

Conflict Weekly

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A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

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The battle for Donbas, Violence in Jerusalem, Riots in Sweden, Kyrgyzstan - Tajikistan border dialogue, and China's military drills

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Source: Institute for the Study of War (21:00 GMT, 20 April)

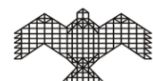


President Zelensky said recently: "It can now be stated that Russian troops have begun the battle for Donbas, for which they have been preparing for a long time. A very large part of the entire Russian army is now focused on this offensive." (Image Source: BBC/Institute for the Study of War)

Ukraine: The battle for Donbas

[In the news](#)

On 18 April president Zelenskyy referred to the renewed efforts on Ukraine's east, especially in Donbas, recognizing the "Battle of Donbas." He reassured that even in the face of a severe attack, Ukraine will keep fighting and defending. He also spoke about the ground reality and said: "very large part of the entire Russian army is now focused on this offensive."



On 18 April, Ukraine's secretary of National Security, Oleksiy Danilov, said: "This morning, along almost the entire front line of the [eastern] Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kharkiv regions, the occupiers attempted to break through our defence."

On 16 April Russian forces in Mariupol issued a surrender-or-die ultimatum to be adhered to by 17 April. This is because they have been closing in on Ukraine's troops to establish control of the strategically important port city. The following day, Ukraine's prime minister Denys Shmyhal said that troops in Mariupol were fighting despite the ultimatum.

On 25 March, the head of the Russian General Staff's Main Operational Directorate, Sergei Rudskoi said that the main objectives of the first stage of their 'operation' have been accomplished. A Reuters report, quoted him: "The combat potential of the Armed Forces of Ukraine has been considerably reduced, which...makes it possible to focus our core efforts on achieving the main goal, the liberation of Donbas."

Issues at large

First, the significance of Donbas. The region is an industrial one in the eastern Ukraine including areas of Luhansk, Makiivka, Horlivka, Kramatorsk, Sloviansk, Alchevsk, Sievierodonetsk, and Lysychansk. It includes the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic, which are controlled by Russia-backed separatist groups. The area has the most-dense Russian-speaking population, and anti-Ukraine sentiments are observed to be the strongest. Before Russia's invasion, two-thirds of the region was controlled by Ukraine, while the rest was Russian-held territory. The geographic and demographic link makes the region significant for Russia.

Second, situating Donbas in a historical context. Following the revolution in 2014, Russia took control of this region and annexed Crimea. The self-proclaimed republics conducted a referendum which Ukraine considered illegal. Thereafter, they signed the Minsk Agreement I and the Minsk Agreement II in quick succession to facilitate a ceasefire to prevent further escalation. Historically, the region was pro-Russia for a long time, and concentrating its offensive in this region might assist them, in uniting better forces.

Third, Russia's interest in Donbas. The region is an old coal and steel-producing area. The ethnic makeup of the majority in this region also compliments Russia's plans. There are also talks of connecting the Donbas region, with the already annexed Crimea with a land bridge, which will provide a better scope for trade and connectivity for Russia. The most positive outcome from the Russian point of view is possibly the annexation of this area with all its industrial potential, into the mainland of Russia.

Fourth, Ukraine's strategy for Donbas. Kyiv has recently drafted up to 20,000 troops to the eastern part of the country, and President Zelensky continues to ask the West for supplies of air-defense systems, anti-tank missiles, and ammunition, to be able to survive a war of attrition.

Fifth, Russia's tactical shift. On 6 April, the Russian forces started to withdraw from Kyiv, the capital, after having failed to capture President Zelensky's bastion in the North of the country. Almost simultaneously the Russian war effort saw a rise in intensity in the eastern part of the country, concentrating on the Donbas. But the sinking of Russia's Moskva, has escalated violence. Additionally, Russian aggression has also been reported in Lviv, to the west of Ukraine. The intensity of the conflict, till now, seems to be centered in the east.

In perspective

First, the shift to Donbas. Russia's approach in Ukraine can be viewed from two perspectives. Russia started the war on several fronts including the eastern region and around Kyiv. Their primary target could have been Kyiv. But when it started failing, their shift to the east could have been a tactic to divert their opponent's resources and attention by escalating and consolidating the offensive on another front. In this case, Ukraine's defense of Kyiv prompted the Russian forces to concentrate on the Donbas region. However, another angle to this can be if it was Putin's strategy to control the east slowly. He may have ensured this by carrying on a battle at Kyiv, this engaged a significant portion of Ukraine's defence systems.

Finally, the tipping point. The battle of Donbas is significant; from a Russian perspective, establishing control in this region is imperative to ensure the public faith in the war. From a Ukrainian perspective, it is a war of attrition and has been successful. With the retreat of the troops from the north, they have been able to put down Russia's spirit by posing a military challenge and making it expensive. The 'Battle of Donbas' will be a milestone regarding the future of the war.

Israel: Al-Aqsa Mosque raids

In the news

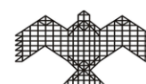
On 15 April, violence broke out in the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem. Israel's police to quell violence stormed the mosque with rubber bullets, tear gas, and stun grenades. Among the Muslims who were gathered to offer morning prayers in the mosque, 158 people were reported to be injured and one 17-year-old died due to injuries. After the clashes, Israel's prime minister Naftali Bennett said: "We are working to restore calm, on the Temple Mount and across Israel. Alongside that, we are preparing for any scenario and the security forces are ready for any task."

