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Grasp the pattern, read the trend

Asia in Review

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to this week's Asia in Review providing you with concise and comprehensive information on what went on in Asia in constitutionalism, politics, human rights, international relations and geopolitics.

Besides keeping you updated about last week's events and the ongoing trends, please also inform yourself on upcoming online events on related topics in the final section. Please note among them the launch event of the 'Asia in Review' - online panel discussion series on law and politics in Asia under the title "Thai Politics after the Lockdown".

Have an informative read and a good time!

With best regards,

Henning Glaser

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- Law and Politics in East Asia
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- International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia
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Law and Politics in East Asia

China: Pro-democracy Hong Kong localists on confrontational course with Beijing ahead of LegCo election

(dql) A number of opposition candidates running for the Legislative Council (LegCo) election in September refused to sign the Hong Kong allegiance form when registering for the polls on Monday. Article 104 of Hong Kong's Basic Law stipulates that LegCo members must swear to "uphold the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, bear allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China and serve the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region conscientiously, dutifully, in full accordance with the law, honestly and with integrity." [Government, Hong Kong]

In the light of the new security law for Hong Kong – which has been in force since 30 June and which tightens Beijing's grip on the city – the move reflects

the candidates' upholding of a confrontational stance towards the city's government and Beijing. Leading pro-democracy activist Joshua Wong said that his refusal to sign the allegiance form was to "let the world to know how we choose not to surrender, how we choose not to kowtow to China," and "that we will continue to fight until our last breath." [Deutsche Welle]

The move comes shortly after localist candidates pledging a confrontational approach towards the city government and Beijing emerged stronger from the recent primaries of the opposition [AiR No. 28, July/2020, 2] than candidates from traditional pan-democratic parties with a more moderate stance. This outcome of the primary vote reflects a political radicalization of parts within the opposition raising concerns over disunity within the opposition and over to an expected hard-line response of Beijing. [South China Morning Post] [Hong Kong Free Press]

In an early sign of such a response, Beijing announced that the primaries were illegal and a breach of the new security law and attacked primary organizer and long-time activist Benny Tai calling him a "arch criminal [...] who creates the chaos in Hong Kong and brings disaster to Hong Kong and its people" and accusing him of "unlawfully distorting Hong Kong's election system", "provoking the new national security law" as well as "being a political agent in Hong Kong for foreign countries and foreign forces." Meanwhile, the city government announced to investigate whether the primary election constitutes the crime of subversion under the new security law. [Hong Kong Macau Office, China, in Chinese] [Quartz]

In a related development, another core organizer of the primaries resigned from his organizing duties bowing to the pressure stemming from Beijing's and the government's statements and announcements. [Straits Times]

China: University fires regime-critical professor

(dql) In a latest case of increasing censorship and restrictions on academic freedoms in China, a prominent Chinese university professor known for his open and repeated critic of President Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party's rule has been sacked by Tsinghua University, where he has been teaching law. He had been suspended and under investigation since spring last year after publishing an article which

criticized the power concentration in Xi's hands and the crackdown on dissent. [WION]

Meanwhile, to express his protest against censorship in China during the Covid-19 outbreak, a Chinese artist kept silent for a month by shutting his mouth with various article of daily use including a packing tape captioned with "404", the error code for a webpage not found. [Reuters]

South Korea to expand employment insurance to all workers

(dql) South Korea's government has announced plans to provide within five years all working citizens with an employment insurance. If executed, the plans would lead to around 21 million people obtaining such an insurance. Currently less than 14 million are covered by the state employment insurance system.

The expansion is directed in particular towards temporary workers and freelancers who are suffering from being not directly employed by companies and are not covered by employment insurance. The scheme also includes artists and people who are employed under special contracts – among them delivery workers, insurance agents and caregivers – allowing them to enjoy jobless benefits in case of job loss as well as to apply for government subsidies during pre-/post-maternity leave and parental leave. [Yonhap]

The employment insurance expansion plans are part of the "K-New Deal" which President Moon revealed last week as policy project to boost jobs and revive the economy to overcome the fallout of the pandemic and for which the government has allocated a budget of more than 130 billion USD. [Nikkei Asian Review]

South Korea: Political backlash against Supreme Court's ruling in false information case

(dql) Reversing a lower court's sentence which would have cost him his office, South Korea Korea's Supreme Court exonerated Governor Lee Jae-myung from the ruling Democratic Party (DP), tipped to be the party's next candidate for the office of the President, from charges of violating the electoral law by making a false claim in a televised debate ahead of the gubernatorial election in summer 2018. The court found that,

although the Governor had been partially inaccurate or deliberately vague, he had not actively lied. [Korea Joong Ang Daily]

While the ruling was praised by the DP for stressing the role of freedom of expression in election campaigns, the opposition parties rejected it for its “bizarre logic [...] of limiting the application scope of spreading false information for ‘freedom of discussion’,” and accused the court of being “on track to adopting Third World country standards.” [Korea Heral]

Taiwan: Ruling party pushes through controversial Control Yuan nominees

(dql) For the third time in the past two weeks, Taiwanese legislators last week scuffled in parliament. This time it was over the ruling Democratic Progressive Party’s (DPP) approval of the controversial appointments of all 27 nominees to Control Yuan, Taiwan’s government watchdog body.

