

Conflict Weekly

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

Conflict Weekly #184&185 | Vol. 04 | Issue No.28 & 29 | 20 July 2023



(The treated water accumulated in tanks in the Fukushima nuclear power plant. Image Source: Kim Kyung-Hoon, Reuters)

The Fukushima waste water controversy, Russia's withdrawal from the grain deal, Stalemate of aid extension in Syria, and Extreme weather anomalies across US Europe and Asia



An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

Gender | Environment | Ethnic Violence

External Interventions | Armed Conflicts | Peace Processes



Japan and the Fukushima Power Plant: The controversy over releasing the wastewater

Sneha Surendran

In the news

On 14 July, along the sidelines of an ASEAN meeting, the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Yoshimasa Hayashi held a discussion with Chinese diplomat Wang Yi on Japan releasing the Fukushima wastewater. Hayashi suggested China to analyse the situation in a "scientific manner," which was dismissed by the Chinese diplomat. Yi reiterated China's position, terming the decision "irresponsible, unpopular and unilateral," raising concerns on the impact of radiation on the environment and people. He called on Japan to focus on the concerns expressed by others including China and South Korea, and to clearly communicate with its neighbours before proceeding with the decision. Yi remarked: "This is as much an issue about attitude as it is about science."

Issues at large

First, the opposition from neighbouring countries. China has been at the forefront opposing Japan's plan of releasing the stored water at the Fukushima nuclear power plant. South Korea, despite initial apprehension, has endorsed it after having its team conducting tests at Fukushima. However, South Korea's opposition - the Democratic Party, have called for the issue to be taken to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, siding with the people who have held demonstrations against the decision. Meanwhile, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), a regional grouping of islands in the Pacific, has stated that the plan was a "major nuclear contamination disaster," stressing the need for more adequate testing, data collection and analysis before proceeding. PIF also reiterated their concerns on using the Pacific as the dumping site for nuclear waste, given that the people of the islands are dependent on the ocean for food and livelihood.

Second, the distrust of the International Agency for Atomic Energy (IAEA). The plan has the IAEA's consent, which conducted a two-year-long review at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. They concluded that the contamination remaining in the treated water was in line with the IAEA safety standards and the release would have "negligible radiological impact to people and the environment." The IAEA head also travelled to Japan, South Korea, and the Pacific Islands to reassure governments and people about the decision. Although the IAEA report was accepted by Japan, it has been criticised by other governments, environmental groups, and scientists. China called the report "one-sided." South Korea's opposition parties also doubt the scientific stance of the IAEA on the issue, saying their report seemed more political and "tailored to Japan."

Third, a mixed response from the Japanese public. In a poll by Kyodo News in June, 45 per cent of the population agreed to the decision while 40 per cent were not in favour. People living in and around the city of Fukushima have been the largest critics; they are concerned that releasing the wastewater will undo the progress over the years, raising concerns of the radiation levels increasing again. Fishing communities have voiced how consumers lost confidence in the fish and food exports from Fukushima following the disaster. Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who is aware of these concerns, had stated: "Japan will continue to provide explanations to the Japanese people and to the international community in a sincere manner based on scientific evidence and with a high level of transparency."

In perspective

First, the economic fallouts. Following fears of radiation contamination in sea-based products, there have been cases of panic-buying of large amounts of salt in South Korea. Seoul, despite supporting the decision to release the wastewater, have continued the ban on products from Fukushima. To allay the fears of the public, authorities are conducting random radiation screening tests in the markets. The Hong Kong government stated that they would impose a ban on food and seafood products from ten Japanese prefectures, including Fukushima and Tokyo. Restaurant-owners in Hong Kong have begun looking at substitutes for Japanese-based cuisine and alternative suppliers of seafood. Meanwhile, China has banned imports from ten Japanese prefectures, including the long-time ban on food products from Fukushima. China and Hong Kong are Japan's largest markets for fish exports. Restrictions from these countries will have a significant impact on the Japanese fisheries' industry.

Second, call for more studies. The IAEA's analysis on the safety of releasing Fukushima wastewater has failed to gain the trust of all countries in the region. More comprehensive and accountable studies and transparency from the Japanese side regarding the health impact of radiation is essential to carry out a successful and peaceful release of the wastewater.



Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative: Uncertainty on global food security

Rishika Yadav

In the News

On 18 July, Russia withdrew from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, a deal allowing grain exports from Ukraine through the Black Sea. This move comes despite the UN's final attempt to persuade President Vladimir Putin to extend the deal through a proposal connecting a subsidiary of Russia's agricultural bank, Rosselkhozbank, to the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) international payment system. The EU aims to increase the transportation of Ukrainian grains through the road and rail of neighbouring countries to offset Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea export deal.

Also on 18 July, Russia attacked the Odessa port, causing damage to the Black Sea port city's infrastructure. In response, Ukraine activated its aerial defences.

On 17 July, the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, stated: "Despite the statement today, I believe the president of the Russian Federation, my friend Putin, wants the continuation of this humanitarian bridge." The latest extension of the deal expired on 17 July after being extended three times the previous year. Kremlin's spokesperson, Dmitri S Peskov, commented: "As soon as the Russian part is fulfilled, the Russian side will immediately return to the implementation of that deal."

Issues at Large

First, a complicated deal and diverging objectives. In July 2022, brokered by the UN and Turkey, the Black Sea Grain Initiative stabilized global food prices and eased shortages in Africa and the Middle East following the war in Ukraine. To renew the deal, Russia demanded reconnecting the Russian Agricultural Bank to SWIFT, and lifting restrictions on maritime insurance and agricultural machinery spare parts. Russia asserts that the institutions crucial for its food and fertilizer sectors should be exempt from sanctions. However, Ukraine's allies are concerned about the potential misuse of these institutions for non-food exports, such as crude oil, leading to reluctance in granting the requested sanctions' relief. Similarly, Moscow claims the deal has not adequately benefited poor countries, while the UN argues it lowered global food prices by over 20 per cent.

Second, the disruption of Ukraine's grain exports. The trade flow in the Black Sea region has been declining steadily since May. This has been triggered after Russia prevented ships from accessing the port of Pivdennyi in the Ukrainian city of Yuzhne near Odessa. This particular port had been a hub in the route for Ukraine's seaborne food exports since the inception of the grain deal. The disruption in the Black Sea trade poses significant challenges for Ukraine's food export capabilities.

Third, global food prices and the threat of food insecurity. Suspending the deal had immediate effects on wheat markets causing price fluctuations and raising food security concerns in developing countries. Nearly 14 African countries depend on Ukrainian and Russian wheat imports. According to the UN, under the deal, 32 million tons of food commodities have been exported from three Ukrainian Black Sea ports to 45 countries across three continents; 46 per cent to Asia, 40 per cent to Western Europe, 12 per cent to Africa and

one per cent to Eastern Europe. The deal allowed Ukraine to export nearly 33 million metric tons of grains, contributing to a 23 per cent drop in food prices. The World Food Programme (WFP) has shipped about 725,000 metric tons of Ukrainian wheat to Afghanistan, Sudan, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Yemen to fight hunger.

In perspective

Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative has major implications on global food security and commodity markets, particularly in Ukraine. Restarting shipments is challenging due to limited and time-consuming alternative routes. Ukrainian farmers may have to lower prices, potentially causing tensions with neighbouring countries. Utilizing the EU's new transportation plan to use road and rail (solidarity lanes) becomes crucial for stabilizing food prices. The withdrawal also raises security concerns for Ukrainian ports involved in grain exports. The attack on Odessa port indicates that other ports, such as Yuzhny and Chornomorsk, could also be at risk. Russia's withdrawal may be perceived as a political move to correct military fallouts to the Wagner mutiny.



Syria: Stalemate over Aid extension

Mohaimeen Khan

In the News

On 11 July, at the UNSC, Russia rejected a nine-month extension of the aid route to Syria, putting the viability of the system in jeopardy. The UN mediated deal that permits aid to be sent over land from Turkey into rebel-held regions in Syria expired on 10 July; the vote to renew the authorisation was postponed. Meanwhile, Russia used its veto to block a nine-month extension and recommended a six-month extension instead. However, the UNSC rejected the proposal, with Russia and China voting in favour and the United States, the United Kingdom, and France voting against it.

On 12 July, refugees in Northern Syria accused Russia of cutting off vital help.

On 14 July, after the UNSC declined to renew its sanction for the operation, the Syrian government granted permission to the UN to utilise a border crossing from Turkey to transfer aid to the northwest region, which is controlled by the opposition. The Syrian government stated that the UN would need to be “in full cooperation and coordination” with them.