On 15 April, the protests broke out in the Gaza strip demanding justice for the wounded Palestinians. The Palestinian foreign ministry condemned Israel's actions in the compound and stated: "holds Israel fully and directly responsible for this crime and its consequences." At the same, Palestine's prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh on the Israeli police strike said: "brutal assault on worshippers during the holy month."

The attacks come during the holy week of Passover for the Jews, Easter for Christians, and Ramadan for Muslims. As a result, all three communities gather in the Old City to offer their worship throughout the week. The Israeli attack comes in direct retaliation to masked youth radicals who were recorded throwing stones toward the Western Wall compound, below the Al-Aqsa Mosque where Jewish worshippers were gathered.

Issues at large

First, Jerusalem as a flashpoint. Israel views Jerusalem as its "unified, eternal" capital. Its annexation of East Jerusalem is not recognized internationally and is considered provocative by Palestinians. Jerusalem, particularly the Old City contains some of the holiest sites for Islam and Judaism. The Al-Aqsa mosque is the third holiest site in Islam and the Temple Mount of which only the Western Wall is remaining is the holiest site where Jews can pray. After the disagreement over the annexation, Palestinians view the visits by Jewish worshippers as a provocation.



Second, the volatility of the season. The holy week of Passover and Ramadan coinciding this year has attracted worshippers in mass numbers to the Old City. Tensions due to being nearby has paved way for violence. A similar incident in 2021 during the same period of Ramadan resulted in an 11-day war and 250 Palestinians killed. When religious sentiments run hot in Jerusalem, it quickly results in violence.

Third, the recurring pattern in violence. There have been multiple attempts in the history of the Al-Aqsa mosque owing to its historic significance. The custody of the mosque is administered by a Waqf or an Islamic trust that is funded and controlled by Jordan and Israel after a peace treaty in 1994. The agreement does not allow Jews to pray in the Al-Aqsa compound but can pray near the Western Wall. However, since the agreement was signed the compound has been party to several controversies that led to violence. The primary reason for these controversies is the preservation of religious monuments and sentiments by disallowing another religion's claims. This pattern is observed in the recent raids as well.

Fourth, the trigger for violence. The anti-discriminatory policies in Jerusalem have added to the frustration of the Palestinian youth. The unfair citizenship rights, evacuations of Palestinians, encroachment of settlements, and human rights violations have resulted in an angry generation of youth. As a result, the youth have utilized this opportunity to express their dissatisfaction. Violence becomes a default measure for the people when there is a lack of unity and diplomacy with the governments.

In perspective

First, the cause of wider unrest. The incident has resulted in wider outrage and unrest across Palestine. The action by the Palestinian youth triggered a reaction by the Israeli security force. At the Gaza demonstration which is the first wave of unrest, attacks by the Israeli force were denounced. The unrest is likely to spread to other parts of Palestine.

Second, the possibility of prolongation of the conflict. Recent precedents show that there is a strong possibility for the conflict to prolongate and expand. Israel and Palestine are preparing for any form of escalation. The ripple effect of one small incident that can otherwise be resolved through the Police, has escalated into a religious and political issue.

Sweden: Riots erupt after far-right group plans rally to burn Quran

In the news

On 15 April, a riot broke out in Malmo, Sweden after 300 people gathered to protest a planned rally to burn Quran. The protest took a violent turn after several protestors pelted stones at police officers and the casualties included bullet injuries of three civilians and stone-pelting injuries of at least two officers. The national police chief in Sweden, Anders Thornberg, said in a press brief that "he had never seen such violent riots following Sunday's clashes in Norrkoping."

On 14 April, Rasmus Paludan, the Danish far-right politician had planned to burn Quran in various Swedish cities. And the riot was a result of a direct clash between the supporters of his Stram Kurs party and the demonstrators against anti-Islam activities. The riot spread over the Easter holidays and was reported in the towns of Norrkoping, Linkoping, Stockholm, Orebro

and Landskrona. While the violence left 12 police officers injured and four police vehicles on fire in the Orebo, equal destruction of public property was reported in Landskrona and Malmo.

On 17 April, the interior and justice minister Morgan Johansson of the Social Democrats condemned the violence and said: “those who attack the police are criminal perpetrators of violence.” He equally said about Paludan that “even fools have freedom of speech.”

Issues at large

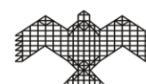
First, the rise of Ramus Paludan. A Danish lawyer with Swedish citizenship, Paludan ascended the Swedish political theatre in 2017 when he set up the Stram Kurs party. Stram Kurs has since nurtured the anti-immigration sentiment in Sweden singling out the Muslim communities since the 2015 refugee influx. In 2019, Paludan was sentenced to 14 days of conditional imprisonment for delivering a racist speech. In Denmark, he garnered political support by inching closer to a power-sharing in the parliament in the last election with a policy to deport 300,000 Muslims. Prior to the riot in Sweden, Paludan was denied permission to hold a meeting about “Islamization in the Nordic countries,” yet his mere presence and provocative hate speech incites both counters and supporters.