All nominees were confirmed with the votes from the DPP, which commands 63 seats in the 113-member legislature. The main opposition Kuomintang (KMT) lawmakers boycotted the voting to express their continued rejection especially of the nomination of an aide of President Tsai Ing-wen as president of the Control Yuan. [Focus Taiwan]

Taiwan: Independence group calls for “Taiwan” passport

(dql) Pro-Taiwan independence activists urged legislators to change the country name on the Taiwanese passport and that of the nation's flagship carrier, from "Republic of China" to “Taiwan” and from “China Airlines” to “Taiwan Airlines” respectively. The activists further argued that according to a survey 70% of the population would support theses changes. [Focus Taiwan]

Law and Politics in South Asia

India approves “urgent” arms purchases

(jk) The Indian Ministry of Defence announced last week that in addition to approving the purchase of thirty-three fighter jets from Russia earlier this month, the purchase of defence weapons and equipment for around $40 million has also been approved. The procurement is said to be needed in order to meet "critical operational requirements" due to the situation along the country’s northern borders. [Hindustan Times]

India: Rajasthan political crisis continues

(lf) Rajasthan's political caused by a fight between the north-western state’s Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and former Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot, both from the Congress party, [AiR No. 28, July/ 2020, 2] continues. After Pilot, since removed as Deputy Chief Minister, and his supporters stayed absent from a party meeting last week, members of the Rajasthan Congress party have tried to remove him and other disloyal members from the legislature. [Times of India]

To this end, they attempted to lean on the 10th schedule of India's constitution (para 2 (1)(a) and (b)) [MEA GOV], which specifies that a member of the legislature can be dismissed on grounds of defection – if either the member leaves voluntarily or decides to abstain or vote against a direction given by the party under what is commonly referred to as a "whip vote" (in which all members are asked to vote unanimously).

Congress argues that since those who decided not to be present in last week's meeting – a crucial meeting on the party's future by their own definition – gave up their membership voluntarily as they showed to no longer support the party and the state government it forms. Despite there not being a clear definition of

what constitutes a member "voluntarily giving up membership", some commentators see sufficient grounds here. [The Wire]

Pakistan: Supreme Court at the center of controversies, again

(ls) In a judgment over a bail application of a Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) lawmaker and his brother against their arrest by the country's National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the Supreme Court criticized governmental authorities, saying that laws were being used as a tool to pressure political opponents into submission and fracture political parties. In particular, the judges ruled that the object of bail should neither be punitive nor preventative. In forceful language, the judgment continued: "Lust of power, desire to capture, and rule, and pursuit of self-aggrandization, have resulted in violation of the prescribed jurisdictional limits and ceding of political space in governance." [Pakistan Today] [Samaa]

At the same time, however, a three-member bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed issued a contempt of court notice to a journalist over an alleged tweet that criticized the judges and the judiciary. Pakistan's judiciary has a controversial history marked by incidents of validating martial laws to ousting elected prime ministers while still insisting to remain above any criticism. [The News] [Asia Times]

In addition, an individual Supreme Court judge is under pressure over allegations of undeclared assets. On Monday, Justice Qazi Faez Isa petitioned his colleagues for a review of their order back in June to require further evidence on offshore properties. The court had quashed a presidential reference against Isa but ordered the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to furnish a report about the issue. Justice Isa's wife also petitioned against this order. [Dawn 1] [Dawn 2]

Sri Lanka backsliding on human rights

(cm/ls) A Muslim lawyer and human rights activist has been put into a 90-day detention, ordered by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. According to the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), any suspect can be placed in detention without charge and without being produced before a judge. The detention order can be renewed for a further 90 days and continue to be renewed for

up to 18 months. The PTA has long been criticized as an abusive law used to crack down on dissent and forcibly disappear people, along with other violations. [Amnesty International]

The UK Human Rights Report of 2019 has labelled Sri Lanka's human rights situation as deteriorating. It emphasized, in particular, intimidation of human rights defenders and violence against minority groups. Though the country ratified the Convention on Enforced Disappearances, open-ended periods of detentions against minority groups, violence and discrimination against the Muslim community still occur frequently. [Colombo Page]

Sri Lanka: President Rajapaksa's faltering evidence of democracy

(cm) Besides Rajapaksa's aim to repeal the 19th Amendment limiting his executive power as president, his party aims to introduce a completely new constitution by "seeking a 2/3rd majority in Parliament". Moreover, Rajapaksa has created a presidential task force of senior military figures that includes several officers who are accused to have committed war crimes, moved not less than 30 government agencies under the Defence ministry's umbrella, and delayed elections numerous times. [Foreign Policy]

Big business in Bangladesh: Selling fake coronavirus certificates

(yo) A hospital owner in Bangladesh was arrested for selling thousands of false negative COVID-19 test results while attempting to cross borders disguised as a woman. He acquired about $350,000 by scamming patients and issuing thousands of fake results.

Many in the country have been charged with medical fraud and taking advantage of the pandemic. Bangladesh's economy is heavily dependent on millions of Bangladeshis that work overseas and send billions of dollars back to their home country. Many of these migrant workers that have been trying to return to their jobs in Europe were tricked into buying unperformed test results. [New York Times]

The false documents have not only revealed the fragility of Bangladesh's health and medical establishment but have also worsened the situation by

undermining the dependability of clinics and discouraging people from getting tested. [CNN]

Nepal: Immediate halt of forced eviction of Chepang indigenous families demanded

(dql) Anmesty International has demanded that Nepalese authorities immediately stop "the forced eviction of the Chepang Indigenous peoples from their settlements and ensure those responsible for the destruction of ten homes are held accountable."

The Chepang are an indigenous Tibeto-Burman ethnic group which mainly inhabits the rugged ridges of the Mahabbarat mountain range, a east-west mountain range of central Nepal.

