

# Conflict Weekly

*A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world*

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(Members of the Wagner Group preparing to pull out from Moscow to return to their base in Rostov-on-Don.  
Image Source: Zakaria Abdelkafi, AFP)

**Protests in France, Termination of UN Mission in Mali,  
and Violence in Israel**



An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

Gender | Environment | Ethnic Violence

External Interventions | Armed Conflicts | Peace Processes



## France: Protests and anti-violence rallies underline issues bigger than a police shooting

Padmashree Anandhan

### In the news

On 3 July, France24 reported that mayors across France staged anti-violence rallies against the ongoing riots after the rioters attacked the house of the mayor of Haÿ-les-Roses, Vincent Jeanbrun. The same day, following a visit to police barracks in the capital's 17th Arrondissement, French President Emmanuel Macron assured his support to the anti-violence protesters. Prime Minister Elizabeth Borne stated that the priority is to bring back the order. The demonstrators said: "Everywhere in France are the scene of serious unrest, which targets republican symbols with extreme violence."

The anti-violence protests erupted as a response to violent riots followed by protests, continuing since 27 June after the shooting of a teen, Nahel Merzouk, in Nanterre. The charges of "intentional homicide" were imposed on the police officer after a video of the police shooting the teen was publicized. In response to the riots, France's Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin ordered the deployment of 40,000 police officers and imposed a curfew as the clashes grew uncontrollable.

The protests began as a "White March" in the northern suburb of Nanterre, where Nahel belongs. Clashes erupted when the protesters used projectiles on police and spread to other cities in France. Most are in the north, central, and southwest of Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Pau, Toulouse, and Lille. The protesters included a majority of the young population between 14 and 18 years old, people from the working class, of African descent and Muslims protesting for "justice for Nahel."

### Issues at large

First, the nature of the protests. The protests, concentrated in Paris, later spread sporadically to other parts of France. However, the reasons are beyond the death of Nahel. It includes persisting issues of racial discrimination, growing police misconduct, and increasing government's harsh measures, including the pension reforms, increase in taxes and cost of living.

Second, a divided France. Episodes of protests, violence and anti-violence rallies across France represent a divided society. The police are against the government's decision to detain the police officer who shot Nahel. The divide is between the "law-and-order" force, which implements measures despite public opposition, and the public, disappointed with the government's response to their demands.

Third, the larger debate over police brutality and systemic racism. The shooting brought back the long-standing accusations against the systemic racist approach by the security forces. The debate over police brutality has existed since 2005, when two teens were killed in a police run, resulting in riots across France against racial discrimination. An investigation in 2017 by France's civil liberties ombudsman revealed that young African descendants are subjected to more than 20 times of identity checks compared to the entire population. In 2020, Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International launched a "class action" against the

government for not addressing the issue of ethnic profiling by the police.

Fourth, the harsh government response. Nearly 45,000 police have been deployed to counter the violence. According to France24, the units were "heavily equipped and have armoured vehicles." The government's harsh response to the protests is nothing old. According to a previous report by Foreign Policy, in 2018 and 2019, the government dealt with the "Yellow Jackets" protests by equipping the security forces with weapons that would cause serious injuries. Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin issued a statement supporting the police in controlling the unrest. The mayors have taken the initiative to pressure the government further to address the violence.

### In perspective

The violence has continued for seven days and has been dealt with by the government through security forces. On the other hand, the anti-violence rally by the regional heads has led to an immediate meeting with the mayors to discuss settling the issue and showcase the government's support to the local leaders. The continued tensions amid the yellow jacket protests, COVID-19 protests and pension reform protests since Macron's first term have given way to deep-seated conflict within the society, reducing respect for institutions.

## Mali: Termination of the UN Mission - MINUSMA

Nithyashree RB

### In the News

On 30 June, the UN Security Council unanimously voted to terminate the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and end its mandate. According to the resolution drafted by the French government, MINUSMA will continue responding to violence, safeguarding civilians and providing humanitarian assistance until 30 September. Further, MINUSMA will limit its operations to providing security to UN personnel and infrastructure until 30 December, when its mandate completely ceases. MINUSMA's withdrawal from Mali is to begin on 1 January 2024.

The same day, the permanent representative of Mali to the UN, Issa Konfourou, commented: "The Mission has not achieved its fundamental objective of supporting the Government's efforts to secure the country." Konfourou welcomed the UNSC decision and acknowledged MINUSMA's provision of humanitarian and social assistance. He assured cooperation with the UN during the withdrawal process and ensured the Malian government's aim to implement the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation 2015.

