

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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The Northern Ireland deal, Battle for Bakhmut and Return of violence in Palestine

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(British PM Rishi Sunak applauded the latest BREXIT deal with the European Union on Northern Ireland.

Image Source: EPA)

New BREXIT deal on Northern Ireland: Some Answers, Tough Questions Ahead

In the news

On 27 February, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak agreed on a deal with the European Union that set a “decisive breakthrough” over the Northern Ireland Protocol. The new BREXIT deal now has the Windsor Framework, which effectively replaces the old Northern Ireland Protocol, a major bone of contention between the UK and EU. According to the old protocol, brought by former Prime Minister Boris Johnson, a few goods from Ireland to Northern Ireland were subjected to checks. However, as Sunak hailed, the new framework has “removed any sense of a border (through customs and checks) in the Irish Sea.”

On 27 February, the Labour party said they would back the deal, while also reminding Sunak that his party signed the last protocol, which created a political crisis in Northern Ireland. The DUP, one of the major political parties in Northern Ireland, had refused to take part in the power-sharing government in Stormont until the former Protocol had been fixed. With the new framework in place, the DUP said it would review the details of what has been published before deciding on a position.

On 28 February, John Kirby, spokesman for the US National Security Council said the Biden administration was “grateful” that the UK and EU had managed to come up with the deal, which he said would improve prosperity for both parties. Simultaneously, it would safeguard the peace arrangements of the Belfast Agreement, also called the Good Friday Agreement, that sought to solve the deep ethnonationalist divisions between NI and the Republic of Ireland.

Issues at large

First, the Windsor Framework in brief. The new deal puts in place three things: removes “any sense of border in the Irish sea”; availability of more British goods in Northern Ireland including medicines and online shopping; “safeguards sovereignty for Northern Ireland” by allowing the NI Assembly to stop EU goods laws applying in Northern Ireland using a mechanism called the ‘Stormont brake.’ But Von der Leyen said the European Court of Justice would have the final say on single market issues but with a softer role. The framework simplifies and removes checks along the green lane and red lane system for goods that will stay in Northern Ireland and those that will go to the EU respectively.

Second, preserving the Good Friday Agreement. Since the BREXIT deal, peace in NI has been relative. Occasional violent conflicts had broken out between the unionists and the remainers. With the ‘Stormont Brake’ political actors in NI will get to decide on its economy. However, a catch remains. Sunak said the Stormont Brake can only be used when the situation is considered “significant” enough. Yet the ‘Stormont Brake’ preserves the devolved power sharing arrangements put in place by the Good Friday Agreement.

Third, the reset in the UK-EU relation. The framework signifies a moment of cooperation between the UK and EU where the two, a year back, looked eye to eye on the NI protocol. In Dublin, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said the negotiating teams in the EU and UK operated in “good faith”, as well as parties at Stormont. In a change of terms, the EU will accept the UK’s public health standards but will need to carry “not for EU” labels. In return, the UK has

agreed to share near-real-time customs data with the EU so it can spot evidence of fraud and take remedial action if necessary.

In perspective

First, the task of implementing the framework. As the details remain to be published, small businesses are still weary of the processes set by the dual lane arrangement. It puts food and medicines back on supermarket shelves yet does not provide a roadmap on the durability of the trade routes.

Second, the moment of truth arrives for the political actors in Northern Ireland. Stormont has been unable to use devolved powers to tackle the cost of living. The stand-off in Stormont also risked tarnishing April's celebrations for the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. With the new framework, the spotlight falls on the DUP. After looking at the fine print of the Windsor Framework, it remains to be seen whether Stormont breaks or puts a brake on the democratic deficit.

Third, stopgap peace between the UK and Ireland. The revised terms of the protocol will soften the Irish Sea border but will not end it. Checks could still return on certain perishable food items coming from the EU. However, with the framework, the UK could no longer breach international law after the prime minister dropped the Johnson-era bill.

Fourth, the future of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. With the framework, Sunak has delivered his party's first mandates in a long time. In taking a calculated risk, the prime minister desires to better the working relationship with Brussels. The Tory leader would now be able to ensure that his upcoming summit in March with the French president Emmanuel Macron ends with a deal on small boat crossings.