Background of Amnesty International's demand is the burning and destruction of Chepang families by authorities without prior warning. [Anmesty International]

Maldives: Government criticized for restrictions on protests

(dql) Human Rights Watch (HRW) has criticized the Maldives for restricting protests in violation of human rights, adding that new regulations threaten civil society groups which support peaceful protests.

HRW's critic comes on the heels of first, a declaration of the Maldivian Ministry of Home Affairs last week according to which street protests, marches, parades, and other gatherings can only be held with prior written approval by Maldives Police Service, and second, a statement of the Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment Ministry warning nongovernmental organizations that they should abstain from supporting “actions that are detrimental to national security and national interests.”

Both Ministries' decisions are responses to a number protests staged in July, including marches by exploited expatriate workers demanding unpaid wages, child and women rights groups, as well as by the opposition coalition. [HRW] [The Edition]

Law and Politics in Southeast Asia

Malaysia: Ongoing political tensions

(cm) Former Prime Minister and incumbent lawmaker for Basian Nasional (BN), Najib Razak, claimed that the new reasoning offered by former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad for his resignation as Prime Minister was untruthful. Earlier last week, on his blog, Dr. Mahathir had stated that stepping down was "only a formality as the Pakatan Harapan coalition had ceased to be the government the moment Bersatu abandoned them". Mr. Najib commented that Dr. Mahathir's resignation was the result of fear from losing the 15th general election, transferring power to Anwar, and being controlled by People's Justice Party (PKR) and Democratic Action Party (DAP). [Malay Mail 1] [Malay Mail 2]

In February, the hitherto-ruling Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition had collapsed, after lawmakers from then-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's Parti Pri-bumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) had left the PH coalition. The exit of these lawmakers and 11 more from the Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) left PH short of a simple majority in Parliament. Mahathir then resigned as Prime minister, which was accepted by the Malaysian King, who, however, immediately re-appointed him interim Prime Minister. However, Najib's Basian Nasional Coalition leadership ended due to his defeat in the general election against Mahathir's Pakatan Harapan (PH) in 2018. His response for Mahathir to 'come clean' is no surprise, as he may want to deter further blame on top of his three major criminal trials, such as the ongoing 1MDB trail. [AiR No. 8, February/2020, 4]

In Mr. Najib's 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal, Goldman Sachs Executives plans to resume

discussion and negotiation on the recovery of lost assets with the Malaysian Government. Goldman Sachs's three units have specifically pleaded not guilty in February to the Malaysian courts for misleading investors in "$6.5 billion in bond sales the U.S. investment bank helped raise for 1MDB". Meanwhile, Malaysian prosecutors believe the expenses of PetroSaudi International (PSI), Saudi Arabia's energy firm, was siphoned from the 1MDB state fund. As a result, the Malaysian Court has placed an interim order to halt PSI from using more than $349 million funds in Britain. Najib's trial itself, however, is only gradually progressing due to ongoing delays. For example, trials were postponed due to Covid-19, Najib's participation as a 'statutory function as MP' in the Chini by-election for Barisan Nasional Campaign, and scheduling dilemmas. However, the High Court mentioned that non-advanced notices will no longer be allowed. [Malay Mail 3] [Reuters 1] [Reuters 2]

Meanwhile, the center-left Democratic Action Party (DAP) of the Malaysian state of Sarawak has recently decided to back Shafie Apdal for PM candidate, with the Sarawak chairman of DAP stating the number of MPs supporting Anwar was only 109. Customarily, 112 MPs are required to form a government, thus Anwar's support is considered short. Justifying the decision, the chairman further said Shafie Apdal's leadership could possibly shape harmony between the racial and religious division currently in place. Earlier last month, Dr. Mahathir, who had announced that he would no longer want to be the opposition`s candidate for Prime Minister, alongside five other MPs had backed Shafie as well. In mid-June then, the Presidential Council of Pakatan Harapan (PH) decided to have Anwar Ibrahim as the PM candidate. [The Star] [AiR No. 26, June/2020, 5]

Malaysian court's hand down sentences on Rohingya refugees

(cm) After many Rohingyas have disembarked on Malaysian shores, 31 men were sentenced to prison for seven months, and approximately 20 of them additionally received three strokes of the cane for having committed offences under the Immigration Act 1959/63 in June. Others, children and women, were given similar jail sentences for entering the nation without a valid work permit.

The Immigration Act in Malaysia imposes up to five years of imprisonment, fines and six strokes of the cane for individuals who are seen as 'irregular', thus

persons who enter the country without the government's permission. Amnesty International questions that Malaysia's treatment of refugees and undocumented migrants complies with international standards while PM Muhyiddin Yassin sought assistance from other neighbouring countries during the ASEAN meeting this month. [AiR No. 26, June/2020, 5] [Amnesty International] [Refworld]

Malaysia: Minister of Religious Affairs gives Islamic authorities "full licence" to carry out enforcement actions against transgender people

(cm) Malaysia`s Minister of Religious Affairs, Zulkifli Mohamad, has reportedly given Islamic authorities "full licence to carry out its enforcement actions" against transgenders living in Malaysia, citing his plan to provide religious education or conversion therapy for transgenders to "return to the right path". [South China Morning Post]

The International Commission of Jurist (ICJ) called for an immediate rescinding of the order, and demanded measures of protection and non-discrimination for LGBTQ persons in Malaysia. The concerns of impunity for violence, mistreatment and discrimination by enforcement officers spark outrage for activists and the LGBTQ community in Malaysia. [International Commission of Jurists]

