

Conflict Weekly

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A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

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Unrest in the Solomon Islands, and the 12 million missing children in China

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(Civilian unrest flares up in the Solomon Islands. Image Source: Jone Tuiipelehaki/REUTERS)

Solomon Islands: Continuing civil unrest and the growing protests in the islands

In the news

On 26 November, the government in the Solomon Islands announced that the curfew in the capital - Honiara would continue indefinitely. Australian Defence Force (ADF) troops arrived in Honiara with the Royal Australian Navy patrolling boat HMAS Armidale to the island. Papua New Guinea also deployed a security team to the island.

On 27 November, Fiji dispatched about 50 troops to reinforce the Australian Defence Force under their partnership. Three charred bodies were discovered in a store in the Chinatown district that led to more than 100 people being arrested.

On 1 December, New Zealand's government announced to send dozens of peacekeepers after the Solomon Islands sent a request for help. Earlier, On 24 November, the New Zealand government announced an immediate response to help restore peace and stability in the

Solomon Islands. The announcement came after the government in the Solomon Islands requested assistance from New Zealand to maintain security in the capital.

Issues at large

First, the internal divide within the Solomon Islands. In the 1990s, Malaitans were being intimidated, and a campaign of violence was perpetrated against them by the Guales or the Guadalcanal islanders. This led to Australia and New Zealand intervening during 2003-2017. These ethnic, geographical divides have been further accelerated by a perceived unequal distribution of resources that renewed discontentment between the islands. Malaita is one of the least developed provinces due to the lack of economic support. The discontent grew after the central government decided to shift the country's allegiance in 2019 from Taipei to Beijing.

Second, the external shift in allegiance. Taiwan accuses China of bribing politicians in the islands to vote in favour of China. China has been one of the largest investors in the islands and had even offered to lease Tulagi island. But, the attorney general of the Solomon Islands ruled the proceedings illegal. China signed five MoU's including an agreement to the Belt and Road initiative after the 36-year relationship with Taiwan. The shift away from Taiwan left the people angry, especially those on the Malaita Island. Malaita's premier continued to maintain relations with Taiwan and receive support, while the central government reiterated its support to China. Manasseh Sogavare's election in 2019 opened up Chinese investments to the country, while till then, the people predominantly in Malaita had benefited from the Taiwanese projects.

Third, Australia's intervention. Australia and the Solomon Islands have signed a security treaty in 2017 and had received a request for assistance under it. This treaty allows Australian police, civilian personal, and defence to intervene in the Solomon Islands in an emergency. This is not the first time Australia intervened in the Solomon Islands; the last was in 2003-2017, which was authorized by the Pacific Island Forum declaration.

In perspective

First, the issues between the two islands need to be resolved systematically, implementing policies to bring equal resource-sharing support and mediation between the ethnic communities.

Second, Beijing and Taipei will continue to be contentious issues until the political parties on the island stop using it as an opportunity to win votes. This historical discontentment can only be partially resolved with structural changes in the administration of both islands.

Third, the Prime Minister blames foreign influences to be the cause of unrest and protests but, he reiterated his support for Beijing over Taiwan. This would likely further complicate the situation as Taiwan had integrated itself with a visible development program with the people of Malaita.

Fourth, Australia's swift intervention has brought a sense of temporary order to the islands, but they hope that this would be a short intervention as the last time they spent more than a decade.

China: 12 million missing children

In the news

On 24 November, the Strait Times reported that the Chinese census failed to account for at least 11.6 million children born between 2000 and 2010. The gap in the number of births came to the forefront after the government released its latest statistical yearbook, which accounted for 172.5 million births in that decade. However, the 2010 census accounted for only 160.9 million births. The Politburo had earlier said: "Allowing every couple to have three children and implementing related support policies will help improve the population's structure."

Issues at large

First, the case of 12 million missing children. The sudden increase in the birth rate in the 2010 census comes to light after parents enrolled their children in schools for primary education. Due to the one-child policy, that was in place from 1979 and lasted until 2015, most parents in the country refrained from documenting their children in the national registry for fear of persecution and punishment. Often, the second child would be left in rural villages with the grandparents for lack of facilities from the government.

