NEW ZIF PUBLICATIONS

ZIF kompakt: Elections in post-conflict areas
Elections are a key instrument that can promote peaceful political contest and produce legitimate governments. However, in deeply divided societies in the aftermath of armed conflict, elections can also open old wounds and lead to new violence. As Sebastian Breuer argues in his ZIF kompakt, it is vital that international actors are aware of the pitfalls of early post-conflict elections and plan their support accordingly.
Read the paper here (German only)

Deal between the US and the Taliban: no happy end in the Hindu Kush
The deal between the Taliban and the US is no peace treaty. That could only be concluded between the Taliban and the Afghan government. Democratic gains in Afghanistan are at risk. Read here Almut Wieland-Karimi's commentary in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung.
Read full article here (German only)
EUROPE

Republic of North Macedonia

North Macedonia elections to go ahead despite Coronavirus fears
Political leaders on Thursday said they would not postpone the April 12 elections over concerns about the global pandemic – but agree to curb election rallies and campaign more on social networks.
Read full article: Balkan Insight (03/12)

CAUCASUS

Georgia

Europeans welcome ‘turning point’ Georgian electoral deal
European parliamentarians on Tuesday (10 March) hailed the political agreement between Georgia’s ruling and opposition parties that promises to resolve the electoral reform conflict that has resulted in a series of protests across the country.
Read full article: EurActiv (03/10)

AFRICA

Burundi

Burundi election countdown amid ‘deteriorating’ human rights situation
Two months ahead of Burundi’s planned local and presidential elections, senior UN-appointed independent rights investigators have urged the Government to reopen the “democratic, civil and political space” there.
Read full article: UN News (03/10) VOA News (03/11)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

UN: nearly 1 million DRC refugees in urgent need of support
The U.N. refugee agency Friday launched an appeal for $621 million to assist nearly 1 million refugees who have fled violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo seeking safety in neighboring countries.
Read full article: VOA News (03/07)

Libya

Stephanie Williams to act as UNSMIL head until Salame replacement agreed
United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres announced yesterday that Stephanie Williams will be his Acting Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) with immediate effect. ... The UN statement said that Ms. Williams brings more than 24 years of experience in Government and International Affairs. She had served as Deputy Special Representative (Political) in UNSMIL since 2018.
Read full article: Libya Herald (03/12)
Haftar tells Macron he will abide by Libya ceasefire
French President Emmanuel Macron met Monday, March 9 with Libyan military commander Khalifa Haftar, who insisted he would commit to a ceasefire with the United Nations-recognized government in Tripoli as long as its allied militia fighters pledge to sign on as well.
Read full article: The Defense Post (03/09)

Somalia

Somalia clashes displace thousands
Somali troops clashed with forces from the country’s semi-autonomous Jubaland region this week in a flare-up of violence that displaced thousands and is raising tensions with neighbouring countries.
Read full article: The New Humanitarian (03/06)

South Sudan

Security Council renews mandate of UNMISS
The Security Council decided to renew the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) today amid encouraging developments in that country’s peace process, including the beginning of efforts to form the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity. Unanimously adopting resolution 2514 (2020) under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, the Council also decided to maintain the Mission’s overall force levels at a ceiling of 17,000 troops, including the Regional Protection Force, and 2,101 police officers. The renewed mandate will run until 15 March 2021.
Read full article: UN Press Release (03/12)

UN Commission calls for criminal accountability for South Sudan
Read full article: VOA News (03/09)

Kiir and Machar agree on cabinet
The parties to the South Sudan Peace agreement on Thursday agreed on Cabinet portfolio balance, and will now be expected to name ministers and their deputies as the government gets down to work.
Read full article: allAfrica (03/07)

Sudan (Darfur)

‘Suspect still at large’: Why Sudan hasn’t handed Omar Bashir over to the ICC
The country is witnessing a debate over how to best hold the ousted leader accountable for alleged crimes against humanity in Darfur.
Read full article: Middle East Eye (03/12)
MIDDLE EAST

Yemen

Yemeni army says sites near Saudi border wrested from rebels
Yemen’s army said it wrested control of several northern towns from the Iran-backed Houthis rebels Monday, a step toward reversing the rebels’ rapid gains in the strategic area.
Read full article: AP (03/09)

UN envoy calls for ‘immediate and unconditional’ freeze on military activities
In a visit to northern Yemen on Saturday, UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths repeated his call for an immediate freeze on military activities and for warring parties to work towards a de-escalation in fighting.
Read full article: UN News (03/07)

CENTRAL ASIA

Afghanistan

Taliban reject Ghani’s offer to free 1,500 prisoners before Afghanistan peace talks
The Taliban on Wednesday rejected Afghan President Ashraf Ghani’s offer to release 1,500 insurgent prisoners ahead of peace talks, saying it wanted 5,000 captives freed before opening negotiations. Taliban political spokesperson Suhail Shaheen told AFP the prisoners should be released “as a trust-building measure” before intra-Afghan talks.
Read full article: The Defense Post (03/11)

Security Council resolution endorses moves towards long-sought Afghanistan peace
The UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution on Tuesday afternoon welcoming recent steps towards ending the conflict in Afghanistan. All 15 members supported the resolution, tabled by the United States, which endorses a joint US-Afghan declaration on peace and an agreement signed between Washington and the Taliban.
Read full article: UN News (03/10)

Rival 'presidents' hold two inaugurations
Two Afghan politicians - who both claim they won the presidential election - have declared themselves president at rival inauguration ceremonies. The electoral commission says incumbent Ashraf Ghani narrowly won September's vote, but Abdullah Abdullah alleges the result is fraudulent.
Read full article: BBC (03/09)

U.S. official says U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan has begun
A U.S. official says U.S. forces have begun leaving Afghanistan under the first phase of an initial troop withdrawal required under the newly signed U.S.-Taliban peace agreement.
Read full article: RFE/RL (03/09)
SOUTH AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN

Colombia

The Colombian trap: another partial peace
Even though a series of armed groups have demobilized and violence has declined over recent decades, peace remains partial in Colombia. The current peace process with the FARC insurgency shows why Colombia has such difficulty achieving a complete peace. 
Read full article: Center for Security Studies ETH Zurich (03/12)

Colombia vows to accelerate implementation of peace after meeting UN Secretary General
Colombia’s president Ivan Duque vowed to accelerate the implementation of peace policies after meeting with United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Monday. The meeting followed growing tensions between the United Nations’ agencies in Colombia and the Duque administration. 
Read full article: Colombia Reports (03/10)

OTHER PEACEKEEPING RELEVANT NEWS

EU unveils ‘partnership plans’ for new Africa strategy
Partnerships on ten policy areas are at the heart of the EU’s plan “Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa,” launched on Monday (9 March). The paper will start a seven-month negotiating process with EU and African leaders, with a view to agreeing a partnership agenda at an EU African Union summit in October. 
Read full article: EurActiv (03/09)