Myanmar: Thousands of villagers fleeing violence in Rakhine state

(jn) After days of heavy fighting between the Myanmar military and the insurgent Arakan Army (AA), at least 3000 civilians have fled their villages in the north of Rakhine state. As about 200.000 refugees before them, they are seeking shelter in Buddhist monasteries and crowded and poorly run refugee camps in coastal areas. The military blamed AA fighters for "using villagers as human shields" that required a counter-terrorism operation to reopen communication lines and to rescue the villagers. However, during that operation at least one civilian was killed, and residents said they feared torture and wanton destruction from government forces that were driving them out of their villages. [Radio Free Asia]

Exemplifying political persecution against people suspected of ties to the AA, Myanmar authorities released the body of a 37-year old man that showed clear signs of torture, according to his family. Civilian detentions are on the rise again with one NGO counting more than 300 citizens arrested on the mere suspicion of connections to the AA. Hundreds of more civilians are said to be on the run to escape arrest by the government. [Radio Free Asia 2]

Philippines defend anti-terror bill, announce controversial coronavirus measures

(mp) In a letter to US representatives, the Philippines assured that its new anti-terrorism law, which took effect on Saturday will respect freedom and human rights. Philippine President Duterte said that "law-abiding citizens" would not have to fear the act, which targeted terrorists only. However, lawyers have questioned the bill before the Supreme Court. [Straits Times] [AiR No. 27, July/2020, 1]

In a related development, civil right groups are highly alarmed after the announcement of new measures to combat COVID-19 including searching for infected patients in their homes in order to take them to central quarantine facilities. Patients who do not comply will face imprisonment. Critics fear police abuse and saw parallels with the President´s so-called "war on drugs" in which police also searched households for drug suspects. [The Diplomat]

Singapore: Results of 2020 General Election Stirs Singapore

(cm) After last week's general elections and a comfortable majority for the ever ruling People's Action Party (PAP), the sudden decrease of 8.6 percent of its votes in comparison with the 2015 elections raises questions. Among the reasons offered as an explanation for the drop in popularity is the belief that younger voters may have reacted to the harsh restrictions of fake news law on Facebook but also the change to online campaigning itself. The Worker's Party (WP) for instance is said to have gained online attention and support due to their successful social media campaigning. It remains to be seen whether the result will eventually strengthen those in the government that are in favour of more democracy or

those in of favour of even more control. [Today Online] [Channel News Asia] [AiR No. 28, July/2020, 2]

Thailand: Resignations of six minister signal PM`s loosing grip

(lm) As Thailand continues to mitigate the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, over the course of the last week, six ministers resigned from their posts, paving the way for Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha to reshuffle the cabinet.

On Wednesday, Deputy Prime Minister and long-time economic policy tsar Somkid Jatusripita was the first to submit his resignation letter, just a day after media reports had quoted the Prime Minister saying that he had no knowledge about the resignation plans of members of his top finance team. Soon thereafter, Finance Minister Uttama Savanayana, Energy Minister Sontirat Sontijirawong, and Higher Education, Science and Innovations Minister Suvit Maesincee also stepped down from their cabinet posts. The three Ministers alongside the Deputy Secretary-General of the Prime Minister's Office had already resigned from the ruling Palang Pracharath Party (PPRP) last week, but had remained in their cabinet posts. On Monday, Prime Minister's Office Minister Tewan Liptapanlop and Labour Minister Chatumongol Sonakul, who last month had stepped down as leader of the Action Coalition for Thailand (ACT), one of 20 partners in Mr Prayuth's government, also resigned from the cabinet. [AiR No. 28, July/2020, 2] [AiR No. 27, July/2020, 1] [Bangkok Post 1] [Reuters] [Reuters 2]

Mr Somkid and his allies have been instrumental in shaping Thai economic policy since the military coup in 2014, and were pivotal to the PPRP`s launch before the 2019 general election by giving a civilian face to the military junta. The new ministers' major task would be to oversee the use of a record 1.9 trillion THB aid package approved in June to weather the economic knock-on effects of the coronavirus pandemic. [AiR No. 23, June/2020, 2] [Bangkok Post 5]

In the light of the resignation of four of his economic ministers, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha on Thursday said that he was planning to complete a cabinet reshuffle before the end of next month. While he declined to comment on potential candidates for the posts, the Prime Minister said that some key posts in the economic team, particularly the finance portfolio, were part of a "central", non-party ministerial quota, and as such did not belong to the PPRP or any

other coalition parties. Mr Prayut further admitted that he had already approached some “outside” economists to join the cabinet. On Saturday, then, Mr Prayut confirmed that he had approached the co-president of Kasikornbank and chairman of the Thai Bankers' Association, Predee Daochai, as well as former Central Bank governor Prasarn Trairatvorakul, to join the new cabinet line-up. Moreover, the Prime Minister dismissed reports that had tipped the head of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC), Thosaporn Sirisumphand to steer the country`s economy. Outgoing Bank of Thailand governor Veerathai Santiprabhob meanwhile denied reports that tipped him as a candidate. [Bangkok Post 2] [Bankok Post 3] [Bangkok Post 4].

In the lead-up to a meeting of the PPRP`s executive committee scheduled for Tuesday to discuss potential candidates for the vacant cabinet positions, reports emerged saying that the party was planning to nominate hitherto-Industry Minister Suriya Jungrungreangkit as the new Energy Minister. Noteworthy, Mr Suriya is a co-founder of the party`s Sam Mitr faction, which considers the energy portfolio as an integral part of the party`s quota. The proposal thus seems to lend further credence to the assumption that the resignation of the government`s economic team signals a diminishing negotiating power of the Prime Minister, who was allegedly planning to offer the energy portfolio to former chief executive of energy conglomerate PTT, Pailin Chuchottaworn. [South China Morning Post] [Bangkok Post 5] [Bangkok Post 6].

