

Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

4 May 2023, Vol.4, No.18

Another ceasefire in Sudan, and a Counteroffensive in Ukraine

Anu Maria Joseph and Padmashree Anandan



(Sudanese refugees who fled the fighting waiting for food packages distributed by the World Food Programme (WFP) in Sudan-Chad border. Image Source: Mahamat Ramadane, Reuters)

SPECIAL COMMENTARY

The State of Conflict in Myanmar: Violence, Counter-Violence, and the Current Impasse

Sudan: Continuing fighting and prevailing uncertainties

Anu Maria Joseph

In the news

On 2 May, South Sudan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the warring parties in Sudan have agreed "in principle" to a week-long ceasefire to begin on 4 May.

On 29 April, according to Volker Paerthes, the UN special representative for Sudan, the opposing sides have expressed willingness to negotiate and have chosen their representatives for the upcoming talks. The talks are proposed to be held in either Jeddah, Saudi Arabia or Juba, South Sudan. He stated: "They both think they will win, but they are both sort of more open to negotiations, the word 'negotiations' or 'talks' was not there in their discourse in the first week or so." The fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has intensified and has reached a third week with multiple failed ceasefires and worsening humanitarian crises. Sudan's Health Ministry reported that at least 550 people died and 4,926 were left injured so far in the fighting.

On 1 May, according to the UN estimates, around 800,000 people would eventually leave Sudan, and 100,000 people had fled Sudan to neighbouring countries amid the humanitarian crisis. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan, Abou Dieng, expressed concerns saying: "It has been more than two weeks of devastating fighting in Sudan, a conflict that is turning the Sudan humanitarian crisis into a full-blown catastrophe" and that "the regional spillover effect of the crisis is a serious concern."

Meanwhile, foreign governments are concluding their evacuation operations. On 3 May, the UK announced its final evacuation flight from Sudan after nearly 2,341 people so far had been airlifted to safety on 28 UK flights.

Issues at large

First, intensified fighting between Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The use of heavy weaponry and artillery has intensified the fighting between the warring parties. Airstrikes and gunfire have spread across Khartoum and Omdurman targeting major government and military infrastructure. The confrontation has also extended to new regions - Al-Jerif in the state of Blue Nile, Darfur, Al-Halfaya, Shambat and North Kafouri. On 28 April, Al Jazeera reported that 74 people were killed in the West Darfur region.

Second, failed ceasefires and ineffective external efforts. The latest week-long ceasefire is the fifth one, after a series of failed attempts. The previous ceasefires have ranged from 24-72 hours. Despite reports of rival factions agreeing to hold talks, both the army and RSF have continued to engage in fighting. Each side has accused the other of violating the previously agreed ceasefires.

Various international actors including the UN, the AU, the US, and the EU have been urging the opposing parties to engage in peaceful discussions. The ceasefire that was brokered by the United States and Saudi Arabia on 25 April failed. The AU and Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) have been calling regional actors for a concerted effort to de-escalate the conflict. On 1 May, during an Arab League emergency meeting in Cairo,

Egypt proposed a draft resolution calling for an “immediate and comprehensive cessation” of fighting. Evidently, the current situation indicates that discussions with external parties have not been effective in addressing Sudan's political issues.

Third, the threat of an ethnic spill over. The leader of RSF, Hamdan Dagalo, is the leader of the Mahariya clan of Darfur’s Rizeigat tribe. Arab tribal militias in Darfur including the remnants of Janjaweed militia, which fought during the 2003 Darfur conflict, pose a potential threat of aiding RSF as their kin in Darfur. It is possible that the Mahamid fighters may form an alliance with the Sudanese Army to undermine their opponent Dagalo in Darfur. Besides, the army and RSF are pushing non-Arabs and Arabs to align with them respectively.

Fourth, threats of regional spill over. The fighting in Sudan poses a threat to regional security. According to Jalel Harchaoui, a Libyan expert with the Clingendael Institute, Arab militias having close ties with Libyan Commander General Khalifa Haftar, the leader of the Libyan National Army (LNA), are maintaining control of the lucrative smuggling routes that go through the city of Kufra, which borders the Sudanese region of Darfur, Chad, and Egypt. RSF is one of the LNA's major trading partners and is pushing Haftar to support Dagalo. If the RSF gets weakened in Darfur, it could prompt their affiliated militias in Chad, which is susceptible to coup attempts, and the Central African Republic, which is plagued by conflict, to join the conflict. This could result in a spill-over effect in these countries. Sudan also borders the Tigray region in Ethiopia which is vulnerable to potential conflicts. Besides, the influx of Sudanese refugees to the neighbouring countries has left the concern of rising cost of commodities and scarce resources in the respective countries.

