

Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

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Taliban offensive in Afghanistan, Protests in Colombia, and the Heat Wave

Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Lokendra Sharma and Akriti Sharma



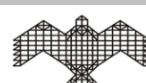
As the US troops are finalizing their withdrawal in Afghanistan, there is an increased offensive by the Taliban against Afghan security forces. (Image Source: CNN)

Afghanistan: As the US leave Bagram, violence increases

In the news

On 2 July, the US military left the Bagram Airfield, the biggest and last base in Afghanistan. The airfield was handed over to Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), effectively ending major US military operations after nearly two decades.

On 2 July, President Joe Biden said that the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan is "on track," adding, "it's a rational drawdown with our allies." He added: "We have worked out an over-the-horizon capacity. But the Afghans are going to have to be able to do it themselves." On the Afghan government's ability post the withdrawal he said: "I think they have the capacity to be able to sustain the government. But I am concerned that they deal with the internal issues that they have to be able to generate the kind of support they need nationwide to maintain the government."



On 4 July, the New York Times reported that General Austin S. Miller, the top US commander in Afghanistan, will remain in the country for "at least a couple more weeks," in an effort to "soften the blow" of the withdrawal from Afghanistan and to reassure Afghans as the Taliban step up their offensive.

On 6 July, National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib assured the Afghan people that the ANDSF will retake all districts that have fallen to the Taliban, saying that government forces had not expected the Taliban offensive but would "absolutely, definitely" counterattack. According to Al Jazeera, the Taliban now controls roughly a third of all 421 districts and district centres as its march through northern Afghanistan gains momentum, causing the Afghan forces to flee across the border into Tajikistan.

Issues at large

First, end of America's 'longest war.' With the withdrawal of troops, what is called the 'longest war' for the US comes to an end after nearly two decades that spanned four presidencies of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump and Joe Biden, respectively. Over the last 20 years, nearly 175,000 people in Afghanistan, including 51,000 terrorists/opposition fighters and over 2,300 US soldiers, had been killed. In addition, the war had cost the US nearly USD two trillion.

Second, the decision to withdraw. The withdrawal plan was consolidated with the signing of the US-Taliban agreement in 2020 under the Trump administration and carried forward by the Biden administration. According to the agreement, the conditions for the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan was laid out in return for a reduction of violence by the Taliban along with severing all ties with terrorist groups and joining the intra-Afghan talks. The deal has not made any lasting impact and has merely been used by the Taliban to ensure the US's exit from Afghanistan.

Third, the growing instability. Concerns over the withdrawal leading to more instability have been raised by the Afghans, Americans and other regional players. The pace of withdrawal and America's long-term strategy in Afghanistan has been questioned amid the deteriorating security situation. Additionally, several other important resources such as aid and foreign contractors that would also be stopped will cause the instability to intensify. Meanwhile, the Taliban has been on an offensive and has made substantial territorial gains since the pull-out process began on 1 May.

Fourth, the unfinished issues. The withdrawal of troops is taking place despite the reports of several terrorist groups still operating in the country, the main reason for their stay. The US's plan on 'over the horizon' counterterrorism measures to monitor and curb terrorism has not been implemented given the hurdles they have already faced. Additionally, the US's institutional building and development plans will also remain unfinished.

In perspective

First, Afghanistan is likely to witness intense violence. In the coming months, the scale and intensity of violence are likely to increase due to the changes taking place in Afghanistan. Thus, this withdrawal will in turn result in displacement of people, disintegrations and push Afghanistan on the path to terror. However, a sole victory of either the Afghanistan government or the Taliban is highly unlikely, as the capabilities and situation in Afghanistan have changed. Rather, the ongoing deadlock is likely to continue.

Second, the futility of baseless interventions. The US's war in Afghanistan is another example of the futility of foreign interventions. While not undermining the effectiveness of interventions, Afghanistan would have problems of its own, however, the nature of the intervention, in this case, has fanned the flames of this conflict.

Colombia: Two months of protests

In the news

On 1 July, Colombia's President Ivan Duque said that he plans to present a new law to Congress which will introduce stringent measures to curb vandalism, roadblocks and attacks on police. This statement came days after the country marked two months of protests that started against the now-withdrawn tax proposals but have since expanded to include a host of demands.

According to Reuters, Duque said: "We've seen some acts of vandalism that have destroyed public infrastructure, that has burned municipal courthouses, that have also attacked commercial premises and clearly we need to toughen penalties". He added: "Peaceful protest is a constitutional right that we all have, and peaceful means without violence and without violating the rights of others".