Speaking after the cabinet meeting on July 21, the Prime Minister said that he would complete the cabinet reshuffle as soon as possible, and brushed off reports that had suggested infightings between him and the PPRP over the new cabinet line-up: "We don't talk about ministerial quotas. I will see to it that the line-up is suitable. I thank all PPRP members. Everybody has the right to speak out, but it is I who make the decision, based on mutual understanding”. [Bangkok Post 7]

Thailand: Senator calls for amnesty bill

(lm) During a Senate meeting discussing the Thai government`s national strategy, Senator Kamnoon Sitthisamarn, who had formerly served as the spokesperson of the junta-appointed Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), last Tuesday called for an amnesty bill to absolve offenders charged with instigating political unrest and protests within the past 15 years.

In a reference to Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha`s "Unify Thais to Build the Nation" campaign, Mr Kamnoon said the bill would significantly boost the government`s national reconciliation efforts as it would benefit protest leaders of all political groups, including the now-defunct yellow-shirt People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), the red-shirt United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) and the now-defunct People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC). As described by Mr Kamnoon, the bill however does not include charges of corruption or offences against Section 112 of the Criminal Code, also known as the lèse majesté. Suggesting that a newly formed committee could grant amnesty on a case-by-case basis, the Senator further said the bill could also be applied to offenders who return to Thailand after having fled from legal proceedings. Lastly, Mr Kamnoon suggested that term "political protest" should also be redefined. [Bangkok Post]

Pointing to the protests that had emerged throughout the weekend [see contribution below], on Monday, Senator Kamnoon followed up on his proposal, asking the government to communicate directly with the demonstrators, while also urging the Prime Minister to personally address the matter. Earlier, Deputy Prime Minister Wissanu Krea-ngam had said the proposal "might warrant serious attention if it is properly submitted to the government". [Bangkok Post 2] [Bangkok Post 3]

The Thai Supreme Court is gradually delivering rulings in cases involving charges relating to protests and political unrest. On Tuesday, the Supreme Court upheld the suspended jail sentences and fines handed down to three people for tearing up their ballot paper during the 2016 referendum on the draft constitution, which was enacted in 2017. Last month, Thailand's Supreme Court had affirmed prison sentences handed down to five leaders of the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) over a 2007 protest. In February last year, the Court upheld eight-month prison sentences for six former PAD co-leaders for their role in the seizure of Government House during the 2008 street protests. Five of them were later granted a royal pardon. [Bangkok Post 4] [AiR No. 26, June/2020, 5] [AiR No. 37, September/2019, 2]

The last amnesty bill was introduced by the then-governing Pheu Thai party in 2013, with then-Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra arguing that the legislation was a necessary step towards reconciliation after years of political turmoil. However, as it was considered as a blanket amnesty with the implicit aim to allow Mr Thaksin to return to Thailand without having to serve a jail sentence, the bill further fuelled

existing political tensions, which eventually led to the demise of the government. No amnesty bill has since been proposed to the parliament.

Anti-government protesters rally to Democracy Monument to demand change

(lm) Defying a coronavirus ban on gatherings, around 2,500 protesters on Saturday evening converged on Bangkok's Democracy Monument to demand the dissolution of parliament, an end to harassment of government critics, and amendments to the constitution. [Reuters] [Bangkok Post 1] [South China Morning Post]

Earlier, hundreds of police had ringed the Monument and set up barriers to try to prevent the protesters from occupying it. Scuffles thus broke out as the mainly young Thai demonstrators forced their way through the police lines. One of the largest street demonstrations since the 2014 military coup, the protests had been organised by the Liberation Youth group and dispersed at about midnight. However, days before the protest, the organisers had already said that they would return in two weeks, should the government not respond to their demands. On Sunday, smaller rallies were held in Chiang Mai and Ubon Ratchathani with protesters issuing the same demands. On Monday, then, about 200 demonstrators rallied at the headquarters of the Thai army to protest against inappropriate defence spending and the military`s involvement in politics. [Bangkok Post 2] [South China Morning Post 2]

Leading conservative activist and secretary-general of the Association for the Protection of the Constitution, Srisuwan Janya, on Sunday called on police to take decisive legal action against those behind the anti-government demonstration, along with lawmakers who had supported them, claiming they had violated a myriad of laws. In his statement, Mr Srisuwan also alleged some MPs of conspiracy, saying they had prepared in advance to use their parliamentary status as collateral to seek bail for protest leaders in case they would have been arrested. In the past, Mr Janya had been active against the activities of the now-defunct Future Forward Party, which was disbanded earlier this year. On Monday, Thai police then announced they were considering to press charges against the organisers of the weekend`s protests, as the demonstration was held without a permission and had further violated the emergency decree. [Bangkok Post 3] [Bangkok Post 4]

Fuelled by the February Constitutional Court ruling dissolving the then-opposition Future Forward Party and banning 11 of its executives from running for political office for 10 years, protests against the government of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha had been drawing increasingly large crowds. However, demonstrations tapered off quickly when several coronavirus clusters were confirmed and the emergency decree was invoked in March. Lockdown measures and social distancing have since helped the government contain the spread of the virus, but it has retained emergency powers, which critics say it wields as a political weapon. [AiR, No. 9, March/2020, 1] [AiR No. 8, February/2020, 4]

