

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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Ukraine grain deal, the Monkeypox emergency, and the US wildfires

Padmashree Anandhan, Emmanuel Royan, and Rashmi Ramesh



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

COVER STORY

Killing Roe will hurt the US Soft Power

Ukraine – Russia: Turkiye and the UN mediates a grain deal to address the global food crisis

In the news

On 22 July, Ukraine and Russia signed a deal under Turkiye and the UN mediation, to remove the naval blockade restricting Ukraine from exporting grains. The deal allows a safe passage for ships and vessels carrying grains, fertilizers and ammonia from three key ports of Ukraine. The ports - Odesa, Chernomorsk, and Yuzhnyy will be monitored by the deal. The UN Secretary-General António Guterres said: "(the deal) will bring relief for developing countries on the edge of bankruptcy and the most vulnerable people on the edge of famine."

On 23 July, Ukraine president Volodymyr Zelenskyy reported on Russia attacking the Odesa port with missiles. Russia's foreign ministry spokesperson, responded that Russia had carried out a high-precision strike which targeted only the military infrastructure.

Issues at large

First, the deal. The reasons behind Ukraine and Russia signing the deal might differ, but the key purpose of Turkey and the UN's involvement is to ease the growing war and its impact on the global food crisis. Ukraine being the producer of key commodities, Russia's naval block has added to the global food crisis; to facilitate the grain exports, both parties needed a mediator to monitor. Through Turkey, Russia will be able to keep a check on what enters Ukraine's ports, and Ukraine will be able to export its accumulated grains on a safe route.

Second, Russia's objectives. Russia, at the peak of shelling down Ukraine, circling its eastern region and important ports, has agreed to the deal because of Turkey's assurance to monitor and prevent the entry of weapons into Ukraine. It will also be signing a "mirror agreement" allowing Russia to export its agricultural produce without sanctions. This means, that while Russia is launching ground attacks, it also wants to protect its economy.

Third, the global food crisis. Ukraine is a significant producer of grains, cooking oil, fertilizers, wheat, corn, and sunflower oil; the war has pushed the food insecurity, especially in East Africa and the Middle East. 50 million people from seven countries in East Africa, including Somalia and South Sudan, have recorded acute hunger and close to 300,000 are on the edge of famine.

In perspective

First, alternate to grain exports. The Russian navy has blocked certain ports of Ukraine, restricting Ukraine's sea exports, but there are other ports at the entrance of the Black Sea, Bosphorus, Danube and Azov Sea areas which can be utilised. Such ports might not have the facility to store grains, but with the ongoing war, developing such ports could be useful.

Second, the continuing Russian attacks despite the deal. According to the deal, Russia is not allowed to launch attacks or interrupt the vessels that pass through the humanitarian maritime corridor unless there is suspicion. Therefore, shelling on military infrastructure in Odesa port does not breach any part of the deal. Such attacks can be a strategy of Russia to ensure Ukraine does not counter back when Russia tries to seize any such vessels.

The Monkeypox Outbreak: WHO declares a global health emergency

In the news

On 23 July, the Director-General of World Health Organization (WHO) Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus designated the ongoing monkeypox outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). Tedros stated: “We have an outbreak that has spread around the world rapidly through new modes of transmission about which we understand too little and which meets the criteria in the international health regulations.”

Issues at large

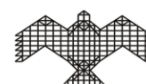
First, increase in monkeypox cases worldwide. For the first time, several monkeypox clusters have been recorded simultaneously in endemic and non-endemic countries since May 2022. The outbreak has over 16,000 cases across 75 countries. Most cases have been recorded in countries where there has never before been evidence of monkeypox transmission. The occurrence of cases and chains of transmission in countries with no immediate or direct epidemiological ties to West or Central Africa regions is a first. Bermuda, Thailand, Serbia, Georgia, India, Saudi Arabia, and Bermuda have all reported their first cases since 14 July, bringing the total number of countries where the current epidemic has been identified to 73.

Second, issues with tracing and testing. A study in the New England Journal of Medicine found that anonymous sex has been a significant challenge in contact tracing, with only 28 per cent of men able to provide the names of all recent sexual contacts. Data in Canada, Spain, Portugal, and the UK suggest places, where men have sex with multiple partners, are increasing the spread of the outbreak. Regarding testing, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention official guidelines recommend that labs test for monkeypox using only samples of a patient’s skin taken from the visible rash. As a result, people whose fever and swollen lymph nodes show up a few days before their lesions must wait until the illness grows before it can be diagnosed. Therefore, people without symptoms will be left to wait and wonder, after an exposure, whether they could be infected.

