

Conflict Weekly

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A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

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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](https://www.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."

Issues at large

First, the “little Danes” experiment. In 1951, 22 Inuit children aged roughly between five and nine were forcefully taken from their families in Greenland for “re-education” towards becoming model Danish citizens. Greenland was a Danish colony; the “re-education” included cutting ties with their roots, culture, and language. The Danish justified the experiment stating Greenland needed to address its poverty and low living standards. The trained little Danes were expected to return to Greenland and modernize the population. When the children returned to Greenland after a year, they lived in an orphanage and were not allowed to speak their language. However, the Greenlandic population perceived them as strangers, and several children returned to Denmark after growing up; CNN reports that many of them were trapped into substance abuse and many suffered mental illnesses, leaving only six survivors.

Second, the idea of re-education. The little Danes experiment was carried out with an assumption that the Danish were superior to their colonies. This sentiment is not unique to the Danish; several colonial powers, including the British, French and Belgians, employed similar tactics in their colonies in South Asia, Africa and so on. Recently, Canada’s announcement of monetary compensation to indigenous communities threw light on the similar plight of indigenous children who were separated from their families in the 1800s to 1900s to westernize them through education in boarding schools.

Third, the failure of the experiments. The experiments aimed at integration or assimilation did not produce the expected results. Several survivors across communities believe that they were subjected to a loss of identity and cultural genocide. Many of the experiments were carried out through threats, abuse and punishing.

Fourth, the apology. Denmark is among several other countries that are now revisiting their colonial past and apologizing to their victims. In recent times, France, Germany, Belgium, have all issued similar apologies to their erstwhile colonies.

In perspective

The apology of Denmark signifies the acknowledgement of the colonial power’s dark past. While the apology may not change the lives of the survivors, it signifies efforts of the governments to reconcile with those who were wronged during the colonial past.

Also, from around the world

By Padmashree Anandhan

Peace and Conflict from East and Southeast Asia

China: UK human rights group receives a warning

On 14 March, a UK-based human rights group received a legal warning from Hong Kong Police for violating China’s National Security Law. UK’s Foreign Secretary condemned China’s attempts to silence the free speech of the organization. The warning issued by the authorities stated that the group could be penalized for GBP 9800, and the head of the group would face three years of imprisonment. It will be the first time a human rights group being targeted by China since the passing of the National Security Law. According to UK’s Foreign Secretary: “Attempting to silence voices globally that speak up for freedom and democracy is unacceptable and will never succeed.”

China: The US warns supporting Russia would lead to severe consequence

On 14 March, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, in a meeting between NATO allies and Asian countries, warned about the isolation and penalties China will encounter if it engages with Russia in the invasion of Ukraine. While the war escalates between Russia and Ukraine, the US fears that further involvement of China in providing security or economic support to Russia will worsen the situation. Therefore, the US authorities have strictly warned China on facing a series of consequences if found to be supporting Russia.

China: Xi address issues on Xinjiang, gender, and energy

On 10 March, President Xi delivered the address on the fifth session of the 13th National People's Congress. The speech highlighted issues of women's security, ethnic unity, energy, and Taiwan. When it comes to ethnic unity, China has been sovereign about its internal issues and has avoided the involvement of external actors, especially in Xinjiang and Tibet. China provided reports showing developments in living standards for those who live in those regions as attempts to show the region positively. The next issue highlighted was on energy security, where CPC was shown committed towards green transition later, the President announced the recognition of greener energy for domestic consumption and its move to stop the financing of coal-powered plants. In terms of Taiwan, although China has not been to achieve "One-China," it continues to increase its military in the region to prepare for future challenges.

Myanmar: Protest rise against the military coup

On 14 March, factory workers from industrial areas protested against the Myanmar military's February coup. The protestors used self-made barricades to push away the police forces. According to records of Human Rights Watch, the police and soldiers were found to be using rifles, killing 65 protestors. One of the protestors said: "We have been under martial law since then. So long as the military exists, we continue suffering." The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners also reported on 1600 deaths since the coup; the UN Human Rights Council is scheduled to discuss Myanmar's humanitarian situation on 18 March.