The political atmosphere heated up again in June, when self-exiled Thai political activist Wanchalearm Satsaksit was abducted by unknown men in neighbouring Cambodia`s capital, Phnom Penh. At the time, protests had flared outside the Cambodian embassy in Bangkok, demanding an investigation and accusing the Thai government of orchestrating the kidnapping. Later the same month, pro-democracy groups then held gatherings throughout the country to commemorate the peaceful “revolution” by the People’s Party of 24 June 1932 when Thailand turned from an absolute into a constitutional monarchy. [AiR No. 23, June/2020, 2] [Air No. 26, June/2020, 5]

Earlier this month, a political activist was sent to a psychiatric hospital after he had posted pictures of himself wearing a T-shirt with a message potentially violating Section 112 of the Criminal Code, also known as the lèse majesté. While the Public Mental Health Department claimed that the man voluntarily admitted himself to the hospital, family members said that officials had turned up at their home and arrested the activist. [Bangkok Post 5]

Thailand: National Human Rights Commission finds rights violations in coal project

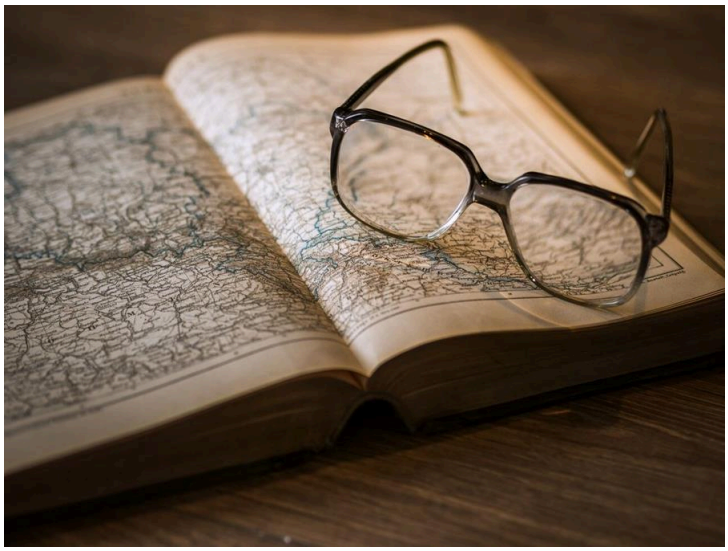
(lm) The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has recommended the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning to revise an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report on a coal mine project in Chiang Mai's Omkoi district, after it had found human rights violations in parts of the document. Before the NHRC began scrutinising EIA report, villagers, some of which belong to the ethnic minority group Karen, petitioned the Commission to look into the matter.

Specifically, the Commission found that a public hearing had been improperly conducted, thus having potentially misinformed or misguided the local villagers. Further, the Commission found that the parts in the EIA report detailing the public hearing contained factual errors including a potentially false list of participants. [Bangkok Post]

Interior Ministry hints at local polls

(lm) Deputy Interior Minister Niphon Bunyamanee on Tuesday said that at least one type of local election is expected to be held before the end of this year. However, the decision will have to be made by the Election Commission, which is currently tasked with rearranging the election constituencies. [Bangkok Post]

International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia



China-USA relations: Tensions over Hong Kong and Xinjiang

(dql) Further worsening already-strained Sino-US relations, President Trump – in response to Beijing's imposition of the National Security Law for Hong Kong – last week signed into law the Hong Kong Autonomy Act, which allows for sanctions against foreign individuals or institutions which the United States hold responsible for contributing to the erosion of Hong

Kong's autonomy, and also signed an executive order which ends US preferential treatment for the city. [South China Morning Post]

China was quick to hit back and announced retaliatory sanctions against U.S. individuals and entities, adding that "Hong Kong affairs are purely China's internal affairs and no foreign country has the right to interfere." [CNN]

In a related development, the U.S. Commerce Department added 11 Chinese companies to the US economic blacklist which are believed to be implicated in using forced labor by Uighurs and other Muslim minority groups in China's western Xinjiang region. The listing prevents the firms from purchasing components from U.S. companies without U.S. government approval.

In response, China accused the USA of oppressing Chinese companies and of slandering its Xinjiang policy. [Reuters]

China, Russia agree on opposing US unilateralism

(dql) Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in a telephone talk week agreed to reject US unilateralism, with the former harshly criticizing the USA for its "'America first' policy, pushing egoism, unilateralism and bullying to the limit", adding that Washington has "lost its mind, morals and credibility," while the latter added that the USA "has always believed in the American exceptionalism and egotism, and it has recently stripped off its pretence and threatened or wielded sanctions against others."

The statements send a strong message to the USA that China and Russia are further closing their ranks against the USA. [South China Morning Post]

China-UK relations: Tensions rising over Huawei and Hong Kong

(dql) The United Kingdom announced a ban of Huawei from its 5G networks. The ban requires British telecoms operators to remove all of Huawei's components from their 5G mobile infrastructure by 2027, and are prohibited from buying Huawei's products from January 2021.

The move is a major turnaround of London, which only in January decided to allow restricted access to the country's 5G networks, and makes the UK the second countries among the "Five Eyes" allies after Australia to follow Washington' call to ban Huawei. New Zealand and Canada so far have not taken such a move.