Third, the availability of vaccinations. According to the CDC, historical evidence from Africa indicates that smallpox vaccination is at least 85 per cent effective in preventing monkeypox. The European Commission approved the Danish biotech company Bavarian Nordic’s Immunovex vaccine against Monkeypox in the EU member states. Bavarian Nordic has agreed to provide 2.5 million doses to a US contract manufacturer who will complete their manufacturing. The agreement would add to a previous purchase of three million doses of vaccine by early 2023, produced in Denmark, and would ensure the availability of vaccines in the fall. By mid-2023, over seven million doses will have been administered.

In perspective

First, early awareness of the outbreak’s concern. Although the WHO’s emergency committee meeting on 24 July lacked consensus regarding the assessment of the virus, the director-general took the call to declare that the outbreak was an international concern. The director-general was also not reluctant to say that the virus is predominant in the gay community, without any concerns for stigmatization. Second, the “wait and see” approach of governments. Announcing public health emergencies may end up costing the nation affected by the epidemic financially, particularly if travel and trade are restricted. Several countries are hesitant to exchange public health information in the event of an outbreak due to their concern over such actions. Too many countries adopt a “wait and see” attitude when it comes to such announcements, pushing them off until it is too late, as was the case with COVID-19.



The US: Wildfires in California, again

In the news

On 22 July, the Oak fire started near Midpines at the foothills of Sierra Nevada and has blown out of proportions, growing into one of California's biggest wildfire incidents of 2022. Despite firefighting efforts, the fires have engulfed more than 15,600 acres, displaced nearly 6000 people, and are few miles away from the Yosemite National Park.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) termed the spread 'explosive' and said: "the growth of this fire is pretty amazing, given the fact of how quickly we had resources here." More than 2000 firefighters backed by aircrafts and bulldozers are on the ground to try and douse down the fire. The Governor of California, Gavin Newsom has declared a state of emergency for Mariposa County, allowing for the supply of additional resources to respond to the wildfires.

Issues at large

First, recurring wildfires in California. The current incident is not the first, as Californian landscape is prone to wildfires due to natural reasons such as vegetation, wind patterns and the bark beetles that are known to feed on the trees, making them vulnerable to fire. However, in recent years, the scale of these fires has increased manifold. According to Cal Fires, eight of California's 10 largest fires and 12 of largest 20 have occurred in the past five years.

Second, wildfires across the globe. Alaska, an Arctic state of the United States is experiencing wildfires due to record-breaking temperatures. The intense heatwave in Europe is resulting in fires across Greece, France, Spain, and Portugal, and thousands have been displaced.

Third, the link to climate change. The rise in temperature increased the rate of evaporation, leading to more moisture drawn from soil and vegetation. The excessive dryness, therefore, becomes a conducive ground for wildfires to spread. In other words, warmer temperatures pushed by climate change increase the risk of fires. The UNEP report titled "Spreading like Wildfire: The Rising Threat of Extraordinary Landscape Fires", February 2022, notes that the extreme global fires may increase up to 14 per cent by 2030, 30 per cent by 2050, and 50 per cent by 2100. Highlighting the link to climate change, the report confirmed that "wildfires are made worse by climate change through increased drought, high air temperatures, low relative humidity, lightning, and strong winds resulting in hotter, drier, and longer fire seasons."

In perspective

First, learning from past experiences. There is a need to learn from the previous disasters and rebuild in a better and more resilient manner. As more population in the US moves out of the urban areas close to wilderness, it is important to implement stringent regulations for building/rebuilding infrastructure. In 2008, California laid down rules for building homes in fire-prone areas, including a "defensible space" without vegetation around the structure, access to water as an emergency measure and other minimum standards for fire-resistant construction.

Second, the implementation of environmental-friendly policies is the only way forward. Leviathan-like disasters are causing irreparable damage across the world. As climate change narrows in, the scale of disasters increases proportionally, effectively closing in on time for climate action and the ability to cope with disasters.