Indonesia: Eight fishermen from Kanniyakumari captured by police

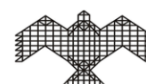
On 09 March, eight fishermen belonging to Kanniyakumari district were held by Indonesian police for being found to be fishing in the sea base of Indonesian waters in the Andaman Islands. According to General Secretary of South Asian Fishermen Fraternit, "Since all the eight fishermen are innocent and they accidentally entered the territorial waters of Indonesia, the Indonesian government should pardon and release them at the earliest so that their panic-stricken families will heave a sigh of relief."

Indonesia and Philippines: Two continuous earthquakes recorded

On 14 March, western Indonesia and the Philippines experienced two earthquakes at 6.7 and 6.4 magnitudes, as reported by the United States Geological Survey (USGS). Indonesia's National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB) said that the first earthquake was felt stronger, creating panic amongst the residents. A similar incident took place in February in North Sumatra of Indonesia, resulting in the death of a dozen of people and the destruction of houses.

Cambodia: Wartime weapons found in border shared with Thailand

On 12 March, in the Thai-Cambodian border of Sangkha district, a large number of wartime weapons were discovered by villagers. After receiving information on the weapons, the Thai Mine Action Centre (TMAC) of the Royal Thai Armed Forces sent troops to examine the



ammunition. So far many such undiscovered mined buried in the forest have led to the killing of villagers and destruction of forests.

Singapore: Risk of Russian oils being stocked as buyers resist to purchase

On 15 March, an analyst from PetroChina Co. reported that the Russian oils may get stocked up in tankers of Singapore and Malaysia as there is hesitance amongst the buyers in purchasing Russia's oil. The resistance comes due to international condemnation the buyer company faces as Russia continues to invade Ukraine. China International United Petroleum & Chemical Co has said that it will continue to observe the developments taking place around Russia to strategize the buying of crude from Russia.

Peace and Conflict from South Asia

India: Talks fails to attain solution for disengagement in eastern Ladakh

On 12 March, the 15th round of India-China talks failed reach a settlement. In the joint statement, both India and China reiterated that a resolution addressing relevant issues in the Western sector of LAC would help in achieving peace and promoting bilateral relations. Both parties agreed to maintain security and military dialogue using diplomatic ways to resolve sooner. According to the statement released: "They had a detailed exchange of views in this regard, in keeping with the guidance provided by the State leaders to work for the resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest."

India: New petition filed against verdict of Karnataka High Court on wearing Hijab

On 17 February, a fresh plea was pursued in Supreme Court against the verdict given by the Karnataka High Court. The verdict denied petitions asking permission to wear Hijab inside the classroom, stating it as not part of the religious practice of the Islamic faith. According to the petitioner: "The high court has failed to note that the right to wear a Hijab comes under the ambit of the right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. It is submitted that the freedom of conscience forms a part of the right to privacy." The petitioners who have filed the suit argue that the scarf was an "innocent element" and not a display of "religious jingoism."

Sri Lanka: The SJB protests against the government

On 16 February, the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) opposition party in Sri Lanka, gathered thousands of protestors to demonstrate against the present government. The protestors demanded the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa due to the booming economic crisis. Protestor's march took place out President's office holding signboards such as "Gota Go Home," and "Country is destroyed.. now enough." The economic crisis has unfolded in Sri Lanka due to various missteps, one being the ban on chemical fertilizer, affecting the rice crop cultivation, and forex shortage due to printing of money. This has led to power cuts and fuel scarcity. In response, Sri Lanka's Cabinet of Ministers has said to ask for a bailout from IMF to deal with the crisis.

Pakistan: Foreign Minister rejects India's clarification on erroneous missile launch

On 16 March, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi rejected India's explanation for a missile that was fired in the previous week by mistake by India which flew into eastern Pakistan. Defense Minister Rajnath Singh assured to review India's missile handling procedures. He said that the launch was due to technical malfunctioning during the regular round of maintenance. Although the disaster was deterred, it sparked tensions in Pakistan. Qureshi, further commented that it was "highly irresponsible."

