not been in the favour of Russia, Moscow has captured a sizeable amount of Ukrainian territory. It is predicted that the next move by Russia would be to encourage referendum in the multiple occupied territories in line with how Crimea was annexed.

The human cost of the war has not been officially disclosed by the Kremlin. According to the US, an estimated 15,000 Russian soldiers have died in Ukrainian territory and three times as many have been wounded. Additionally, Moscow has notably lost high ranking senior officials and generals during the war and up to 4,000 armoured vehicle losses. The strategic miscalculation also witnessed the Russian air force missing-in-action and the lack of combined arms operations from the Russian side. During the months, Moscow also faced supply issues, disorder and discipline problems within the Russian ranks, including sabotage, surrender, and disobedience. Though a large portion of Ukrainian migration has been towards the western side of Europe, some Ukrainians fled to Russia in the early months.

The Russian government faced internal opposition to their war efforts in Ukraine. A report by OVD-info, an independent human rights reporter, has revealed that Moscow has successfully suppressed internal dissent. The portal estimates over 16,437 arrests in connection with anti-war protests between 24 February and 17 August 2022 in Russia. The number includes 138 arrests for anti-war posts on social media, 118 arrests for anti-war symbols, and 62 arrests carried out after anti-war demonstrations. On 22 August, during Russia's flag day, Moscow's facial recognition system was used to arrest at least 33 people as 'preventive detention,' using facial recognition technology. Since 24 February, the Russian State Duma lawmakers have adopted a total of 16 new repressive laws or amendments to existing legislation. Russia has used one piece of new legislation to designate up to 74 organisations as 'foreign agents,' and 15 organisations as 'undesirable.' Moscow has blocked over 7000 domestic and western websites for their information about the war citing military censorship.

The economic implications and impacts of the war have been the strongest for Russia. Following the tough sanctions placed by the EU and NATO member states, the Russian economy has experienced one of its greatest shocks since 1991. In April, the Central Bank projected the Russian economy to face 8-10 percent losses, and currently, it is estimated that the USD 1.8 trillion economy of Russia would face four to six percent losses in 2022. Though the projections are less than early estimates, Russia has only now begun to face the brunt of supply shortages. Moscow has been cut off from the Western financial markets and in July 2022, Russia defaulted on its foreign obligations due to challenges of payment through Roubles. In retaliation, using one of its most potent economic weapons, Russia has cut back on supplies of its natural gas to Europe. Though the high global energy prices have to some extent helped the Russian economy escape from huge losses, domestic inflation and the lack of supply of essential goods shall remain a problem in the months to come.

View from the West

While the sanctions extend across sectors, their effectiveness is slow to manifest. The West since the beginning of the war has step-by-step and systematically sanctioned all major branches of industry



and service sectors, but despite that, Russia continues to hold strong in Ukraine. Five basic categories of sanctions imposed; they cover individuals, financial institutions, the economy, the military, and services. Economic sanctions top the list of the EU's seven packages of sanctions, and the sanction packages of the US, the UK, and Switzerland, the main target being isolating Russian energy, material for the manufacturing and technology industries, precious metals such as platinum, palladium, gold, and diamonds, and barring its supply chains via road and ports. Although such sanctions have derailed Russia's economic growth, through re-routing its goods and energy to China, Turkey, and India, it has found ways to keep their economy afloat and keep the war going.

The second target is the financial sectors, by freezing the assets and reserves held by Russia in the US and European banks, which has, to an extent, prevented the Russians from launching a more intensive war. In terms of individual sanctions, from the Russian elites to the military officials responsible for the Bucha Massacre, war crimes and civilian killings, people have been sanctioned on a retaliatory basis only. Along with Russia, Belarus has also been under scrutiny due to its closeness and support to Russia in the war. This was particularly imposed by the UK and Switzerland. In terms of military sanctions, Russian defence exports, along with equipment for aircraft and space have been targeted, but compared to economic and financial sanctions, military sanctions are observed to be less.

When comparing the total economic, humanitarian, and military aid support provided by the western countries, the US tops the list with EUR 44 billion, while the EU has provided only EUR 16.25 billion, followed by the UK, Germany, Canada, Poland, Norway, and France. From the start of the war, intelligence support has been consistent from the US, UK, and NATO. But in terms of military aid, till the fall of Mariupol in May, the weaponry and military aid were more modest and ranged from helmets and bulletproof jacket to soviet era weapons, and mid-range missiles. Only after June, did weapons with longer ranges and higher capabilities start to arrive in Ukraine, such as High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS), NATO-calibre weapons, and advanced missile systems begin to be supplied to Ukraine, and this boosted Ukraine's ability to win back some of the lost cities such as the southern city of Kherson and the city of Kharkiv in the north. This shows the shortfall in addressing the post-war economic impact and in providing humanitarian protection.

