National Institute of Advanced Studies
International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI)

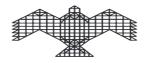Report

Young-IPRI Workshop
"Why Conflicts Continue"

organised in collaboration with
Centre for South Asian Studies, Pondicherry and India Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

Date & Venue
3-4 November 2022, Centre for South Asian Studies, Pondicherry University

Pondicherry Workshop Report on "Why Conflicts Continue"

From 3 November to 5 November 2022, International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI) under Conflict Resolution and Peace Research Programme at National Institute of Advanced Studies along with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Pondicherry University organised a workshop at Pondicherry University. The theme of the workshop was "Why Conflicts Continue". Scholars from various universities and colleges including, Manipal University, Madras University, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala University and Hyderabad Central University participated in the workshop. There were 22 presentations which were divided and grouped under different themes. The themes included, gender and conflict, conflicts from Central Asia, Middle East and Europe, environment and resource conflicts, conflicts in South Asia, conflicts in Africa, conflicts in East Asia and Maritime conflicts.

This report is prepared by Anu Maria Joseph, Research Assistant at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru.

Session-I: Gender and Conflict
Discussant: Apoorva Sudhakar
Research Associate, NIAS
Honour Killings in Pakistan: The social roots of a conflict
Madhura Mahesh, Research Intern, NIAS

The issue of honour killings in Pakistan points to the conservative patriarchal nature of Pakistani society. The issues followed by conservatism are diverse. First, the lack of women's rights in Pakistan against atrocities. Women are considered 'property' of men and they decide the future of the women in the family. Women are sometimes used as bargaining chips and as a form of payment to wealthy zamindars to cover any payments. Education for girls was barred in Pakistan for a long time as religious leaders and politicians considered it unnecessary and promoted the role of women as housewives entirely. A woman seen alone with another man is considered a threat to the family's honour and it will fall upon the man of the house to rectify this.

Secondly, the communities' reactions to such practices. The instances of missteps or scandals are dealt with by the community and the considered parties who criticise and pass comments which incite family members to take action. The perpetrator is supported by his family and community to bring the family's honour back. In majority cases, the justice system declares him innocent.

Lastly, the justice system in Pakistan has passed contradictory judgements. In Pakistan, there are two laws which address this matter of honour killings but they have multiple loopholes which can be easily exploited by the perpetrators. There is also confusion between British Era laws and the Sharia laws. The clash leaves a lot of interpretation and finds the accuser not guilty. Justices and politicians usually do not address this matter and this leads to a lack of effort by both in the same.

Understanding discrimination towards the LGBT Community in Europe: Sexual Orientation, Emotional Distress, and Church-State Relations
Angelin Archana

There are six major narratives about the LGBT community, which include negative othering, opposing a gender ideology, hetero activism & protecting natural family rights, and restoring natural order and threat to child safety. However, the EU has been gathering support for these vulnerable groups to improve their mental health. It wants to address the various discriminatory practices and their mental health issues through multiple institutions. Despite numerous laws and measures, at the individual level, people still fear being discriminated against and in the worst cases, have lesser belief in the executive systems. The EU's recommendation to punish sexual orientation discrimination is welcomed; however, it is also backed by increasing the number of conservative ideologies. Both queer and conservative have strengthened their activities in order to convince the neutral people to support their respective clans.

The Church's interference in wider activities such as access to Baptism, seminary (nuns and priesthood), right to safety, freedom of conscience, legal documentation, diversity in leadership, the guided protocol for families, the blessing given to same-sex marriages, affiliation to theological education materials, adoption practices, sensitive usage of language, participate in political organisations, reproductive rights, and certain health rights.

In order to create a healthy society rather than the constant rivalry between queer and conservative politics, it is very important for the church to accept the LGBT community as a part of it. This inclusion will eventually stop hate speeches and discrimination against the group.

Session II: Central Asia, Middle East and Europe
Discussants: Abigail Miriam Fernandez & Padmashree Anandhan,
Research Associates, NIAS
The perpetual Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Key issues at stake
Arul Braighta, Postgraduate Scholar, Loyola College

Although there have been repeated attempts by international mediators, there are multiple reasons why Israeli-Palestinian issue has not yet been settled. Firstly, the dispute is extremely entrenched, with both parties having long-standing emotional and historical ties to the contested territory with the Israelis claiming historical and religious ties and the Palestinians claiming that they are the indigenous people. This makes it very challenging for both sides to reach the essential agreements for a wave of long-lasting peace.

