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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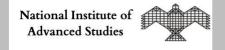
Assassination attempt on Imran Khan and Russia's withdrawal from Kherson

Abigail Miriam Fernandez and Madhura Mahesh



(People at a rally at the site of the assassination attempt on former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan. Image Source: AP/Dawn)





Pakistan: The assassination attempt on Imran Khan

In the news

On 3 November, Imran Khan was shot at in an assassination attempt when the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's (PTI) 'Haqeeqi Azadi' march reached Wazirabad's Allahwala Chowk in Punjab. The suspect opened fire on the PTI chief leaving him with four bullets in the leg; one person was killed and 14 others injured.

Following the attack, PTI senior leader Fawad Chaudhry alleged: "It was a well-planned assassination attempt on Imran Khan. The assassin planned to kill Imran Khan and the leadership of PTI. It was not 9MM, it was a burst from an automatic weapon. No two opinions that it was a narrow escape."

Meanwhile, Khan said the attack was "actually an attempt to permanently silence" him for "exposing the elite capture." He said: "These powerful people will try to target me again because they have a fear that my party will sweep the next elections," and that they were strongly opposed to him, an "outsider," for aiming to bring a change to the current political system.

Following the attack, a controversy over the filing of the First Investigation Report (FIR) for the incident arose. On 5 September, the Punjab police denied having received any complaint from the PTI for an FIR. However, the PTI claimed that they had submitted the request at the police station, but were not provided with any receipt. Later, on 7 November, the Punjab police finally registered an FIR after the Supreme Court warned that it would initiate suo moto proceedings if the provincial police failed to register the FIR. However, the FIR did not mention the names of the people Khan accused in the complaint, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, and senior intelligence officer Major General Faisal Naseer.

Issues at large

First, Khan's recent political battles. Since April 2022, Khan has been entangled in several political tussles with the government and establishment. It began with the passing of the noconfidence motion resulting in the removal of his government. Following this, Khan took a hard stance against the incumbent government, the establishment and other institutions and blamed them for his removal from office and alleged that there was a foreign hand in the matter. However, the latter three came down hard on Khan as the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) chiefs accused him of a false foreign conspiracy narrative and the Election Commission of Pakistan issued verdicts against him. On the threat to his life, Khan claimed he was aware of the conspiracy for a while. Previously, during a rally in September, he claimed that there was a plot to assassinate him and frame it as a religiously motivated attack.

Second, the deadlock over the FIR. The Punjab police took four days to file an FIR for the incident due to several political reasons. To begin with, Khan refused to withdraw the name of a senior army officer from the complaint. Further, Punjab's ruling coalition partners and Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervez Elahi were deadlocked over the inclusion of the army officer's name from the complaint and insisted that it be dropped. And, the Punjab police's denial of having received any FIR application from the PTI and the Punjab inspector general's decision to quit the Punjab government. These delays and deadlock raised questions regarding institutional exceptionalism as well as accountability and transparency of investigations.



Third, the Supreme Court's intervention. The delay in the registration of an FIR drew the attention and intervention of the Supreme Court with the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) warning of taking suo moto notice if the FIR of the attack was not registered within 24 hours. However, the CJP's observations were politicised as the PTI and the government interpreted them differently. While the PTI saw it as the "first steps towards justice," the government emphasised the legal uncertainty and pointed out that the CJP had only asked the IG Punjab "to act in accordance with law" and that the observations were not binding. Thus, the Supreme Court was forced to both intervene in the matter and also disregard it once it did.

In perspective

First, the political turmoil in Pakistan. The assassination attempt comes at a time when the country is reeling under political, economic, and institutional crises along with the challenge of recovering from the worst climate-induced floods in Pakistan. This incident has only deepened the uncertainty generated by political unrest and turmoil.

Second, Khan's fight against the government. The assassination attempt is likely to intensify Khan's calls for early elections, clarity on the US cipher, and a probe into his removal. Additionally, with the PTI's march being weaponised, the demonstration would intensify and adopt a harder stance.

Third, the violation of rule of law. The developments following the incident have become highly politicised and violate the rule of law. The delay in filing an FIR, and the intervention of the Supreme Court are instances where the rule of law is being violated.