Issues at large

First, two months of continuous protests. The protests started on 28 April against a controversial tax reform proposal by the Duque administration that sought to raise tax revenues. After violent protests, Duque withdrew the proposal and then Finance Minister Alberto Carrasquilla, who piloted it, resigned from his post. The protests, however, have continued regardless. The talks between protestors and the government at the end of May, which showed some progress, also collapsed in June. Even though the national strike group has suspended weekly protests to prepare drafts to present to Congress at the end of July, protests have continued in small pockets in the country.

Second, the expansion of demands. Stemming from a larger discontent in society, the inclusion of multiple groups in the protest movement — youth, middle class, unions and the indigenous communities — has resulted in a commensurate expansion of demands. This includes basic income, better employment opportunities, police reforms and respect for human rights. The indigenous communities also recently toppled the statue of explorer Columbus — after whom the country is named — demonstrating their opposition to colonialism and bringing to light the exploitation suffered by them to date.

Third, Duque's heavy-handed response. While Duque took the right step early into the protest movement by withdrawing the tax reforms, he has also been blamed for a brutal police response that has killed several dozens of protestors, according to right groups.

In perspective

The last two months have exposed the discontent boiling in the Colombian society, which initially found an outlet in the tax proposals. The strong-arm tactics approach by Duque has not been helpful in addressing it. His new announcement of bringing a new stringent anti-vandalism law, when a law for that very purpose already exists, is only going to make matters worse.

Colombia will only come out of this tense stalemate if the negotiation process with the wide array of protesting groups is restarted and the Duque administration takes steps to address genuine popular demands.

UNODC World Drug Report: 36 million struggled with drug use disorders globally in 2020

In the news

On 29 June, Lytton, a village in Northwest Canada recorded the country's highest-ever temperature of 49.6 degrees Celsius following which the authorities issued evacuation orders.

On 28 June, Portland recorded its highest ever temperature of 46.6 degrees Celsius. Similarly, on 27 June, Seattle recorded 42.2 degrees Celsius.

On 4 July, Finland's Lapland recorded 33.5 degrees Celsius which was its hottest day since 1914.

On 30 June, US President Joe Biden said: "Climate change is driving the dangerous confluence of extreme heat and prolonged drought. We're seeing wildfires of greater intensity that move with more speed and last well beyond traditional months, traditional months of the fire season," adding, "Right now we have to act and act fast. We're late in the game here."

On 2 July, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that the situation caused by the heatwave was "unprecedented," adding, "Lives have been lost, and the risk of wildfires is at a dangerously high level."

Issues at large

First, the global increase in the frequency of extreme weather events. In the recent past, extreme weather events like cold waves, heatwaves, droughts, floods, cyclones, have been recurring with high frequency and intensity. From July 2020 to November 2020, the world witnessed 30 storms breaking all previous records. Similarly, wildfires across the US, Brazil, and Russia have been recurring each year, serving as an alarm for climate change.

Second, the global rise in temperature. On 1 July, the World Meteorological Organization announced that Antarctica had recorded its highest ever temperature of 18.3 degrees Celsius. Polar regions have been witnessing a rise in the temperature resulting in glacier melt. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2020 was the second warmest year after 2016. At least 23 countries have recorded a temperature of 50 degrees Celsius in 2021.

Third, the cause of the heatwave in the US and Canada. A heat dome effect has been created over the high-pressure regions of Canada and the US, due to which the hot air is trapped over the region. The heat dome traps hot air for several days and nights, which causes a sudden increase in the temperature, which is higher than the average temperature. Extremely high temperatures have increased the risk of wildfires across the country. According to British Columbia Wildfire Service, 1,700 lightning strikes were recorded on 2 July 2021. Moreover, there has been a sudden increase in deaths over the past week. British Columbia Coroners Service has recorded 719 sudden deaths in the past week which is three times the normal deaths. Many emergency cooling centres have been put up across Vancouver and other cities to temporarily prevent people from health risks due to the heatwave.

In perspective

First, climate adaptation. Climate mitigation and adaptation should go hand in hand. Since extreme weather events are increasing globally, there is a need for more focus on climate adaptation measures. This would help in addressing the extreme weather events effectively and reduce the health risks due to climate change.

Second, the need for effective management of extreme weather events. Developing efficient early warning systems, climate-resilient infrastructure, disaster risk management, sharing of information and resources should be stressed upon.

Third, the fingerprints of climate change. Such events serve as an alarm for the fact that climate change is real. Climate action is urgently needed. Even though the countries announce ambitious targets in the Paris Climate agreement, not much attention is paid to the fact whether the countries are domestically doing enough to meet the targets.