Second, the rise of the political right in Sweden. In the 2018 Riksdag election, the Sweden Democrats, the right-wing political party became the third-largest in Sweden. Cutting through the vote margin of the ruling centrist Social Democrats, the Sweden Democrats shifted the political climate by testing Sweden’s exceptional social welfare programmes for the refugees. Sweden Democrats which had their roots in Neo-Nazism have been able to shed their past by rooting against street crimes that peaked in 2015. As the Swedish society struggled to integrate the Muslims from Syria and Afghanistan, many Swedes also came to view them as pressure on public finances. In 2018, when the unemployment rate reached 3.8 per cent and gun violence was ten times more, many supported the Sweden Democrats who viewed refugees as a “state-financed sloth.”

Third, the spectrum of freedom of expression. Paludan’s call to burn the Quran however inciteful it may be has been dubbed by the justice minister as a fool’s right to express. A regional trend in mainstream media such as Charlie Hebdo to satire and draw caricatures of religious symbols has long tattled the contours of secularism. Individual religious rights such as wearing a hijab could simultaneously be symbols of oppression and choice but in a secular environment such as in France, it stands banned. With Paludan, a similar dichotomous regional trend to defend the freedom to express within divided societies could be observed.

In perspective

First, the riot comes amid ambiguity on the profile of the demonstrators and the unpreparedness of the police force. Even with loud announcements from Paludan and history of riots since 2010 in Sweden, the police grappled with the spread and spectacle of the destruction. Second, the riot also marked a failure of the state in its touted integration policy which has not created the social space for cultural exchanges and acceptance in due course. It proves to be an example of how multicultural societies faced with monolithic administrative systems behave. Paludan is a representation of one such divisive society.



Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan: Foreign Ministers discuss the renewed border clashes

In the news

On 14 April, Kyrgyzstan's foreign minister Ruslan Kazakbaev and Tajikistan's foreign minister Sirojiddin Muhridin in a telephonic conversation discussed the situation along with disputed segments of the border between the two Central Asian nations and renewed border clashes. Following the conversation, Kyrgyzstan's Foreign Ministry said that Kazakbaev and Muhridin "agreed to continue discussions on further steps to resolve border issues."

On 12 April, a Tajik border guard was killed in a shoot-out while two Kyrgyz border guards and four Kyrgyz civilians were wounded in the incident that took place in a disputed segment along the border. Following the incident, the governor of Kyrgyzstan's southern region of Batken said that Kyrgyz-Tajik talks on the situation ended overnight with an agreement to withdraw additional armed forces from both sides. The governor added, "It was agreed that the two sides' police will take joint control over the border segment crossing the Konibodom-Khujand highway. Special explanatory works will be held among locals residing close to the border area to ensure they are aware of the situation."

Issues at large

First, the dispute over border demarcations. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan share a 971-kilometre border, however, only 519 kilometres are properly delineated. At present, the two countries have about 70 unresolved border disputes. The main problem stems from the two republics using two different geopolitical maps; Tajikistan operates with maps from 1924-to 1939, while Kyrgyzstan uses maps from 1958 to 1959. This difference in border demarcations has resulted in unresolved issues related to the distribution of water and land and illegal border crossings. The fighting at the border reached an unprecedented scale in April 2021, in which over 50 people were killed and over 300 wounded in a clash on the border.

Second, increased military action. In the past skirmishes and occasional low-level violence at the border took place between Kyrgyz and Tajik border communities. However, the recent clashes involve the military forces. Thus, in contrast to the previous clashes, which usually involved stone-throwing and other forms of low-level violence, armoured vehicles, military helicopters, mortar shelling, and other heavy military equipment are being used by the two countries.

Third, the lack of dialogue. Over the years several efforts at negotiating delimitation have taken place but have yielded no results. The leadership of both countries remain hesitant to take up serious negotiation over the dispute. Additionally, the dispute has been used by political leaders, who have calculatedly used it to secure popular opinion.

Fourth, the role of external actors. There has been no response from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan's neighbours and international partners to take up the role of mediator. While most Central Asian republics have unresolved border issues hindering them from taking up the role, countries such as Russia and China chose not to get directly involved in the matter.

In perspective

First, the increasing militarization of the border raises the potential for violence. With border forces engaging in the conflict, the risk of increased violence is only inevitable. This is already seen with the frequent clashes between the two sides' border forces being reported along the border. Second, unlikely inter-state war. While the intensity may have increased it is unlikely that a full-blown interstate war would take place. However, the frequency and intensity of the clashes highlight the increasing interstate conflicts in the region. The conflict is likely to take on a cyclic characteristic unless the two sides decide on resolving the disputes.

Taiwan: China's military drills in response to US delegation visit

In the news

On 14 April, a six-member bipartisan Congressional delegation led by the United States senator, Lindsey Graham, visited Taiwan to discuss US-Taiwan relations and regional security. On the same day, the eastern command of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) held military drills, using bombers, aircraft and warships around Taiwan in response to the US officials' visit to Taiwan. On 15 April, during the visit, Graham said: "We have a strong military, not to take other people's property but to protect our freedom and the freedom of the world. We're here in this part of the world not to conquer but to be a good ally."