Fifth, continuing evacuation. A majority of the countries made use of the temporary ceasefires to evacuate its citizens residing in Sudan. According to an Al Jazeera report on 25 May, the UK evacuated 4,000 citizens from Sudan; Germany's evacuation mission carried nearly 500 people from more than 30 countries; India transported 3,000 citizens and Russia 140 out of a total of 300 citizens; US special forces evacuated all government personnel and their families which is fewer than 100 people.

In perspective

First, growing instability within and in the regions. As the fighting expands to new regions with the use of heavy weaponry, it is uncertain whether the warring parties would adhere to the agreed week-long ceasefire. The volatile ceasefires are likely to delay further peace talks. Although the parties have agreed to hold talks, the questions - how, when and where are still unclear.

Sudan shares long and porous borders with conflict-riven neighbours, including the Central African Republic, Chad, Libya and South Sudan. While regional ethnic and tribal militias are pushed to take sides, there is a chance that the conflict in Sudan might turn into a proxy conflict profiting from the chaos. It would also lead to the incapability of regional actors and institutions including the IGAD and AU in mediating a solution to the issue.



Second, the conflict has turned the humanitarian crisis into a catastrophe. According to the UN, inaccessibility to basic commodities has left 15 million people already facing food insecurity. East Africa has been facing the worst drought after five consecutive rainy seasons which, according to the UN, has left 43,000 people dead. Existing disease outbreaks and climate related hazards have overlapped with the conflict leaving millions in a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian crisis.

Third, lack of a comprehensive political process. Sudan needs an effective ceasefire followed by an inclusive peace talk supported by regional and international actors. However, the Western countries revert to taking side with the interim government as well as to make efforts to end the fighting.

Besides, the hope for democracy and a civilian transition in Sudan seems unlikely to happen any time soon.

Ukraine: Efforts to strengthen counteroffensive and Russia's counterassault

Padmashree Anandan

In the news

On 29 April, the Ukrainian diplomat to Germany, Oleksii Makeiev, appealed to Germany to deliver air defence systems, tanks, and ammunition to prepare for the counteroffensive. Makeiev said: "For the planned counteroffensive, we need more armoured vehicles, tanks and artillery systems, long-range ammunition in the shortest possible time."

On 1 May, a spokesperson of the Ukrainian Air Force, Yurii Ihnat, stated that all supplied air defence systems to Ukraine had been deployed for combat duty and to safeguard the airspace. Despite receiving missile systems such as IRIS-T and Patriot, it is reported to be insufficient to guard all directions.

On 1 May, RT reported on Russia's Ministry of Defence claim on the launch of a massive missile attack across Ukraine targeting the weapon production, military industry, and munitions. Although the details of the locations were not disclosed, the strikes were confirmed by the Ukraine Armed Forces in Kyiv, Sumy, and Dnepropetrovsk. According to a senior Russian official in Zaporozhzhia, the attack had destroyed Ukraine's "46th airborne brigade" which was expected to be used for a counteroffensive.

On 1 May, in its intelligence update, the UK Ministry of Defence has reported that Russia is constructing defence structures along the frontline in Ukraine and in certain areas within Russia. This was observed especially in the northern border of Crimea and the village of Medvedivka. Such defences are viewed as an attempt by Russia to counter the upcoming counteroffensive by Ukraine.

On 2 May, after the attacks on its military production and munitions, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for boosting the air defence. He said: "We are working with our partners as actively as possible to make the protection of our skies even more reliable."

Issues at large

First, Ukraine's continued demand for advanced weapons and air defence systems. Ukraine's ground forces continued to counter Russia's attacks between January and March of this year. Withdrawing from Soledar and experiencing exhaustion in Bakhmut have been pivotal moments for Ukraine, prompting them to request more advanced weapon systems. This initially started with requests for battle tanks, modern aviation and advanced missile systems. The same can be observed from the leaked Pentagon documents that revealed the lack in Ukraine's air defence and Russia's air superiority. Ukraine's objective to overcome the gap and its determination to counter Russia has resulted in demanding offensive weapon systems. Although the pressure helped in a faster delivery of Leopard 2 and Leopard 2A6, advanced air defence systems remain only in the demand list.



