

Conflict Weekly

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A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

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Evacuation in Sudan, and the Chinese Ambassador's statement on the status of former Soviet republics

Apoorva Sudhakar and Femy Francis



(Hundreds of citizens from Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, and Germany gathered at the Marka Military Airport, Jordan, after being evacuated from Sudan. Image Source: Mohammed Ali, EPA-EFE)

Sudan: Fragile Ceasefire and Evacuation

Apoorva Sudhakar

In the news

On 25 April, a 72-hour ceasefire, brokered by the US and Saudi Arabia, was declared in Sudan as countries hastened to evacuate their citizens amid the increased fighting between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF). On the same day, India announced that over 500 Indians had arrived at Port Sudan to be evacuated by the Indian Navy; more are expected to follow as over 3000 Indians are stuck in Sudan. Saudi Arabia announced that it had rescued 357 citizens from 27 countries.

Previously, on 24 April, the French Embassy in India said that France's evacuation operations were ongoing after its military flights evacuated 388 people from 28 countries. On 23 April, the US, through Djibouti, and the UK announced that their diplomats had been evacuated; the same day, the UK faced criticism for evacuating only diplomats and their families. Following this, the UK began rescuing its citizens, and the second batch of evacuees arrived in Cyprus on 25 April.

Amid the evacuation, challenges loomed large; on 25 April, Reuters reported that the RSF had looted a Qatari convoy, an Iraqi national was killed in clashes, and an Egyptian diplomat had been injured. Similarly, 126,000 Eritrean asylum seekers in Sudan were reportedly being forced to return to Eritrea. On 24 April, a Kenyan diplomat said 30 students had been evacuated to Ethiopia; however, the BBC quoted a student who said they had escaped on their own and had to bribe the Sudanese policemen.

Issues at large

First, the increased fighting between SAF and RSF. After the fighting between the two forces broke out on 15 April, the death toll has risen to over 420. More than 3,700 have been wounded. Thousands have fled the capital Khartoum to Sudan's borders with Egypt, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Chad. Meanwhile, fighting has spread beyond Khartoum to Merowe, North Darfur, North Kordofan, South Darfur, and Kassala State.

Second, a series of fragile ceasefires. The latest ceasefire is the fourth among a series of ceasefires failed to hold. The third ceasefire was announced to observe Ramadan. However, clashes continued despite the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' call for at least a three-day ceasefire. The first two attempts were 24-hour ceasefires that failed to hold.

Third, the multiple crises in Sudan. In 2019, Sudan witnessed the ousting of long-time dictator Omar al-Bashir in 2019, which later led to the Juba Peace Agreement 2020 to resolve protracted internal conflicts. However, in October 2021, the military and the RSF ousted the transitional government. In December 2022, the military and pro-democracy group Forces of Freedom and Change signed a framework to establish a new civilian-led transition government. Following the coup and the signing of the framework, several thousand Sudanese staged pro-democracy protests, sometimes leading to violence and suppression by the military. Simultaneously, several tribal conflicts like those in the Darfur region continued.

Fourth, regional and international concerns. Sudan shares borders with seven countries; five of them are in a state of political turmoil - Central African Republic, Chad, Libya, South

Sudan and Ethiopia. The porous borders allow people and arms to circulate unchecked among these countries. The other regional concern is that a spillover of the fighting and refugees could spoil relations between Egypt and Sudan, both seeking to strike a deal with Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Sudan is an oil-rich country that opens into the Red Sea, where external powers like Russia are pursuing a deal to establish a military base. According to the BBC, Sudan's "huge, and relatively underused potential of the rich soil" has also attracted players like UAE.

In perspective

The ceasefire to evacuate foreigners is a relief as several of them were left clueless on how to escape the violence. The foreign governments should aim at extending the ceasefire so that an agreement can be reached to address the current power struggle. Meanwhile, the hurried evacuation processes seem like a reminder of the evacuation from Afghanistan in 2021. It reflects the failure of conflict warnings and the lack of preparedness during conflict escalation.