Acting Deputy Representative to the UN, Jeffrey DeLaurentis, commented: "While we deeply regret the transition government's decision to abandon MINUSMA and the harm this will bring to the Malian people, we voted in favour of this resolution as we are ultimately satisfied with the drawdown plan this Council has just adopted. We call on all signatory parties to continue their cooperation and avoid any actions that would jeopardize the ceasefire." Permanent Representative of the UK to the UN, Barbara Woodward, stated: "We do not believe that partnership with the Wagner Group will deliver long-term stability or security for the Malian people."



### Issues at Large

First, a brief note about the MINUSMA. It began operations in Mali on 25 June 2014 after the jihadists and separatist movements jeopardized security and stability. The mission aimed at providing security, stability and civilian protection, supporting political dialogue and reconciliation, and promoting human rights. Since 2019, the insurgency in the region has exacerbated; understaffed MINUSMA made operation difficult. The mission could not help decrease the fatalities and lost 303 of its personnel. Following the coup in 2020, the Malian military government demanded authorization for each flight of MINUSMA which slowed ensuring security and humanitarian assistance. Dwindled cooperation between the government and MINUSMA limited its operations.

Second, the rising anti-West sentiments. Anti-West protests have been rising in Mali, calling for non-intervention by the West. The Malians see deploying French and other European troops as a neocolonial occupation. Mali's military's relationship with France was strained after the military accused the French troops of failing in their operation. In February 2022, France announced the withdrawal of its troops from Mali, stating the lack of cooperation by the government following the coup. Mali's Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop accused MINUSMA of deepening internal divisions and conflicts and stated the call for withdrawal for its failure to contain the militants. Diop added that there exists distrust towards the mission. He commented: "MINUSMA seems to have become part of the problem by fuelling community tensions exacerbated by extremely serious allegations which are highly detrimental to peace, reconciliation and national cohesion in Mali."

Third, the role of Russian mercenaries. US National Security spokesperson John Kirby asserted that the Wagner Group was responsible for the Malian government's decision to push MINUSMA out. Kirby commented: "We know that senior Malian officials worked directly with Prigozhin employees to inform the UN Secretary-General that Mali had revoked consent for the MINUSMA mission." The condemnation of the Wagner Group's involvement in Mali is increasing. Since 2022, the Russian Mercenary has been operating in Mali, taking hold of the vacuum left by the French. In May, the UN accused the Malian troops and foreign military personnel, indicating the Wagner Group, of killing more than 500 people in Central Mali.

### In perspective

First, the termination of the mission is likely to increase human rights violations as there is a lack of accountability from the military government. Pushing out MINUSMA will put the Malians at a greater humanitarian risk.

Second, the unequipped government and the Russian mercenaries. With over 17,000 personnel, MINUSMA has been the UN's largest and most expensive mission for a decade. The Malian government and Russian mercenaries are not equipped to counter the multiple challenges, including deep social divisions, rising insurgency, and jihadism.

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## Israel: Violence in Jenin

Sandra D Costa

### In the News

On 2 July, Al Jazeera reported that the Israeli military conducted airstrikes in Jenin. At least ten Palestinians were killed, and over a hundred were wounded. According to the report, the attack was aimed at the Jenin Brigades, a Palestinian group that emerged from various factions in 2021.

On 4 July, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, remarked that all military operations must be conducted with full "respect for international humanitarian law."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that Jenin should be "a military operation, to take down buildings, exterminate terrorists – not one or two but tens and hundreds if necessary thousands."

On the other side, a spokesperson for Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas called the operation "a new war crime against our defenceless people."

The US White House National Security Council stated: "We support Israel's security and right to defend its people against Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other terrorist groups."

### Issues at Large

First, a brief note on the Jenin refugee camp. The camp is located in the city of Jenin in the West Bank. It was established in 1953 to host the Palestinian refugees who had fled the 1948 war, also known as the Nakba. Israeli forces controlled the camp during the 2002 second Palestinian intifada. Additionally, it stands as one of the nineteen West Bank refugee camps with the highest unemployment and poverty rates. Israel considers the Jenin refugee camp a militant stronghold; the camp witnessed Israeli army raids for over a year. On 30 June, Israel raided the camp, killing two Palestinians.

Second, increasing violence in the West Bank. Since January, the West Bank has been subjected to increasing violence including raids, shootings and killings, destruction of buildings and infrastructures, and tear gas firings. According to Al Jazeera, more than 140 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli troops or settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem since the beginning of the year.