Second, Russia's swift tactics. Due to limitations in skilled personnel and logistics, Russia's winter offensive was expected to be aggressive, but was observed ineffective. Despite the limitations, it strategically deployed the Wagner Group and its special forces in Bakhmut which has helped it to regroup its military forces to launch an offensive in other areas, including Sloviansk, Kherson, and Murmansk. As Ukraine's spring counteroffensive is expected to be launched, Russia can be observed to be switching its targeted attacks. Initially, it had focused on residential buildings, water storages, energy infrastructure and lately at military stockpiles, munition and production units.

Third, increased pressure on the West. The US, Germany, and the NATO allies, who have been relentlessly supporting through intelligence, ground, air, and sea weapon systems, have always been wary of the impact. Military aid to Ukraine has always been limited to ensure their defence and prevent further escalation. The demand from Ukraine for advanced ground or air weapon systems has been increasing, causing the West to show restraint in providing them.

In perspective

First, Russia's shift in target could be to reduce the intensity of the counteroffensive to mellow down the impact on its military. Launching offensives on the brigades prepared ahead of the counteroffensive could be a strategic move to avoid further loss of personnel and prevent aggravated logistical challenges.

Second, for Ukraine, it will be a scuffle between the West and Russia. To carry out the counteroffensive, it will have to strategize its usage of available weapons and ensure the prepared military stocks are not destroyed. Until there is a larger military sanction from the West, Ukraine's ability to counter Russia will remain uncertain.

SPECIAL COMMENTARY**The State of Conflict in Myanmar:
Violence, Counter-Violence, and the Current Impasse**

by Bibhu Prasad Routray

In the last 27 months, Myanmar's military has defied international strictures and condemnations. While the West is disinterested in undermining the military and actively promoting the pro-democracy activists, the Tatmadaw has found a long leash to life from its friends in the neighbourhood and beyond.

On 22 April, Sai Kyaw Thu, the deputy head of Tatmadaw (Myanmar's military) appointed to the Union Election Commission, was shot dead in the Thingangyun township in eastern Yangon by suspected members of the People's Defence Forces (PDF). The killing is part of the counter-violent campaign unleashed by the pro-democracy activists to undo the February 2021 coup by the military; it should also be seen as sort of a temporary coagulation of their objective—to disrupt the 'elections' planned by the military. The military, too, realizes the importance of its planned pursuit, which although criticized heavily by the international community, may legalize its usurpation of power. Oddly, Myanmar, wracked by intense quotidian violence, is in a dead-heat state, and also in a state of fluidity.

The Elections Stratagem

Installing a government that is 'by, of, and for the military' at the earliest has been the Tatmadaw's holy grail. The National League for Democracy (NLD), which secured emphatic victories in the 2015 and 2020 elections, threatened the military's preeminent position in Myanmar's body politic. The 2008 Constitution's provisions, scripted to protect the military's paramountcy, were constantly challenged by the NLD, which had become immensely popular. The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) was no match for the NLD. Hence, the military's strategy demanded that it not only conduct the elections, swearing by its commitment to the constitution.

The military also wants to deflect the criticism that it is unconstitutionally holding onto power for too long, ensuring the impending elections have a pre-determined winner—the USDP. Thus, the controversial Political Parties Registration Law that required the political parties to re-register themselves with the EC within 60 days was brought in January 2023. The stringent law also required that parties must have a sizable presence all over the country to qualify. The shadow National Unity Government (NUG)/NLD, along with 40 other parties, refused to be part of the process and in April, were dissolved.

The military's move has justifiably attracted wide criticism, similar to its past and continuing a series of steps to convict Aung San Suu Kyi and a large number of NLD politicians in a plethora of concocted cases, effectively ensuring that they are kept out of the political process. Critics allege that such elections can never be free or fair. The United States urged the international community to reject any "sham election". However, the military reckons that the installation of a newly elected government will take much wind out of the NUG's charges against it. The new government will effectively be the face of the military's policies, legitimizing it, and justifying its actions. This makes the proposed elections not a gamble, but part of the strategy of the military.