Second, the involvement of other regional and global parties in the war adds to its complexity. For instance, Saudi Arabia has backed the more moderate Palestinian factions whereas Iran has been a key sponsor of Palestinian militant groups. The United States has traditionally been a strong supporter of Israel, but more recently it has been trying to play a more even-handed role. The two sides struggle

to negotiate a compromise because of this outside intervention.

Three, these groups often carry out violence against civilians, which makes it even harder for the two sides to reach a negotiated settlement. Four, the conflict is further complicated by the fact that there are now two different Palestinian governments, each with its own vision for the future—the Hamas-run government in Gaza and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. It is challenging for these two factions to talk with the Israelis because they frequently engage in confrontation with one another.

Crimes against Kurds: Five reasons why it is still continuing
Sayani Rana, Undergraduate Scholar, St Joseph's University

The reasons for the continuing crimes against Kurds are multiple. First, the Kurds are divided, not just through their citizenship but also through their ideology. They demand for a separate state to protect themselves from all the discrimination they are facing, but the way to achieve their independence differs. Secondly, due to a weak sovereignty, the official military of different sovereign states are infiltrating an area which is thought to be part of a different sovereign state but is autonomous. Three, Lack of Cooperation among the Nation-States. If taking down the rebels is the only reason why Turkey and Iran are continuing their attacks in Iraq, then there should be co-operation

between the different parties so that the result could be achieved without harming the Kurds who are not anyway associated with the rebel groups. Four, discriminatory practices by Turkey and Iran. Till now, the focus is on the violence that the Kurds in Iraq are facing due to the attacks conducted by Turkey and Iran. But, the Kurds exist in the territory of Iran and Turkey as well and they too are experiencing conflict with their state.

Session III: Environment and Resource Conflicts Environmental Issues and Identity
Anu Maria Joseph, *Research Assistant, NIAS*

Crisis in Brazil: Unresolved conflict between indigenous communities and political regimes
R Mirudula, Postgraduate Scholar, Loyola College

The government in Brazil is becoming autocratic and it is more concerned with extending the land for agriculture and infrastructural development which would bring an immense boost in its economy, but it has no idea how devastating the impact would be of clearing up the only most dense forest in the earth. The indigenous communities in Brazil are the last hope as they are the only ones who are concerned about the environment and raising their voice to protest against the Amazon deforestation. In Brazil, the only solution to the alarming situation is to create awareness among people and all the countries to collectively take action and work together to stop deforestation and adopt other environmentally friendly ways for economic development. More awareness should be created about the ways to achieve a green economy for a sustainable future and more funds should be allocated for its development by the governments.

The Catalonia crisis: Reasons behind the persisting conflict

Nabeel P, PhD Scholar, University College, Trivandrum

The Catalan movement is largely built on Catalan identity and perception that an independent Catalonia would benefit in all round development of the region. The conflict of Catalonia with the Spanish centre has been fuelled by resentment and frustration sparkled by the limitations of autonomy, by the wounds of historical memory and anger engendered by the economic crisis. A compromise is not at all an easy task as Catalonians are unlikely to back down their demands unless absolutely assured of cultural protectionism and significant economic advantage. In the current scenario the situation is even more critical as Catalans are arguing for a referendum to decide about secession and their Spanish counterpart is making clear that there is no possibility of any referendum as it violates the constitution. Also the Spanish government won't be ready to give away one of the most prosperous regions of the country and now itself there is strong general resentment in Spain against the purported economic and political privilege that Catalonia enjoys.

Conflicts in the Sahel: The role of climate change in conflict perpetuation

Manjima A, Postgraduate Scholar, University of Hyderabad

In the case of Africa, especially the Sahel region, climate change has been implicated as having direct and indirect consequences for local, national, and regional security. Climate change in the Sahel region has had an adverse impact on the prominent sources of livelihood- agriculture, pastoralism, and fishery. As resources become limited, alternate livelihoods become inaccessible, and the risk of people employing violent means to protect the resources is heightened, especially in scenarios where the adaptation capacities of the communities are weak. The loss of livelihood due to extreme weather conditions has bolstered the association of people with these militias, and the armed groups have moulded their effective practices to receive assistance from the changing climate, for instance, using wetter weather and thicker vegetation to mask their operations.