Ukraine: The Russian withdrawal from Kherson

In the news

On 9 November, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu announced the withdrawal of Russian troops from Kherson city. This decision came after the Russian commander in Ukraine, General Sergei Surovikin, briefed Shoigu on the situation at Kherson city and said: "Having comprehensively assessed the current situation, it is proposed to take up the defence along the left [eastern] bank of the Dnieper River. I understand that this is a very difficult decision, but at the same time, we will preserve the most important thing – the lives of our servicemen and, in general, the combat effectiveness of the group of troops, which it is futile to keep on the right bank in a limited area." Shoigu agreed with the assessment and ordered the troops to move out of Kherson city and its surrounding areas, and set up command at the east bank of the Dnieper River.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy expressed his hesitation with this move and said: "The enemy doesn't give us gifts. We are moving very carefully, without emotion, without unnecessary risks."

Reacting to this, President Biden said at a press conference: "I found it interesting they waited until after the election to make that judgement, which we knew for some time that they were going to be doing. And it is evidence of the fact that they have some real problems — Russian — the Russian military."

Issues at large

First, Kherson province as a part of the Russian Federation. Although the troops will be withdrawn from the city, they would still be present in the Kherson region which was formally annexed into the Russian Federation on 30 September. Since the war started on 24 February, Russia wanted to take control of Kherson city and it captured it in March. After this, Kherson city has been under Russian military occupation and then part of the Russian federation after 30 September.

Second, imposition of martial law in all annexed regions. On 19 October, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the imposition of martial law in all four annexed regions. In Kherson city, the Russian troops carried out civilian evacuations from the west bank of the Dnieper River to the east bank. The troops evacuated 115,000 people from the city.

Third, the Ukrainian counteroffensive in Kherson city. Ukrainian troops in the past week have gained large swathes of territory west of the Dnipro River and are advancing into the outskirts of Kherson city. They have used long-range missiles to hit Russian targets and caused significant damage to the Russian troops by destroying army personnel and command posts in the city. The High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) provided to Ukraine by the US has played a key role in Ukrainian advancement into the city.

In perspective

First, the strategic importance of Kherson city. Given the importance of Kherson city, the withdrawal of troops is surprising. The city is an important Black Sea port connecting Crimea to the rest of the annexed regions in Ukraine. Since the beginning of the invasion, Russia has focused on occupying the city and has been one of the major front lines of the conflict.

Second, the possibility of larger civilian casualties. The troops are being withdrawn to the east bank of the Dnipro River where civilians were relocated to in October. This increases the possibility of civilian casualties by a Ukrainian counter-offensive targeting Russian troops in the new stronghold. This also increases the risk of a Russian attack on the city, which may detonate any mines left behind by the Russian troops. In the war, Russia has always retaliated heavily targeting civilian infrastructure if it suffers a major setback in its "special military operation." With the withdrawal and the death of the Russian-backed deputy head of Kherson, Kirill Stremousov, in an alleged car accident, fears of a large civilian attack are emerging in the city of Kherson.



Also, from around the world

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East and Southeast Asia

China: Guangzhou faces another lockdown as 2500 COVID-19 cases appear in 24 hours

On 10 November, the local government in Guangzhou administered another lockdown in Guangzhou city, a key economic powerhouse, after 2500 cases of the coronavirus were identified. The sudden lockdown has added to the economic pressure on China and played a role in slowing the economy. The lockdown urges the city's 13 million people to stay indoors and allows only one person from each family to purchase the necessities daily. The city also suspended the local transportation services, cancelled flights from major cities and ceased classes for students.

North Korea: UNSC remains silent on Pyongyang's multiple sanctions violation

On 4 November, the UN Security Council held an emergency council session to discuss North Korea's multiple sanctions violation following its launch of an unprecedented number of missiles from 1 to 5 November. China and Russia blocked the unanimous vote to hold North Korea liable for breaching the UN charter multiple times. The US Ambassador to the UN criticised the UN Security Council for not acting against North Korea. China and Russia defended North Korea, stating that the missiles were launched in self-defence after South Korea and the US conducted joint aerial exercise "Vigilant Storm" from 1 to 5 November. From 2 November, North Korea has launched 30 ballistic missiles, of which one crossed the inter-Korean border to South Korea for the first time since the 1953 Korean war.

Japan: Tokyo to toughen its security policy

On 6 November, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida addressed the international fleet review and announced that Tokyo would strengthen its military capabilities within five years. The fleet review was attended by 18 warships from 12 countries, where the US and France also dispatched their warplanes. Kishida said that while Japan needs to be prepared for any threats that might disturb its security in the future, it would retain its pacifist nation principle taken after the Second World War.