The latest outbreak of violence adds to the political turmoil that Sudan has been undergoing since 2019. It erases any hope for democracy as the military will likely use this opportunity to consolidate its power and violate the 2022 framework. The violence also threatens the already fragile security of the Horn of Africa.

Former Soviet republics are not sovereign states: Chinese Ambassador's statement creates diplomatic tensions

Femy Francis

In the news

On 21 April, the Chinese Ambassador to France, Lu Shaye's statement that the former Soviet republics are not sovereign states triggered a global uproar of criticism. The diplomat, during an interview, said: "Even these ex-Soviet countries don't have an effective status in international law because there was no international agreement to materialize their status as sovereign countries." This came after he was questioned over the "illegal" annexation of Crimea by Russia, to which Shaye responded: It "Depends on how the problem is perceived." He iterated that Crimea was "at the beginning Russian," but later, it was "offered to Ukraine during the Soviet era."

On 24 April, the Chinese embassy in France issued that the comments made by Lu Shaye were "not a statement of policy, but an expression of personal views." Additionally, the embassy stated: "On territorial sovereignty, the Chinese side's position is consistent and clear. The Chinese side respects the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries and upholds the purposes and principles of the UN Charter." The Chinese embassy also highlighted that, following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, China was amongst the first countries to initiate and establish bilateral relationships with the newly independent republics. They added: "The Chinese side respects the status of the republics born after the dissolution of the Soviet Union as sovereign countries."



Issues at large

First, the Chinese ambiguity. The statement amassed major criticism as the war crossed one year, and China has refused to take sides. The comment made by the diplomat devalues the status of the former Soviet and the now independent countries. China, since the culmination of the war, refused to condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The comments made by the diplomat add to the ambiguous view of China, where it is observed as a back-door supporter of the Russian cause while it personifies as a non-aligned country in front of the world order.

Second, the global outrage. The comment triggered international outrage as the statement strips the democratic right of the republics to exist independently. Ukrainian presidential aide Mykhaylo Podolyak stressed that the post-soviet republics are "enshrined with international law." He said: "It is strange to hear an absurd version of the 'history of Crimea' from a representative of a country that is scrupulous about its 1,000-year history." The Latvian foreign minister criticized the remarks made by the Chinese diplomat as completely unacceptable and demanded the retrieval of the statement with an explanation by the Chinese authority. Furthermore, the three Baltic republics, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, plan to summon the Chinese ambassador or a representative to provide an explanation. The international community has unanimously expressed censure against the statements made as it refutes and questions the right of the former Soviet countries to exist independently.

Third, questions over the Chinese neutral position over Ukraine. While the statement directly disregards the countries' sovereignty, it also countermands China's efforts to isolate itself from the Russia-Ukraine war. The war has led to Russia being heavily sanctioned by the international community. Regardless of their friendship or status in the war, China has tried to avoid taking sides. Beijing submitted an official statement on "China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis," where it called for an end to war and the need for peace negotiations. The report also stated that nuclear weapons must be avoided and that corridors should be provided to evacuate civilians. The statement goes against China's neutrality narrative; their image is at stake, and they cannot afford to disappoint the contesting blocs. The comment highlights the Chinese position in the war, ruining their isolation efforts.

In perspective

China's role as the broker of peace in the Russian-Ukraine war wavers as its neutrality is questioned. The European Union, especially French President Emmanuel Macron, who recently visited Xi Jinping, saw China's potential as the deciding factor to change the trajectory and end the war. It was observed that China is the only country that can influence Russia and, therefore, a major power that could potentially broker peace. Currently, China is concentrating on damage control measures reiterating its neutral stance and rebuilding confidence in the international world order while not disappointing the Russian cause. On 26 April, Ukrainian President Zelensky and China's Xi Jinping held a telephone conversation for the first time since Russia invaded Ukraine. Zelensky said they had a "long and meaningful" conversation to strengthen their bilateral relationships. Additionally, China plans to send a special envoy to Ukraine after the conversation. The sudden interaction by China shows how it is scrambling to re-establish its neutral stance when the international community becomes increasingly sceptical of its loyalties.