First,Shrinking of Lake Chad Basin and its violent fallouts. Severe droughts that have inflicted the region since the 1980s have led to several militarised conflicts. Inter-state conflicts are driven primarily by water scarcity.

Second, Farmer-Herder Conflicts in the Nigerian belt. The increase in the temperature by one-degree Celsius leads to a 54 per cent increase in the mixed areas populated by both farmers and pastoralists, compared to an increase of 17 per cent in the non-mixed areas. A prominent example of an area occupied by both farmers and herders in the Middle Belt of Nigeria. The conflict over the control of limited fertile land has escalated into an unprecedented scale of violence characterised by planned community attacks that have been extremely lethal, killing more than 1300 people in 2018 alone.

Third, the Darfur war, 2003. The Darfur conflict revealed climate as the forgotten culprit revealing the ecological dimension of the conflict. The structural vulnerabilities induced by climate change sow the seeds of conflict, which flourish under the nourishment provided by fragile governments, poor enforcement of rules, and ethnic tensions, leading to interstate conflicts, civil wars, and extremism. They can also weaken the tried and tested measures of establishing post-conflict stability due to the dilemma of resource distribution. Thus, climate change is a security threat, both in terms of national

security and human security, which is increasingly becoming more visible as the driver of conflicts.

Water Conflicts in Central Asia: Issues of scarcity, management, and external involvement
Kalpana Pandey, Postgraduate Scholar, CHRIST (Deemed-to-be University)

The major reason for the mounting water crisis is the continuous pressure on water resources and the increasing population which has further forced countries to over utilise the water resources of the rivers like Amu Darya and Syr Darya. Lack of governance is the prime threat to the continuing water crisis in the region. The mismanagement of the water in the region has further grabbed the attention of various other countries in the region. The water quotas have also not been fixed by the countries which is further leading to anxiety among the local people. Further, resulting in no proper planning to establish infrastructure regulating the water supply into the region.

The continuing GERD conflict: Bifurcated national interests and resource scarcity
Poulomi Mondal, Postgraduate Scholar, Pondicherry University

Domestically, the Abiy Ahmed government faces the prolonging Tigray conflict from the TPLF and fails to achieve an effective communication with the rebel groups deteriorating the condition of the country to face famines, health insecurity or rising extremism, making GERD the ultimate face saver and a bacon for hope as well as political legitimacy among the citizens of Ethiopia which banks on the symbolism of national development. In addition, instability comes from the external factors fuelling the conflict which hinders any cooperation even on the GERD issue.

The water politics in Nile may as well be using local political entrepreneurs or the warlords to decide the use of Nile as a "trump card" in elections which can elevate the instability of the entire region. With the rapid demographic growth and urbanisation process owing to the rising population, countries over the last decade have seen a substantial increase in their water needs. The Nile Basin Initiative was aimed to introduce a more "sustainable and equitable" approach to use the river's waters but failed to get consensus due to the inherent debates between the upper and lower riparian which is at the core of every hydro conflict in every region of the world.

Session IV: Conflicts in South Asia
Discussant: D Suba Chandran
Professor and Dean, NIAS

Ungoverned Borderlands and Contested Identity: The Case of the Naga Insurgency
BK Bhuvesha, Postgraduate Scholar, Manipal Academy of Higher Education

Conflict prevails predominantly as the insurgents deploy political and psychological means and methods; this ultimately leads to prolonged conflicts in the Northeast. Many such reasons ensure conflict continues in the region as follows: diaspora in the borderlands, factional clashes, inter-tribal rivalry (ethnic identity), and ideological differences. First, diaspora in the borderlands. Ironically, the territorial integrity, security, connectivity and ethnicity are found to be interlinked among various ethnic entities along the porous Indo-Myanmar border, which creates a wedge between the ground realities and the polices, hence making the conflicts never ending.