Ukraine: Battle for Bakhmut

In the news

On 24 February, Russia's Wagner Group founder Yevgeny Prigozhin claimed victory over Berkhivka, a village situated in the Northwest of Bakhmut. Prigozhin said: "Berkhivka is fully under our control. Units of Wagner Private Military Company are in full control of Berkhivka." On 25 February, Prigozhin claimed the capturing of Yahidne village located in the north of Bakhmut. In response, Ukraine's armed forces denied the claims but reported on the continuing offensives around Bakhmut.

On 28 February, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said: "Bakhmut direction – the situation is getting more and more difficult. The enemy is constantly destroying everything that can be used to protect our positions, gain a foothold, and ensure defense."

The UK Ministry of Defence initially reported on defences held by Ukraine in the logistical routes despite the offensive launched by Russia. On 20 February, it reported on increased casualties in the Russian army, especially in the 155th elite forces and 40th naval infantry brigades due to its pursuit in Bakhmut and Vuhledar. In a statement: "It is likely that Russia will claim that Bakhmut has been captured to align with the anniversary, regardless of the reality on the ground." On 16 February, US Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council, John Kirby said: "...the most vicious fighting is happening around



Bakhmut.”

Issues at large

First, the geographic significance of Bakhmut. Russia was the first to claim an advance in the area in February. An important city located on the highway toward Lysychansk is considered a strategic route for Ukrainian troops to replenish stocks. The area gains attention for its economic significance and indirect strategic advantage. Other than the major producers of sparkling wine and table salt, the city connects to Sloviansk and Kramatorsk. Although Kramatorsk is similarly advanced in the production of mining equipment, Sloviansk contains a strategic highway M03 which directly connects Kyiv, and Kharkiv, extending to Russia's border close to “Rostov-on-Don.” Apart from the geography, ethnically the city is dominated by 70 per cent of Ukrainians and less than 30 per cent by Russians.

Second, the claim game. In the prolonged fight between Ukraine and Russia, the claim over the areas surrounding and the damage incurred have not provided any clear image of the on-ground situation. While the Wagner Group claimed to capture the villages in the North and Northwest of Bakhmut, Ukraine has not accepted its claims but confirmed that the fight is becoming intense and challenging to defend. Meanwhile, the US National Security Council and the UK's Ministry of Defence have added details on Russia incurring personnel loss and have remarked on the brutal nature of the war in Bakhmut. However, none of the statements given by the actors give clarity on the state of Bakhmut. From the differentiating claims, the intensity of the battle and the resource loss is the only takeaway.

Third, Ukraine's push for more offensive. The persistent defence held by Ukraine against Russia with the support provided by Europe and the US has been the persuading factor to demand more weapon systems. Since the battle continues to incur major losses, with Russia observed to be deploying a mass number of troops, the US, the EU as well as NATO members are pressured to fulfil the promises over advanced weapons and battle tank delivery. For Ukraine, the support given so far in the form of intelligence, advanced ground weapon systems, air defence capability, and battle tanks has been sufficient to withstand Russian attacks in Bakhmut. However, as it aims to put an end to the enduring loss of its resources, Ukraine has pushed up demands for modern aviation to halt Russia in the region. This means Ukraine's military strategy is slightly diverging in countering Russia from defensive to offensive mode.

In perspective

First, an expensive war with no significant outcome so far. Russia's drive to continue the war for six months despite the logistical challenges and personal loss at the military and paramilitary levels might not reap the benefit. If Russia's goal is strategic and aims to take control of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk eventually, the losses and exhaustion experienced in the battle for Bakhmut will slow down or reduce the attacking capacity of the Russian military. Thereby, barring it from going forward or adding a limitation to its larger posture in the eastern Donbass. Ukraine and its supporting countries would have to stretch its military expenditure to be on par with Russia. This would only result in increasing the war cost and damages.

Second, an emerging break in Russia's inner circle. The extensive role played by the Wagner Group in Bakhmut and the supreme image surrounding its founder Prigozhin has raised questions over Russia's military command. Prigozhin's capacity to withstand the fight and

command the group has stirred debate over Russian leadership.

Israel-Palestine: Return of violence

In the news

On 22 February, multiple clashes broke out following an attack on Nablus, a Palestinian city in the West Bank, by Israeli troops targeting two wanted Palestinian fighters; at least 11 other Palestinians were killed and 102 wounded in the raid.

Previously, on 20 February, following an agreement with the US, the Palestinian Authority withdrew a UNSC draft resolution against the unlawful Israeli settlements. The PA's decision drew criticism from the opposition and the Hamas.