Third, the cycle of violence. The State and Hamas have led a vicious cycle of violence. On the one hand, the demolition of Palestinian structures around settlements by Israel, torching of homes and vehicles, raids and shootings and drone attacks are continuing. On the other hand, there have also been attacks on non-state actors. According to Al Jazeera, 130 Palestinians have lost their lives in the West Bank in just seven months into the year, compared to 170 Palestinians in 2022.

### In perspective

Jenin, besides Gaza, is becoming a key battleground in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For Netanyahu and his party, the standpoint is clear: "The Jewish people have an exclusive and



inalienable right to all parts of the Land of Israel." The bloodshed in Jenin has exacerbated the divisions inside Palestine, prompting Hamas to call on young Palestinians in the West Bank to join the struggle. The divisions within the Palestinian society present a challenge to the Palestinian Authority, which seeks to retain control and stability despite being attacked by different parties.

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## IPRI REVIEW

### Myanmar: Five takeaways of the UNHCR report on climate-induced displacement

Rishika Yadav

On 23 June, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP) published the "Myanmar Emergency Update."

The report is about the internally displaced people (IDPs) in Myanmar, their dire situation exacerbated by the devastating impact of Cyclone Mocha. The report revealed that as of 12 June, there are at least 1,844,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in the country, with 1,516,000 newly displaced since 1 February 2021.

Although the report provides valuable insights into the displacement figures caused by cyclone Mocha and ongoing conflicts, there is a significant data gap concerning sex and age disaggregation. This limitation hinders a comprehensive understanding of how different demographic groups are affected. Such data is crucial for targeted and effective responses.

Following are five key takeaways from the report.

#### **1. Cyclone Mocha worsening the situation for the IDPs in Myanmar**

Cyclone Mocha in May, which caused landslides across Myanmar, has compounded the hardships faced by IDPs, refugees, and host communities in Bangladesh and Myanmar. Myanmar was the hardest hit, with the state of Rakhine affected worse. The cyclone exacerbated a dire situation following heavy rainfall, strong winds, landslides, and the destruction of houses and infrastructure, leading to increased IDPs.

#### **2. Increased efforts by UNHCR, UNICEF and UNFPA in addressing the Cyclone Mocha fallouts**

The UNHCR and its partners (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) are responding to the crisis caused by the cyclone Mocha. They provide relief items, such as shelter support, core relief items (CRIs), and personal protective equipment (PPE), to the affected communities. UNHCR actively supports coordinated efforts in Myanmar, focusing on the state of Rakhine. It has launched flash appeals seeking USD 375 million to provide humanitarian assistance.

#### **3. Deteriorating security situation**

The security situation in the northwest region of Myanmar continues to worsen, with 27 townships remaining under Martial Law. Communities in conflict-affected areas, particularly in the state of Chin, cities of Sagaing, and Magway, are facing vulnerabilities due to recurrent

conflicts, displacement, frequent airstrikes, artillery fire, security operations, and arson. The situation calls for coordinated efforts under the Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons 1954 to address the complex intersection of climate and conflict-induced displacement.

#### **4. Challenging food security situation**

The loss of arable farmland, particularly in the northwest region, is an additional challenge to an already precarious situation. The destruction of farmland disrupts agricultural production and hampers communities' ability to sustain themselves, exacerbating the existing food security concerns.

#### **5. Fallout on neighbouring countries**

The report says that although no new Myanmar refugees were recorded in Thailand during the reporting period, India has seen over 700 new arrivals in May 2023, bringing the total number since February 2021 to 54,200. The Indian state of Mizoram has the largest number of refugees (40,550 individuals), while Manipur hosts 8,450 individuals.

### IPRI REVIEW

## **Afghanistan: Four Takeaways of the US State Department Report on After Action Review**

Ryan Marcus

On 1 July, the US Department of State released the "After Action Review on Afghanistan," covering the events between January 2020 and August 2021. The After Action Review (AAR) analyses the activities following the termination of the US military operation in Afghanistan. The Department of State was tasked with a complex environment to execute a massive humanitarian airlift. The situation had burdened the Department's personnel and crisis response structures.

The following are the four takeaways from the report.

