

Article written by Sletske Moshuldayev, Research Analyst - March 2022

Conflict Monitoring Report – March 2022

Various conflicts have intensified this past month, while others have abated following a period of escalation. Based on global news monitoring and intelligence gathering, this report includes ten different conflicts that have been dynamic and prominent these past few weeks. These include the Russia-Ukraine crisis, a surge in attacks between Israel and Palestine, a worsening political and economic crisis in Sri Lanka and enlarged political instability in Tunisia and Pakistan. These are complemented below by several brief alerts: deadly attacks in Burkina Faso, a state of emergency in El Salvador, enhanced migration concerns along the US-Mexican border, continued junta-led violence in Myanmar and apparent peace talks concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. It is likely that further implications of these conflicts will build up in the upcoming weeks and thus call for continued monitoring.



1. World Conflicts – March 2022



a. The Ongoing Russia-Ukraine Crisis
Ukrainian forces continue to resist and oppose Russian attacks, with the latter decreasing the geographical scope of its main offensive. Facing economic sanctions, Russia has set new military objectives, **focusing** on the Donbas region. As the Russian troops retreat, **reports indicate mass killings of Ukrainian civilians** – such as in **Bucha** – which Western states recognized as war crimes and Russia denies.

Meanwhile, **Western actors continue to support Ukraine through monetary and military supplies**, reinforced by US President Joe Biden’s **trip** to Europe and President of the European Union Ursula von der Leyen’s **visit** to Kyiv. At the same time, **the number of refugees fleeing Ukraine stands at more than 4.6 million as of April 12th**, with reports indicating that some are **returning** to their hometowns in Ukraine. Implications of the war continue to be felt across the world, in part through grain shortages threatening the food security in various low- and middle-income countries.

b. Israel-Palestine: Surge in Attacks

Tensions between Israel and Palestine continue to escalate as both sides saw several **deadly attacks** in recent weeks. Terror attacks killing Israeli citizens were responded to by reinforced Israeli military activity in the West Bank in an attempt to capture the assailants and their relatives. **This led to the deaths of both Palestine-based militants and civilians**. Whereas the Islamic State has **claimed** responsibility for certain attacks and Hamas praised the



actions, the Palestinian National Authority condemned the violence. **Analysts relate the series of attacks to the start of Ramadan, remembering the 11-day crisis that occurred in May 2021.** At the same time, however, these events come amidst Israel **hosting** an international conference on the Iran nuclear deal on March 28th with the United States, Egypt, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Morocco present. This signifies an important step forward for Israel as it seeks to normalize its relations with several Arab League countries, a move contested by other League members and Palestine actors.

c. Sri Lanka's Economic and Political Crisis

Amidst a severe economic crisis, **Sri Lanka faces violent protests by disgruntled citizens** targeting the country's leadership. With Sri Lanka enduring high inflation, low foreign currency reserves and defaulted external debts, **its citizens endure a lack of basic goods and services.**

Queuing lines have **led** to several deaths and energy shortages hold. The government originally responded with a curfew and a state of emergency but

soon revoked these following growing discontent. **The country's cabinet has resigned,** with the exception of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his brother, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. They **blame** the economic crisis on external factors, including COVID-19 impacts on the country's tourism sector, yet analysts indicate that poor economic planning also played a role. **Talks** with the International Monetary Fund, India, China and other potential credit providers continue as threats to the security of Sri Lanka's citizens increase. **Rising global fuel prices further enhance the severity of the crisis,** which also sees its repercussions in other areas of the world, especially states in Africa and the Middle East.



d. Tunisia: Presidential Power Grab

Tunisian President Kais Saied increased his grasp on power as he **dissolved parliament on March 30th,** a move met by public **protests** just a few days later. This move directly follows the

first (online) meeting since the parliaments' suspension in July 2021. **During the session, members of parliament denounced earlier decrees enacted by President Saied**, including his enhanced executive control over **judiciary** powers since February 2022. In an attempt to re-configure the country's constitution, Saied **plans** to hold a referendum on a new constitution next July and hold parliamentary elections in December. **In the meantime, opposition parties have indicated that they will boycott the referendum** and have called for elections to be held prior to the establishment of a new constitution. With increased potential for the political situation to destabilize, **the country also faces deteriorating economic conditions**, meaning public unrest may grow in upcoming weeks.