Pakistan: Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances fails to take action

On 11 March, the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances to the Islamabad High Court (IHC) disclosed in its report that out of 8,643 citizens who were missing since March 2011, 3284 have been confirmed to have returned. The commission began in 2011 to track down missing persons and after 11 years it has received 8,643 forced disappearances complaints and 2,249 cases are under investigation. The main reasons behind such disappeared were military operations, drone attacks, and illegal crossing of people on the Afghan border to join the war against the US. According to IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah stated that the responsibility of the commission was to advise the government to counter such disappearances and upon pointed out that the commission has failed as no action has been taken till now.

Afghanistan: WFP report food insecurity and lack of funds to support crisis

On 14 March, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi along with the delegation reached Kabul to examine the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and to meet Islamic Emirati Officials. While addressing the reporters, Grandi highlighted UNHCR's 40 years of support to people in Afghanistan and assured that it will continue to help the displaced people in the country and its refugees in the rest of the world. Apart from this Grandi is also expected to discuss the humanitarian situation with the Emirate officials to find solutions for the people.

Peace and Conflict from Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Azerbaijan: Five-point plan proposed to Armenia triggers tensions

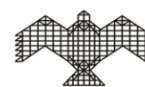
On 15 March, the tensions between Nagorno-Karabakh rise back, Azerbaijan proposed a five-point plan to Armenia to normalize relations. The plan, calls for recognition of each other's territorial integrity, refraining from threats, delineating the border, and developing transportation links. According to Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan: "It is paramount for the Armenian side that the rights and freedoms of the Armenians of Artsakh are guaranteed, and the status of Nagorno-Karabakh is finally clarified. For us, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is not a territorial issue, but a matter of rights." In response, Azerbaijan mistook the statement as a step to recognize Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan. Thereby increasing tensions might lead to both parties taking an extreme position.

Saudi Arabia: Crown Prince meets Boris Johnson for boosting collaboration in the energy sector

On 16 March, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson met Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman in Riyadh during his trip in the Gulf. The talks focussed on reducing the dependency on Russian oil and gas. Instead of increasing collaboration between the UK and Saudi Arabia on energy, security, and trade. Johnson said: "Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are key international partners in that effort." He added that the UAE and Saudi Arabia were UK's two largest economic allies in the region, with trade worth GBP 12.2 billion and GBP10.4 billion respectively as of 2020.

Nigeria: NUSA release statement on extrajudicial killings

On 11 March, the President of Nigeria Union South Africa (NUSA) released a statement revealing the killing of two Nigerians in the attack by South Africans over drugs. The Union urged both countries to end extra-judicial killings. It reported that two of its member were previously killed similarly, alleging the involvement of drugs. The President of the Union said: "We do not condone crime but justice must be served by the court of law should anyone be found guilty of any criminal act."



Ethiopia: Ethiopian Human Rights Commission reports 750 civilians killed

On 11 March, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission reported that close to 750 civilians were killed in the Amhara and Afar regions in the latter half of 2021. According to the report, the reasons behind the killing were due to enforced disappearances, looting, torture, and various destructions. Many others have been reported to have died in extrajudicial killings, drone attacks, and artillery firing.

Peace and Conflict from Europe and the Americas

Ukraine: Continuing Russian attacks across cities

On 16 March, a 35-hour curfew was declared in the capital city Kyiv. While three Prime Ministers met in Ukraine, Russia continued shelling Ukrainian cities through its artillery and warplanes. The recent reports stated that a 12-storey suburban building in Kyiv was taken down by Russians, injuring two and resulting in the evacuation of 35 people from the block. Apart from these, a series of explosions were recorded in Odesa and Zaporizhzhia. While the attack continues in Mariupol, the living conditions of 400,000 people have worsened with no access to water, electricity, and gas. The Russian troops aligned in the borders have blocked the entry points of humanitarian aid and routes for people to escape, thereby narrowing the living possibility of people in Mariupol.

Ukraine: Narrowing humanitarian corridors due to Russian shelling

On 12 March, Luhansk Oblast's Governor Serhiy Haidai stated that 70 per cent of the region was under Russian occupation. Meanwhile, Ukraine-controlled areas witnessed an artillery bombardment leading to dozens of civilian deaths and other casualties. Via the Facebook post, Haidai also mentioned the lack of humanitarian corridors available for citizens to flee the region. Additionally, Sumy's regional administration head Dmytro Zhyvytskyi announced via Telegram that six escape routes were prepared for evacuation. Those from Sumy, Trostianets, Lebedin, Konotop, Krasnopillia, and Velyka Pysarivka are likely to be taken to the south of Sumy, to Poltava.