China expressed its strong opposition to the UK's "groundless" ban of Huawei's 5G kit and vowed "to "safeguard" Chinese companies' "legitimate interests." [CNBC] [BBC]

US Secretary of State Pompeo, meanwhile, welcomed London's decision and announced that the USA will expand its campaign against Huawei to restrict US visas for the companies' employees. [The Guardian]

In another move angering China, the UK on Monday announced that it will "immediately and indefinitely" suspend its extradition treaty with Hong Kong and extend its arms embargo on China to Hong Kong. [CNN]

In an earlier move, Prime Minister Boris Johnson offered millions of Hongkongers, eligible for the British national overseas status (BNO), residency in the UK. [AiR No. 27, July/2020, 1]

Japan: Heightened of territorial conflicts with China

(mp) Territorial conflicts between China and Japan in the East China Sea are aggravating after Chinese ships´ activities in the area have been increasing. In June, Chinese Coast Guard vessels intruded into Japanese waters for over 39 hours, which is the longest period after Tokyo gained state control over the islands in 2012.

Subsequently, a Chinese research ship operated in a Japan-claimed zone near the country´s southernmost point for several days, ignoring Tokyo´s appeals to cease activities. While survey ships are required to seek permission before entering a foreign zone, the Chinese government declared Oktinotori was not an island but rocks; therefore, Japan´s claim lacked a legal basis and the research activities were in line with international law.

In early July, China protested about the "trespassing" of Japanese fishing boats into their territorial waters near to the disputed Japan-administered Senkaku Islands, which China calls Diaoyu. Japan immediately rejected

the Chinese complaint, which presumably intended to strengthen China´s sovereignty claims. Just last month, the city assembly of Ishigaki had passed a resolution to change a southern area´s name to “Tonoshiro Senkaku,” aiming to strengthen Japan´s claim over the island. This again was followed by Beijing assigning Chinese names to nearby seabed zones. [Nikkei Asian Review] [Kyodo News 1]

Moreover, Japan announced to instantly send out fighter jets against all Chinese aircraft taking off from their base in Fujian province, not only those which intrude Japan´s air space. This measure is necessary as Beijing moved its airbase, which is now located only 380 kilometers away from the disputed Senkaku islands. In 2019, Japan intercepted Chinese military aircraft for 675 times. [Kyodo News 2]

South Korea: First military communications satellite launched

(dql) South Korea has launched its first military communications satellite into space, in a move signaling Seoul's efforts to build up its defence capabilities against nuclear-armed North Korea.

South Korea has become the 10th country to possess a military-only communications satellite to ensure "permanent and secured military communications". [Al Jazeera]

South Korean lawsuit filed against Kim Jong-un’s sister

(yo) A South Korean conservative activist lawyer filed a suit against Kim Yo-jong, sister of the North Korean leader Kim Yong-un, accusing her of being responsible for the blowing of the drastically deteriorating relationship between the two Koreas. South Korean prosecutors said they were looking into the litigation, but said that they would not be able to formally investigate Kim Yo-jong nor bring her to court. The lawyer admitted the implausibility of being able to carry out the investigation and forcing North Korea to pay compensation for destroying a building funded by South Korea. He noted the suite was a symbolic gesture, criticising the Moon administration’s lack of assertiveness in dealing with the North.

Under South Korean Constitution North Korea and its people are recognised as part of South Korea and

lawsuits can be tried without defendants in court but it is most likely prosecutors will drop the case. [New York Times]

North Korea proceeds down a nuclear path

(yo) The “closed-door meeting” of the Workers’ party of the North Korea’s Central Military Commission which took place on July 18 insinuates that North Korea plans to continue developing and eventually producing strategic weapons. North Korea released photos of the CMC meeting, which revealed that nuclear weapons specialists were attending the meeting. The photo communicates the message that nuclear program remains key to the Commission's policy and is consistent with recent statements about planning for threats coming from the US and strengthening own capabilities. [28 North]

Taiwan-EU relations: Brussels urges Taipei to push for death penalty abolition

(dql) During the annual human rights talks with Taiwan, the European Union last week reiterated its strong opposition to the death penalty and “called on Taiwan to reinstate a de facto moratorium and pursue a policy towards the abolition of the death penalty.”

Further topics discussed included protections for migrant workers, the protection of rights of Taiwanese detainees in the EU, as well as LGBT rights.

US Carrier Strike Group (CSG) exercises with Indian Navy amid prospects of Australian participation in Malabar exercise

(jk) Earlier this week, the US CSG lead by the USS Nimitz engaged in a number of military drills in cooperation with the Indian Navy "in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific" [US INDO PACOM]. The Nimitz CSG had just concluded dual CSG exercises (together with the USS Theodore Roosevelt) in the Philippine Sea last month [US Seventh Fleet], and has in previous years also taken part in India's Malabar multilateral navy exercises.

With regard to those and last week's news on Indian intentions to invite the Australian Navy to join the upcoming instalment of the exercises (Australia forms together with India, the US and Japan the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or "Quad") [Asia in Review No. 28, July/2020, 2], a meeting of India's Ministry of Defence further discussed the issue and, while still no formal decision was reached, the invitation appears increasingly likely. [The Hindu]

Notwithstanding Australia not participating in the exercises in previous years either due to their own withdrawal or lack of invitation, bilateral (including naval) cooperation between the two countries is very much ongoing (see for instance AUSINDEX naval exercise) and took another deepening step last month when the two signed an arrangement concerning "Mutual Logistics Support" which agreed on reciprocal access to each other's military bases. [Asia Nikkei]

All Quad members share similar concepts and visions for a free and open Indo Pacific and its undergoing resurgence underpins ever growing apprehensions vis-à-vis a more assertive People's Republic of China.