On 15 July, the conditions set by the Syrian government on aid deliveries from Turkey to the country’s north-western region were deemed “unacceptable” by the UN.

Issues at Large

First, the humanitarian importance of aid in Syria. According to UNICEF, more than 50 per cent of families in Syria face food insecurity, and around 90 per cent of households live in poverty. In Syria, 13.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, of which 5.9 million are in acute need. Owing to a deteriorating economic crisis, ongoing hostilities, widespread population displacement, and severely damaged public infrastructure, about two-thirds of the population need aid. More than 80 per cent of the requirements of residents in rebel-held regions are met by the aid including everything from food to diapers and blankets and medicines. Aid distributions are routinely criticised by the government in Damascus as a breach of its sovereignty. The earthquakes of this year exposed the weakness of the cross-border system and raised questions about the UN's humanitarian mission in Syria. Russia has been undermining the aid system for years.

Second, the intensity of the crisis. After 12 years of conflict, the humanitarian situation in Syria is still dire and has only become worse due to severe economic crises, including the decrease in the value of the Syrian currency. Syrian farmers have been forced to leave their farms; their fields have been destroyed by missile attacks. According to the recent assessment of the Syrian human rights situation by the German Foreign Office, the scenario was categorised as "catastrophic." Civilians are being targeted; hospitals and schools are being bombed; continued forced recruitment, arbitrary arrests, torture and death sentences are handed down without a trial. There has been a rise in cholera outbreaks, measles, diphtheria and dengue along with medicine and food shortages. Although officially, there is a truce between and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, localised ceasefires are yet to result in a more comprehensive peace process.

Third, donor fatigue. Syria's humanitarian services suffer from increasing funding and donor

fatigue. The UN's assistance appeal for Syria was at USD three billion in 2016, the amount increased gradually each year, reaching USD 4.4 billion in 2022 before the devastating earthquake in February. Despite this increase, humanitarian organisations have seen a steady decline in funding. According to the UN, 64 per cent of the humanitarian response was funded in 2019 compared to 49 per cent in 2022.

Fourth, Russia's veto. Several political events provoked Russia to use its veto power. These include Turkey's approval of Sweden's NATO membership, the transfer of the Azov Battalion personnel to Ukraine, Turkey's insistence on Ukraine joining NATO and the reiteration that the Crimean Peninsula is Ukrainian territory. There has also been an improvement in the security coordination between Turkey and the United States with regard to Syria.

In perspective

First, challenges to international norms. Russia's recurrent use of its veto power has raised concerns about the UNSC's capability to respond to the humanitarian needs of the Syrian population. Additionally, it has sparked discussions on how geopolitical concerns affect the distribution of humanitarian relief and the broader implications for international humanitarian law and norms.

Second, the need for alternatives. Alternative funding sources separate from the UN and collaborating more closely with regional humanitarian organisations inside Syria is required. The US and its Arab allies including Saudi Arabia, Jordan and UAE should pressure Assad and his northern adversaries into adopting an agreement to restore control over important state institutions in north Syria.



Climate change: Extreme weather events across the US, Europe, and Asia

Akriti Sharma

In the news

On 18 July, in the US, Arizona recorded 42 degrees Celsius temperature for the 19th consecutive day. Similarly, on 16 July, Death Valley recorded a 53-degree Celsius temperature. In Hawaii's Big Island, the National Weather Service (NWS) issued a tropical storm warning forecasting it to bring significant rainfall, after which many states were kept under alert for floods. Meanwhile, in Bucks County in Pennsylvania, flash floods killed at least five people.

On 18 July, in Canada, smoke from the wildfires continued to spread across California, the state of Arkansas, and New Hampshire.

In Europe, on 18 July, Greece recorded more than 43-degree Celsius temperature. Greece also recorded wildfires due to extremely dry conditions. The EU announced that it will send amphibious aircraft to the country to douse the wildfires from above. According to the European Space Agency, countries including Italy, France, Spain, Germany, and Poland are witnessing heatwaves, and the islands of Sicily and Sardinia recorded the highest-ever temperature of 48 degrees Celsius in Europe.

In Asia, on 13 July, in India, the Yamuna River reached its highest level in 45 years due to high rainfall. Hundreds of people were evacuated to relief camps and the government issued a flood alert. In the state of Himachal Pradesh 88 people died due to flash floods that swept away bridges, cars and homes. On 12 July, at least 40,000 people were evacuated from China's Sichuan province due to unusually heavy rains and floods. On 19 July, the death toll in South Korea's Cheongju region due to floods reached 44. South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol blamed the authorities for their failure to follow disaster response.