Issues in Peace and Conflict This Week: Regional Roundups

Akriti Sharma, Ankit Singh, Rashmi Ramesh, Apoorva Sudhakar, Anu Maria Joseph, Femy Francis, Harini Madhusudan and Padmashree Anandhan

East and Southeast Asia

US and South Korea declares deterrence plan against North Korea nuclear threat

On 26 April, the United States president and his South Korean counterpart Yoon Suk Yeol declared to strengthen the deterrence plan against North Korean nuclear aggression. The understanding includes the docking of the US nuclear submarines and bolster training between the two countries. The state visit by the South Korean president to the US marks 70 years of alliance between the two countries. Joe Biden said: "A nuclear attack by North Korea against the United States or its allies and partners is unacceptable, and will result in the end of whatever regime were to take such an action." South Korean president Yoon affirmed the commitment as a 'righteous alliance' and appreciated the US providing bilateral consultation in case of a Nuclear attack from North Korea.

Myanmar: Former UN Chief Ban Ki-moon's visit

On 24 April, former UN Chief Ban Ki-moon visited Myanmar as the country grapples with internal conflict. He engaged with the Junta and discourse over peace measures, saying: "I came to Myanmar to urge the military to adopt an immediate cessation of violence and start a constructive dialogue among all parties concerned." Additionally, he urged the military to take the first step when bringing peace. He also called for unity in action from the ASEAN community. He said: "ASEAN member states and the wider international community need to show unity and resolve in their commitment to peace and democracy in Myanmar, which is a source of serious international concern."

Myanmar: Junta raid burns down 450 houses

On 26 April, the Irrawaddy reported that the Myanmar Junta burned 450 houses in the Kantbalu Township, Sagaing Region and the Pazi Gyi. It was reported that 200 junta troops vandalized the Pazi Gyi village leaving 215 residential houses destroyed. Additionally, the village monastery was also burned, and the troops raided the region.

South Asia

Pakistan: Street protests in Swat against blast in a police station

On 25 April, hundreds of people protested and condemned the killing and injuring of several personnel in a blast inside a police station in Kabul, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The residents raised questions on the claims by the counter-terrorism department and asserted that the people of Malakand division would no longer be "deceived in the name of terrorism dramas." The speakers said that Pakhtuns won't tolerate terrorism on their land anymore and that they believe that acts of terrorism had always been carried out in the country to claim American dollars.

Islamic State mastermind terrorist behind 2021 bombing at Kabul Airport killed by Taliban

On 24 April, CBS and BBC reported that families of soldiers killed in the 2021 Kabul airport attack were being notified by the US military of the confirmed killing of the IS terrorist. According to a report in the New York Times, the US learned of the leader's death in early April. However, it is unclear whether he was targeted by Taliban or he was killed during



ongoing fighting between IS and the Taliban. Around 170 civilians and 13 US soldiers were killed during the bomb explosion at Kabul Airport in 2021.

India-China: Eighteenth round of talks

On 23 April, India and China held the 18th round of corps commander-level talks along the LAC in Ladakh. A statement from the Ministry of External Affairs said: "In line with the guidance provided by the State leaders and further to the meeting between the two foreign ministers in March 2023, they had an exchange of views in an open and candid manner," No breakthrough was sought during the meeting.

India: Terrorists attack an Army truck in Jammu and Kashmir

On 20 April, terrorists attacked an army truck while transporting eatables during the festival season in the Poonch region. Five soldiers were killed, and one was injured in the attack. Steel core bullets capable of piercing armoured shields were used in the attack. Multiple security agencies in Poonch and Rajouri regions are conducting massive search operations. So far, fifty people have been detained for questioning regarding the attack.