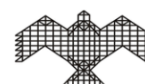
Second, shifts in China's demographic policies. 12 million births went unnoticed in 2010 when Politburo continued to believe that the growth rate must be controlled. In 2016, the government realized the steady drop in population growth and raised the limit to two children per couple. In 2021, the government started providing many subsidies and assistance such as cash benefits, longer maternity and paternity leaves, child-rearing leaves from work and providing subsidies for the second and third child. Yet, these provisions are not attractive enough for the people at the moment.

Third, the impact of the one-child policy. The government implemented the policy as it feared that a population explosion would result in slower economic development and put a strain on the existing resources. However, the policy led to massive gender imbalance in Chinese society as most families with a patriarchal leaning opted to abort or abandon the female child. Another impact that will be apparent in the future is the shortage in the labour force.

In perspective

First, China's failure to account for the 12 million children in the 2010 census is a big blow to the detail-oriented image of the Communist Party of China. The figure is not a minor and negligible number that can be pushed aside as human error. It will also raise questions on China's statistical capabilities.

Second, the additional 12 million children prove that the administration may only have a limited amount of control over policies such as childbirth. Despite the numerous subsidies and benefits, the country may face problems as it tries to raise its population growth in the 21st century.



Also, from around the world

By Apoorva Sudhakar and Abigail Miriam Fernandez

Peace and Conflict from East and Southeast Asia

China: Henan province to establish surveillance system of journalists and students, says Reuters report

On 30 November, Reuters reported a review of a tender document entailing plans to establish a surveillance system designed to collect individual files about persons of interest who visit Henan province. The information on the persons will be collected through facial recognition cameras, which will subsequently connect to various databases. The document procured by Reuters reportedly calls for monitoring journalists and international students; journalists will be classified in descending order of risk as red, yellow and green. Reuters quoted from the tender: "Suspicious persons must be tailed and controlled, dynamic research analyses and risk assessments made, and the journalists dealt with according to their category."

China-Taiwan: PLA warplanes record "full attendance" for patrols in November near Taiwan

On 1 December, Global Times quoted analysts who said the People's Liberation Army's warplanes were sent for patrols near Taiwan every day in November. The news report quoted the Liberty Times Net, which termed this a rare development wherein the PLA warplanes had recorded full attendance for drills near Taiwan. The news report further said the warplanes were sent near Taiwan amid "a number of provocations" including its approval of an additional budget worth USD 8.63 billion for naval and air force requirements.

The Philippines: Eight rebels killed in a clash in Iloilo province

On 1 December, military officials said that eight communist rebels of the New People's Army were killed in a clash in Iloilo province. The regional commander said that "four assault rifles, anti-personnel mines and rebel documents" were retrieved in operation, which commenced after villagers communicated to the army that 70 to 80 guerrillas were present in the area. According to the military, at least 3,500 armed guerrillas operate despite facing challenges like infighting and surrendering several fighters.

Myanmar: Suu Kyi, Win Myint face new charges; the verdict on the previous case delayed until December

On 30 November, state-run media reported that the military government in Myanmar had filed a new charge of corruption against Aung San Suu Kyi and former President Win Myint. The charge, which comes under the anti-corruption law, deals with purchasing and renting a helicopter; punishment for violation of the law goes up to 15 years in prison. In a related development, a court in Naypyidaw has delayed the verdict on Suu Kyi's cases related to violating COVID-19 rules until December.

Peace and Conflict from South Asia

Sri Lanka: Troops break Tamil memorials in Mullaittivu

On 30 November, the Federation of Media Employees' Trade Unions said that armed troops broke up Tamil memorials for Sri Lanka's civil war dead in Mullaittivu. Further, it said: "Soldiers used a palm stick wrapped with barbed wire to assault a photojournalist covering the events," adding that reporters in northern and eastern Sri Lanka have been subject to "constant harassment" by security authorities.