On 14 July, the COP28 president, Sultan al-Jaber, while laying out a plan for the climate summit, urged countries to be "brutally honest about the gaps that need to be filled." On the same day, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said "that climate change is out of control."

Issues at large

First, the complex meteorological causes. The cause of the heatwave in the US is the formation of a heat dome over the Mediterranean basin. A heat dome occurs when the atmosphere traps hot ocean air like a cap. Additionally, a double jet stream is one of the reasons for extreme heat. After a split in the jet stream, a part of it travels to the North and another one to the South, leaving parts of Western Europe without wind and resulting in the formation of small heat caps over the region. El Niño is a natural climate phenomenon that lasts for 16 to 18 months. The warm band of ocean wind developed in the central and east-central equatorial Pacific increased temperatures around the globe, resulting in drought-like conditions and extreme flood situations due to erratic rainfall. Due to these complex meteorological phenomena occurring simultaneously, erratic extreme weather was witnessed across the globe.

Second, the increasing frequency of extreme weather events and links with anthropogenic climate change. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) AR6 Report, climate change is one of the major driving forces behind the increasing frequency of extreme weather events across the globe. Heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, and floods have become frequent in recent years and this is attributed to anthropogenic climate change.

Third, increase in compound events. Compound events are extreme weather events of a similar kind that lead to one another. According to the IPCC AR6 Report, unusual hot temperatures can cause heatwaves, wildfires and droughts. This can be observed across the globe, where one extreme weather event leads to various other extreme weather events of a similar kind. In Europe and the US, the hot temperatures have resulted in heatwaves and wildfires.

In perspective

First, the loss and damage fund. The loss and damage fund was decided in COP 27 which aims at aiding countries that are most vulnerable to the impact of climate change. Although the countries are yet to develop a framework for the fund, it can be useful for the least developed and developing countries that might have inadequate capacity to address extreme weather events.

Second, the need for efficient disaster management. With the rise in extreme weather events and disasters, countries need to have effective disaster management strategies. Efficient early warning systems are crucial to reduce the impacts on the economy and the eversion of human losses and help countries in better disaster preparedness.

Third, the need to ramp up climate action. Given the drastic shift in the frequency and intensity, countries have little choice but to ramp up climate action. Most of the developed countries are still falling short of achieving their climate commitments. With a significant lag in the commitments, the 2030 1.5 Degree target set by the Paris Agreement 2015 might not be achieved and can have serious fallouts.



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

China: Joint military drill with Russia in the Sea of Japan

On 16 July, a Chinese flotilla joined the Russian naval and air forces for a joint-military exercise in the Sea of Japan. The Chinese Ministry of National Defence stated that the exercise aimed at "safeguarding the security of strategic waterways." The flotilla consisted of five warships and four ship-borne helicopters. This is the first time both naval and air forces of Russia participated in the drill at the Sea of Japan.

North Korea: Tests new ICBM "Hwasong-18"

On 12 July, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported that North Korea tested its new type of Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) "Hwasong-18," a solid-fuel ballistic missile. This comes after Pyongyang accused the US of violating their airspace by conducting surveillance. The US National Security Council spokesperson Adam Hodge stated: "This launch is a brazen violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions and needlessly raises tensions and risks destabilising the security situation in the region."

Myanmar: Escalating clashes in the Kachin region

On 14 July, Myanmar Now reported on clashes near the Laiza region in the state of Kachin. The Myitkyina-Bhamo highway is partially closed amid ongoing hostilities and martial law was to be imposed in the Bhamo Township in the region. Troops from various battalions allegedly sent by the Myanmar military and pro-junta groups claimed four army divisions attacking Laiza. Additionally, fighting was reported in the Waingmaw and Hpakan regions in the state of Kachin. In a separate incident, five junta soldiers and one civilian were killed near the Kamaing region in the same state.

Thailand: Move Forward Party leader suspended by the Constitutional Court

On 19 July, the Bangkok Post reported that the prime ministerial candidate of the Move Forward Party (MFP), Pita Limjaroenrat, was suspended from his membership in the House of Representatives following his inherited shareholding in a defunct media company, iTV Plc. The constitution prohibits Members of Parliament (MPs) from holding media organization stocks. Limjaroenrat claims that the shares were part of his late father's estate, managed as executor and transferred to relatives.