Also, from around the world

By Avishka Ashok, Shruti Sadhasivam, Akriti Sharma, Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Rashmi BR, Apoorva Sudhakar, Harini Madhusudan, Rishma Banerjee, Padmashree Anandhan, Lavanya Ravi, and Ankit Singh

East and Southeast Asia

South China Sea: China commemorates the 20th anniversary of the Declaration of the Conduct of Parties

On 25 July, China's foreign minister Wang Yi addressed the opening ceremony of the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and said that peace and stability are crucial in the region. The Declaration of Conduct establishes the basic principles and common norms and is the first political document signed by China and ASEAN on the South China Sea issue. Wang said: "All sides should firmly support all efforts that are conducive to peaceful settlement and management of disputes, oppose any words and deeds that create tension and provoke confrontation in the region." He called for improving bilateral and multilateral maritime-related dialogue mechanisms. Wang also stated that the South China Sea is neither a "safari park" for states outside the area nor a "fighting arena" for superpowers to engage in conflict. Wang added that only the countries surrounding the South China Sea region should resolve the issue.

China: National Health Commission predicts a decline in birth rate before 2025

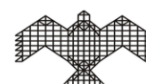
On 25 July, The Strait Times reported that the National Health Commission's head of population and family affairs stated that China's population growth has slowed dramatically and is anticipated to drop before 2025. According to statistics, the rate of new births in 2021 was the lowest in numerous provinces in decades. Only one province in China, Guangdong, has experienced more than one million births. Birth rates in central Hunan province dropped below 500,000 for the first time in over 60 years. As a result of reasons such as the high cost and work overload, many young people in China are struggling to stop a significant decline in natural population growth.

Thailand: Prime minister surpasses 4th no-confidence vote

On 23 July, Thailand's prime minister Prayuth Chan-ocha defeated a no-confidence motion passed against his government because of economic misgovernance and corruption. Although 206 voted against the government and nine abstained from voting, the government managed to secure 256 votes in favour due to its majority in the parliament. The prime minister said: "For the remaining 250 days of the government, I insist that I will do everything to take the country out of the crisis as soon as possible." Earlier, Prayuth faced three censure motions. The opposition accused Prayuth of spying on those who opposed his policies and censured him for decriminalizing Cannabis with no safety protocols.

Myanmar: Four pro-democracy activists were accorded death sentence by Junta

On 25 July, in a secretive trial, four democracy rights activists were accorded capital punishment by Myanmar's Junta on charges of committing terrorist activities. Global News Light reported that: "...the four men were executed because they gave directives, made arrangements and committed conspiracies for brutal and inhumane terror acts." The accused include Ko Jimmy, a prominent member of pro-democracy student group and Phyo Zeya Thaw, an NLD lawmaker. Additionally, Hla Myo Aung and Aung Thura Zaw were accorded death sentence for terminating the life of a junta-appointed informer. The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews and the National Unity Government (NUG) claimed that they were greatly enraged and dismayed over the incident.



South Asia

India: Protests in Lakshadweep demand resumption of ship services

On 21 July, the protestors marched towards the secretariat and demanded the resumption of ship services in the Union Territory. The protests turned violent and resulted in mass arrests by the administration. The administration said that the protests were political stunts and were “misguided.”

Sri Lanka: Fuel crisis worsens

On 26 July, Sri Lanka restricted fuel import for a year due to depleting foreign exchange reserves. A fuel rationing system will be followed. The power and energy minister said: "An advertisement was published today calling for expression of interest (EOI) for oil companies to import, distribute and sell petroleum products in Sri Lanka." The Ceylon Petroleum Corporation, which controls 80 per cent of the oil market, will give a share of its fuel stations and resources to the new entrants. Amidst the fuel crisis, the schools also reopened.

Sri Lanka: Clampdown of protests turns violent

On 22 July, the Sri Lankan military assaulted peaceful protestors, including journalists and lawyers. The protestors had agreed that they would peacefully leave the protest sites the next day following the court order, however, the military turned violent. Opposition leader Sajith Premadasa tweeted: “A useless display of ego and brute force putting innocent lives at risk & endangers Sri Lanka’s international image, at a critical juncture,” The UN Human Rights Office said: “We have concerns that the raid on the camp sends a chilling message to peaceful protesters, including elsewhere in the country,”

Afghanistan: Tashkent Conference was constructive, says the Taliban

On 26 July, acting minister of Foreign Affairs, Amir Khan Muttaqi, while speaking at the end of the Tashkent conference, said: “Good views were exchanged for economic and transit development and for Afghanistan to become an economic hub,” adding, “We hope with this exchange of views and information, the economic and political relations with neighbouring, regional and world countries will be incentivised.” Before the meeting, the ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan said: “The main goal of the event is to develop a set of measures and proposals for the approaches of the world community to promote stability, security, post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan and its integration into regional cooperation processes in the interests of the multinational Afghan people and the whole world.” The conference was attended by representatives of 20 countries, including Russia, the EU, the US, China, the UK, Japan, Iran, Pakistan, and India.