Second, intra-tribal rivalry. Tribal differences and internal fissures are the major factors that cause tension among the tribes. The Nagaland and Mizoram insurgencies spilled into the state of Manipur as the state's population broadly belongs to Naga, Mizo, and Kuki-chin. This tension among the tribes led to a demand for greater Nagalim, which would include four districts of Manipur.

Third, ideological difference: The differences in the ideologies of the prominent insurgencies of the region keep the disturbing process alive in the region to showcase their superiority of power, forgetting the livelihood of the people in the region. However, the Naga movement seems to have lost its original ideology and goals.

Four, factional clashes: Due to the factional clashes, the vision of the Naga community is right now distorted as clear as mud, making the conflict prevail beyond the ceasefire agreements penned with splinter groups as well.

The Balochistan Insurgency: Contemporary factors that prolong the conflict
Vijay Anand Panigrahi, Postgraduate Scholar, Pondicherry University

The Balochistan province has developed a case of fragility where there is increased insecurity, violence, conflict, weak governance, and degradation of economic, political, and social factors. The presence of a nexus between the political leadership and the factions operating within the state apparatus working against the popular interest weakens the province, and thus makes it the most fragile province in Pakistan. However, the major elements prolonging the insurgency in Balochistan are concerned with the nationalist sentiment of the locals, the unstable and unequal political representation, the inequitable resource sharing, the human rights violations, and the role of foreign influencers.

Myanmar's Rohingya Problem: Colonial past, ethnic differences, and exclusionary State
Tanay Thakur, Postgraduate Scholar, University of Hyderabad

The extreme bigoted and anti-Muslim views propagated by radial nationalist organizations in lieu of communal tension

and persecution of Rohingyas have initiated a social re-configuration that is beyond control. The government is ineffective in dealing with the broader phenomenon of Buddhist nationalism.This racial divide entered the political vocabulary of Burma and created a climate of terror among the citizenry by scapegoating Rohingyas. Due to underdevelopment and job scarcity in the Rakhine region, Rohingyas as 'outsiders' were seen as an economic threat and burden. Hence the polarisation, amplified by social media and radical Buddhist organisations based on religious and racial differences, has made any path of reconciliation between the Rohingyas and 89% of Buddhist citizens of Myanmar not viable.

Ethnic Conflicts in Myanmar: The continuing stalemate
Vaighna Raj, Postgraduate Scholar, CHRIST (Deemed To-be University)

The following are the major factors that have caused continuing conflicts in Myanmar.

First, Primordial Nationalism. Separatist movements, rooted in animosity, considered human nature, place ethnocentric nationalism, which then gives rise to the never-ending conflicts, attributing to an ethnic-centred identity, thus linking even the concepts of citizenship to it. General Ne Win's policy of Burma nationalism talks about such an attempt at nationalism by constructing the dominant Buddhist identity through the assimilation of ethnic minority cultures, leading to further hostility.

Second, Legacy of a colonial past. In the 1950s, the exclusivity of religious nationalism was observed when the Buddhist Burman nationalism Young Men's Buddhist Association) was resisted by the ethnic minorities with an adherence to Christianity, influenced by colonialism (Kachin Identity). Thus, the religious divide and the dependency on foreign intervention can be the reasons triggering the vulnerabilities of Myanmar to witness continuous ethnic conflicts even today.

Third, Rational Choice Theory. To justify the profits of many with the cost of losses of a minority has become the political justice of offensive realism since time immemorial. Thus promoting a dominant narrative of Bamer Buddhist nationalism, in opposition to the Rohingya Muslim community, with the ideology of "clean and clear Burma", seeks justification from such a theory, thus escalating the ethnic rivalry.

Four, geography. The porosity of the borders has led to the geographic vulnerability in South East Asia since the colonial period, thus ensuring great migration of Indians to the frontier areas, rich in natural resources. However, the widespread migration of ethnic minorities who are not recognised as citizens by the state of Myanmar provided with refugee status also contributed to the large-scale mobility in the border areas, thus deteriorating the peace between the neighbouring countries.

Five, liberalism and ethnocentrism. Liberalisation, after the 2010 elections in Myanmar, has widened the political and social freedoms and escalated ethnicity as the state's central feature. Since the military regime summoned the 2010 electoral elections, the power hierarchy

among the ethnic groups has created a toxic effect on Myanmar.