India: Naxals attack security forces in Chhattisgarh

On 26 April, 10 District Reserve Guards and one civilian were killed in an attack by the Naxalites in Chhattisgarh. The guards and their driver were attacked by an IED with 50 kg of explosives while returning from a security operation. A high alert has been issued in the region. According to the Police: "Security forces have been asked to stay cautious while moving in a vehicle and conducting de-mining exercises to detect the Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) planted by Naxalites after the attack on 26 April."

Sri Lanka: Protests over anti-terrorism bill

On 25 April, in the eastern and northern provinces, Tamil parties protested against the anti-terrorism bill. The new Anti-Terrorism Act sought to replace the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1979. The protest was arranged by the Tamil National Alliance, and normal life was disrupted in the provinces due to the protests.

Central Asia, The Middle East, and Africa

Syria: Protests against Arab rapprochement with Assad's regime

On 24 April, hundreds took to the streets across northwestern Syria against the Arab rapprochement with Bashar al-Assad's regime. The biggest was held in Idlib, which is still under conflict and is a stronghold of rebels. Some groups in Azaz, the place hosting internally displaced Syrians and Tal Abyad, a town on the Syria-Turkiye border, also protested. Smaller groups also demonstrated across a few European cities, including Amsterdam, Vienna and Berlin.

Ethiopia: Prime minister agrees to hold peace talks with the Oromo rebels

On 23 April, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed agreed to hold peace talks with the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), a rebel group in the Oromia region. The talks will be held in Tanzania this week. This is the first time the Ethiopian government is trying to negotiate with the group, which has been fighting the federal forces for years. Abiy stated: "A negotiation with Oneg Shene will start a day after tomorrow in Tanzania." The OLA has not yet responded to the statement. The OLA is a formally banned opposition party and was later termed a terrorist group during the Tigray conflict. The grievances of the group are the alleged marginalization of the Oromo majority people and the ignorance of the government.

Burkina Faso: 60 civilians killed in armed attack

On 24 April, Al Jazeera reported that at least 60 civilians were killed in an attack in the village of Karma in northern Burkina Faso. A Prosecutor, Lamine Kabore, citing information from the Ouahigouya police station, said that the perpetrators were wearing the uniforms of the Burkinabe armed forces. He said: "The wounded have been evacuated and are currently being taken care of within our health facilities." Several active armed groups are believed to be controlling 40 per cent of the country. At the beginning of April, the Burkinabe military government announced a "general mobilization" against the jihadist campaigns across the country.

Europe and the Americas

Haiti: Gang member lynched and put on fire by public

On 24 April, in the capital Port-au-Prince, around 13 members of a gang were beaten to death and later set on fire by the public. According to a police statement, security forces had confiscated their weapons, and the public later got hold of the gang members. The security forces have recently engaged in hot urban warfare with gang members to bring law and order to the capital. Around 200 gangs operate around the capital city port.

The US: SC provides temporary respite to ban on abortion pill

On 21 April, the United States Supreme Court ruled to block lower-court decisions that would have placed restrictions on mifepristone, an abortion pill whose health and safety standards have been challenged in Republican-controlled states. President Joe Biden called upon the voters to bring the issue of abortion access to polls. One of the US's most high-profile reproductive healthcare groups, Planned Parenthood, celebrated the Supreme Court's decision.

Ukraine: Phone call between Chinese President Xi and Ukraine President Zelenskyy

On 26 April, POLITICO reported a phone conversation between China's President Xi Jinping's call and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. According to the reports, Xi's remarks stressed on settling the Ukraine war through "political resolution." Xi was reported to have said: "China is neither the creator nor a party to the Ukraine crisis." In a statement, Zelenskyy said: "Particular attention was paid to the ways of possible cooperation to establish a just and sustainable peace for Ukraine."

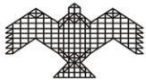
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About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative(IPRI)

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.

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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