#### **1. Unstable situation impinging on the pre-planned evacuation procedures**

Despite the withdrawal of the military in February 2021, the State Department officials operated in the belief that the situation would not deteriorate in Kabul for several months. Following the Taliban's gains in early May 2021, US official circles raised an alarm to execute preparations for an evacuation. The US officials relied on the assurance of Ashraf Ghani's government to concentrate its military forces in Kabul. The department and the interagency had prepared a backup plan for a non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) (Departure of civilian noncombatants and non-military personnel from another country to a safe destination). However, with the deteriorating situation after the Taliban takeover and Ghani's flight, the consular officers encountered multiple challenges while airlifting thousands of US citizens at Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA)

#### **2. Fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in the embassy**

The COVID-19 pandemic caused several operations of the department to stall. The US embassy in Kabul suspended in-person interviews for Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV)



and instructed the Afghan staff to refrain from embassy premises to prevent local spread. Following a brief resumption of its operation, the COVID outbreak in 2021 disrupted the embassy's functioning. COVID-related precautions have caused the department to discuss crisis planning and response. The decline in visa demand following COVID had made the Bureau of Consular Affairs available to enlist personnel at the embassies, contact US citizens and increase outreach for resource and response time. However, due to COVID protocol engagement, the State Department could not strategize to its full potential.

### **3. Gaps in appointments**

Several Department positions were not filled by the Senate-confirmed appointees, causing a prolonged gap in filling senior domestic or chief of mission positions that are not in the Department's best interest. Under the Trump and Biden administrations, most positions related to US foreign policy were occupied by a series of talented career officers in an acting capacity. The AAR report considers the qualified acting officers different from a Senate-confirmed official.

### **4. New personnel in an unfamiliar situation during May 2021**

The embassy underwent a major staff transition right before the Taliban takeover in May 2021. Due to the one-year foreign service tour assignments, several officers departed in late July and early August. Several officers, including the senior regional security officer and the head of the consular section, had briefly arrived in Kabul before the situation, causing difficulty in crisis planning and undertaking responsibilities. The new personnel were unfamiliar with the conditions of Afghanistan and found it challenging to execute the evacuation process.

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## Issues in Peace and Conflict This Week: Regional Roundups

Rishika Yadav, Sneha Surendran, Jerry Franklin, Ryan Marcus, Femy Francis, Rashmi Ramesh, Harini Madhusudan, Padmashree Anandan and Akriti Sharma

### East and Southeast Asia

#### **South Korea: Two-week strike against reforms in labour law**

On 3 July, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) announced that it would organize a two-week strike against the reformed labour law proposal that proposed flexible overtime of up to 69 hours per week. An estimated 500,000 workers will strike, demanding South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol's resignation. KCTU Chairman Yang Kyung-soo remarked: "We are going on a general strike because we need to stop regressive labour reforms. The KCTU declares an all-out struggle against the Yoon government, and this two-week strike is the first step."

### South Asia

#### **Maldives: Foreign Ministry statement against the "India Out" campaign**

On 30 June, after a group of protestors staged a demonstration on the "India Out" campaign in the Maldives, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement blaming the opposition for the protests. It stated that the protests "only provoke hatred, but also promote hostility with the objective of tarnishing the country's long-standing cordial ties with India."

#### **India: Violence continues in Manipur**

On 2 July, according to The Hindu, at least four men were killed in Manipur violence. Bishnupur Superintendent of Police (SP), quoted by The Hindu: "Three village guards were killed by the miscreants who are suspected to have come from the hill areas. By the time the police reached the spot, they had left but took vantage positions and an exchange of fire took place."

### Central Asia, The Middle East, and Africa

#### **Armenia: Four Armenian defence servicemen killed in the Nagorno-Karabakh region**

On 1 July, News.am, an Armenian media, reported on the death of four Armenian soldiers in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated: "The Azerbaijani side is deliberately escalating the situation as its forces remain illegally on Armenia's sovereign territory." The Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs commented: "Armenia bears full responsibility for the escalation of tensions." This comes after the US-led three-day closed-door mediation between Armenia and Azerbaijan on 29 June, in its latest attempt to quell the conflict that has flared repeatedly. Following the mediation, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that Armenia and Azerbaijan have made "further progress" toward a peace agreement.

#### **Iran: Rise in execution rates**

On 4 July, Iran Human Rights (IHR), a non-profit human rights organization based in Iran, stated that Iran has executed more than 354 people until 30 June this year. IHR warned that the pace is higher than in 2022, and the Iranian authorities have used death penalties to inflict fear following the protests related to the death of Mahsa Amini. The group also noted a 36 per cent rise compared to death penalties in 2022 and a 126 per cent rise in drug-related charges.