India: Assam and Mizoram decide to increase border fencing

On 25 November, Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma meet in Delhi to discuss the border dispute between the two States. During the meeting, they decided to increase the fencing along the inter-state border. Zoramthanga describing the meeting as "cordial", said: "We had a very good meeting. We are like brothers. Tomorrow we will meet Union Home Minister [Amit Shah] together. We will try to increase our fencing all along the border." Meanwhile, Zoramthanga urged Prime Minister Modi to be sympathetic to the Myanmarese refugees who had crossed into Mizoram.

India-China: Central Tibetan Authority urges India to bring out a policy on Tibetan exiles

On 26 November, The Hindu reported that the office of the Central Tibetan Authority in exile in India raised concerns that China might be "pushing" more Tibetans to the borders. Penpa Tsering, leader of the CTA stated: "We hope to send a Representation to the Indian government on the overall situation of Tibetans in India, and challenges we face today," adding, "We want to ask how India can help us sustain our community, especially those settled in Arunachal, Tawang, in Uttarakhand and Ladakh. We definitely need more steps — a strategy — a firm policy and the means to cater to the needs of people in the border areas."

Afghanistan: Taliban delegation met with 16 designated ambassadors and representatives in Doha; Iranian and Taliban forces clashed in border areas

On 1 December, Taliban delegates led by acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi met with 16 designated ambassadors and representatives from various countries in Doha. During the meeting, the delegates discussed security, humanitarian, economic, political and health issues in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the Taliban delegates conveyed that they would cooperate with aid agencies to deliver aid to the people and urged the foreign delegations to reopen their embassies in Kabul. On 1 December, the Taliban spokesperson stated that Taliban and Iranian forces clashed in border areas in Nimroz province. The spokesperson confirmed that the clashes have ceased and that there were no casualties.

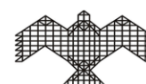
Peace and Conflict from Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Armenia-Azerbaijan: Aliyev, Pashinyan and Putin meet to discuss Nagorno-Karabakh

On 28 November, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appreciated the trilateral meeting between Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia to settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The Deputy Spokesman for the Secretary-General said that Guterres had particularly appreciated Russia's role in providing a platform for talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan. On 26 November, Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Russian President Vladimir Putin met in Sochi. Besides meeting the Azerbaijan and Armenian leaders together, Putin also held separate meetings with Aliyev and Pashinyan. The three leaders signed an agreement calling for working "toward the creation of a bilateral commission on the delimitation of the state border between Armenia and Azerbaijan and its subsequent demarcation, with Russian consultation upon request of the sides."

Jordan: Hundreds protest against water-for-energy deal with Israel

On 26 November, hundreds of Jordanians protested to express their rejection of the water-for-energy deal between Jordan and Israel. Al Jazeera explains that under the deal, Jordan is bound to receive "200 million cubic metres (7.06 billion cubic feet) of desalinated water from Israel, in return for 600 megawatts of electricity generated from a UAE-funded solar energy plant in Jordan." The protesters presented three contentions. First, they believed the deal would lead to the normalization of ties with Israel. Second, they warned that Jordan might become dependent on Israel for water. Lastly, they questioned how Jordan could sign the deal while Israel occupied Palestinian territories. If implemented, this would be among the biggest cooperation projects between the two countries, 27 years after they signed a peace deal.



Palestine: UN agency faces major funding crisis

On 30 November, Al Jazeera reported on the head of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees' (UNRWA) statement that the agency was short of funds and cannot pay at least 28,000 employees. The UNRWA chief said that while the requirements of the Palestinian refugees has been on the rise, the funding to meet these necessities has been stagnant since 2013. He warned that the current funding crisis could lead to halted COVID-19 vaccination programmes, and could impact maternal and child care facilities, and affect educational facilities for several million children.