Also, from around the world

By Apoorva Sudhakar and Abigail Miriam Fernandez

Peace and Conflict from East and Southeast Asia

Hong Kong: Police arrest nine for alleged terrorist activities

On 6 July, Hong Kong police said nine people had been arrested for suspected terrorist activities; the arrested, including six secondary school students, have been charged under the National Security Law. The nine had allegedly attempted to make bombs and carry out a series of attacks on "courts, cross-harbor tunnels, railways" and plant explosives on dustbins. Reuters reported that the police also confiscated "triacetone triperoxide (TATP) in a hostel room police described as a laboratory for bomb-making equipment."

Japan: Deputy PM calls for defending Taiwan with US assistance; China criticises remarks

On 5 July, Kyodo news agency reported that the Japanese Deputy Prime Minister had expressed the need to defend Taiwan with US assistance if the island faced any problem. The Deputy Prime Minister said: "If a major problem took place in Taiwan, it would not be too much to say that it could relate to a survival-threatening situation (for Japan)." The statement garnered strong criticism from China; on 6 July, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson termed the remarks "extremely wrong and dangerous," adding, "We will never allow any country to interfere in the Taiwan question by any means. No one should underestimate the Chinese people's firm determination, firm will and strong ability to safeguard national sovereignty."

North Korea: Pyongyang has a policy of human trafficking, says a US report

On 1 July, the United States released the Trafficking in Persons report wherein North Korea has been named among the 11 governments which have a policy of human trafficking. A policy of trafficking includes "trafficking in government-funded programs, forced labour in government-affiliated medical services or other sectors, sexual slavery in government camps, or the employment or recruitment of child soldiers." The report says several other state sponsors of trafficking used North Korean workers who were forced into free labour by Pyongyang. Further, it raises concerns that defectors from North Korea in China were forcefully returned and were, hence, at the risk of other rights abuses, forced labour and being trafficked elsewhere.

Myanmar: At least 25 killed in the latest clash between military troops and civilian forces

On 6 July, The Sentinel reported that at least 25 people had been killed in clashes between the military troops and the People's Defense Force (PDF) in Saigang province near the country's border with India. The clashes began on 2 July and ended on 4 July after PDF fighters ran out of bullets and other arrows. Meanwhile, on 5 July, a British-government funded project - Myanmar Witness - was launched to probe into the violation of the rights in the country. Myanmar Witness is expected to share details of the same to the United Nations' Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar.

Peace and Conflict from South Asia

India: Gupkar alliance says it was "disappointed" with meeting with PM Modi

On 5 July, the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) said it was "disappointed" with the outcome of their meeting with PM Narendra Modi. A statement issued by the alliance said that restoration of statehood was the BJP's commitment on the floor of Parliament, adding, "so any Assembly election must be held only after the restoration of full statehood for J&K. To this end, the PAGD has decided to reach out to other political parties in J&K with a view to taking a common position on the issue." This statement came a day before the Delimitation Commission planned to visit Jammu and Kashmir to interact with political parties, public representatives and state government officials on redrawing boundaries of existing Assembly seats.

India: Custodial death of Father Stan Swamy stirs outrage

On 5 June, Father Stan Swamy, who tirelessly fought for jal (water), jungle (forest) and zameen (land) for tribal people passed away while in custody. He was arrested in 2020 under the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in the Bhima Koregaon caste violence case. On 6 July, a report from an American forensic agency claimed that incriminating evidence was planted on the computer of Surendra Gadling, who was arrested under a harsh anti-terror law for alleged links to the banned CPI(Maoist) group, suggesting that Father Stan's computer could have also been targeted. Meanwhile, the opposition and civil society have expressed anguish and outrage over his "inhuman treatment" and have called for the government to act.

Pakistan: Violence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan

On 5 July, three soldiers were killed and one injured in a suspected terrorist attack in North Waziristan. According to officials, the attack took place at the Beza check-post near the Afghan border, the use of heavy weaponry is also suspected. This comes after two soldiers were killed when alleged terrorists from Afghanistan opened fire at a military post in North Waziristan's Dwatoi area and three soldiers were killed in South Waziristan on the same day. Meanwhile, five Balochistan Liberation Army terrorists were killed in an intelligence-based operation of the CTD in Quetta's Killi Gulzar, Hazar Ganji area in Balochistan.