Pakistan: UNHCR report cites Pakistan as the largest refugee-hosting country in Asia and the Pacific

On 25 July, a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report said that Pakistan continues to be the largest refugee-hosting country in Asia and the Pacific. According to official estimates, 250,000 Afghans have entered Pakistan since the Taliban takeover in August 2021, and over 1.5 million Afghans still prefer to stay in Pakistan. Further, the report cites that by December 2021, the “Documentation Renewal and Information Verification Exercise” (DRIVE) revealed that there were 1,252,800 registered Afghans, carrying “proof of registration” (PoR) cards in Pakistan.

Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Tajikistan: 104 children and 42 women repatriated from ISIS camp

On 25 July, 104 children and 42 women were repatriated to Tajikistan from a refugee camp in Syria. An official statement on the state news agency website claimed that the repatriation is

aimed at saving Tajik children from hopelessness and returning them to a peaceful life in their country. Several Tajik nationals continue to live in camps and prisons in Syria. Although the exact numbers are not known, it is estimated that around 600 Tajik nationals continue to remain in these camps and prisons. Previously, the Tajik government undertook a similar repatriation effort in 2019 focused on children.

Yemen: Houthis abduct nearly 100 women

On 25 July, Geneva-based SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties said that the Houthis had abducted nearly 100 women since the beginning of July. Homes and female student accommodations in Hajjah, Haresh and Abes districts were aggressively raided, and women were abducted on charges of sex work, adultery and ‘immoral acts’ and sent to Houthi-run prisons. SAM stated: “what happened with the women is a full-fledged kidnapping crime that does not take into account the legal controls imposed by the law.” The Houthis rejected a mediation proposal offered by the local and tribal leaders trying to secure their release.

Libya: 13 killed in clashes involving forces loyal to Presidency Council

On 22 July, 13 people were killed and 27 injured in the capital Tripoli during clashes between rival factions in areas housing diplomatic missions, and international and government agencies. An interior ministry spokesperson said the fighters were affiliated with the Presidency Council, the body acting as the transitional head of state. The prime minister’s office said the interior minister was replaced in response to the clashes

Mali: Al Qaeda affiliate group claims attack on military base

On 23 July, the Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), a group affiliated to the al Qaeda, claimed responsibility for the attack on Mali's main military base near the capital city Bamako on 22 July. This comes after the Mali military had already accused the JNIM's Katiba Macina branch of the attack on the day. The JNIM said the branch attacked the speculated presence of a Russian mercenary from the Wagner Group. The JNIM statement said: "We say to the Bamako government: if you have the right to hire mercenaries to kill the defenceless innocent people, then we have the right to destroy you and target you."

Europe and the Americas

Russia: ROSCOSMOS to exit International Space Station after 2024

On 26 July, the newly appointed chief of the Russian Space Agency said that Russia would withdraw from the ISS after 2024 and build its orbiting outpost. The ROSCOSMOS chief revealed a model of Russia’s orbital station, estimated to cost USD six billion and told president Vladimir Putin: “I think that by that time, we will start putting together a Russian orbital station.” In the context of the ongoing war, the deteriorating relations with the US and the ISS’ ageing infrastructure, the announcement could be an attempt by Russia’s Space industry to raise the bar and ensure the Russian economy is well equipped with the necessary space services.

Russia: Gazprom announces further cuts in gas flow via Nord Stream 1

On 25 July, Russia's Gazprom announced that it would further reduce natural gas flows through a major pipeline to Europe to 20 per cent of capacity. They cited necessary equipment repairs as the cause behind the cut and said that the "daily throughput" to Germany would be reduced to 33 million cubic meters. The pipeline was already delivering just 40 per cent of its capacity from 21 July, following 10-day scheduled maintenance. German economics and climate minister, Robert Habeck, commented on this move and said: “Putin is playing a perfidious game,” as this further exacerbates the impending energy crisis as European countries try to shore up storage for the coming winter months.



Haiti: Boat carrying 60 refugees capsizes near the Bahamas

On 25 July, at least 17 people drowned when a boat carrying refugees towards the US. Police in the Bahamas said the boat capsized more than 11 km (6.8 miles) off New Providence Island. Divers went down and recovered 17 bodies; the immigration minister said survivors indicated that they paid between USD 3,000 and USD 8,000 for the voyage. Gang wars and endemic poverty has pushed many Haitians toward the US.