South Asia

Pakistan: Senior commander exits the terrorist group TTP to join the Hafiz Gul Bahadar

On 13 July, the Friday Times reported that a senior Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) commander, Mukhlis Yar Mehsud, has defected from the terror group to join the Hafiz Gul Bahadar (HGB) network. According to reports, Mehsud has been appointed as a commander in South Waziristan, heading the Mehsud tribe. Currently, the HGB is concentrated in North Waziristan. The TTP has officially denied the news of Mehsud leaving.

India: Violence continues in Manipur

On 15 July, two people were killed in two separate incidents in Manipur. In another incident, more than 40 people barged into a Kuki village, which resulted in violent clashes. On 17 July, Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM) demanded a separate state or Union Territory from the state of Manipur. The Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) also decided to seek a separate state for Kuki and Zo communities. On 10 July, the Hindu reported that one policeman was killed and ten people were injured during clashes between the Kuki and Meitei communities in the Kangpokpi area of Manipur. At least 150 people have been killed in the violence after the conflict broke out on 3 May.

Afghanistan: Taliban claims forbidden services led to beauty parlour ban

On 6 July, the Taliban announced a ban on beauty salons citing that they offer services that they justify are forbidden in Quran and cause economic hardships for grooms during weddings. On 4 July, the Taliban issued a one-month time for beauty salons to wind down their business. Virtue and Vice Ministry spokesperson Akif Maker stated that the services interfered with the ablutions required for prayer.

Central Asia, The Middle East, and Africa

Iran: Students suspended for refusing to wear hijab

On 10 July, more than 60 female students were barred from attending universities due to their refusal to wear a hijab. According to the Human Rights Activists in Iran (HRAI), the women were subjected to harassment by the university disciplinary committees and pro-regime civilians. They were given disciplinary hearings, suspended from classes and threatened with low grades as a result of defying the hijab law.

Iran: Two people executed on account of shrine attack

On 8 July, the Iranian government publicly executed two people over an attack on the Shah Cheragh Shrine, Shiraz. The attack had taken place on 26 October 2023 and was claimed by the Islamic State. The remaining suspects received prison terms. More than 13 people were killed and 40 were injured during the attack.

Iraq: Talks between Iraq and Syria

On 16 July, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani held talks with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. This has been the first between the two leaders ever since the Syrian war in 2011. The two leaders stressed on securing the 600 kilometres of border from security threats, especially regarding the Islamic State. They also agreed to counter drug smuggling. Al-Sudani also iterated on ways to address droughts in both countries, which are caused by upstream damming by Turkey, a low rate of rainfall and climate change.

Israel: Protests against judicial reforms continue

On 15 July, thousands of protestors rallied in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Herzliya and Netanya against the planned judicial reforms by Netanyahu's government. This marked the 28th week of protests as the government gave its initial approval to a bill that would reduce the power of the judiciary to strike down government decisions and give it more power in appointing judges. Several opposition parties threatened to call for a general strike, a move which was withdrawn when the government paused the reforms temporarily.



Tunisia: EU signs deal to prevent illegal migration

On 16 July, Africanews reported on the EU and Tunisia signing a deal to prevent illegal migrants from crossing Tunisia to EU countries and curb smuggling. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Tunisian President Kais Saied, Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte facilitated the deal in Tunis. The deal focused on macroeconomic stability, economy and trade, the green transition, people-to-people contacts and migration. The EU will provide aid of EUR 105 million for the search and rescue of migrants and patrolling along the sea routes. From EUR 105 million allocated budget, EUR 15 million will be utilized for the voluntary return of Sub-Saharan African migrants to their origin countries from Tunisia.

Sudan: Khartoum rejects African peace bid

On 11 July, Al Jazeera reported that the Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD's) proposal to deploy peacekeeping forces to protect civilians. The Sudanese authorities boycotted the offer, blaming Kenya for providing favourable conditions to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated: "The disrespect of IGAD towards the opinions of its member states will cause the Sudanese government to rethink the utility of its membership in the organisation. The Sudanese government rejects the deployment of foreign forces in Sudan and will consider them enemy forces."

Lebanon: Complaint in the UNSC against Israeli occupation

On 12 July, the Daijiworld reported that the Lebanon's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is prepared to file a complaint in the United Nations Security Council against "Israel's annexation" of the northern part of Ghajar which is on the border to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. Lebanon accused Israel of erecting a wire fence and building a cement wall surrounding the village of Ghajar. According to the UNSC resolution that ended the 2006 war between Israel and the Hezbollah, the former was required to withdraw from Ghajar.