Afghanistan: Russia concerned over ISIS build-up

On 2 July, Russia raised concerns over the build-up of ISIS in Afghanistan amidst the troop withdrawal. Foreign Minister of Russia Sergei Lavrov claimed that the Islamic State had gained ground because of the poor progress of negotiations between warring parties in Afghanistan, adding, "In these conditions, [the Islamic State] is actively capturing territory, primarily in northern Afghanistan, right on the border with countries that are our allies."

Peace and Conflict from Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Central Asia: Tajikistan and Uzbekistan prepare for the possible Afghan refugee crisis

On 5 July, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon ordered 20,000 reserve officers to the Afghan border in response to the Taliban's recent offensive in northern Afghanistan. Additionally, authorities stated that they are preparing for an influx of refugees to enter the country. Similarly, Uzbekistan is also taking the measure in the anticipated flow of refugees from bordering Afghanistan.

Azerbaijan: Explosion in the Caspian Sea near Azerbaijan oil and gas fields

On 5 July, a strong explosion took place in the Caspian Sea area where Azerbaijan has extensive offshore oil and gas fields. The blast caused a column of fire to rise; however, the state oil company Socar said none of its platforms was damaged. The cause of the blast was not immediately determined, but the company later said preliminary information indicated it was a mud volcano.

Lebanon: Caretaker PM warns of "social explosion" amid economic crisis

On 6 July, Al Jazeera quoted caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab: "Lebanon is a few days away from the social explosion. The Lebanese are facing this dark fate alone." His remarks come amid an economic crisis wherein the currency has lost more than 90 per cent of its value. Diab was addressing ambassadors to Lebanon and said: "As we gather here, the streets of Lebanon are full of cars queuing in front of gas stations. And there are those searching in pharmacies for medicine and a can of baby formula. Inside their own homes, the Lebanese are living without electricity." With this, he called on the international organisations and heads of states "to help save the Lebanese from death and prevent the demise of Lebanon."

Syria: Eight, including six children, killed in government shelling

On 3 July, the Syria Observatory for Human Rights said eight civilians, including six children, were killed and 16 others injured in artillery firing by the Syrian government in Idlib province. Five of the deceased belonged to the same family. Syria's Civil Defence, commonly known as the White Helmets, tweeted: "A horrific massacre committed by Russia & regime forces this morning in #Idlib countryside, where 8 civilians ... were killed." Al Jazeera reported that this was the highest death toll in the continuing violence in Idlib despite the implementation of a ceasefire in March 2020.

Israel-Palestine: Israeli air raid targets Gaza Strip

On 2 July, Israel claimed that its air raid had targeted a weapons manufacturing site in the Gaza Strip in response to an alleged launch of incendiary balloons from the area. Al Jazeera quoted from the Israeli military statement: "In response to the arson balloons fired towards Israeli territory today, [military] fighter jets struck ... a weapons manufacturing site belonging to the Hamas terror organisation." Sources in Hamas confirmed the incident but said no casualties were recorded. This is the third such attack since the end of the 11-day clashes in May.

Palestine: Protests against PA President continue

On 3 July, protests against the Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas continued outside the PA headquarters in Ramallah in occupied West Bank. This comes a week after Palestinian security forces, some in plain clothes, used force to disperse similar demonstrations. The US State Department spokesman conveyed that Washington was "deeply disturbed by reports that non-uniformed members of the Palestinian Authority security forces harassed and used force against protesters and journalists." Similarly, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said the security forces had targeted women protesters and asked the PA "to ensure freedom of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly."

Yemen: Over two million children are not in school, says UNICEF report

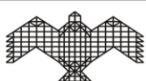
On 5 July, UNICEF released a report titled "Education Disrupted: Impact of the conflict on children's education in Yemen" which observed that over two million children in the country were out of school, owing to the long-drawn conflict and poverty. The report terms children as "the primary victims of this terrible crisis." Further, it says 11.3 million children are in need of humanitarian aid of some kind. It also highlighted that 8.1 million children required emergency assistance; this was an increase of 1.1 million children compared to 2014 when the conflict started.

Nigeria: 140 school children kidnapped in Kaduna state

On 5 July, at least 140 children were reportedly abducted from a school in Kaduna State. The police claim that gunmen "overpowered the school's security guards and made their way into the students' hostel where they abducted an unspecified number of students into the forest." As of 6 July 2021, more than 1,000 students from schools and colleges have been kidnapped since December 2020. This latest development comes after eight people, including a one-year-old baby and two nurses were kidnapped from the National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Centre in Zaria.