Canada: Pope Francis issues apology to indigenous people

On 25 July, at a gathering of indigenous people in Masckwacis, Alberta, Pope Francis issued an apology for the atrocities committed by the residential schools from 1880 to 1990 in the same region. The Pope called it a “disastrous error” committed by overzealousness and said it was “right to remember such traumas even at the risk of opening old wounds.” The Pope also recognized that words alone are not enough and concrete action must be taken; he is investigating with experts on the same. Residential schools for indigenous people were run by Christian missionaries which separated kids from their parents, inflicted physical and sexual abuse, erased languages and cultures. In these catholic run schools, thousands of children died and survivors were left traumatized. A lot of mixed feelings of hope, healing and anger were expressed by the survivors of the indigenous community after hearing the apology.

The US: Former Trump Advisor Steve Bannon found guilty

On 22 July, a congressional committee jury investigating the Capitol Hill riots that took place on 6 January 2021 ruled Steve Bannon guilty of “contempt of Congress.” Bannon, a former advisor of Trump, was convicted of two charges: one for refusing to appear for a deposition and two for refusing to submit required documents in response to the committee’s subpoena. Bannon’s legal team presented a defence stating that he made a mistake but not a crime; the justice department argued that Bannon had chosen his allegiance to Trump over the law. The jury debated only for three hours before reaching its verdict; the committee leaders called it a “victory for the law.” Bannon faces up to two years in jail and USD 200,000 fines. His sentencing has been set to 21 October. Bannon vowed to have the case reversed stating: “we may have lost the battle here today but we will not lose the war.”

The US: Alaska experiences its largest wildfires

On 25 July, AP News reported that Alaska is experiencing wildfires like it has never seen before. Until now 530 wildfires have been recorded in 2022 which have blazed through an area the size of Connecticut and the worst of the wildfire season is yet to come. Some residents have been forced to evacuate and one civilian was killed. Alaska experiences wildfires regularly, mostly caused by lightning and human incidents. However, heat waves and climate change have exacerbated the frequency of fires. There is no loss of property but the massive amounts of smoke released has caused dangerous breathing conditions. The smoke also caused a helicopter to crash which was carrying firefighting equipment.

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COVER STORY

Killing Roe will hurt the US soft power

Amit Gupta



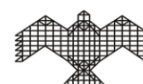
(Image Source: AP Photo/Andrew Harnik/usnews.com)

Killing Roe will hurt the US soft power

The Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* has led activists on both sides to mobilize to push their respective cases. While the focus is naturally on the domestic implications of overturning a 49-year-old law, there is an aspect of this debate that is not discussed—what will be the international implications for the United States now that the US is one of the few countries in the world that outlaws abortion (albeit for now only in some states)?

An argument can be made that if the US goes in this direction, it will be another blow to American soft power when the US is being challenged militarily in Europe, and globally China is eroding its economic supremacy. American soft power, which rests on the espousal of liberal-democratic values, especially the protection of individual rights, has in the past bolstered America's military campaigns, foreign policy, and global economic endeavours. This soft power advantage has been tarnished in recent years both by US foreign policy and military actions and the rise of China and its attempts to create a favourable national brand image for the country. Killing *Roe* adds another nail to this coffin.

For the past three decades, academic discussions of soft power have centred around Joseph Nye's definition of the phenomenon. Nye argued that it was the attributes of a society that led to it being liked by other nations and that gave a nation a more friendly environment in which to pursue its foreign policy: "Soft power arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced."



Nye wrote of soft power in the early 1990s when the world had moved from bipolarity to unipolarity. America's economic strength allowed it to create a single global market with many American brand name products like Nike, Apple, and McDonalds. For this reason, sociologists started using the terms Globalization and Americanization interchangeably.

Nye's views were reinforced by Fukuyama, who suggested that the world was witnessing the "end of the history" since liberal democratic ideals had won. Nye's definition of soft power was also implicitly based on American military and economic might and the fact that authoritarian and totalitarian regimes had bankrupted themselves in trying to create an alternative version of the global political order.

This definition of soft power, however, is increasingly under challenge since not only has American economic power been contested by the rapid growth of the Chinese economy, but the moral authority on which the attractiveness of Western societies was based has been adversely impacted as liberal democratic societies have re-entertained formerly taboo right-wing ideas and their economies are beginning to slow down.