Australia: Takes measures to prohibit training to Chinese defence forces

On 9 November, Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles called for an examination of military "secrecy policies" following reports about China approaching Australian pilots to extend military training. Marles said: "But let me be clear: Australians who work or have worked for the government in any capacity, particularly our ADF (Australian Defence Force), who come into possession of the nation's secrets, have an obligation to maintain those secrets beyond their employment with, or their engagement with, the Commonwealth." Further, he added that disclosing military secrets is a crime. Australia's joint police-intelligence service task force was entrusted with inspecting cases involving Australian military personnel extending training to China's People Liberation Army. The Australian Defence Department review is expected to disclose their report finding by 18 December.

ASEAN: Ukrainian foreign minister signs an amity treaty in Cambodia

On 10 November, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kulbela signed the Treaty on Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Cambodian capital Phnom Penh during the annual summit of the

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The TAC promotes a mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations. However, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was disallowed from addressing the summit virtually.

Australia: Hackers claim ransom for purloining health reports

On 10 November, hackers claimed a sum of USD 14 million to stall the release of personal records of the Australian health insurer, Medibank. Medibank verified that the miscreants had accessed information of nearly 9.7 million current and former clients, including Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. The company rejected any notion of paying the ransom. The data uploaded included names, addresses, passport numbers and birth dates of the respective clients. Previously, about 9 million individuals' information from the telecoms company, Optus, got breached due to hackers. In the wake of the cybercrime, a former FBI agent and US Defence Intelligence Agency officer, Dennis Desmond said: "The healthcare data is a huge target and personally identifiable data is high-value. Generally, profit and greed are the number one driver."

South Asia

Sri Lanka: The UN emphasises urgent humanitarian support to tackle the food crisis

On 8 November, the United Nations highlighted Sri Lanka's hunger crisis which has deteriorated further. The UN observed that the crisis has intensified and needs to address double the amount of people earlier affected. The UN reported that the number of people needing humanitarian aid was 1.7 million in June, which has now risen to 3.4 million. The UN further confirmed its revised plan to handle the crisis, which should be sufficient to feed another 2.1 million people in Sri Lanka. The program also aims to ensure the subsistence and livelihood of 1.5 million farmers and fishermen of Sri Lanka.

Nepal: Children and women among most vulnerable in aftermath of earthquake

On 9 November, at least six people died and 12 were injured after an earthquake hit the north western region of Nepal. The epicentre of the earthquake was the Khaptad National Park, where doctors and Red Cross officers dispensed aid to the hundreds that were displaced. With sudden dips in temperature and buildings wrecked with damage, officials said that there are chances of "respiratory and communicable" diseases in the area, and that they are "aware" of the risk of infections among the people.

India: EAM Jaishankar calls for peaceful settlement of Russia-Ukraine conflict

On 8 November, Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar conveyed his desire for Russia to negotiate a peaceful resolution with Ukraine. His visit to Moscow welcomed criticism as he defended India's steady purchase of Russian oil, claiming that it satisfies national interest. He pointed out that the increased interdependence in global trade and the economy was bound to bear significant consequences in the event of such conflicts. India has previously offered to broker a peace agreement between the two countries but has not explained what it would entail.

Gilgit-Baltistan: Arson attack on a girls' school in Diamer district

On 8 November, a girls' school in Gilgit-Baltistan's Diamer district was set on fire. The locals have blamed terrorists for the incident and have promised to rebuild the school along with providing security to educational institutions. Later, on 10 November, the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) stated that based on the preliminary investigation, the fire in the school was not an act of terrorism. Additionally, the SSP claimed that militants would



have claimed responsibility for the incident as they did in 2018 when 12 schools were burned, stating they have expressed on social media that they are not related to the incident.

Afghanistan: 9 in 10 households cannot meet their food needs, says WFP assessment

On 9 November, Tolo News reported that the European Union donated EUR 50 million to World Food Programme (WFP) in a bid to help Afghans with livelihoods and resilience support. According to the WFP, Afghans are less prepared for another harsh winter due to unprecedented economic hardship and environmental disasters like earthquakes and flooding. Additionally, they stated that nine in ten households are unable to meet their food needs, with those headed by women particularly vulnerable. Further, the EU Chargee d'affaires to Afghanistan said: "People who previously were able to put food on the table are now struggling and turning to humanitarian agencies to help steady them in this new reality. We are committed to helping the Afghan population, especially the most vulnerable. Our investment in WFP's resilience programming is an investment that will have long-lasting, positive effects for local communities."