On 23 February, after numerous rocket attacks by Palestinian rebels amid tensions over the Nablus raid, Israel targeted the Al-Shati refugee camp in the Gaza Strip; the camp was suspected to have factories producing weapons for the Hamas. A Hamas spokesperson warned: "The resistance in Gaza is observing the enemy's escalating crimes against our people in the occupied West Bank." He added: "Patience is running out."

On 24 February, the Nablus-based Lions' Den independent armed group called for protests throughout Palestine leading to clashes with Israeli soldiers in various parts of the West Bank.

On 26 February, Jordan hosted Israel and Palestinian officials, to avert "a security breakdown that could fuel more violence." A joint statement said that Israel had agreed to stop "discussing setting up any new settlement units for four months and stop approving any new settlements for six months." On the same day, two Israelis were shot dead by a Palestinian gunman; following this, Israeli settlers set fire to homes in Palestinian towns.

As of February, at least 390 Palestinians had suffered injuries and Palestinian officials claim that at least 300 attacks were carried out by Israeli settlers. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that Israeli settlement construction in the West Bank will resume just after Jordan hosted the meeting between the Israeli and Palestinian officials.

On 1 March, Israeli Finance Minister and in charge of civil administration in the occupied West Bank Bezalel Smotrich said: "I think the village of Huwara needs to be wiped out. I think the state of Israel should do it."

Issues at large

First, the return of violence. The Nablus raid has been the deadliest Israeli operation in the West Bank since the second intifada of 2000-2005. According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, after 2000, the West Bank witnessed the "bloodiest" start of a year in 2023. The Ministry said: "In the past 22 years, we have not recorded this number of martyrs, in the first two months of a year." For the past six years, attacks by Israeli settlers have steadily increased. The casualties of January and February surpassed that of any comparable period in 2022 and includes 67 Palestinians, and 11 Israelis.



Second, the growth of organised Palestinian armed resistance. Israel has focused its brutal assaults on Nablus and Jenin in 2022. Simultaneously, armed opposition is increasing in these cities. Despite the spread of armed resistance in other parts of the West Bank, the Lions' Den and the Jenin Brigade remain the "epicentre" of Palestinian armed resistance. These are a new generation of Palestinian fighters who disobey traditional armed groups. They target Israeli checkpoints and attack during Israeli operations. The decline in support for the PA, is one of the key drivers behind the emergence of new armed groups in the West Bank.

Third, the return of Netanyahu. The violence broke out in less than two months since Netanyahu's conservative government came to power; the coalition includes ultra-nationalist parties supporting the brutality carried out by the Israeli settlers. Meanwhile, amidst the violent clashes, Netanyahu said: "I ask – even when the blood is boiling – not to take law into one's hands," and asked the security forces "to carry out their work." Netanyahu's new governing coalition has been acting unilaterally when announcing significant illegal settlement construction projects, increasing demolition of Palestinian homes, and enacting harsh measures against Palestinian prisoners, raising the possibility of a volatile situation developing on the ground.

In perspective

First, ongoing conflict with no end in sight. Palestinians view the continuous Israeli settlement building on the land they claim for a future state as the main reason behind their protracted war with Israel. Palestinians claim the attacks are a retaliation to Israel's actions and its significantly stronger military. Israel claims its continuing "break the wave" operation in the West Bank targets militant groups and prevents them from carrying out strikes. However, the operations occur in populated refugee camps and other urban areas, where they encounter armed resistance and violent clashes.

Second, a cause of worry for the Israeli government. The rise of Palestinian armed resistance is a major challenge for the Israeli government, because the fighters confront and resist the raids. These organisations are better at defensive operations. For the Israelis, the spread of this phenomenon is dangerous. Armed resistance has spread from Jenin to Nablus and is currently taking place in areas close to Ramallah signalling a changing situation in the West Bank.

Also, from around the World

Avishka Ashok, Abigail Fernandez, Akriti Sharma, Rashmi Ramesh, Harini Madhusudan, Apoorva Sudhakar, Anu Maria Joseph, Femy Francis, and Padmashree Anandhan

East and Southeast Asia

East Asia: Survey notes an uptick in youth defying traditional gender norms

On 1 March, the Strait Times cited an opinion from the China Daily that looked into the issue of low fertility rates amongst East Asian Countries. The article recorded that the high costs of raising children were the top concern for the youth in these countries. However, despite the government's efforts, South Korea's fertility rate remained the lowest globally at 0.84 births per woman. A similar trend was observed in Singapore; the rate has remained at 1.12. Easing the costs of living is, therefore, not helping the situation. On 26 February, the Korean Association for Social Welfare Studies released the results of a survey on expectations of traditional gender roles in the country. According to the survey, only four per cent of the respondents agreed with the traditional norms of marriage and childbirth. There is an increasing trend of defying gender roles in East Asia.