Yemen: President vows to keep Marib away from Houthis' control; Arab coalition conducts air raids in Sanaa and Sadaa

On 29 November, on the eve of Yemen's 54th anniversary of independence, President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi said that Marib will not fall into the hands of Houthis. Hadi said, "Marib, the gateway to the defense of the Arabian Peninsula, will not fall, and their project will fall in front of the solidity of our heroes, and its deserts will bury the dreams of their (Iranian) masters." In another development, on 25 November, the Arab coalition conducted airstrikes on military targets in Sanaa and Saada. The coalition claimed to have destroyed a workshop reportedly storing ballistic missiles.

Ethiopia: Government troops recapture several towns from TPLF

On 1 December, a spokesperson for the Ethiopian government said that its troops had recaptured the Shewa Robit town and the UNESCO World Heritage site Lalibela from Tigrayan forces. Shewa Robit, which is 220 kilometres from Addis Ababa, and Lalibela were captured by the Tigray People's Liberation Front in late November and August, respectively. Several other small towns have also reportedly been from the TPLF.

Uganda: Military launches operation in cooperation with DRC against Allied Democratic Forces

On 30 November, the Ugandan military said that along with the Congolese military, it had launched air and artillery strikes against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) positioned in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The development comes after a series of suicide bombings in Uganda's capital, Kampala, earlier in November, for which the government blamed the ADF. On the same day, Ugandan troops entered the DRC into the North Kivu state. A spokesperson for the DRC government said the decision was taken after "an assessment to continue in-depth operations by the special forces of the two countries to clear the positions of the terrorists concerned."

Peace and Conflict from Europe and the Americas

Ukraine: Russia planning "significant aggressive moves" against Ukraine, says Blinken

On 1 December, the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated that Russia has plans to take "significant aggressive moves" against Ukraine adding that the US was "deeply concerned by evidence that Russia has made plans for significant aggressive moves against Ukraine." Further, he said that Russian President Vladimir Putin "has made the decision to invade" Ukraine, however, "we do know that he's putting in place the capacity to do so on short order, should he so decide." Subsequently, Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky said: "We need to tell the truth that we won't be able to stop the war without holding direct talks with Russia," adding, "All the external partners have acknowledged that but some of the internal ones haven't." Meanwhile, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated that Turkey is ready to act as a mediator between Ukraine and Russia.

Belarus: Lukashenko visits warehouse that provides housing to migrants

On 26 November, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko during a visit to a warehouse that provided housing migrants said: "If you want to go westwards, we won't detain you, choke you, beat you. It's up to you. Go through. Go," adding, "We won't in any circumstances . . . load you on planes to send you home if you don't want that." Further, he blamed the European Union for creating the border crisis and blaming it on Belarus. Meanwhile, the Polish Interior Ministry announced that the government has decided to extend the state of emergency that allows the government to continue restricting access to its border with Belarus.

Serbia: Protests against new mining laws

On 27 November, hundreds of environmentalists took to the streets in protests against two new laws that they believe will give power to foreign mining companies in Serbia. The protesters who chanted slogans against conservative President Aleksandar Vucic clashed with police in Belgrade and Novi Sad as the former brought traffic to a standstill.

Arctic: Report states that there could be more rain than snow in the Arctic

On 30 November, a new study led by the Canadian University of Manitoba and co-authored by scientists at the US-based National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) revealed that Arctic autumns could be dominated by rain rather than snow by 2060 which is 30 years earlier than the previous estimate of 2090. The study attributed the shift to rapid warming, sea ice loss, and changes in weather patterns caused by increasing global temperatures.

The US: Supreme Court takes up Mississippi abortion case

On 1 December, the United States Supreme Court began the hearing of the Mississippi state law enacted in 2018 that bans most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy as unconstitutional. The justices heard the oral arguments that precedes a decision by the Supreme Court that could overturn the 50 years of federally protected abortion rights, granted in a landmark 1973 ruling known as *Roe v Wade*. Most of the justices signal support for Mississippi abortion restrictions.

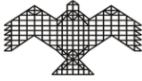
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About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI)

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 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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