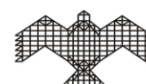
On 15 April, post the meeting with the US delegation, the Taiwan Foreign Ministry said: "In the face of increasing threats to international peace and stability brought about by China's authoritarian expansion, Taiwan continues to improve its self-defence capabilities."

On 15 April, after the military drill, PLA eastern theatre command, colonel Shi said: "This operation is in response to the recent frequent release of wrong signals by the US on the Taiwan issue. The US bad actions and tricks are completely futile and very dangerous. Those who play with fire will burn themselves."

Issues at large

First, the recent US interactions in Taiwan. A series of US delegations visited Taiwan amidst the Ukraine crisis. The visits were focused on collective action to maintain regional security, military deterrence, finance collaborations, and developing green technology. One such important action taken by the US is the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, which proposes Taiwan taking part in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC), military exercise. Under this, it recommends cooperation between the National Guard and Taiwan, mandates Taiwan to provide a report on its "asymmetric defensive capabilities," and drafts policy objectives on partnering with Taiwan in the Indo-Pacific region. The US is strengthening its presence in Taiwan to discourage China from any military adventurism. It does not want a Ukraine-like situation in Taiwan. On the economic front, the US senate seeks to bolster Taiwan's participation in the WHO and other international forums to build resilience against China's economic coercion. Apart from the military and economic aspects, the US has also been focusing on maintaining close ties through increased military exchange with its allies, Australia and Japan to be ready in case of a conflict in Taiwan.

Second, China's response. Beijing considers Taiwan a breakaway province and believes reunification is inevitable in the long run. It has gradually increased its military drills around Taiwan and the South China Sea by deploying heavy bombers, aircraft and patrol vehicles.



Recently China is observed to be expanding its nuclear capabilities, carrying out a series of hypersonic weapon tests, and flying its warplanes in air-defence identification zone (ADIZ) of Taiwan. Which has triggered fear, questioning the military action of Taiwan against China in case of an incursion. At the economic level, its recent focus has been in bridging Taiwan with its semiconductor industry. Taiwan being the largest producer with 90 per cent contribution to high-end semiconductor products in the world.

Third, Taiwan's strategy to counter China. Taiwan is fearful of Beijing's long-standing reunification aspirations but the government and the public want the status quo. China's increasing military drills and aircraft incursions have pushed Taiwan to rethink its security and economic strategies. Taiwan believes that the war in Ukraine might provoke China to launch against Taiwan in the future. Taiwan's military is found to be training with US-made Javelin missiles after its success in the Ukraine war. It also plans to extend its "mandatory military service requirement," to prepare against China. Other strategies opted by Taiwan are, sending its military delegation to Sweden and Finland to learn about their civilian defence programme.

In perspective

First, China's apprehensions. Taiwan is roughly 100 miles away from the coast of southeast China. The US indulging in intense strategic ties with Taiwan may ruin the probability of China's great rejuvenation and will nurture the credibility of the US-led western order in east Asia. China could try to strengthen its economic ties with Taiwan, especially in the semiconductor industry. Second, the possibility of a Ukraine-like situation in Taiwan. Drawing lessons from Ukraine, and the failure to get Russia under immediate control through sanctions, the West has opted to increase its military support to help Ukraine win the war. Similarly, the US on the decision to support Taiwan can end up supplying high-end weapons sooner than Ukraine to counter China as the economic dependency is more complex. But, if the US decides to underplay in a conflict situation prioritizing its interests, then Taiwan might become the next Hong Kong.

Also, from around the world

By Padmashree Anandhan, Sejal Sharma, and Vijay Anand Panigrahi

East and Southeast Asia

China: Researchers discover a rise in water level in the lakes in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau region

On 17 April, a set of researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the University of California discovered the rise in the water level across 10 major lakes in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau region. The researchers had shortlisted 10 lakes which were more than 500 square kilometres to evaluate the variation in the water storage. It found that rainfall, glaciers and melting snow, lake surface evaporation, and soil freezing-thawing contributed to the increase in water level. They also discovered that the Plateau contained more than 60 per cent of the total water in the whole region. The reasons behind the accumulation of water were unknown due to complex topographic factors.

China: New rules to control women trafficking

On 18 April, China's lawmakers proposed a draft to revise the law on tightening the rules against women trafficking. The draft mandates a "screening mechanism," to track down the individual or group involved in crimes against women. As per the draft, it will allow marriage registering organizations, local bodies, and women associations to report to the police if they suspect any transfer or kidnapping of women.

China: NHC reports on the COVID-19 cases

On 18 April, the National Health Commission reported 3,316 new COVID-19 cases, out of which 3,297 were found to be spread through local transmission and 19 from abroad. So far, 18,284 new cases have been recorded as asymptomatic and 276,499 patients are currently under observation. The number of cases recorded in Hong Kong is more than 300,000 and in Taiwan, it is close to 36,000.

New Zealand: Military and financial support to Ukraine

On 11 April, prime minister Jacinda Ardern announced that it would be sending the country's Hercules aircraft and 50 personnel to Europe. Ardern said: "Our support is to assist the Ukraine army to repel a brutal Russian invasion because peace in the region of Europe is essential for global stability." The personnel will be deployed for two months in support of Ukraine and would additionally give the country financial support of USD 8.8 million. The defence aircraft will be used to carry equipment and supplies across Europe and to crucial distribution centres.