### **Ethiopia: Addis Ababa concerned over fights in Sudan**

On 29 June, BBC reported that the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Meles Alem, expressed his concerns over the expansion of fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan and fighting involving a rebel group, Sudan's People Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), in the state of South Kordofan. According to the UN, more than 50,000 civilians have fled Sudan to Ethiopia.

### **Rwanda: British court rules migrant deportation illegal**

On 29 June, Africanews reported that the British court of appeal declared the plan to deport migrants from Rwanda unlawful, citing that Rwanda cannot be considered a safe Third World country. The court stressed in a summary of the judgement: "Unless and until the deficiencies in its asylum process are corrected, sending asylum seekers to Rwanda will be unlawful." The British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has announced that the government will appeal in the Supreme Court.

### Europe and the Americas

#### **Poland: Greenpeace protestors urge on limiting timber harvest**

On 30 June, the Greenpeace activists called on the Polish Prime Minister, Mateusz Jakub Morawiecki, to take action to protect Poland's forests. They requested the government to limit timber harvesting in the Carpathian Mountains' forests. According to Greenpeace, a forested area of five soccer fields disappears every hour from the Carpathians, which run through parts of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Ukraine. Greenpeace protestors remarked: "The politicians have de facto privatized Polish forests and treat them like money-making machines."

#### **Turkey: Erdoğan declines ratification of Sweden's NATO membership**

On 3 July, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan signalled that the country would not ratify Sweden's membership in NATO. Erdoğan has described Sweden's Quran burning incident, on 28 June, as a hate crime against Muslims. Turkey has delayed the approval of Sweden's membership and accused the country of being lenient towards anti-Islamic demonstrations and promoting the Kurdish insurgency in Sweden. Turkey and Hungary are the only countries that have not approved Sweden's bid. Meanwhile, Erdogan stated: "We advise them to scrutinize themselves and do their homework better." He added: "We will teach the arrogant Western people that it is not freedom of expression to insult the sacred values of Muslims."

#### **Germany: Poland condemned over Oder River pollution**

On 3 July, the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection condemned Poland for its failure to address the pollution of the Oder river that had resulted in the death of hundreds of fish. The Oder river runs along the borders of the two countries. Christopher Stolzenberg, a spokesperson for the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, stated: "There has been no reaction by the Polish side to limit the salt discharge." Meanwhile, Aleksander Brzozka, a spokesperson for Poland's Ministry of Climate and Environment, said that his government was in contact with the German side and "exchange information on a current basis."

### Haiti: UN Secretary-General visits violence-torn country, calling for international aid

On 1 July, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, visited Haiti for the first time as head of the UN. He appealed for a "robust international force" to aid Haiti's security forces in fighting violent gangs. The country has been facing violence perpetrated by gangs, leading to a humanitarian crisis and death and displacement. The UN has reported that 5.2 million people in Haiti currently need humanitarian assistance.

### Peru: Ubinas volcano spewing ashes; emergency status declared

On 3 July, Peru officials said they would declare an alert around the Ubinas volcano in the southern region of the Moquegua. Seismic activity was detected around the regions, along with the volcano releasing toxic gas. Ubinas is Peru's most active volcano and a part of the Pacific's 'Ring of Fire.' The Geophysics Institute of Peru (IGP) reported that the current seismic activity began on 22 June. The National Institute of Civil Defence reported that the area's status alert was raised to orange from yellow after the volcano's ash spill reached 1,700 metres in height.

### The US: Supreme Court overturns affirmative action-based admissions in two universities

On 29 June, the US Supreme Court bench ruled that race can no longer be a factor in university admissions. The policy of positive discrimination, also called affirmative action, has helped African Americans and Hispanics access quality education. Justice Clarence Thomas, the nation's second black judge and a conservative, nodded with the majority bench decision and called such positive discrimination policies "patently unconstitutional."

### The US: Shooting in Baltimore left two dead and 28 injured

On 2 July, during a block party in southern Baltimore, a mass shooting incident left two dead and injured 30 others. The police commissioner of the district mentioned that a search was on for the shooter. Separately, a gunfight erupted at a Kansas nightclub where eight people were shot and injured.

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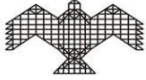
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### About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative(IPRI)

National Institute of  
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The International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI), initiated in 2018 at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), is a part of the Conflict Resolution and Peace Research Programme at the School of Conflict and Security Studies.

IPRI undertakes research on various issues relating to peace with special emphasis on radicalisation, sustainable peace, gender roles in peacebuilding and global protest movements. IPRI 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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