China: Taiwan's Defence Ministry records incursion by 19 PLA aeroplanes

On 1 March, Taiwan's Defence Ministry accused the People's Republic of China of trespassing into its Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ). The ministry reports that over 19 People's Liberation Army (PLA) air force planes entered the ADIZ in the last 24 hours. This is the latest intrusion in the many similar incidents caused by the PLA in the last few months. In the recent intrusion, J-10 fighter jets were used to cruise by the southwestern part of Taiwan's ADIZ.

China: Introduces egg freezing for unmarried women and infertility treatments

On 28 February, the Strait Times cited a Global Times interview with Dr Lu Weiying, a member of the top political advisory body, announcing her decision to introduce the concept of egg freezing for unmarried women. Dr. Weiying announced that she would also introduce infertility treatments in the public health insurance system at the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Dr. Weiying called for allowing unmarried women to freeze their eggs "to preserve the eggs before they pass their peak reproductive years. The woman still needs to get married if she wants to use her frozen eggs and get pregnant in the future."

Japan: Records lowest birth rate in seven-year decline

On 28 February, Japan's health ministry recorded that the number of newborns fell by 5.1 per cent to 799,728 in 2022. The record marked the lowest birth rate since the country began the study in 1899. The number of deaths in 2022 was marked at 8.9 per cent at 1.58 million, recording an increase. The 2022 birth rate has continued the trend of a consequent seven-year decline in Japan. The Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihiko Isozaki commented on the recent data: "We recognise that the falling birth rate is a critical situation. My understanding is that various factors are intricately intertwined, preventing individuals from realising their hopes for marriage, child birth and child rearing."

Philippines: Files 10 diplomatic protests against China over the South China Sea in 2023

On 27 February, the Department of Foreign affairs in the Philippines reported filing ten diplomatic protests against China over their aggressive activities in the South China Sea in the last two months. They add to the total of 77 diplomatic protests filed against China by President Ferdinand. They continue to protest against China's illegal presence in Philippine



waters citing China's aggressive nature in using military-grade lasers at Philippine ships on contested waters.

South Asia

India: Targeted killing in Jammu and Kashmir

On 26 February, a bank guard belonging to the Kashmiri Pandit community was shot dead in Pulwama by militants. The incident took place when he was in the local market to buy groceries. Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor said in a statement that the security forces were given freehand to address the situation. According to the Jammu and Kashmir Police, The Resistance Front (TRF) is responsible for the killing. On 28 February, security forces gunned down two militants who were responsible for the killing.

Nepal: UNHRC meeting promises justice to insurgency-era victims

On 1 March, while addressing the 52nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Nepal committed to providing justice to insurgency-era victims after amending the Enforced Disappearances Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act. Nepal reiterated to protect and promote human rights. Additionally, it pledged reparation to the conflict survivors. Peace and Human Rights Advisor to the Prime Minister Govinda Prasad Sharma said: "Nepal is close to concluding the peace process by establishing a credible, meaningful and victim-centred transitional justice process." He added: "My delegation assures that there will be no amnesty for serious human rights violations."

Bangladesh: Villagers attack Indian Border Security Force

On 26 February, two Indian Border Security Force (IBSF) soldiers were injured and their weapons were snatched by hundreds of villagers along the border. The BSF was on duty along the border when the Bangladeshi farmers were bringing their cattle to the Indian side after which the villagers entered the Indian side and attacked. The incident took place in the Murshidabad district.

Central Asia, Middle East, and Africa

Israel: Protests and clashes over judicial reforms

On 1 March, protesters in Israel marked the 'day of disruption', demonstrating against the new judicial reforms. Scuffles broke out as protestors blocked roads and clashed with the police, who in turn fired stun grenades and arrested nine people. National Security Minister Ben Gvir said that anarchists would not be allowed to block roads and cause disruptions. Prime Minister Netanyahu tweeted and warned that violence against police officers, roadblocks, and flagrant violation of state laws will not be accepted.