Myanmar: NUG president urges humanitarian support

On 18 April, Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG) president Duwa Lashi La urged the international community to double aid to people in Myanmar and to create a federal democratic union. Duwa Lashi La related the crimes happening in the Ukraine war with Myanmar and pointed out the atrocities committed by the Myanmar Military. He said: "Each day the military murders and tortures more innocent men, women and children." Apart from the request, he appreciated the international support in isolating the Junta and imposing sanctions.

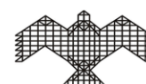
Myanmar: 1600 prisoners released on Buddhist new year

On 18 April, Myanmar's Junta announced to release 1,600 prisoners on the occasion of the Buddhist new year. As per the announcement, 1,619 prisoners, that includes 42 foreigners were "pardoned." The Assistance Association of Political Prisoners (AAPP) reported that, 13,282 people had been arrested by the military in the February 2021 coup and among the prisoners, the political detainees were not freed. According to the secretary of the state: "1,619 prisoners, including 42 detained foreigners, will be released under the amnesty."

South Asia

Sri Lanka: Government requests the IMF for a Rapid Financing Instrument

On 19 April, Sri Lanka appealed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for an urgent financial rescue aid. Sri Lankan delegation headed by finance minister Ali Sabry began talks with the IMF on Monday as the country battles its worst economic crisis in seven decades. Sabry requested a Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI) from the IMF which is usually granted to member nations with urgent funding needs. The IMF has agreed to consider this request even though it does not come under their standard circumstances for the issuance of an RFI. The IMF also notified that India made representations on behalf of Sri Lanka for the same financial aid.



Sri Lanka: New cabinet with 17 members

On 18 April, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa established a new Cabinet of Ministers in Sri Lanka despite continued demonstrations seeking his resignation. 17 ministers were appointed by the President including some former members of the cabinet. 24 state ministers were also appointed. The President called it an opportunity to change the system as wished by the people. Acknowledging the faults made by his administration, he said: “I believe that we should have gone for a programme with the International Monetary Fund earlier. Also, I think the decision not to provide chemical fertilizers to farmers was an error. We have taken steps to revive that practice.”

India: Tamil Nadu chief minister seeks to legalize temporary asylum for Tamil migrants

On 15 April, Tamil Nadu’s chief minister, MK Stalin, held virtual talks with migrants from Sri Lanka temporarily being accommodated in a camp in Ramanathapuram and enquired about their essential needs. He had earlier requested the Union government to provide legal provisions permitting the Tamil migrants to seek asylum in the state. The chief minister called it India’s duty to embrace the migrants and has asked permission from the prime minister to extend necessary help to them. So far 39 Sri Lankans have illegally reached Tamil Nadu trying to escape the miseries in the crisis-hit island nation.

India: New Delhi witnesses another communal clash

On 16 April, two communities clashed while a hanuman jayanti procession crossed a mosque in New Delhi’s Jahangirpuri. Eight policemen and one civilian sustained injuries as the confrontation escalated to stone pelting from both sides. The Delhi police have recovered three firearms and five swords from the accused. 21 suspects were arrested by the police on charges of rioting, arson, criminal conspiracy, and Section 27 of the Indian Penal Code’s Arms Act. Three accused have a prior criminal record, as notified by the Delhi police. This incident took place just days after major cities in the country witnessed hostile clashes on the day of ram navami.

India: Targeted killings in Kashmir

On 15 April, a village sarpanch was killed by militants in Baramulla of north Kashmir raising concerns of the Hindu minority in the region. Several Kashmiri Pandit organizations raised the issue of mortal threats against the members of the hindu community and non-locals. The head of the Kashmiri Pandit Sangarash Samiti (KPSS), Sanjay Tikoo, claimed that the security of the Hindu community has been compromised and yet again the government has failed to ensure their safety.

India: Health ministry challenges WHO’s Covid death calculation procedure

On 17 April, the Indian health ministry alleged that World Health Organization’s (WHO) procedure unfairly calculates the deaths caused by Covid-19 and called it a flawed mechanism. The New York Times published an article titled “India Is Stalling the WHO’s Efforts to Make Global Covid Death Toll Public.” On 16 April which triggered a response from the Health Ministry office in New Delhi. WHO further accused India of undercounting its death toll by a massive 3.5 million. The organization also claimed that India is delaying its effort to revise the Covid-19 global death toll.

Afghanistan: Three consecutive blasts near schools in the capital killed six

On 19 April, six people were killed while many others were injured as three blasts in a row were reported in west Kabul. The initial explosion was witnessed near Mamtaz Tuition Centre. Subsequently, two more explosions took place around the vicinity of the Abdul Raheem Shaheed High School. The latter explosions happened when students of the school were leaving

their classes. The responsibility for these blasts is not claimed by any group yet but the concerned ministry has launched an investigation into the incident.

Afghanistan: Pressure to reopen girls' schools

On 17 April, a group of women conducted a home protest in the capital requesting the state officials to reopen schools for girls above grade six. The protest was organized by Junbish Khodjosh Zanan Afghanistan shortly after the Ministry of Education expressed its positive interest in reopening the schools for girls studying in grades 7-12. Although a green light is hinted at by the ministry, no such decision is announced yet on this matter. The women rights activists in the country strongly criticized the state's action depriving girls of their education and reiterated the Taliban's commitment to ensure schooling for all.