Central Asia, Middle East, and Africa

Armenia-Azerbaijan: Pashinyan proposes creating a demilitarized zone around Nagorno-Karabakh

On 10 November Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan proposed the creation of a demilitarized zone with international guarantees around Nagorno-Karabakh. He said: "It is proposed to create a demilitarized zone around Nagorno-Karabakh with international guarantees, as a result of which Nagorno-Karabakh may not need a defense army of that scale. This proposal is still valid, I think." The proposal was initially brought out by Nagorno-Karabakh's de facto authorities, at a meeting on 31 October with the presidents of Russia and Azerbaijan in Sochi. Meanwhile, on 8 November, a day that Azerbaijan calls Victory Day to mark the end of fighting in 2020 President Ilham Aliyev said: "Two years have passed, but there is still no feasibility study [for the road project], no progress, no railroad, no automobile road. How long do we have to wait?"

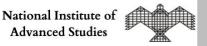
Yemen: Missile strikes by Houthis; assassination of military leader

On 9 November, the Houthis conducted drone strikes targeting the commercial port in Shabwa, in southern Yemen. The drone landed near an oil ship that was offloading fuel at the port. No casualties were reported in the incident. On 8 November, a Yemen military leader Brig Gen. Mohammed Al-Jaradi and his bodyguard were assassinated by unidentified men in the city of Marib. Gen Jaradi was an advisor to the Yemeni defence minister and had fought seven years against the Houthis, and recently had commanded troops in the battle of Marib. On 7 November, human rights groups condemned the Houthis for carrying out missile strikes on Marib, which killed four people and left five injured. Two ballistic missiles targeted the army ammunition storage site which resulted in an explosion, and the other missile hit the densely populated camps that hosted internally displaced people (IDPs).

Syria: Air attack in eastern province

Air attacks targeting pro-Iran fighters have been reported in the eastern part of Syria along the Iraqi border. The Syrian Observatory said that the attacks hit a "convoy of fuel tankers and trucks loaded with weapons" for the fighters in the eastern province of Deir Az Zor. Though the casualties are not confirmed, the Observatory has estimated around 14 deaths.

Sudan: Protesters call for an end of violence in Nuba region



On 9 November, thousands of people belonging to Sudan's Nuba ethnic group protested in the capital, Khartoum, calling for an end to violence in their region. The protesters carried placards saying: "No to the genocide of the Nuba," accusing the government of supporting the Arab militias trying to force out of their land. In October, at least 20 people were killed in a clash between Messiria Arabs and Nuba communities.

Ethiopia: WHO head says food and medicine not reaching Tigray

On 9 November, the World Health Organization said that food and medicine are not reaching Tigray despite the signing of a ceasefire agreement the previous week. WHO head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said: "I was expecting food and medicine to start flowing immediately after the ceasefire. That's not happening." Meanwhile, an Ethiopian official said that Tedros was trying to undermine the ceasefire agreement and that food and medicine were reaching Tigray.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Army operations target M23 rebels, says civil society leader

On 8 November, Al Jazeera reported that the Democratic Republic of the Congo's troops had bombed areas controlled by M23 rebels in the east. The news report quoted the president of a civil society group who said the people had urged the army to finish their operations faster as people had already been displaced and several were living in camps with little humanitarian assistance. The reporter said around 90,000 people have been displaced after fighting in the region resurged in October. Meanwhile, the M23 spokesperson termed the army operations counterproductive, stating that they put the civilian lives at risk.

Africa: France ends Operation Barkhane in Sahel

On 8 November, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the end of France's antijihadist Operation Barkhane in Sahel. In a keynote address at the naval base at Toulon, Macron said: "I have decided, in coordination with our partners, to make official today the end of the Barkhane operation." He added that the decision was a consequence of what France has experienced in the region, and a new strategy would be developed within six months. Macron said: "Our military support for African countries will continue, but according to new principles that we have defined with them."