Kenya: Increasing anti-government protest

On 19 July, the Kenyan opposition leader, Raila Odinga, announced the commencement of another three-day anti-government protests. The ongoing series of demonstrations are against the tax hikes followed by the country's surging cost of living. According to the United Nations Human Rights Office, at least 23 people were killed during violent demonstrations in the previous week. The UN Human Rights Spokesperson, Jeremy Laurence, stated: "The UN is very concerned by the widespread violence and allegations of disproportionate use of force, including the use of firearms by the police during protests in Kenya."

Cameroon: Open fire kills about 10 people

On 17 July, Cameroon's regional governor Debben Tchoffo reported on the death of ten people in a separatist attack in the city of Bamenda in northwestern Cameroon. The government has blamed the Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF) for the attack. However, the ADF has denied responsibility for the incident. Additionally, Tchoffo declared the possible launch of a man-hunt for separatists behind the massacre and announced further investigation. Amnesty International slammed government troops, separatists and militias for the atrocities in Cameroon's English-speaking regions.

Europe and the Americas

Poland: Migrants experience harsh treatment on the Polish-Belarusian border

On 10 July, Euronews reported that hundreds of migrants were fighting for survival on the Polish-Belarusian border. Since the beginning of the migration crisis in 2021 more than 48 bodies have been discovered. Migrants experience dangers in the “red zone” regions of the Bialowieza dense forest, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Although the Polish government had legalised migrants since 2021, the Polish NGO Grupa Granica claims that the Polish border guards are not accepting asylum applications.

Serbia: US sanctions Serbian Security Information Agency Chief for corruptive actions

On 11 July, the US sanctioned the Security Information Agency Chief Alexander Vulin, accusing him of fostering corruption and promoting Russian interests. The Treasury Department Office of Foreign Assets Control claimed that Vulin had been involved in transnational crimes, illegal narcotics and misusing the public office. The department stated: "Vulin's acts have advanced corruption within Serbia's government and institutions." The sanctions imply that Vulin's assets under the US jurisdiction will be frozen and US businesses and institutions are prohibited from having financial dealings with him. Separately, the US sanctioned Kosovo-Serbian businessman Zvonko Veselinovic over his corruptive activities and claimed to have direct links with the Serbian government.

Ukraine: G7 proposes to provide long term security commitment

On 12 July, the G7 group proposed a plan to organize bilateral and long-term security commitments to help Kyiv in its war against Russia. According to Politico, the US, the UK, France and Germany have been discussing with Kyiv how to create a common framework for all countries willing to provide financial and military aid to Ukraine. CNN outlined the three goals of the declaration. The first goal is to ensure a "sustainable force capable of defending Ukraine now and deterring Russian aggression in the future." The proposal would look forward to strengthening Ukraine's "economic stability and resilience and providing technical and financial support for Ukraine's immediate needs." Additionally, the declaration would enable Kyiv to implement an effective reform agenda to advance the good governance necessary for its Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

Switzerland: Accession to air defence system Sky Shield along with Austria

On 7 July, BBC reported that Switzerland and Austria had signed a declaration to join Europe's air defence system, Sky Shield. The move was criticised by right-wing politicians in Switzerland as the country has historically been neutral in conflicts. Austria, too, has been neutral. Nonetheless, both countries stressed that despite agreeing to join the defence program their stance on neutrality remains the same. Sky Shield is an air defence initiative that focuses on different missile systems to defend various ranges in the airspace. 19 countries are now part of the initiative including Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and the Nordic and Baltic countries.

Spain: 86 rescued after vessel went missing in transit to Spain via boat

On 10 July, Spain's Maritime Rescue Service reportedly rescued 80 men and six women, while searching for a migrant vessel. However, the Spanish authorities have not confirmed if it is one of the three vessels which went missing while sailing from Senegal to the Canary Islands. The authorities have warned West Africa and the Canary Islands to look out for the migrants who are still missing. Three boats, carrying over 300 people, which took off sail from Senegal to Spain, have been missing for the past 15 days. According to the United



Nations International Organisation for Migration, at least 559 people died attempting to reach the Canary Islands.