Pakistan: Several injured as protests over driver's assassination in Chagai turn violent

On 15 April, seven people sustained injuries amid protests against the killing of a driver by security forces. The driver was reportedly killed as he tried to escape when he was asked to stop in the Panch Raik area near the Pak-Afghan border. Residents and drivers of Nokkundi and Dalbandin areas of Chagai district came together to protest outside a government building reportedly being used by the security forces and set its main gate on fire. Four more people got injured on Sunday as the protests continued despite the continuous assurance of justice by the Chagai Deputy Commissioner Mansoor Ahmed Baloch. He also claimed that all demands of the protestors were accepted and that the driver's death would be fully investigated.

Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Sudan: Military general announces to ease tensions

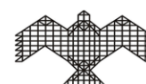
On 15 April, Sudan's military general Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan commented that the military coup was willing to take steps to relax tensions in the region. The military general along with other leaders carried out a coup in October 2021 ending the coalition that was formed post-expelling of Omar Al-Bashir. Since the coup, 94 have been reported to have been killed in the protests. He said: "We are embarking on a difficult period and we must all present concessions for the sake of our country." The comments come as the military considers the declining economy and security in the country. Burhan reiterated that the military will transfer the power only to an elected government.

Yemen: Houthi rebels agree to remove child soldiers from the military group

On 19 April, the UN reported that Houthi rebels had agreed to remove child soldiers who have been part of the civil war for the past seven years. On 18 April, Houthis signed an "action plan" to stop involving children in armed conflict and attacks on the schools and hospitals. UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric confirmed the same stating the rebels had assured to identify children from their groups and to release them within six months. According to the UN, close to 3500 children were found to be recruited and used in Yemen's civil war.

Turkey: New attacks launched on Kurdish militants

On 18 April, Turkey launched an attack using artillery, T129B helicopters, drones and F-16 fighters, Turkey's Special Forces, and elite commando units. It targeted both ground and aerial cross border on Kurdish militants in northern Iraq. The cross-border attack was called Operation Claw Lock was carried out in response to the increased strikes against the Turkish base in Nineveh and Kurdistan Workers' Party's expansion attempts. According to a member of the scientific committee of the Istanbul-based Academy of International Relations said: "The military operations began about a week after the visit of Barzani to Ankara and it clearly indicated the existence of security coordination between Irbil and Ankara to launch the military operation."



South Africa: Death toll rises after devastating floods

On 18 April, KwaZulu Natal province accounted for 443 deaths, including two emergency workers and 63 people missing after the destructive flooding caused by torrential rains that started on 12 April. The storm has displaced more than 40,000 people and has caused extreme damage to infrastructure in the region. The government has declared a nationwide state of disaster and has deployed more than 10,000 military troops to assist with rescue operations. The military would also contribute to medical and relief measures ongoing at the local level. Climate change and changing weather patterns in the region have contributed to frequent extreme weather phenomena in recent times.

Africa: UN allocates USD 100 million in aid to fight hunger

On 14 April, the United Nations released USD 100 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) towards relief projects in six African countries and Yemen. The CERF enables humanitarian assistance in crisis situations. This aid is directed towards enabling UN agencies in providing critical relief measures such as medical, nutritional and monetary aid. The funding will support humanitarian operations to battle food insecurity across the Horn of Africa region and Yemen, mainly driven by armed conflict, drought and economic turmoil. More than 4.5 million people are expected to be soon pushed into poverty, destitution and hunger.

Europe and the Americas

Netherlands sending patriot missiles to Slovakia under NATO treaty

On 14 April, the Dutch Patriot anti-aircraft missile system was sent to Slovakia to protect the NATO treaty area and its population against possible missile strikes. The Dutch have also sent 150 soldiers to Slovakia that are to be stationed alongside German soldiers at the Sliac air base. After Russia invaded Ukraine, these anti-aircraft systems were transported to Slovakia for precautionary measures. Slovakia also showed its support for Ukraine by sending S-300 anti-aircraft systems to defend itself from Russian forces. The Netherlands would defend Slovakia with the Patriot air defence system.

Russia: Defence Ministry confirms explosion of Moskva

On 14 April, Russia's Defence Ministry reported on the explosion of its vessel Moskva. In the statement released, it said: "The cruiser Moskva's ammunition has detonated as a result of a fire on the warship. The vessel is seriously damaged. The entire crew has been evacuated. The cause of the blaze is being investigated." The Ukrainian forces had stated that that vessel was attacked using Neptune missiles. Previously, the Moskva warship was under attack by Ukrainians calling for surrender, later Russia confirmed that the ammunition which was stored in the ship had exploded.

Slovakia: Sends S-300 surface to air missile system

Slovakia announced its decision to supply Ukraine with the S-300 surface-to air missile system to strengthen its air defences. According to Slovakia's Prime Minister Eduard Heger: "I believe that this defence system will help save as many innocent lives as possible from the aggression of Putin's regime." In line with Biden's statement, Slovakia has received surface to air missile from Germany and the Netherlands as part of reinforcing the borders of eastern Europe.