The Opposition's Strategy

Sai Kyaw Thu, deputy director of the EC, was shot multiple times in the chest, neck, and head, and died on the spot. He is one of the high-profile officials who have been killed by the PDFs. The latter are loosely organized armed wings of the NUG, which was set up by the democratically-elected politicians who were removed from office in the military coup. Thu, however is on the long list of officials directly linked to the proposed elections who have been targeted by the PDFs. Officials, enumerators, and pro-military politicians have been attacked. Low-level officials working with the military or alleged informers have also been killed regularly. As a result, a compilation of accurate voter lists has been made impossible, according to the military's own admission.

Counter-violence by the PDFs has revolved around a set of purposes, either to vent public anger against unpopular decisions made by the military or to paralyse the military administration to force it to rethink the coup that pushed democracy into cold storage. On 24 March 2023, Min Tayza Nyunt Tin, a corporate lawyer accused of helping Myanmar's military leaders to launder money was shot and killed in the port city of Thanlyin. In April 2022, a deputy governor of Myanmar's central bank, appointed by the military days after it seized power, was shot at and injured by unknown assailants at her house in Yangon. The incident came after the central bank announced that foreign exchange held by local Myanmarers must be exchanged for the local kyat currency within one working day. In November 2021, a top executive from Mytel—a telecom venture between the Myanmar military and Vietnamese firm Viettel — was gunned down outside his Yangon home. The vehemence of the PDF's violence, although nowhere close to ensuring a victory for the NUG, may have achieved a limited purpose.

Being Desperate and Brutal

In his New Year's message and Independence Day address on 4 January 2023, military chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing promised to hold an election and transfer power to the winning party. Although the election law does not say how early a date for the polls must be announced, it was expected that the elections, even if a staggered one, would be completed by August 2023. However, there is little possibility of the strategy of the military to hold elections coming to fruition anytime soon. On 1 February 2023, the military rule was extended by another six months. The military-controlled National Defence and Security Council (NDSC) cited the 'extraordinary situation' in the country that has hampered efforts to hold the proposed general elections in 2023.

Assessments sympathetic to the pro-democracy activists and the NUG demonstrate that more than half of the country's territory is now being controlled by the anti-military ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) and the PDFs. The military, however, claims that its writ runs large over two-thirds of Myanmar's territory. This sanguine assessment notwithstanding, accumulated frustration of not being able to control the affairs of the entire country has pushed the military to add more brutality to its campaigns. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turkhas, termed this as a "festering catastrophe." Until 3 May, 3459 people have been killed in the military's actions since the February 2021 coup, according to the non-governmental group, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. At least 600 air attacks have been carried out by the military between February 2021 and January 2023, according to the conflict-monitoring group, Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED).

On 27 March, during a speech to mark Armed Forces Day in the capital Naypyidaw, Min Aung disclosed the military would take "decisive action" against "the terror acts of the NUG and its lackey so-called PDFs". Two weeks later, on 11 April, more than 100 people were killed and dozens more wounded in air strikes on Pa Zi Gyi village in the Kantbalu township of the larger Sagaing region. The village had been a hotspot for PDF activities for the past several months. The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the attack. Other major attacks in March 2023 include the killing of 28 people in a monastery in southern Shan state and the raping, beheading, and killing of at least 17 people in two villages in the Sagaing region.

While the larger punitive air raids and artillery attacks have attracted international condemnation, many killings of anti-military activists have been carried out by pro-military militia groups—the Thway Thout Ah-Pwe, or "Blood Comrades"—comprising former military personnel, pro-military civilians, soldiers, and police personnel. These groups were formed after an April 2022 announcement by the military.

Sanctions Galore, Diplomacy on a Vacation

Major Western powers continue to impose sanctions on the military's officials. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Myanmar is a member, is peeved with Min Hlaing's repeated failure to honour his promises of restoring democracy. Assessments point to the choking impact of the sanctions on the military's resources and capacities. And yet, brutality and a sense of impunity of the military continue to persist, buoyed by concrete military assistance and secret assurances by a host of countries including China and Russia.

On 2 May, Chinese foreign minister Qin Gang made a rare trip to Naypyidaw during which he demanded that the international community should respect Myanmar's sovereignty and play a constructive role in helping it achieve peace and reconciliation. The Russian Foreign Minister had made a similar visit in August 2022. In March 2023, UN Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews drew parallels between the Ukraine war and Russian arms supply to Myanmar which kills civilians. India too is reportedly assisting the military's officials to conduct the elections, by training them and providing them with electronic voting machines.