Ethiopia: Tigray accepts ceasefire "in principle," presents conditions to federal government

On 4 July, The Guardian reported that the Tigray region had accepted the federal government's unilateral ceasefire but presented certain conditions. The conditions included the withdrawal of Eritrean forces and armed fighters from the Amhara region. Next, the Tigray People's Liberation Front also demanded the restoration of the government in Tigray, which the federal government previously termed a rebel authority. A statement signed under the "government of Tigray" read: "As long as we have a foolproof guarantee that the security of our people will not be compromised by the second round of invasions, we accept a ceasefire in principle." Meanwhile, on 2 July, the Acting UN aid chief briefed the Security Council about the humanitarian situation in Tigray. He said: "More than 400,000 people are estimated to have crossed the threshold into famine and another 1.8 million people are on the brink of famine. Some are suggesting that the numbers are even higher. Thirty-three thousand children are severely malnourished."



Mali: France resumes joint military operations after consultation with the transitional government

On 2 July, the French Defence Ministry announced that France would resume its joint military operations in Mali. Euronews quoted from the Ministry's statement: "Following consultations with the Malian transitional authorities and the countries of the region (...) France decided to resume joint military operations as well as national advisory missions, which had been suspended since 3 June." Further, the Ministry said the decision to resume operations was taken due to the threat of terrorism and radical Islamism.

Burkina Faso: Protesters demand solution to "jihadist bloodshed"

On 3 July, thousands took to the streets of the capital, Ouagadougou, demanding strong actions against the increasing "jihadist bloodshed." The protesters were mobilised by the opposition amid the government's call for the boycott of the protests. Africanews reported that demonstrators were heard shouting: "No to growing insecurity," "No to populations being abandoned," and "Is there still a president in Burkina Faso?" The development comes after over 130 people were massacred by armed groups on 4 June in Solhan village; the attackers included children as young as 12 years old.

Tunisia-Libya: 43 migrants drown in the Mediterranean Sea; Italy to probe Libyan coastguard's attempt to attack migrant boat

On 3 July, The Guardian reported that 43 people had drowned, and 84 were rescued from a shipwreck off the Tunisian coast. The Tunisian Red Crescent said the boat was ferrying migrants from Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea and Bangladesh from Libya to Italy across the Mediterranean Sea. In a separate incident, rescue workers from a German organisation recorded the video of a Libyan coastguard attacking a boat in distress in the Mediterranean Sea on 30 June. The organisation said the boat had 50 people, including children; the Libyan coastguard was using a boat supplied by Italy. Further, the organisation said the Libyan coastguard tried to ram the migrant boat and also fired at least two shots in its direction. On 3 July, Italian prosecutors launched an investigation into the incident, but the chief prosecutor said further probe required authorisation from the Ministry of Justice as "the object of the proceeding is a foreign authority."

The GERD: Egypt rejects Ethiopia's plans to fill Nile Dam; Ethiopia denounces intervention by League of Arab States

On 6 July, Egypt denounced Ethiopia's decision to begin the second filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (Nile Dam). The Egyptian Irrigation Minister termed Ethiopia's decision a unilateral move and "a violation of international laws and norms that regulate projects built on the shared basins of international rivers, including the Nile River." Meanwhile, on the same day, Ethiopia criticised the League of Arab States' decision to submit a letter to the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly requesting their intervention in the issue. The Ethiopian Foreign Ministry released a statement: "Ethiopia rejects the unwelcome meddling by the League of Arab States on the matter of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)..." adding, "The League of Arab States has a reputation for its unfettered and unconditional support to any claim Egypt has presented on the issue of the Nile."

Peace and Conflict from Europe and the Americas

The UK: Scottish fisherman raise concern over EU paperwork

On 5 July, a Scottish shellfish supplier criticised the export paperwork required to ship fresh produce to the European Union after Brexit. The fisherman raised fears of "physical collapse" under EU paperwork "madness" of the forms, which cost time and money to complete. Additionally, the fisherman said: "In simple terms to export to China, Hong Kong or Singapore, it is cheaper and quicker to export there than it is to France." This statement comes amidst the criticism over the fishing terms the UK secured in the post-Brexit trade agreement with the EU.

The UK-EU: Controversy over David Frost's statement on Northern Ireland protocol

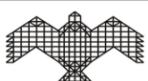
On 5 July, Foreign Minister of Ireland Simon Coveney stated that the European Union leaders feared the worst after what he termed as a provocative article written by David Frost and the Northern Ireland secretary, Brandon Lewis, in the Irish Times. He stated that the EU fears that Boris Johnson wants to "dismantle" the Northern Ireland protocol. In the article, Frost and Lewis state that the UK-EU agreement in the 'sausage war' was "welcome" but that it addressed "only a small part of the underlying problem", claiming the "process to resolve all these difficulties" was "creating a series of rolling crises as we lurch from one deadline to another."