Syria-Turkey: Earthquake death toll crosses 50,000; cholera outbreak in Syria

On 24 February, Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) announced that the latest death toll as a result of the earthquake reached 44,218. Syria's latest numbers revealed that 5,914 people died in the calamity. Alongside the major quake of 7.8 magnitude, the aftershocks were nearly as powerful as the initial jolt, resulting in more destruction and death. In Syria's northwestern parts, a cholera outbreak is worsening the situation. On 28 February, Syria Civil Defence or the White Helmets said that two people died of cholera in the same areas that have been affected by the earthquake. The outbreak traces back to the previous year and has currently claimed 22 lives. The White Helmets tweeted: "The destruction of infrastructure, water and sewage lines after the earthquake increases the possibility of an outbreak of the disease." Even prior to the calamity, 63 per cent

of the refugee camps in the area lacked appropriate sewage systems and 43 per cent lacked access to clean water sources.

Somalia: Al-Shabab's attack and army's counter operations

On 1 March, the state-run news agency said that at least 10 Al-Shabab militants were killed in a security operation. On 22 February, BBC reported that at least 10 people were killed in an attack in Somali's capital Mogadishu. The authorities reported that Al-Shabab is responsible for the siege at the building occupied by pro-government militia. Security forces stated that they have killed four members of the Al-Shabab group. Despite significant gains by Somalia's military backed by the African Union and the US forces, the militant group continues to carry out frequent attacks.

Mali: At least 12 people killed in militant attack

On 24 February, BBC reported that at least 12 people were killed in an Islamist militant attack in central Mali's Mopti region. Malian officials said that gunmen attacked a village, shot people, and burnt homes. Jihadist groups linked to al Qaeda and the Islamic State are suspected to be responsible for the attack.

Democratic Republic of Congo: M23 seizes more territory

On 27 February, BBC reported that the M23 rebels had seized more territory in Mushaki and Ryaya areas of the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The Congolese army has not yet commented on the reports of capture. The areas are said to have large deposits of coltan, manganese, tantalum and other minerals. According to the new timelines by East Africa defence chiefs, the rebels were supposed to withdraw on 28 February from territories they had seized.

Nigeria: Oppositions protest against the INEC and irregularities in the election results

On 28 February, members of Nigeria's major opposition parties walked out of the National Collation Center protesting against the irregularities in the results announced. The main oppositions People's Democratic Party and Labour Party, alleged that there were instances of over-voting and disparities in the results. Meanwhile, protests broke out in major towns denouncing the Independent National Election Commission (INEC), accusing the body of running non-transparent elections and demanding a rerun.

Nigeria: Eight police officers killed in suspected IPOB attack

On 20 February, a local police spokesperson in Anambra state said that at least eight police officers were killed in two separate attacks suspected to be carried out by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). The spokesperson said a patrol vehicle and three exhibit vehicles had been set on fire in the attack and that two attackers were arrested and three were "fatally wounded." The attacks come days ahead of the presidential elections; an Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) official said deployment to some stations may be hindered due to security challenges.



Europe and the Americas

Sweden: Forest ecosystem in danger; EU to regulate restoration law

On 27 February, EURACTIV reported that the Swedish forest ecosystem was in danger. The forest industry presents an existential threat to centuries-old Swedish landscapes. Thousands of old forests have been chopped and replaced with planted monocultures, slowly ruining sensitive species' habitats. Currently, nearly 2,000 forest species come under the red list and 400 are affected by the clear-cutting of the forest ecosystem. The deceptive marketing has been called out by several activists and yet there is no Swedish law that protects these ecosystems. Therefore, the pressure to protect these old ecosystems and restore the fragments lies with the EU legislation.

Italy: Migrant boat crash raises question over government's approach

On 26 February, Italy's news agency ANSA reported a migrant boat crash into one of the rocky reefs on Italy's Calabrian coast. Nearly 100 people are presumed to be dead, and 80 have reportedly survived. The total number of people in the boat is estimated to range from 180 to 250. During the rescue operation by the Port Authority of Crotona, the coast guards found that many children had not survived. The migrants were from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Syria. Meanwhile, Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said: "...is committed to preventing the departures and with them the perpetration of these tragedies, and will continue to do so, first of all by demanding maximum collaboration from the states of departure and origin." In response to the incident, European Commission President Ursula Von Der Leyen said: "Member States must step forward and find a solution. Now. The EU needs common and up-to-date rules that will allow us to face the challenges of migration."