With the government mandating the oil companies to pull out its operations, major European oil firms such as BP, Norway's Equinor, France's Total Energies, Siemens, Rio Tinto, US's Halliburton, and Baker Hughes withdrew their operations. Due to increasing pressure on the Russian economy related to western sanctions, Russia began to reduce and cut down its oil and gas supplies to countries along the Baltic Sea, as well as to northern and western European countries through Nord Stream, Gazprom, and Rosneft. This has now led to an energy imbalance in Europe, which has been so dependent on Russian energy. Although Europe has so far been able to meet its energy demands through alternative supplies provided from the US, Africa, and new regional explorations, progress in the direction of environment and climate goals has slowed. With the reduced energy alternatives and price hikes, Europe is now facing an energy crisis-induced inflation.

Contributing to the background which can be connected with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia on 24 February and the state of war existing since then, were the failure of talks and diplomatic dialogue with Russian officials including in the Normandy format. Individual leaders did their best to engage in direct talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in an attempt to persuade him to de-escalate and reconsider aggressive military action. Despite all such efforts taken for example by French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, the war has dragged on for more than 180 days.

On 22 July, through Turkey's mediation, the first historic deal was signed between Ukraine and Russia to address the growing food insecurity, offering some rare optimism in an otherwise bleak landscape of unabated war.

The Global Fallout

The COVID-19 pandemic led the world to inflation, energy and food crises due to country-wide lockdowns. Russia attacking Ukraine on 24 February came at a time when the world was starting to recover from the consequences of the pandemic. Many of the implications of the war were also felt by countries outside Europe. Energy, food, and economic crises were amplified due to the war. There are major global impacts on three types of commodities since Russia and Ukraine are one of the largest exporters of grains including wheat, fertilizers, and sunflower oil.

The sanctions on Russian exports and the sea blockade imposed by Russia on Ukrainian ports disrupted the supply chain, deepening the global food crisis. The Baltic Sea area, the Caspian Sea and Sub-Saharan Africa, especially the Sahel region, were affected by the shortage in grain supplies aggravating the food shortages, and famine. The reliance of Africa on Russia and Ukraine for food resources has put it in a critical position. And, across the globe, it is estimated that 345 million people across 82 countries are at risk in terms of adequate nutrition. The food crisis amplified after the ships that carried more than 20 tonnes of grains and sunflower oil were blocked by the Russians at the Black Sea ports of Ukraine after its capture. After negotiations mediated by Turkey and the UN on 22 July 2022, Russia unblocked some ships and the first one left Odesa port on 31 July 2022. Ships which Russia allows to pass through the blockade contain tons of food resources and can help mitigate the current food crisis.

The global economy plunged downward during the pandemic. Then, on top of problems caused by the pandemic, the war in Ukraine brought on energy and food crises that have culminated in an overall global financial downturn and dramatic rises in the cost of living. The IMF had downgraded global economic growth for the fourth time since its prediction of 4.9 per cent in July 2021 to 3.2 per cent. Inflation has risen by over five percent across two and three tier countries since the Ukraine war began.

Japan, an ally of the US, was the first non-western state to impose export, financial and travel bans on Russia to take action against the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore followed suit with sanctions against Russia. However, India and China have not imposed sanctions on Russia, and have regularly abstained in UNGA votes against Russia. Similarly, South Africa, Indonesia, Mexico and Brazil took stance in support of Russia and did not impose sanctions.

Also, from around the world

By Avishka Ashok, Akriti Sharma, Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Joel Jacob, Rashmi BR, Anu Maria Joseph, Harini Madhusudan, Padmashree Anandhan, and Ankit Singh

East and Southeast Asia

China: Foreign Ministry condemns US Ambassador's statements on House Speaker Pelosi's visit to Taiwan

On 22 August, the Chinese Foreign Minister referred to the US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns' remarks on Taiwan and said that the statements distorted facts and displayed the



hegemonic logic of the US. During an interview with CNN, Ambassador Burns asserted that China is the cause of instability in the Taiwan Straits and that the country overreacted to the US Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan. The Chinese spokesperson said that the US had been warned multiple times before Pelosi's visit and was warned there would be serious consequence in the wake of her visit. On 25 August, the Chinese state media also released an 11-point "factsheet" on China's right to take military action against Pelosi's visit to Taiwan.

South Asia

Pakistan: Government declares 'national emergency' amid rain-induced floods

On 25 August, the government declared a 'national emergency' amid the rain-induced floods which killed 937 people and left at least 30 million without shelter, terming the monsoon rains a "climate-induced humanitarian crisis of epic proportions." According to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Sindh reported the highest number of deaths as 306 people lost their lives due to floods and rain-related incidents, while Balochistan reported 234 deaths. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab recorded 185 and 165 deaths, respectively.

Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Armenia-Azerbaijan: Leaders agree to meet for EU-mediated talks

On 25 August, the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to hold talks mediated by the EU on 31 August. The meeting is scheduled to take place in Brussels with the participation of Charles Michel, the President of the European Council, who also mediated talks between the two leaders in Brussels in May. Previously, on 19 August, senior representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan held a discussion in Brussels. Following the meeting, EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia Toivo Klaar said: "good and substantive discussions" with the secretary of Armenia's Security Council, Armen Grigorian, and a foreign-policy adviser to the president of Azerbaijan, Hikmet Hacıyev.

Tajikistan: HRW calls on authorities to stop the "wrongful detention" of residents of Gorno-Badakhshan region

On 23 August, Human Rights Watch (HRW) called on Tajikistan's authorities to stop the "wrongful detention" of residents in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO). Additionally, HRW said that Tajik authorities have arrested and detained more than 200 residents in the GBAO on charges related to the protests in May and "are facing closed, unfair trials." Previously in May, Tajik authorities carried out a crackdown in GBAO following protests over the lack of an investigation into the death of an activist in police custody as well as the refusal by regional authorities to consider the resignation of two regional leaders.

Nigeria: Military reportedly kills 25 Islamist militants

On 23 August the Nigerian military reported that it had killed 25 militants belonging to Islamic State West Africa Province (Iswap) in a series of air strikes in the north-east of the country. A Nigerian military spokesperson said that Iswap's local leader Fiya Ba Yuram was also targeted, but it is not confirmed if he was killed. The military also said it killed an unidentified number of militants in another attack on 20 August, in Tunbuns area on the shores of Lake Chad and in Borno state. Iswap broke away from Boko Haram in 2016. The two groups continue to carry out attacks in the region.

Ethiopia: Fresh fighting

On 24 August, Tigray forces accused Ethiopian forces of launching a fresh offensive on the southern border with Amhara. While the Ethiopian government blamed Tigrayan forces for starting the fight, its military reported on hitting an airplane in Mekelle carrying weapons for the TPLF. Head of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, called for "de-escalation" and "talks to seek a peaceful solution." The AU's Horn of Africa envoy, Olusegun Obasanjo, has been

leading the peace talks to end the 21-month Tigray conflict. Earlier, the Ethiopian government appealed for a formal Tigray ceasefire agreement, where the government wants the AU envoy to lead the peace talks, however, Tigray authorities want former Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta to lead the talks. Re-emergence of tensions between the two sides has been threatening to undo a humanitarian truce reached in March. Meanwhile, UN chief Antonio Guterres said he was “deeply shocked” by the renewed fighting and called for an “immediate cessation of hostilities” and to resume peace talks, humanitarian access and re-establishing public services in Tigray.

Europe and the Americas

Ukraine: Accused Russia of illegal adoption of displaced children

On 23 August, Ukraine accused Russia of the organised adoption of children and transferring them from occupied territories to Russia. Kyiv has been accusing Moscow of "deporting" Ukrainians since the beginning of the War. Ukraine's foreign ministry stated, "The Russian Federation continues to abduct children from the territory of Ukraine and arrange their illegal adoption by Russian citizens." According to them, over 1000 children from Mariupol were illegally transferred to outsiders in Tyumen, Irkutsk, Kemerovo, and Altai Krai, in Siberia. The claim was based on the findings of information from local authorities in Krasnodar, a southern Russian city near Ukraine. The statement revealed more than 300 Ukrainian children were also held in specialised institutions in the Krasnodar region. This would make Russia a violator of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Colombia: Defence Minister announces halt in aerial bombings against armed groups

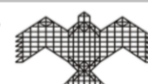
On 25 August, Defence Minister Ivan Velasquez announced the suspension of aerial bombings targeting armed groups, in an effort to minimise the deaths of civilians and children who have been forcibly recruited into the organisations. It marks a shift in Colombia's strategy against leftist rebels and drug-trafficking gangs amid a recent uptick in violence, especially in remote parts of the country. He said: “Children forcibly recruited by illegal groups are victims of this violence. Therefore, no military action with respect to illegal armed organisations can endanger the lives of these victims.”

Haiti: Protests waged against inflation and crime

On 22 August, thousands of Haitians joined rallies around the Caribbean country to protest rampant crime and soaring consumer prices as its central bank reported that inflation had hit a 10-year high. Protesters set up burning barricades in some areas including the capital of Port-au-Prince, some of whom said they were angry over the growing scarcity of gasoline and diesel that could force some businesses to close their doors. Jean Baden Dubois, Haiti's central bank governor, said the economy would likely contract by 0.4 percent by 2022, following a sharp depreciation of the gourde currency. Demonstrators held rallies in cities including in Cap-Haitien, Petit-Goave, and Jacmel, many wearing red shirts emblazoned with the word "endepandans" or "independence." Chronic gang violence has left much of the country's territory out of control of government authorities, and outbreaks of bloody turf battles between rival gangs have left hundreds dead and thousands displaced.

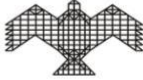
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About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI)

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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