Hungary: EU warns of sanctions over anti-LGBT law

On 7 July, the European Union threatened to impose sanctions on Hungary over the country's newly passed law which discriminates against the LGBT community; the law will go into effect from 7 July. The European Commission President termed the law "shameful" and said: "If Hungary does not correct the situation, the Commission will use its powers as guardian of the treaties." Euronews explains that the law, passed in June, "bans the portrayal of homosexuality and sex reassignment in school education material, advertisements and TV programmes addressed to people under 18 years of age." Meanwhile, the government claims that the law was passed to prevent children from falling victims to paedophilia; this defence garnered further criticism from the public.

Georgia & Croatia: Pride marches cancelled amid violence

On 6 July, the organiser of the Tbilisi Pride march in Georgia cancelled the event following attacks from homophobic groups. Before the event began, Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili termed the march as "unacceptable for a large segment of Georgian society." A statement from the organisers said: "We cannot come out to the streets full of oppressors supported by the government, patriarchate and pro-Russian forces, and risk the lives of people." Similarly, in Croatia, violence broke out as participants of the LGBT+ Pride march came under attack. A statement from the Zagreb Pride organisation said: "For the first time in ten years, on the day of the Pride Parade of the LGBTIQ community, Zagreb Pride, there was an outbreak of homophobic fascist violence."



France: RSF's 'predators of press freedom' list includes 37 heads of state

On 2 July, Reporters Sans Frontieres named 37 heads of states who massively cracked down on press freedom, labelling them as "press freedom predators." According to the report, this year's list featured Kim Jong-un, Jair Bolsonaro, Vladimir Putin, Imran Khan and Narendra Modi. Along with these names, Mohammed bin Salman, Viktor Orban, Carrie Lam and Sheikh Hasina were also among the new entrants to the list.

Haiti: President assassinated in an attack at the residence

On 7 July, President Jovenel Moise was assassinated in an attack on his private residence. The country's interim prime minister condemned the attack terming it as a "hateful, inhumane and barbaric act" and said: "The country's security situation is under the control of the National Police of Haiti and the Armed Forces of Haiti," adding, "Democracy and the republic will win." The assassination comes amid ongoing political unrest in the country, stirring fears of escalating turmoil

Chile: Protesters clash with police during the inauguration of a new constitutional assembly

On 5 July, as Chile's newly elected constitutional assembly was being inaugurated, protesters at the venue clashed with police causing a delay in the event. The security forces used water cannons and fired tear gas to disperse the angry crowds. The continuing protests highlight the challenges for the drafting of a new constitution against a backdrop of deep divisions that still exist in Chile. Previously, the constitutional body was one of the key aspects that the government agreed upon after social unrest in October 2019. The body is made up of 155 delegates, including 17 indigenous candidates chosen by a popular vote in May.

Gulf of Mexico: Fire erupts after a gas leak in an underwater pipeline

On 2 July, a massive fire broke out in the southern waters of the Gulf of Mexico as an underwater pipeline leaked, causing a huge fire on the ocean surface. According to Petroleos Mexicanos, a Mexican state-owned oil company, a bizarre chain of events including a lightning storm and a simultaneous gas pipeline leak had caused the subaquatic fireball. The incident has sparked criticism and concern over the operations of such companies and the ecological impact of such accidents.

The US-Venezuela: Biden assures opposition leader Guaido of support

On 6 July, US President Joe Biden in a letter reaffirmed support to Venezuela's opposition leader Juan Guaido. He said: "Under your leadership and in coalition with civil society leaders you are preserving those ideals of freedom democracy and sovereignty." The letter was sent on the occasion of the anniversary of Venezuela's independence as well as amidst efforts to resume negotiations with President Nicolas Maduro's government.

The US: Pakistan, Turkey and 12 other countries added to a Child Soldier Recruiter List

On 1 July, the United States added 14 countries to its Child Soldiers Prevention Act (CSPA) list under the State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report 2021. The countries include Pakistan, Turkey, Afghanistan, Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Venezuela and Yemen. Following the report, Pakistan and Turkey categorically rejected the list, terming it as "baseless" and accusing the US of "hypocrisy and double standards" respectively.