Ukraine: Russia strikes intelligence centre near Kiev

On 27 February, the Russian Defence Ministry's official Telegram channel confirmed that a Ukrainian electronic intelligence centre located in the settlement of Brovary in the Kiev region had been struck by Russian missiles. Additionally, the ministry reported that the Russian missiles had hit the "West" special operations centre, located near the city of Khmelnytsky in western Ukraine and destroyed an ammunition depot near the city of Artyomovsk/Bakhmut as well as a US-made AN/TPQ-37 counter-battery radar, in the Donetsk region. This marks the increased attacks by Russia on Ukrainian critical infrastructure.

Ukraine: 'Men are not allowed to leave the country,' says presidential aide

On 27 February, Ukrainian presidential advisor Mikhail Podoliak's DW interview gave a response to the media statements on aggressive mobilisation tactics of the Kiev government. He said: "Fleeing the draft means wanting the country to be destroyed." On 26 February, The Economist referred to the case of a man who was missing both hands since childhood, where the draft office in Lviv insisted he was fit to serve until social media uproar forced them to relent. Podoliak said: "The state has a duty to provide things, let people travel, let people live as they wish. Yes, in peacetime. But in wartime, that's not a question to raise. Do you want to cross the border? That means you want Ukraine to stop existing, because you crossed the border."

US-Russia: Moscow outlines conditions for unfreezing nuclear deal

On 27 February, the Russian Ambassador to the US said the US must reconsider its anti-Russia policies before the New START (a nuclear arms reduction treaty between the US and the Russian Federation) can be resumed. This comes after Moscow's decision to suspend

New START discussions which is the last remaining nuclear arms control treaty with the US. The ambassador revealed that the decision to suspend was the right response to Washington's anti-Russia policies and its violations of the deal. Further, he commented on Washington's criticism of the move and said that the US was shifting the blame. He said that "Washington has launched and dragged its European allies into a large-scale hybrid war against Russia," while openly stating that its goal is "to inflict a strategic defeat on our country."

Mexico-Peru: Obrador continues criticising Boularte

On 27 February, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador criticised Peruvian President Dina Boularte calling her a "puppet of oligarchs." Obrador claimed that former Peruvian President Pedro Castillo's impeachment and imprisonment as unjust and a total farce and that the oligarchs wanted to plunder Peru. Obrador said: "They need to have a puppet, a dummy governor of their own." The development comes after Boularte ordered a "definitive removal" of Peru's ambassador to Mexico on 24 February after Obrador called Boularte's government unconstitutional.

Mexico: Thousands protest against electoral reforms

On 26 February, thousands of people protested against President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's approval of electoral reforms; in Mexico City alone, over 500,000 people were protesting. The reforms would cut salaries and funding to local election offices and reduce training for citizens operating and overseeing polling stations. The reforms would "also reduce sanctions for candidates who fail to report campaign spending." The protesters believe the reforms would increase Obrador's powers over the election and would indicate a return to the past wherein vote manipulation was rampant.

The US: Labor department shed light on increased exploitation of children

On 27 February, the Departments of Labour and the Health and Human Services announced that an Interagency Taskforce to Combat Child Labor Exploitation would be created. The development comes after the Department of Labor observed a 69 per cent increase in illegal employment of children since 2018. The Department said in the 2021 fiscal year, over 3,800 children had been employed in 835 companies, amid an increased number of children entering the US from Latin America. An AP News report said that the issue has placed Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra under scrutiny as a video reported by The New York Times shows Becerra urging his staff to "discharge children from the federal government's broken system of shelters faster." Becerra said: "If Henry Ford had seen this in his plants, he would have never become famous and rich...This is not the way you do an assembly line."

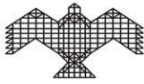
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About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative(IPRI)

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 researches are published as briefs, reports and commentary.

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The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as “Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education,” in 1964, the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. KAS cooperates with governmental institutions, political parties and civil society organizations, building strong partnerships along the way. In particular, KAS seeks to intensify political cooperation in the area of development cooperation on the foundations of its objectives and values. Together with the partners, KAS makes a significant contribution to the creation of a global order that empowers every country to determine its own developmental priorities and destiny in an internationally responsible manner.

KAS has organized its program priorities in India into five working areas: Foreign and Security Policy; Economic, Climate, and Energy Policy; Rule of Law; Political Dialogue focused on Social and Political Change; and Media and Youth. The India Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation takes great pride in its cooperation with Indian partner institutions that implement jointly curated projects and programmes.

About Conflict Weekly

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