In the last 27 months, Myanmar's military has defied international strictures and condemnations. While the West is disinterested in undermining the military and actively promoting the pro-democracy activists, the Tatmadaw has found a long leash to life from its friends in the neighbourhood and beyond. Hence, a little break is expected from the cycle of violence and counter-violence in the coming months. What is worse, the whim to hold the elections at any cost may make the Tatmadaw's stabilization project more brutal than ever before.



IPRI REVIEW

Droughts in East Africa: A climate disaster Three Takeaways

By Akriti Sharma

The recent droughts in East Africa are the worst in the last four decades. Scientists suggest that such exceptional droughts would not have occurred without climate change. Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia are witnessing inter-community conflicts, displacement, hunger, and malnutrition due to the continuing droughts. With multiple crises at the fore, the countries have limited capacities to manage such disasters and need assistance from regional and global actors.

On 27 April, The Washington Post published an article “Climate change caused catastrophic East Africa drought, scientists say” which looked at the causes and impacts of the East African droughts. The article is based on a study conducted by World Weather Attribution (WWA) titled “Human-induced climate change increased drought severity in Horn of Africa” which highlights the key scientific findings of the persisting droughts in the region and its major fallouts. According to the report, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia have been witnessing extreme drought conditions for the past three years. The following article looks at some of the key takeaways of the report.

1. The climate change link

Droughts in East Africa are caused by extreme weather conditions coupled with less rain and extremely hot and dry temperatures making them the worst droughts in the last four decades. Southern parts of Ethiopia, Somalia, and eastern Kenya have received below-average rainfall in the last three years. Such a weather anomaly is a one-in-a-ten-year event. Scientists believe that such a drought would have not occurred without climate change. Erratic rainfall patterns have been persistent in Africa with longer and denser rains in the western parts and severe drought conditions in the East. The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report forecasted an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events of similar conditions. Extreme weather events of such a magnanimous scale are caused by human-induced climate change.

Prolonged drought conditions have had multifaceted fallouts and have aggravated the existing vulnerability of the population in the East African region. It has led to increased hunger, crop failures, migration, deaths, and conflict in the region. The population in the region is highly vulnerable to an already existing nexus of issues such as poverty, inequality, hunger, malnutrition, disease, and conflict. Climate change has pushed the population to face severe food and water shortage, pasture degradation, and livestock losses. Farming is the major activity that sustains the population of the region and with droughts, people have lost their major sources of livelihood. In Kenya, after the declaration of a drought emergency in 2021, vulnerable groups such as lactating women, children, and older populations were exposed to malnutrition and needed humanitarian assistance. In Ethiopia and Somalia, 1.2 billion people have migrated across borders due to droughts which led to a mass dropout of children in schools. Resource scarcity has led to various inter-community conflicts and disease outbreaks. This reflects the capacity of climate change to exacerbate persisting vulnerabilities.

2. Delayed response followed by fragmented disaster response and management

The impacts of the droughts can be managed through early warning systems and management; however, the response has varied in all three countries. Kenya has been proactive in disaster management through the National Drought Management Authority engaged in developing coping strategies and policy coordination among the institutions for early warning and response. Somalia's response seems highly fragmented due to chronic humanitarian conditions and limited institutional capacity. The African Union has aided both countries through Africa Risk Capacity. Ethiopia, embroiled in political conflict, had little room for disaster response. However, with years of droughts, communities have developed household-coping strategies to manage the droughts which is necessary but inadequate to manage such an exceptional drought. In 2020, the drought was already forecasted by various weather agencies due to La Nina projections but a delayed response was also predicted. Kenya declared drought a national emergency only a year later calling out for humanitarian assistance. Management of disasters requires not only an early warning but an early response.

3. Relevance of loss and damage

The continuing drought in the East African region is a classic example of "loss and damage" financing which is the third pillar of climate action after mitigation and adaptation. With inadequate global action to curb emissions, such events are forecasted to increase and require collective mechanisms to be dealt with. The aftermath of extreme weather events is beyond the gamut of mitigation and adaptation and restoration of pre-disaster conditions requires financial assistance. At COP 27, the concept of loss and damage fund was introduced as a major step towards compensating the vulnerable communities which face drastic impacts of climate change due to the global increase in emissions and hence it is a collective responsibility to compensate them for the damage caused. However, UNFCCC is yet to establish a Loss and Damage Fund which was agreed to at COP27 in Egypt. The population in the region is in dire need of funds to cope with the drought and sustain their livelihoods.