The US: Additional military aid of USD 800 million to Ukraine

On 13 April, US president Joe Biden declared additional military assistance of USD 800 million to Ukraine. The previous package included heavy artillery, armoured personnel carriers and coastal defence boats. In the additional package, the US has agreed to supply "11 Mi-17 helicopters, 40,000 artillery rounds, counter-artillery radars, 200 armored personnel carriers

and 300 additional "Switchblade" drones." According to Pentagon spokesperson, John Kirby, highlighted that in terms of Howitzers and radars, the Ukrainian forces needed training in using the equipments. On the same, the Pentagon released a statement: "focused primarily on accelerating production and building more capacity across the industrial base for weapons and equipment that can be exported rapidly, deployed with minimal training, and prove effective in the battlefield."

The US: Mass shooting leaves nine injured

On 19 April, at least nine people were shot amidst a mass shooting at a lounge in Furman, South Carolina. The victims had been transported to the hospital by civilians around the area. Law enforcement agencies claim the incident to be a planned attack as it follows two mass shooting incidents that occurred over the weekend. The former attacks did not have any fatalities. Other incidents of mass shootings were seen in Columbia and Pittsburgh. The shootings are expected to follow a series of gun violence that has been rampant in the country for the past few weeks.

The US: Ban on anti-satellite missile tests

On 19 April, Vice President Kamala Harris announced a ban on missile tests against satellites making the US the first country to do so. The move is a part of the Biden administration's plan to encourage responsible space usage. Kamala Harris, in her address said: "These tests are part of their efforts to develop anti-satellite weapons systems. These weapons are intended to deny the United States our ability to use our space capabilities by disrupting, destroying our satellites- satellites which are critical to our national security." The announcement comes amid increased tensions with Russia and its anti-satellite missile tests that were carried out in November 2021.

The US: Brooklyn subway attack suspect held without bail

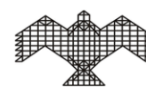
On 15 April, the accused in the Brooklyn subway shooting case, Frank James appeared in court for executing the attack which injured 23 people. James is to be held until trial without bail on grounds of federal terror charges. The attack is said to be premeditated however; James lawyer requested a psychiatric report as the accused did not request for a plea. The investigation revealed that he had left behind a trail of incriminating items at the scene of crime before fleeing and had reportedly handed himself over to the police on 13 April. The alleged motive behind the shooting has not been revealed yet.

The US: International trade halted due to truckers' protest

On 11 April, commercial traffic was stopped at the bridge connecting Pharr and Reynosa, a key South Texas border crossing, after Mexican truckers staged a protest on their side of the crossing. The truckers were protesting the new inspection requirements imposed by the State's governor Greg Abbott, which mandates additional inspection of all commercial vehicles even after clearing US customs.

About the authors

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A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

6 April 2022, Vol.3, No.1

Political Crises in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Tunisia; Ceasefire in Yemen; and the Battle for Mariupol

Chrishari de Alwis Gunasekare, Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Apoorva Sudhakar, Lavanya Ravi, and Sruthi Sadasivam



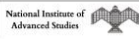
Photo Source: REUTERS/Dinuka Liyanawatte

Sri Lanka: The economic woes spiral into a political crisis

[In the news](#)

On 1 April 2021, Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa declared a state of emergency following protests over the economic crisis. In his address, he said: "At this crucial juncture the country needs stability to weather the current financial crisis and difficulties."

On 5 April, the government lost its majority in the Parliament, following a series of resignations by the Parliamentarians, from the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) and its alliance partner, the Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP). Earlier, the Cabinet ministers also handed over their resignations, and most of the political parties withdrew their support to the ruling party to remain independent within the Parliament.



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30 March 2022, Vol.2, No.53

30 days of War in Ukraine

Padmashree Anandhan



Source: Institute for the Study of War (21:00 GMT, 31 March)

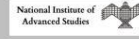
Photo Source: BBC/Institute for the Study of War

30 days of Ukraine war: Developments, trends and perspective

[In the news](#)

On 24 February, Russia's President Vladimir Putin began the invasion in Ukraine, launching troops into Ukraine. The launch marked the start of the war in Europe since World War II.

On 27 February, the EU announced a ban on airspace to prevent Russian aircrafts from entering its space. The EU and its allies agreed to cut down Russian banks from SWIFT along with the US. It is the most relied financial telecommunication system of Russia used in oil and gas exports.



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Sri Lanka's worsening economic crisis

Chrishari de Alwis Gunasekare



Besides the economic crisis, there is also a serious energy crisis in Sri Lanka, people are standing in long queues in front of the oil stations. (Image Source: REUTERS/DINUKA LIYANAWATTE)

The worsening economic crisis in Sri Lanka

[In the news](#)

On 17 March, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa addressing the nation, on the current economic crisis claimed: "This crisis was not created by me. When those who contributed to the creation of this crisis are criticizing the government in front of the people today, I am attempting to immediately resolve this crisis and provide relief to the people... The root cause of current issues is our foreign exchange crisis."