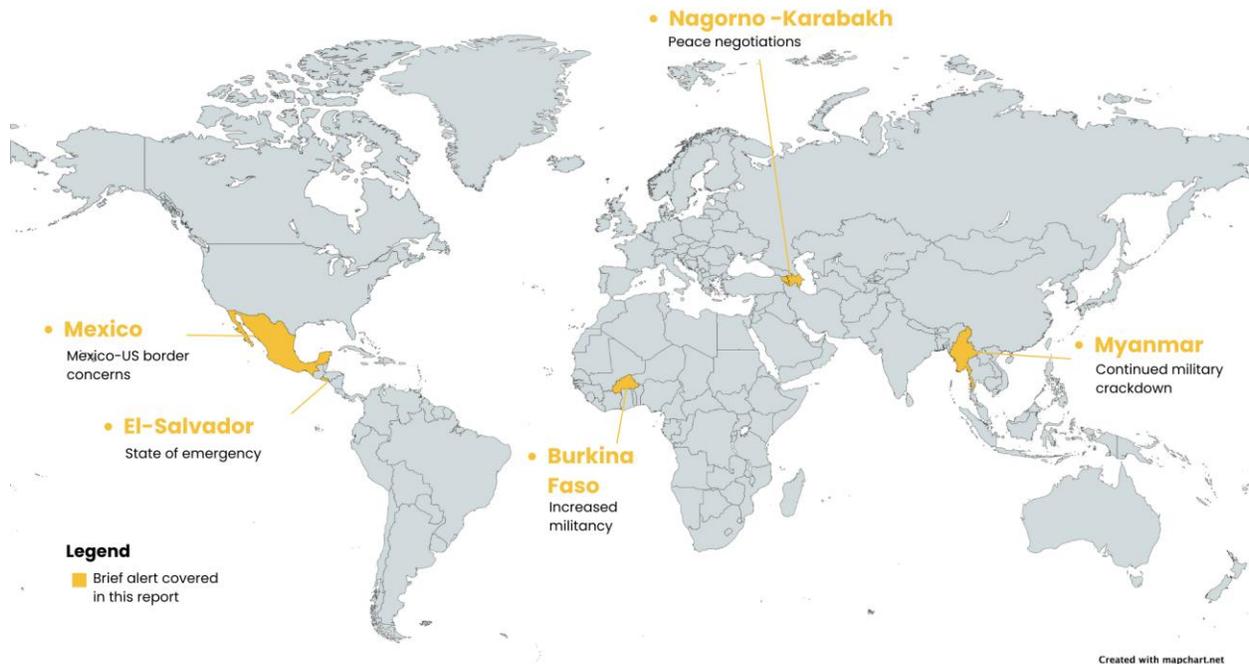


e. Political Turmoil in Pakistan

Following a vote of no confidence for former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan by parliament, **Shehbaz Sharif has been selected as the new Prime Minister on April 11th**. This development came after weeks of political uncertainty in the country, starting with indications of opposition parties initiating the vote based on claims that Khan has mismanaged the economy and foreign policy. Several of Khan's coalition partners subsequently **walked away**, disbanding his parliamentary majority. **Khan opposed the vote**, postponed parliamentary sessions, attempted to instigate **legal measures** to stall the opposition and called for early elections. These actions did not prevent the current outcome, with the parliament able to either legally **continue** to rule until the next general elections in 2023 or call elections soon. **Facing ongoing protests**, a worsening economic crisis and some new policy **indications**, it remains to be seen what alterations occur in the country's political and economic stability.



2. Brief Alerts – March 2022



a. Burkina Faso: Increased Militancy

Following a military coup in January of this year, Burkina Faso's military leadership has now stated it will continue to stay in power until security has been restored in the country. Earlier reports indicated they were looking at a three-year transition. **As insurgent attacks related to Islamic State and Al-Qaeda groups continue to occur in the country**, the supposed political transition remains uncertain.

b. Continued Military Crackdown in Myanmar

Myanmar's military leader Min Aung Hlaing **excludes** negotiations with opposition forces as an option to resolve the ongoing domestic conflicts, **indicating a likely continuation of oppressive and violent attacks on Myanmar's citizens**. This follows the **acknowledgement** by the US of genocide carried out against the Rohingyas by the military earlier in the month.

c. State of Emergency in El Salvador

El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele **declared** a 30-day state of emergency on March 27th following a **spike in gang-based violence**, with 67 deaths in just one day. The measure is implemented along with new regulations to restrict gang mobilization and communication, **but also has implications for human rights in the country**.

d. Mexico-US Border Concerns

Humanitarian tensions may arise along the US-Mexico border, as President Biden's administration imposed new regulations this month to expedite the asylum process for immigrants. This comes amidst an expected surge of refugees from Central and South American states.

e. Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Negotiations

High-level diplomatic talks between Armenia, Azerbaijan and the European Union this month indicate potential progress on the Nagorno-Karabakh territorial disputes. While this announcement followed discord between Russia and Azerbaijan over the 2020 ceasefire agreements just days before, it remains to be seen what impact this new direction will have.

Conclusion

Far from covering all ongoing conflicts around the world, this report highlights ten conflicts that experienced a building up of tension this past month. As European states continue to predominantly be engulfed in the Russia-Ukraine crisis, various states elsewhere face intensifying domestic instability - if not enhanced international threats and insecurity. Most conflicts indicate that more serious periods of upcoming turmoil may occur soon, yet some suggest the opposite. As all conflicts mentioned in this report carry both short and long term implications, they call for continued attention in the upcoming weeks.

About the author: Sietske Moshuldayev

Sietske Moshuldayev has an international background and is inherently intrigued by the causes and consequences of geopolitical events. She has completed two bachelors at the University of Leiden (International Studies, BA & Political Science, BSc) and currently pursues a masters in International Security at Sciences Po, Paris. Having specialized in East Asian affairs for her undergraduate studies, she now focuses on global risks and risk management



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This article was edited by Ruben Pfeijffer

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