Conclusion

Droughts in East Africa reflect how climate change is manifesting and exposing vulnerable regions of the world to extreme conditions which are beyond adaptive capacity and mitigation measures. Even while pursuing global climate action, such weather anomalies will continue to rise and push vulnerable populations to face the consequences without having any historical responsibility for causing climate change. Apart from a scientific study, it also highlights how such weather anomalies can further socioeconomic vulnerabilities including poverty and conflict.

The report also points out limited climate finance as one of the barriers to undertaking coping strategies. Developed countries have been lagging in their climate financing commitments. East African droughts can push the "loss and damage" debate in the global climate forums in favour of vulnerable communities across the globe. Droughts in East Africa are a global climate concern and demand international and regional support to address acute food, water, and energy insecurity. Climate change is pushing vulnerabilities in communities and regions. Countries with limited resources, especially the least developed and developing countries, do not have the capacity to manage such extreme weather events and they require attention and assistance from the international community. Additionally, against the backdrop of the post-pandemic recovery, global inflation and a rise in food and energy prices, the drought response of the governments in the region has been affected. The UN and the African Union can help bring the droughts in East Africa to international attention through global climate



summits.

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

Japan: Finance minister meets South Korean counterpart to discuss regional tensions

On 1 May, Israeli air strikes targeted the Aleppo international airport in the northern part of Syria, killing one soldier and wounding five other soldiers and two civilians. The strikes have rendered the airport out of service, affecting aid flow to the conflict-ridden zones of the country. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that Israel targeted a munitions depot at the airport, alongside striking a military airport in Aleppo's countryside. However, the latter was not reported by the mainstream media.

Israel-Palestine: Strikes in Israel and Gaza following detainee's death

On 2 May, Israeli jets carried out strikes on the Gaza strip as a response to the rockets that were fired from Gaza into Israel. The Hamas and the Islamic Jihad (Movement) claimed responsibility for the attack on Israel and claimed it was in response to the death of Khader Adnan, a prominent Palestinian prisoner who was on hunger strike for 87 days. Israel Prisons Service said that Adnan was found unconscious in his cell, and was taken to a hospital but was later declared dead. Following his death, hundreds of people took to streets in Gaza and West Bank and held rallies in support of him. The Israel Military reported that 26 rockets were fired from Gaza, after which three people, including a foreign national were wounded.

Tunisia: Coastguards recovers bodies of 41 migrants

On 28 April, the BBC reported on coastguards recovering the bodies of 41 migrants near the Tunisian coast. A senior official said that more than 200 people drowned over the past week. A justice official in the port city of Sfax, Faouzi Masmoudi said: "On Tuesday [25 April], we had more than 200 bodies, well beyond the capacity of the hospital, which creates a health problem." The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said that a total of 300 migrants died, including those departing from the Libyan coast, over the past week. It added that more than 800 migrants died this year alone.

Ethiopia: Government agrees to resume negotiations over GERD

On 27 April, the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that it is ready to resume tripartite negotiations with Egypt and Sudan regarding the issue over the Grand Renaissance Dam (GERD). State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mesganu Arga, announced the decision during his talk with the US special envoy to the Horn of Africa, Mike Hammer. The ministry stated through Twitter: "Regarding GERD [Ambassador Mesganu] said Ethiopia is ready to resume the tripartite negotiations under the auspices of the AU." The relations between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan have strained over the construction and operation of the dam, which demands a legal agreement regarding the same.

Kenya: Opposition resumes protests

On 2 May, the major opposition leader in Kenya, Raila Odinga, resumed protests against the rising cost of living and election irregularities. Initially, the protests began in March, but were later suspended after Odinga and the Kenyan President William Ruto agreed to hold talks. The disagreements during the talks led to the resumption of the protests. Besides, the authorities had banned opposition protests claiming to be “in the interests of national security,” and citing violence during the previous demonstrations.

Horn of Africa: Climate change is the major driver of the worst drought, WAA analysis

On 27 April, Al Jazeera reported on a study by the World Weather Attribution (WAA) on the continuing severe drought in the Horn of Africa. The analysis indicates that the drought has left more than 4.35 million people in the region in dire need of humanitarian aid. Besides, 43,000 people in Somalia are estimated to have died in 2022. According to the study, climate change is a major driver behind the worst drought. A climate scientist with the Kenya Meteorological Department who worked with WWA, Joyce Kimutai, said: “Climate change has made this drought exceptional.”