About the authors

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Ceasefire in Ethiopia, Berlin Conference on Libya and the World Drug Report

Apoorva Sudhakar and Jeshil Samuel J



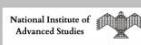
The TPLF rebels returned to Tigray and took over its capital last week in Ethiopia. The government has announced a unilateral ceasefire. (Image Source: BBC)

Ethiopia: Federal government declares unilateral ceasefire after TPLF recaptures Mekelle

In the news

On 29 June, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) spokesperson vowed to clear the Tigray region off all "enemies." BBC quoted the spokesperson's remarks to CNN: "We will not stop until Tigray has been cleared of any and all enemy forces. We will do whatever it takes." On the same day, Tigray residents reportedly celebrated the recapture of Tigray by the TPLF. Meanwhile, the US State Department warned that if hostilities continue in Tigray, Ethiopia and Eritrea should be prepared for actions from the US.

On 28 June, TPLF troops seized the regional capital, Mekelle, forcing Tigray's interim authority appointed by the federal government to flee. Following this, the federal government



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Three new reports on Child labour, Ethiopia and Xinjiang, Tensions in Belfast, and the Suu Kyi trial

Apoorva Sudhakar, Mohamad Asael Ummer, Dincy Adlakha, Sourina Bej and Vibha Venugopal

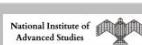


12 June was observed as World Day Against Child Labour, marking 2021 as International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour. According to the latest report of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) "160 million children – 63 million girls and 97 million boys" were engaged in child labour in 2020. (Image Source: UNICEF)

Child labour: 160 million children, one in ten, are engaged in labour, says the new ILO-UNICEF report

In the news

On 12 June, countries observed World Day Against Child Labour marking the 2021 International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour.



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The US Juneteenth, UN resolution on Myanmar and Global Peace Index

Vishnu Prasad E, Anju C Joseph and Abigail Miriam Fernandez



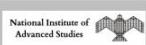
Juneteenth has become more than a day just to commemorate the end of slavery in the US. (Image Source: Reuters)

The US: Juneteenth approval a step in the right direction

In the news

On 17 June, President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, which made 19 June an official federal holiday to commemorate the end of slavery in the country. Biden said: "I have to say to you, I've only been president for several months, but I think this will go down for me, as one of the greatest honors I will have as president. By making Juneteenth a federal holiday, all Americans can feel the power of this day and learn from our history — and celebrate progress and grapple with the distance we've come (and) the distance we have to travel." It became America's first new holiday since Martin Luther King Day in 1983.

On 19 June, the holiday celebrations were marred by acts of violence across the country that left at least five people dead. In Oakland, California, seven people were shot at a Juneteenth



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16 June 2021, Vol.2, No.10

Three new reports on Child labour, Ethiopia and Xinjiang, Tensions in Belfast, and the Suu Kyi trial

Apoorva Sudhakar, Mohamad Asael Ummer, Dincy Adlakha, Sourina Bej and Vibha Venugopal

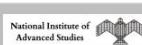


12 June was observed as World Day Against Child Labour, marking 2021 as International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour. According to the latest report of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) "160 million children – 63 million girls and 97 million boys" were engaged in child labour in 2020. (Image Source: UNICEF)

Child labour: 160 million children, one in ten, are engaged in labour, says the new ILO-UNICEF report

In the news

On 12 June, countries observed World Day Against Child Labour marking the 2021 International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour.



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The UN report on Taliban-al Qaeda links, Denmark on relocating refugee camps, Burkino Faso massacre, Arctic melt, and Afghan trilateral dialogue

Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Sourina Bej, Apoorva Sudhakar, Rashmi BR and Sarthak Jain

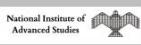


According to the latest report of the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team "the Taliban and Al-Qaida remain closely aligned and show no indication of breaking ties." (Image Source: BBC)

Afghanistan: Taliban still closely aligned to al-Qaida, says UN report

In the news

On 1 June, the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the UN, in its twelfth report, has observed: "the Taliban's messaging remains uncompromising, and it shows no sign of reducing the level of violence in Afghanistan to facilitate peace negotiations with the Government of Afghanistan and other Afghan stakeholders. The Taliban's intent appears to be to continue to strengthen its military position as leverage." The report maintained as earlier: "the Taliban and Al-Qaida remain closely aligned and show no indication of breaking ties." Member States report no material change to this relationship, which has grown deeper as a



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02 June 2021, Vol.2, No.09

Continuing protests in Colombia, another mass abduction in Nigeria and a controversial election in Syria

Vishnu Prasad, Apoorva Sudhakar and Jeshil Samuel J



Street protests returned in Colombia, as the negotiations between the government and protesters failed. The UN has called for an independent investigation. (Image Source: BBC/Reuters)

Colombia: The protests continue

[In the news](#)

On 28 May, at least four people died in Colombia after police took on protesters who attempted to lift roadblocks. Protesters were back on the street after talks between the government and protest groups had broken down. On the same day, President Ivan Duque announced that he was deploying the military to the town of Cali, which had been hit by violence.