Six, militarisation of ethnic groups. As the electoral democracy in Myanmar has failed to address the effective representation of ethnic minority groups, militarisation has eventually increased. With the state and Tatmadaw unable to maintain peace in the periphery, ethnic communities have formed militias, which one can say is not out of choice but out of necessity to ensure protection from the communities subjected to rivalry.

Session V: Conflicts in Africa
Discussant: Apoorva Sudhakar, *Research Associate, NIAS*

Understanding challenges of state-building and dynamics of instability: Case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
Shamini V, Postgraduate Scholar, Women's Christian College

There are two main causes of the long list of issues that have affected the Democratic Republic of the Congo ever since political independence. The first is the scourge of colonial exploitation and destruction of people and land, whereas the second is the leadership dilemma. It's relatively simple for instability to develop when the rights and freedom of the populace are not respected or are violated. Government officials are corrupt and mismanage a nation's resources. When elections are not fair and transparent, political instability

arises. Because of rigged elections and other forms of election-day intimidation, several nations have experienced political instability. Political instability can readily be caused by high rates of unemployment and poverty in any nation. When the vast majority of people in a country are jobless and poor, the nation becomes unstable and causes outbursts directed against the government. A country could quickly descend into political instability when the head of state decides not to step down when its tenure is up. The opportunistic governments that have succeeded one another over the years have all been marked by wealth, corruption, grave human rights abuses, and committing all kinds of crimes with no repercussions. The conflict escalates due to poor security and governance in the region. In DRC, the ongoing armed conflict disrupted everyday existence. Food prices are significantly affected by COVID-19 measures and the virus itself, and households' purchasing power has dropped as a result of the country's economic downturn. With over 27 million people experiencing severe or acute food insecurity, the DRC is currently experiencing the worst food security crisis.

Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: Six reasons why it continues
Anu Maria Joseph, Research Assistant, NIAS

Following are the major reasons that cause the continuation of the Tigray -Ethiopia conflict.

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First, the role of politicised ethnicity. Though three years of protests led by the Oromia and Amhara communities ended the authoritarian regime, the outcome was an immature political system of uncertainty caused by deep rooted politicised ethnicity. Abiy's attempt to mend the social fabric of the country through creating an inclusive political environment went counterproductive. Ethnic and inter-ethnic clashes broke out across the country over land, political power and recognition. As Tigrayans lost their hold in the centre, many ethnic groups which were marginalised during the previous regime started targeting Tigray. Though not in power, having a centralised army and leadership, TPLF continued to have the capacity to fight against multiple ethnic based armed groups as well as the federal forces. The conflict would continue till Abiy's government forms a better federation accepting the existing social structure and fulfilling demands and interests of all ethnic groups which is far from happening.

Second, volatile Truce. The Ethiopian government declared the truce unilaterally in March at the time when the international community was distracted by the commencement of the Ukraine war. TPLF reacted to the government's decision with a statement to abide by what it called a "cessation of hostilities." However, there was no formal deal. The truce existed verbally, with no written document. Without any monitoring entity, lack of trust and formal talks with agreed conclusions, the truce was always volatile.

Three, military mobilisation. The Ethiopian National Defence Force and its allied Amhara forces along with Eritrean forces have been reportedly mobilising arms and troops. At the same time, there were also reports of TPLF devoting much of its resources to training and rearming. There were also rumours of TPLF buying new weapons from abroad. Tensions were built upon arms mobilisation by both sides using truce to reorganise, once again denoting the conflict never ended.

Four, alienation of Tigray. Since the beginning of the conflict, the region has been shut down from basic communication services, banking and electricity by the federal government. Besides, hospitals and schools were destroyed forcing the people to depend only on foreign aid. Even after the truce was declared, the reach of aid was limited, challenged by multiple attacks, restrictions, lack of fuel and other basic facilities. Besides, continued lack of communication services and basic health facilities alienated Tigray from the rest of the world, which further provoked the Tigrayans against the government.

Five, conflicting interests and conditions. While the government backed an African Union led peace process Tigray leaders expressed scepticism that the AU, having its headquarters in Addis Ababa could act as a fair mediator, and rejected AU's leadership under former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo. Tigary authorities preferred former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta to be the mediator. Further, the federal government called for a talk without any preconditions, while Tigray authorities demanded for an unfettered humanitarian aid, a full restoration of services as well as return of western Tigray which has been claimed by the Amhara ethnic community.