Africa: Children of African descent face higher level of discrimination, says report

On 8 November, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent presented a report to the UN General Assembly outlining the discrimination faced by children of African descent. The report said the level of discrimination meted to these children reached an extent that they were not considered children, even by the law. The report highlighted that children of African descent were subjected to "heavier policing, including more arrests, police surveillance, racial profiling, strip searches and excessive use of force." The Chair of the Working Group attributed such actions against children to racial discrimination, stereotypes, and xenophobia.

Europe and the Americas

Poland: Strengthens its border with Russia to prevent migrant entry

On 8 November, Poland doubled its border in the shared territory of Kaliningrad with Russia in a preventive move against people to pass through the EU. The decision comes after Russian aviation began to send flights middle-east to Kaliningrad. According to Poland's Defence Minister: "Soldiers of the Polish army began installing wire on this border, on the



entire land section of the border with Russia," The reports from the Polish border service state an increase in the number of migrants attempting to cross through the EU via Belarus.

Greece: Union worker protests against the labour reforms

On 9 November, protests were held by workers from ADEDY and GSEE belonging to the private and public sectors across Greece. The protestors condemned the labour reforms introduced by Greece's Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis in 2019, and demanded an increase in salaries and a reduction of the 24 per cent VAT rate. Despite the government's efforts to aid household electricity bills and increase the minimum wage twice to EUR 713 per month this year, it is seen as insufficient due to the rising price of gasoline which has passed the threshold of EUR two per litre. The protests have resulted in a halt in halt of transport services, schools, and government services and operation of media.

France: National strategic review to focus on boosting the defence

On 9 November, the Secretariat-General for National Defense and Security (SGDSN) published its defence strategy report focusing on possible security threats in the Indo-Pacific, China, and way forward in 2030 for France's defence. In the report, Russia is seen as an actor undermining European security and its growing relations with China is observed as "strategic convergence." In terms of China, its aim to overtake the US as a super power and weaken the West's leadership in the international fora remains the goal. As per the report by China's military, France will pursue an assertive strategy in the Indo-Pacific, African states, and the Taiwan Strait. The defence strategy sets the standard to increase the budget of France's defence in 2023-24 with more investments towards hybrid strategies, more cooperation with the UK, and adaptation to Europe's maritime system.

Sweden: Agrees to aid in countering terrorist groups in Turkey

On 8 November, Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson met with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara to assure Sweden's commitment to fulfill the security obligations against PKK terrorist group by Turkey. Upon fulfilling the condition, Turkey has agreed to proceed with the accession to make Sweden become part of NATO. The resumption of arms trade with Turkey is also seen as a positive step toward mending the bilateral relations.

Haiti: Another journalist killed, tallying the total to eight

On 5 November, the Inter American Press Association reported that Fritz Dorilas was shot dead outside his home, taking the total number of journalists killed this year to eight. Dorilas was the co-host of a radio program "Le droit, la loi et la justice," which translates to "The law and justice" run on Radio Télé Megastar. Local news reported that he was killed in the Tabarre community region, where gang violence has increased over the year. Crime against journalists has seen a rise in the country owing to the escalation in gang violence.

Dominican Republic: Torrential rains leads to death of six

On 6 November, heavy rains wreaked havoc in some areas of the capital killing at least six people. The region experienced twice the monthly estimate of rain within two hours causing damage to civilian infrastructure and the agricultural sector. Several people are still missing, and rescue operations are underway. Poor drainage caused flooding in the streets, leading to the damages. Climate change has led to frequent and intensive occurrences of such natural disasters in the region in recent times.

The Bahamas: Hurricane Nicole hits the islands

On 10 November, tropical storm Nicole evolved into Hurricane Nicole and broke through the country, moving towards Florida's Atlantic shoreline. Authorities have issued mandatory evacuation orders and advised residents in low-lying areas and on barrier islands to seek shelter. Extensive flooding has affected most of the Bahamas. It is expected to bring in dangerous rainfall and strong winds to the region.

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Permanent ceasefire in Ethiopia and a report on the supply chain behind war crimes in Myanmar



The Supply Chain that fuels War Crimes in Myanmar

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Protests and Violence in Chad











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Haiti's Gang Violence, Venezuelan Migrants and the US, and Global Hunger Index



Global Hunger Index: Four Takeaways





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UNHRC proceedings on Xinjiang and the Oxfam report on reducing inequality



SPECIAL Report Review
The Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index 2022







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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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