Burkina Faso: 33 soldiers killed in jihadist attack

On 28 April, BBC reported that at least 33 soldiers were killed in the north-east of Burkina Faso. According to an army statement, Islamist militants active in the region are suspected to be behind the attack. The incident marked the second similar attack over a week, killing dozens of soldiers. Over 100 civilians were killed in the region by what the local officials described as men in military uniform. Non-governmental organizations reported that over 10,000 civilians and soldiers have been killed in various attacks since the beginning of this year.

Europe and the Americas

Europe: Protests across Germany, France, Spain, and Italy on May Day

On 1 May, labour unions and social activists marched across Europe marking International Workers Day to highlight their causes, while many expressed concerns about rising inflation. Climate activists in Paris vandalized a Louis Vuitton Museum, and protesters in Germany demonstrated against violence targeting women and LGBTQ+ people. Despite occasional clashes with police, thousands of people took part in mostly peaceful demonstrations. In Germany, leftist groups and labour unions organized hundreds of rallies, and the German Trade Union Confederation reported that 288,000 people participated in 398 events. In France, hundreds of people protested against President Emmanuel Macron's pension reform, and the protests turned violent after clashes between protesters and security forces. In Italy, the right-wing government approved measures to boost employment and pay rates, while protesters marched against welfare cuts and loosening rules on short-term employment contracts. In Spain, over 70 marches were organized by unions, warning of a "social conflict" if salaries did not keep pace with inflation.



The UK: Over a million NHS staff in England to receive five per cent pay rise

On 3 May, the BBC reported that over one million members of the National Health Service (NHS) staff in England will receive a five per cent pay increase and a one-time payment of at least GBP 1,655, after 14 health unions agreed to the deal proposed by the government in March. The agreement covers the entire NHS staff except doctors and dentists. The offer was accepted by a majority of unions, including Unison and the General Municipal Boilermakers (GMB) trade union, but the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) rejected the deal and has threatened to counter with further strike action. The British Medical Association (BMA) also met with the health secretary to discuss junior doctors' pay, but the two sides have not reached an agreement.

Peru: Report terms government action against protestors as massacre

On 3 May, a report was released by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) assessing human rights violations and the crackdown of the government against nationwide protests in January 2023. According to Reuters, at least 60 people were killed and hundreds were injured. The protests were triggered following a political crisis and the jailing of former president Pedro Castillo. According to the report, a large number of those killed and injured during the protests had been targeted with firearms. It was also found that many of the harshest responses took place in the rural Andean regions such as Ayacucho and Puno, both of which consist of large Indigenous populations.

Mexico: President urges the US to shut all USAID and terms the funding as interventionist

On 3 May, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador issued a letter to the US President Joe Biden which said: “The U.S. government, specifically through USAID, has for some time been financing organisations openly against the legal and legitimate government I represent.” Obrador asserted that such kind of intervention is not a right conduct between free and sovereign states. Earlier on 28 April, the president threatened to shut down the Institute for Information Access and Transparency (INAI), an autonomous public body which oversees government transparency and freedom of information.

Canada: Government reaches an agreement with striking federal workers

On 1 May, the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) union which was spearheading protests and strikes of federal workers announced that workers will return to work after the government relented to their demands. The PSAC president declared that the union had won a 12.6 per cent wage increase over the four-year contract period (2021-2024) and an agreement with the government will set new bars and working conditions for all workers in Canada. 35,000 workers continue the strike as some pending issues remain unresolved so far.

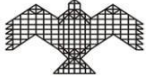
About the authors

Dr Bibhu Prasad Routray is Director of Mantraya, Goa. He was formerly a Deputy Director at the National Security Council Secretariat, Government of India. Harini Madhusudan, Rashmi Ramesh, Ankit Singh and Akriti Sharma are Doctoral Scholars at the School of Conflict and Security Studies, NIAS. Padmashree Anandan is a Project Associate at NIAS. Anu Maria Joseph and Femy Francis are Research Assistants at NIAS.



About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative(IPRI)

National Institute of
Advanced Studies



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.

Editor: D. Suba Chandran

Assistant Editor: Anu Maria Joseph

Editorial Team: Harini Madhusudan, Ankit Singh, Rashmi Ramesh, Femy Francis, Akriti Sharma and Padmashree Anandan.