Six, international ignorance. The international community has been ignorant in responding to the conflict in Tigray. There has been a scarcity of action from the international community as greater focus went to the Ukraine war instead of conflict inTigray which the Director General of WHO described as the "world's worst humanitarian catastrophe."

Conflict in Central Sahel: Reasons for protraction of conflict

Sruthi Sadhasivam, Postgraduate Scholar, CHRIST (Deemed-to-be-University)

Conflict in Central Sahel is protracted mainly due to lack of state control over border regions, increasing tensions between community-based armed groups and a rise in Jihadi attacks in the border regions. Some of the factors that make conflict in Central Sahel ineluctable are the following.

First, terrorist groups and insurgent groups operating in Central Sahel. The jihadist groups have been launching attacks against Niger and Burkina Faso. The group has expanded its operations from the Ménaka region of Mali into the Tillaberi region of Niger. This indicates that terrorist organisations are present throughout the Central Sahel region.

Second, state actors as perpetrators of conflict in Central Sahel. The Central Sahel countries mired in coups became inefficient in ensuring order in the domestic sphere and poorly governed the regions and these states also had weak institutions and structures.
This environment is appropriate for the underrepresented and the already disadvantaged ethnic communities to feel a sense of regional deprivation and lose trust in the legitimacy of the state. With the inadequate presence of the state in certain regions of Central Sahel, there has been a rise in the emergence of community-based armed groups (CBAGs).

Three, the role of climate change in exacerbating the conflict. Climate change is affecting their livelihood and also aggravating ethnic rivalry. It has indeed affected the dynamics of pastoral and agricultural production systems. The occurrences of frequent droughts combined with population growth put massive pressure on natural resources such as "land, water and pasture". Climate change cannot be considered as the main reason for ethnic herder community and ethnic farmer community conflict, other factors such as rise in arms banditry and state's political decisions have played a significant role in causing the farmer-herder divide.

Four, ethnic rivalry, communal violence and instability. The state's disproportionate focus on countering terrorism and its failure to address communal tensions at the initial phases can be attributed as the major reason for rise in communal violence. Five, poverty. Poverty and joblessness are some of the chief factors that force youngsters to join terror outfits. Unequal distribution of resources coupled with feelings of injustice make people prefer membership in terrorist organisations. Apart from that, the youth engage in banditry and smuggling due to lack of employment.

Eleven Years of Libya Conflict: Four reasons why it continues
Rubina Pradhan, Assistant Professor, JAIN (Deemed-to be University)

In the aftermath of Gaddafi's fall, the transition process in Libya has been rough and plagued by the rise of armed militias, divergent political interests, ethnic cleavages and struggle for control over natural resources, and increasing foothold of extremist factions owing allegiance to al Qaeda terrorist ideology. The conflict in Libya persists because of factors like the inability to establish a single democratic government, lack of internal governance, home for terrorist groups, the refugee problem, and unlawful use of weapons. The proliferation of local warlords and radical factions, the collapse of state institutions, the depletion of financial reserves and most importantly increasing hardship for the ordinary citizens of Libya are the factors that need attention and need to be analysed. The control over the authority in Libya is entangled across tribal, political, regional, external, and religious lines as well.

Session VI: Conflicts in East Asia
Discussant: Avishka Ashok, *Research Associate, NIAS*
Democracy and Deep-rooted Conflict: Reasons why Hong Kong continues to struggle under the Communist Regime
Aniba Junaid, Postgraduate Scholar, University of Calcutta

There are several reasons why the conflict continues. While there exist significant political reasons and implications that continue to seek popular discontentment and attention; what also must be taken note of is that most conflictual situations have psychological implications. The 'imprinting effect' on individuals in societies that struggle in resolving long-term conflicts is potentially fueling and is powerful enough to maintain conflicts.

Decentralised protests that have often been the trend in Hong Kong have made it difficult for officials to pinpoint the centre of the protest, which nevertheless protects protesters but denies the opportunity for officials to call for appropriate negotiations.

The ubiquity of uncertainty in political situations plays a tantamount role in conflictual circumstances. Uncertainty in political scenarios involves confusion and misguidance in the political choices citizens make.