In such a situation, the western model is looked at with some scepticism around the world. In the United Nations General Assembly, 35 nations with a combined population of 4.4 billion abstained in a vote against the Russian invasion of Ukraine even though the United States kept repeating that this was an assault on the liberal international order. Further, Nye's discussion of soft power only tangentially accepted that non-liberal democratic states could have soft power—he initially pointed out that the Soviet state in the 1950s and 1960s had been able to exert a similar soft power due to its high levels of productivity. In contrast, in the 1930s, E.H. Carr wrote about the power of opinion and saw it as important as the military and economic instruments of power in the realm of international relations.

While discussing the power of propaganda, Carr pointed out the power over international opinion that an organization like the Catholic Church had and the influence the Bolsheviks had over international revolutionary and workers groups across Europe and the colonized world. A similar type of admiration existed for Hitler's Germany and the Nazi dictator was able to use the 1936 Olympics to create a favourable international image of his country. Carr's use of the term "to shape opinion" is more value-neutral than Nye's version of soft power with liberal-democratic values and society as its foundation. If, however, we view Chinese soft power through Carr's work, it becomes clear that Beijing has been able to create its version of a positive global image.

Thus, around the world, China has invested in Confucius Institutes, it spends close to \$10 billion on its global media efforts, and as Hollywood has found, the global success of its movies depends heavily on the Chinese market. Despite China's concerted efforts to create a successful national brand name, the United States, until recently, was universally admired. As the Australian scholar put it, "while everyone admires China, no one wants to be China."

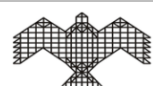
The United States' advantage in soft power is based on the fact that as the foremost liberal democracy in the world, it not only created the liberal international order, but its domestic order exemplified a democratic society that brought about progressive change. Externally, the existence of free media earned the American government and society greater credibility worldwide as a genuinely democratic society. In recent times, however, America's brand name has taken a beating due to factors that began with the second Iraq war and culminated with the Supreme Court's decision to abrogate Roe.

The first blow to American soft power was the decision to invade Iraq based on the false assertion that Baghdad had weapons of mass destruction (WMD). America's international reputation and soft power saw the bulk of the countries around the world side with Washington. Still, once it became clear that there was no WMD in Iraq, it was a blow to the credibility of the United States and its allies. Tony Blair, an early supporter of the Iraq War, is still vilified in Britain for his part in selling a false security threat to the country that led to hundreds of British casualties. To put this in perspective, had Xi Jinping or Vladimir Putin invaded a country on false assumptions, they would have been the laughing stock of the global community. The US was able to weather the storm because of its international reputation. Still, no longer was any country in the world going to take American intelligence analysis or the words of an American president at face value.

The second major blow was the Trump Administration's decision to walk out of the Iran nuclear deal, and the Climate Change accords since it suggested that the US could not sign permanent agreements and, therefore, was not worth negotiating with. This was followed by the refusal of Trump to concede that he lost the 2020 election making the United States the only liberal democracy in the world to have such a state of affairs—elsewhere, the losing candidate readily and quickly concedes. Americans like to go on about how the country is the best democracy in the world but the political divide within the nation coupled with a constitution, parts of which are increasingly anachronistic and unwieldy in a modern world, lead to a situation where people have begun to question the value of the American democratic system as a template for global democratic practice. But the overturning of Roe may cause the most long-term damage to American soft power.

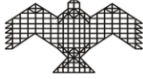
By banning abortions, America joins a group of nations that include Iraq, Egypt, Madagascar, Nicaragua, and Laos, that have taken away a woman's right to choose. On the other hand, nations like Afghanistan, Iran and N. Korea, which are hardly seen as stellar examples of progressive change, and certainly not liberal democracies, permit it. The United States, therefore, has been placed in a club of nations that are not seen as leading the path of human rights and, instead, have sought to actively take away the rights of individuals. This is a vital blow to US foreign policy goals since so much of America's international efforts to persuade other nations rests on its reputation as a "shining house on the hill" that other countries admire and seek to emulate. A shining example does not pass regressive laws on its citizens.

Further, while American politicians, diplomats, and academics keep harping on the need to preserve a liberal international order, they need to remember that a liberal order ultimately rests on the existence of liberal democratic societies that believe in human rights and, more importantly on the fact that their societies and laws lead to a growing progression of individual rights—not to their contraction. Put simply, the next time American diplomats or politicians chastise another country for its suppression of human rights the response is going to be, "Why should we listen to a country which has taken away the human rights of fifty per cent of its population?"





National Institute of
Advanced Studies



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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