On 30 May, the United Nations called for an independent investigation into the number of casualties that had happened since the protests began on 28 April. UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet voiced 'deep concern' over the violence.



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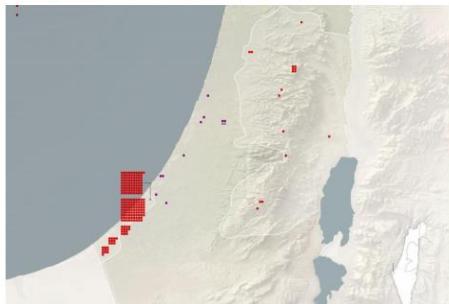
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19 May 2021, Vol.2, No.07

Elusive ceasefire in Israel-Palestine conflict, a migration crisis in Spain, three weeks of protests in Colombia, and the rise of Ransomware reign

Udbhav Krishna P, Mohammad Aseel Ummer, Vishnu Prasad, and Jeshil Samuel J



The clashes between Hamas and Israel continue into the second week, as there is no end to the rocket attacks. Casualties are increasing across Israel, as could be seen from the above image by The New York Times. (Image Source: The New York Times)

Israel-Palestine: Who wants what?

[In the news](#)

On 18 May, a White House statement stated that President Joe Biden had extended his support for a ceasefire in the Israel-Palestine conflict during the phone call with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. As of 18 May, Gaza health officials reported that at least 212 Palestinians had been killed, including 61 children and 36 women, in more than a week of fighting. Meanwhile, ten people have been killed in Israel, including two children. Around 3,350 rockets



07 July 2021, Vol.2, No.14

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26 May 2021, Vol.2, No.08

Ceasefire in Israel, NLD ban in Myanmar and a new Belarus crisis

Lakshmi V Menon, Aparupa Bhattacharjee and Sourina Bej



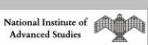
"We see the cease-fire not as an end, but as a beginning — something to build on" commented the US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken in his first visit to the Middle East. (Image Source: Al Jazeera)

Israel-Hamas ceasefire: The long road to peace

[In the news](#)

On 21 May, Israel's Cabinet voted to approve Egypt-mediated ceasefire with the Hamas in the Gaza strip, following 11 days of airstrikes and rocket attacks. Palestinians conducted celebratory gatherings in the occupied territories, and Israel removed emergency restrictions in rocket-hit areas. While both parties have claimed victory, they also maintained that the holding of the ceasefire would depend on ground circumstances.

During 25-27 May, Antony Blinken, as a part of his first visit as the US Secretary of State to the Middle East, met the leaders of Israel, Palestine, Egypt and Jordan. On 25 May, in a statement in Jerusalem, he said: "I traveled here at the request of President Biden, who asked me to come to pursue four basic objectives. First, to demonstrate the commitment of the United States to Israel's security. Second, to start to work toward greater stability and reduce tensions



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Escalating Israel-Palestine violence, an attack and a ceasefire in Afghanistan, and the fallouts of Scotland election for the UK

Jeshil Samuel J, D. Suba Chandran and Sourina Bej

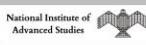


Following clashes between the Israeli police and Palestinians last week in East Jerusalem, the violence escalated further as Hamas and Israel exchanged rocket attacks. (Image Source: Agence France/Getty Images /The New York Times)

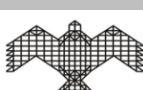
Israel: Surge in violence, as the Hamas and security forces engage in rocket attacks, escalating the conflict

[In the news](#)

On 07 May, a series of skirmishes started between the worshippers and the Israeli police in the Al Aqsa mosque compound, with an exchange of stones, stun grenades and rubber bullets. The Palestinians had been protesting against any possible eviction in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem that would follow a Court verdict and the Israeli government's settlement policies.

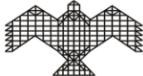


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About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI)

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 research are published as briefs, reports and commentary.



About Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as “Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education”, in 1964, the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. With 16 regional offices in Germany and over 120 offices abroad, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is committed to achieving and maintaining peace, freedom and justice through political education. KAS promotes and preserves free democracy, social market economy, and the development and consolidation of the value consensus. KAS also focus on consolidating democracy, the unification of Europe and the strengthening of transatlantic relations, as well as on development cooperation.

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



About Conflict Weekly

The Conflict Weekly is 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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