An existential question of privileges and rights makes a regular Hong Kong citizen unsure of the political scenarios that generations ahead will have to experience and cater to politically. The validity of property rights (specifically, government land leases) beyond June 30, 2047, is itself a matter of query as Hong Kong looks for a new meaning in political existence post-2047. This nevertheless proves that this uncertainty will always provide a futile ground for conflict in Hong kong. An undefined future and a troubled present will push Hong Kong into a flux of regular conflicts where citizens continue to question the privileges and rights they should be enjoying. In simple words, the 'one country, two systems' in itself has been the largest contributor to the continuation of conflictual scenarios in Hong Kong. Hence to bring the argument together it seems unlikely that the conflict

in Hong Kong will come to a near end anytime soon.

The Conflict in Xinjiang: Three reasons why it continues
Amrita Jash, Assistant Professor, Manipal Academy of Higher Education

The following are the three major reasons why the conflict continues in Xinjiang. First, PRC's Repressive Ethnic Policy towards Uyghurs.In the recent times, the conflict caught international attention with reports on internment camps, detention centres and prisons against Uyghurs in Xinjiang which the Chinese government refers to as "re-education camps" and "vocational education and training centres" to change Uyghur habits and thoughts and prevent the rise of religious extremism in the province. Besides detention centres, Uyghurs have also been subjected to intense surveillance; forced sterilisation of women; torture and execution inside the detention centres; targeted harassment; and forced labour in Xinjiang. Thus, human rights violation has become the other characteristic of the ethnic conflict.

Second, demographic Changes. The demographic change in Xinjiang acts as another that has resulted into the conflict. According to the latest census and the Government's White Paper on "Xinjiang Population Dynamics and Data", while the overall population of both Han and Uyghur ethnic groups has grown, the Uyghur population now constitutes about

45 per cent of the region's total and Han Chinese. This segregation has also resulted in fear that Uyghurs will become a minority in their own land and that Beijing's goal is to strip out and remove the culture of the Uyghur people. It is therefore, the 'othering' of the Uyghurs by the Han Chinese state that causes the discontentment that continues to fuel the conflict.

Three, Chinese State's Interests. Uyghur resentment is not directly related to Uyghurs, like that of in Tibet, one of the underlying reasons that contributes to the conflict is the economic exploitation of XUAR. PRC's desire to maintain territorial control over XUAR is linked to its strategic, economic and security interests in the region that invariably ignores the interests of the Uyghur.

South China Sea: Why countries fight for Spratly Islands
Sethuraman N, Research Intern, NIAS

Geographically, the South China Sea plays a vital role in the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific region. It is a bridge connecting the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific and is an area where many countries meet from the Far East to Southeast Asia. It also maintains the country's major Sea lines of communication (SLOCs), whose economies are directly connected to these shipping lanes. The South China Sea also has many unexplored natural resources, including about 7.7 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, which all

neighbouring countries eagerly explore. These natural resources boost the economies of many countries in the region. The region has taken the lead for the past two decades in geopolitics and strategy due to territorial disputes and growing claims to the island territories that are an integral part of many nations. Also, since most of the imports and exports pass through the region, the United States, Japan, and South Korea are interested in the area. A Chinese invasion of these islands would mean "free and open navigation" for all nations. It will undoubtedly affect the international rules in the area. China wants to create a unilateral hegemonic power in the sea to control these SLOCs and natural resources so that it can dictate the terms. The Philippines, Brunei, and Malaysia claim these Islands as theirs based on UNCLOS's new maritime laws. South Asia and Southeast Asia are highly populated areas where it is considered a larger market for selling goods from China and Other leading producing countries. In the 1970s, it was found that the region contained a large amount of natural Oil and Gases, which could change the fate of the country that controls this region. The claimants may have different views and goals to accomplish, so they may differ and cause conflict.