[Issues at large](#)

First, a brief note on the current economic crisis. Sri Lanka's economy was hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is currently facing the most severe economic and energy crisis recorded in recent history due to the ongoing foreign exchange shortage. The prices of essential



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The end of Denmark's Inuit experiment

Apoorva Sudhakar



Danish PM meets and apologises to survivors of the 1950s' little Danes experiment. (Image Source: peopledispatch.org | Aaja Chemnitz Larsen MP)

Denmark: PM apologizes to survivors of "little Danes" experiment

[In the news](#)

On 9 March, Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen apologized to the victims of a social experiment in the 1950s wherein 22 Inuit children were separated from their families and taken to Denmark to "re-educate" and integrate them into the Danish society.

On the same day, the PM met with six survivors; The Guardian quoted Frederiksen: "What you were subjected to was terrible. It was inhumane. It was unfair. And it was heartless... We can take responsibility and do the only thing that is fair, in my eyes: to say sorry to you for what happened." CTV News quoted Greenland Prime Minister Mute Egede: "This is part of our common history ... The truth has emerged and it is a truth which hurts to look back on."

On 9 March, CTV News quoted one of the survivors: "Our parents said yes to the trip but were hardly aware of what they agreed to."



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09 March 2022, Vol.2, No.50

International Women's Day: Gap between policies and realities on gender equality

Mallika Joseph

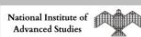


International Women's Day was celebrated on 8 March 2022 across the world. (Image Source: UN Women)

International Women's Day: Gap between policies and realities on gender equality

[In the news](#)

On 8 March, the world celebrated International Women's Day (IWD). The UN's theme for International Women's Day 2022 was "gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow," with a special emphasis on climate change. It was aligned with the priority theme of the 66th meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) held in March every year. This year's priority theme is "achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes." In his statement on IWD, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres pointed out that women primarily bear the brunt of climate change and environmental degradation. Further, he acknowledged that the clock on women's rights was moving backwards in many areas, particularly due to the pandemic, and called for bold action and massive investment to address gender inequality.



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2 March 2022, Vol.2, No.49

Russia's Ukraine Invasion: One Week Later

D Suba Chandran



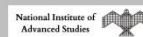
Photo Source: news.un.org

Russia's Ukraine Invasion: One Week Later

[In the news](#)

On 26 February, a group of leaders across the US, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the European Commission, came together to "condemn Putin's war of choice and attacks on the sovereign nation and people of Ukraine." The joint statement underlined their resolve to "continue imposing costs on Russia that will further isolate Russia from the international financial system and our economies" and undertake the following measures: to ensure that "selected Russian banks are removed from the SWIFT messaging system" thereby disconnecting these banks from their global operations; to impose, "restrictive measures that will prevent the Russian Central Bank from deploying its international reserves," so that the international sanctions are not undermined by Russia; to act "against the people and entities who facilitate the war in Ukraine and the harmful activities of the Russian government," addressing wealthy Russians linked with the Russian government; to launch "a transatlantic task force that will ensure the effective implementation" of the sanctions; and, to coordinate "against disinformation and other forms of hybrid warfare."

On 26 February, the Russian news agency TASS reported the Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying: "Immediate measures are certainly being taken in order to mitigate the damage from sanctions and ensure the unhindered operation of all economic sectors and systems. ... (Russia) has every possibility and potential to do that. ... Analysis will be required to determine the retaliatory measures that would best serve our interests."



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23 February 2022, Vol.2, No.48

Russia's Ukraine salami slicing and Canada's freedom convoy protests

D Suba Chandran & Sarasi Ganguly

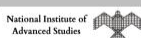


Russian President recognizing the two separatist regions of Ukraine on 21 February, is followed by a "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance" between Russia and the two "new republics" - Luhansk and Donetsk. (Image Source: kremlin.ru)

Russia's Ukraine salami slicing

[In the news](#)

On 21 February, Russian President Putin signed an executive order recognizing "Donetsk People's Republic" and "Luhansk People's Republic" – two regions in eastern Ukraine, that were waging a separatist war with Kyiv. Two separatist leaders Denis Pushilin (Donetsk), and Leonid Pasechnik (Luhansk) were with Putin in Moscow for the event. On the same occasion, Putin also signed two separate agreements – "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance" with the "Donetsk People's Republic" and the "Luhansk People's Republic." The treaty "reaffirms the policy of the Russian Federation to develop comprehensive, forward-looking cooperation" "provides for broad cooperation in the political, economic, social, military and humanitarian areas" with the two regions. On 22 February, the Duma ratified the order.



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Unfreezing the Afghan assets, Tunisia's judicial crisis and Libya's new political deadlock

Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Poulomi Mondal, and Harshita Rathore

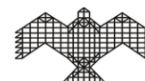
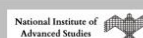


An executive order signed by President Biden on Afghanistan says the US administration "will seek to facilitate access to \$3.5 billion of those assets for the benefit of the Afghan people and Afghanistan's future pending a judicial decision." (Image Source: Reuters-Stringer)

Afghanistan: President Biden signs order to split USD seven billion in frozen Afghan assets

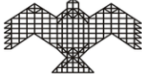
[In the news](#)

On 11 February, President Biden signed an Executive Order to help enable certain US-based assets belonging to Afghanistan's central bank, Da Afghanistan Bank. The order claimed that "this is one step forward in the United States' effort to authorize the transfer of a significant portion of the funds to meet the needs of the Afghan people."





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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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