Ukraine: Russian troops advance to Western cities

On 11 March, while Kharkiv was being attacked, Russia launched a new set of attacks for the first time in Lutsk, a country in the north-west, Ivano-Frankivsk in the south-west and Dnipro in the central-eastern of Ukraine. The west part of Ukraine was considered to be safe points for people fleeing and with Russia striking in the west, means the war is reaching its full escalation. The Mayor of Lutsk confirmed the blasts which targeted a kindergarten and an apartment building. Ukraine's State Emergency Services (SES) reported killings of many civilians and soldiers due to bombings and aerial assault. With continued gunfire taking place in the north-west and southwest cities of Ukraine, Ukraine issued a warning to Krykhyvtsi, Chukalivka, Opryshivtsi, Gorodok districts for people to evacuate immediately. Upon airstrikes in Chernihiv, the northern city of Ukraine, the city was cut off from the water supply.

Russia: Defense Ministry releases video destructing Ukraine's ammunition depot

On 16 March, Russia's Foreign Intelligence Agency Head said that while Russia's position in the world is being defined, Ukraine's fate will be decided soon. His speech highlighted the sovereignty aspect and stressed that Russia will not compensate when it came to sovereignty. The Defense Ministry also released a video of the destruction of Ukraine's weapons and ammunition depot in the Chernigov region. In the statement released: "The Russian Armed Forces' artillery unit conducted a fire mission, carrying out a pinpoint strike that destroyed a combined depot site containing missile and artillery weapons, as well as up to 20 pieces of weapons and military equipment."

Russia: President Putin urges volunteers from Middle East to fight the war in Ukraine

On 11 March, Russia's President Vladimir Putin in his address at the Russian security council meeting, urged for volunteers to fight Russian-backed groups in the war. He later approved the volunteers from the Middle East to support Russia in eastern Ukraine. The involvement of Syrian government troops is predicted to be involved in the fighting for Russia, the inflow of Syrian soldiers is due to Russia's previous help backing Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Putin said: "If you see that there are these people who want of their own accord, not for money, to come to help the people living in Donbas, then we need to give them what they want and help them get to the conflict zone." Apart from this, Putin indicated that the talks between the Ukraine and Russian officials and sanctions on Russia are seen as a positive development.

Ireland: Meta fined EUR 17 million for data breach

On 16 March, Ireland's data regulator stated that it would be imposing a EUR 17 million fine on Meta platforms. The country's Data Protection Commissioner said: "Meta Platforms failed to have in place appropriate technical and organizational measures which would enable it to readily demonstrate the security measures that it implemented in practice to protect EU users' data." The decision came after an inquiry in 2018 on the 12 data breach notifications, which were then submitted to the regulator. The Data Protection Commissioner has many other ongoing investigations into Meta; Dublin regulates the internet giants as their European Headquarters are based in Ireland.

The US: F-35 jets set to replace Tornado fleet

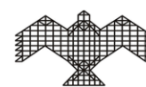
On 13 March, German Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht initiated the purchase of thirty-five F-35 fighter jets from the US to replace its Tornado fleet. The military upgrade was in response to Russia's intervention in Ukraine. As a first step, the Ministry will submit a formal request to the US government to purchase the fighters to gain clarity on delivery timelines and options for cooperation in training and maintenance. The announcement comes after German Chancellor Olaf Scholz stated that the country would increase military spending to more than two per cent of GDP in response to evolving security challenges in Europe.

The US: Additional military equipment worth USD 200 million authorized

On 13 March, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken condemned a missile attack by Russia on Ukraine's border with Poland. Blinken said: "We condemn the Russian Federation's missile attack on the International Center for Peacekeeping and Security in Yavoriv, close to Ukraine's border with Poland. The brutality must stop." Also, on 13 March, Biden authorized USD 200 million to procure additional military equipment for Ukraine. The announcement comes as Washington had already authorized USD 350 million worth of military equipment on 26 February.

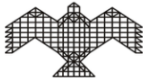
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About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI)

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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