Session VII: Maritime Conflicts
Discussant: Padmashree Anandhan, *Research Associate, NIAS*
Conflict over Kuril Islands: Four reasons why it continues
Allen Joe Mathew, Undergraduate Scholar, St Joseph's University

The Kuril Island dispute still persists even after the end of the Cold War and breakup of the Soviet Union. Both countries have a powerful incentive to end the dispute and move forward yet both are uncompromisingly stood by their demands. Japan says it has total claim over the four islands and will only agree if Russia agrees to return all the four islands back to it. The Russian government has flatly refused to negotiate, even though it is known that these islands were occupied by Stalin's troops during the end of world war two, including in Soviet records. The economic value of the control of these islands gives access to a huge maritime area and increases the owners Exclusive Economic Zone and also gives jurisdiction over the maritime territory. The territory includes a spawning ground for a lot of fish species which are commercially exploitable. The seabed is also known to contain lots of metal deposits such as titanium, magnetite, nickel, copper, chromium, vanadium and niobium. Another reason is that the control of the islands provides leverage in the East Asian trade, as they connect the Pacific Ocean with the Russian Arctic Coastline and the Sea of Okhotsk. Moreover, for Russia, the control of the islands provides the only access to the Pacific that does not freeze over in the winter. Russian submarines are also stationed here along with their huge Eastern Siberian fleet. For Russia, a large part of its economy is based on oil and gas, this route is also used for sea-based energy trading.

Moving away from the economy, another major issue relating to Japan is that this territorial dispute is pictured as a reminder

of the Japanese defeat and the consequent Soviet occupation. In public perception any compromise on the Japanese side would not sit well with the population. Therefore, from a land dispute it morphs into a stand on what is morally correct.

The Solomon Islands Conflict: Transformation from Ethic Indifferences to Political Instability
Devjyoti Saha, Postgraduate Scholar, Pondicherry University

The reason behind the persistence of hostile elements is that the approach adopted by the government and the masterminds of RAMSI does not address the underlying ethnic indifferences and structural inequalities present in society. Any conflict resolution mechanism addressing the conflict in the Solomon Islands has to consider the society. The failure of institutions was a reason but not the root cause.

In this case, the base is occupied by a conflict among ethnic identities, with the conflict over land holdings and resources and the conflict for provincial autonomy at the top. The model also emphasises the role of emotions playing a part in the conflict, and here the dominant emotion is mutual mistrust.

Most importantly, there was no attempt by the interventional forces to implement the main agenda of the Townsville Peace Agreement, i.e. the implementation of a federal form of governance with effective provincial autonomy. Because the aid from traditional allies like the US and Australia carried the baggage of democratic expectations. At the same time, China does not care about the prevalence of democracy or a democratic political environment because China does not provide benevolent aid but concessional loans for its own self-interest. With Sogavare moving towards autocracy and increasing footprints of China in the country, one can conclude that the Solomon Islands' emergence as a federal, politically stable and economically independent nation is now a distant dream.

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 is published as briefs, reports and commentary.

About Young-International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI)

The International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI) aims to inculcate the scope of peace research in young scholars (below 35 years of age) as it is easier to progress when one starts early. To achieve this, IPRI has engaged with partner institutions since 2018 to create a network of young scholars, the Y-IPRI. The Y-IPRI workshops focus on contemporary political, economic, gender and environmental conflicts.

About Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as "Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education," in 1964, the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. KAS cooperates with governmental institutions, political parties and civil society organizations, building strong partnerships along the way. In particular, KAS seeks to intensify political cooperation in the area of development cooperation on the foundations of its objectives and values. Together with the partners, KAS makes a significant contribution to the creation of a global order that empowers every country to determine its own developmental priorities and destiny in an internationally responsible manner.

About UMISARC - Centre for South Asian Studies

The Pondicherry University launched a Post Graduate Programme (M.A) in South Asian Studies in the Centre for South Asian Studies during the Academic year 2008-2009 under the XI plan. South Asia Foundation (SAF) had supported the Centre with 16 Madanjeet Singh Group (MSG) Scholarships to students (two - one male, one female - from each SAARC country) to pursue this course during 2008-2021. The teaching and research in South Asian Studies at Pondicherry University received major fillip with the signing of an MoU between Pondicherry University and the SAF on June 20, 2009 for the establishment of the Madanjeet Singh Institute of South Asia Regional Cooperation (MISARC). In the year 2010, the UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) agreed to associate with all the institutions of excellence established by SAF including MISARC of Pondicherry University. Hence, it has been renamed as UMISARC (U stands for UNESCO).