Georgia: The far-right wing protests against “Pride” event

On 8 July, over 2,000 Anti-LGBTQ protesters stormed the Pride festival held in the capital Atlanta. The right-wing protesters, which included the Orthodox Christian clergy, burnt the rainbow flag. President Salome Zurbishvili blamed the Georgian Dream Party which failed to condemn its followers from violent aggressions. Interior Minister Alexander Darakhvelidze stated: “This was an open area, participants of the protest managed to bypass the security and find other ways to enter the event area.” The organiser of the 2023 Pride event stated that the far-right group has been “openly inciting violence,” and complained that the Ministry of Interior and the police took little action.

Iceland: Volcano erupts near Reykjavik; third eruption in the region in the past two years

On 10 July, the Guardian reported that a volcano near Iceland’s capital, Reykjavik, had erupted. The country’s Meteorological Office stated: “The eruption is taking place in a small depression just north of Litli Hrótur, from which smoke is escaping in a north-westerly direction.” Thousands of small earthquakes had been recorded in the surrounding region last week, which indicated the imminence of the volcanic eruption. This is the third eruption in the region in the past two years succeeding the 19 March 2021 eruption in Geldingadalur Valley and the 3 August 2022 eruption in Meradalir Valley. The region had remained dormant for eight centuries until the 2021 eruption. Volcanologists have estimated that the three eruptions in the last two years indicate the beginning of a new cycle of increased volcanic activity.

Russia: Attack on the Crimean bridge

On 17 July, the Moscow Times reported on the press secretary to Russian President Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Peskov's comments on the attack on the Crimean bridge. The Moscow Times quoted Peskov: "We know the reasons and those behind this terrorist act. This will require further composure and additional measures and work from all of us. No other measures have been discussed at the moment." He also stated that although he could not provide any specific details about Moscow's response to the attack, its ultimate answer would be the achievement of all the goals behind the "military operation" in Ukraine. The Russian Ministry of Transportation noted that the bridge's support remains intact while the surface is damaged.

Mexico: Migrants move together to reach US borders

On 15 July, over a thousand migrants, predominantly Venezuelans, gathered in Mexico to move northwards to the southern borders of the US. The migrants stated that they had banded together as they had run out of money alleging that immigration authorities in Mexico were not supporting them with resources or information regarding asylum procedures in the US. Since May, the US has recorded nearly 2.5 million migrants arriving at its southern borders.

Nicaragua: UN decries killing of indigenous people in the Bosawas Biosphere Reserve

On 7 July, the UN Human Rights Office condemned the killing of two indigenous people on Nicaragua's Atlantic coast. The Human Rights Office stated: “It calls on the government to investigate and find those responsible for these attacks and take action to prevent this from happening again and guarantee the rights of the victims and their families.” The reserve faces interference from settlers who clear the land for agriculture, logging and the prevalence of illegal mining.

Haiti: Medical aid group temporarily suspends work in hospital

On 7 July, the international medical aid organisation, Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres or MSF) reported that they had stopped their operations temporarily in a Haitian hospital after about 20 armed men barged into the hospital. The men forcibly took away a patient undergoing treatment for serious injuries and issued threats to the medical staff. The group stated: “We strongly condemn this incursion which demonstrates once again the unprecedented level of violence currently raging in Port-au-Prince. All trauma and burn care activities at the Tabarre hospital are currently suspended due to this incident.”

The US: Author's guild pleads CEO of AI companies over intellectual property problem

On 18 July, Margaret Atwood and Suzanne Collins among other prominent authors signed their names in a letter urging the CEOs of big tech companies engaged in the AI revolution to stop training AI platforms using their original works. Publishers, actors and creative writers have demanded to be paid if their work has been used to train large language models. Until recently, the big tech companies have shared the data characteristics used to train their AI models.

About the authors

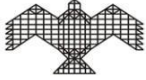
Akriti Sharma, Rashmi Ramesh and Ankit Singh are PhD Scholars at NIAS. Mohaimen Khan is an Independent Scholar based in Manipal. Anu Maria Joseph, Femy Francis and Rishika Yadav are Research Assistants at NIAS. Padmashree Anandhan is a Research Associate at NIAS. Ryan Marcus is an Undergraduate Scholar at the Kristu Jayanti College, Bangalore. Sneha Surendran is a Postgraduate Scholar from OP Jindal University, Haryana. Prerana P is a Postgraduate Scholar at the Christ (Deemed To Be) University, Bangalore.





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.