India–Pakistan relations further strained by spying case

(lf) Indian diplomats left a meeting arranged by Pakistan with the former Indian naval officer Kulbhusan Jadhav who currently sits on death row in Pakistan for espionage. They claimed that they were not provided unhindered consular access. [Reuters]

Jadhav stated last week not to file a review of his case [see AiR No. 28, July/2020,2]. He had been arrested in 2016. India took the case to the International Court of Justice, which stalled the execution and asked Pakistan to review the death penalty while at the same time allowing India full consular access. Relations between India and Pakistan had already been tense since both countries expelled diplomatic staff over corruption allegations earlier this year. [see AiR No. 26/2020, 5]

India-Bangladesh: Will border incidents harm relations?

(ls) Bangladesh's Foreign Minister said that India's Border Security Force should be cautious and use non-lethal weapons while guarding the common border. The comment came in response to a reported lynching

of three Bangladesh citizens in India's Assam state on Sunday. Police said that the three had come to steal cattle. Moreover, there have been several shooting incidents at the India-Bangladesh border over the course of recent years. [The Hindu]

At the same time, however, Bangladesh and India have upgraded their trade relations and concluded several cooperation agreements for some years. In October 2019, for instance, Standard Operating Procedures for the use of ports for movement of goods to and from India were concluded. In 2015, the two countries had signed an agreement on coastal shipping. [Economic Times]

For insights into recent Pakistani diplomatic efforts to push for a reset of relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan in the wake of uncertain India-Pakistan relations see [Tribune].

India-Bhutan: New trade route opened

(ls) India and Bhutan have launched a new trade route between Jaigaon in West Bengal and Ahllay in Bhutan. It is aimed at facilitating the trade of goods and strengthening the sub-regional cooperation. Bhutan, which is in a border quarrel with China [AiR, No. 28, July/2020, 2], is a key buffer state between India and China and critical for India's security in the region. [Economic Times]

Pakistan: Tensions in Balochistan as partnership with China and Iran grows

(ls/lf) Last week, eight soldiers were killed in an attack in Pakistan's Balochistan province which belongs to the cultural-geographic region of Balochistan inhabited by the Baloch people and comprising parts of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran. No group has claimed the attack in the Pakistani province yet. The long-ongoing conflict has been growing tense over recent months which might partly be due to China's increasing activities in the region, which is rich in resources, including copper, gas and gold.

Benefits from most of the investments may not make their way towards the Baloch population, however and may also have stirred up additional resentments against the federal government in Islamabad. Separatist groups have increasingly targeted Chinese construction sites. Last month's attack on the stock

exchange in Karachi by Baloch militants has shed additional light on a long insurgence struggle that involve a number of external players. [Al Jazeera] [Reuters]

At the same time, China and Iran are currently negotiating a major military and trade agreement that is likely to take place within the framework of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Iran's closer partnership with China means that Pakistan may involve Iran in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, which is part of the BRI, and thus have a better chance to protect its security interests in Balochistan. It appears possible that Pakistan, China and Iran may form a joint military force for intelligence-sharing and to carry out targeted operations against militants that use the Pakistan-Iran border to destabilize the region. [The Diplomat]

Pakistan and Afghanistan blame each other over alleged rocket attacks

(lf) Afghanistan's Foreign Minister has condemned an alleged rocket firing by the Pakistani army across the contested border. A report stated that the rockets were fired into Afghanistan's north-eastern Kunar province killing four civilians and injuring several more. Pakistan's police on the other hand, accused Afghan forces to have targeted a house, which has long been a safe place for local rebels and Taliban fighters.

This incident occurs as new peace negotiations between the Pakistani government and the Taliban are expected to be held later this month. They had been stalled due to the prisoner exchange which is part of the US-Taliban peace deal concluded earlier this year. [AiR No. 9, March/2020, 1]

It is not uncommon for Afghanistan and Pakistan to accuse the other of starting fire in the border region. The two countries are divided by the contested Durand line stretching over 2,400 km, often separating villages in two. In 2017, Pakistan started to fence the line. [Al Jazeera]

Chinese embassy in Myanmar attacks US for its criticism of China's regional striving for power

(jn) China's embassy in Myanmar claimed on Sunday that the US was "outrageously smearing" the country

and of driving a wedge between China and other Southeast Asian nations over the South China Sea dispute and Hong Kong. The US showed a “selfish, hypocritical, contemptible, and ugly face” in an attempt to “shift the attention on domestic problems and seek selfish political gains”.

The US embassy in Yangon had decried China’s “unprecedented campaign to undermine the sovereignty of ASEAN countries in the South China Sea” as part of a "larger pattern to undermine the sovereignty of its neighbors". Further, it compared China’s behavior in the South China Sea and Hong Kong to large-scale Chinese investments projects in Myanmar that mostly benefit China and could become debt-traps, but also pointed to Chinese responsibility for drug and human trafficking as well as environmental destruction in Myanmar: “This is how modern sovereignty is often lost – not through dramatic, overt action, but through a cascade of smaller ones that lead to its slow erosion over time," the embassy asserted.

Despite its relative economic insignificance, Myanmar has become another strategic theater where China is eyeing access to the Bay of Bengal and is flexing its mighty economic muscles (see e.g. AiR No. 26, June/2020, 5). [Reuters in Channel News Asia] [US Embassy Op-Ed]

Vietnam reacts to hardened US stance on South China Sea dispute

(jn) Vietnam’s Foreign Ministry welcomed any views in accordance with international law on the South China Sea, and that “respecting the legal order at the sea and implementing [the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea] in full and with good faith” was crucial. The statement came after US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had told reporters that the US would support countries around the globe which believe their legal territorial or maritime claims were violated by China, though the US would do so by pursuing diplomatic means, such as in multilateral bodies like ASEAN. [South China Morning Post]

Despite the rhetoric, Beijing is seen as carefully navigating its relationship with Vietnam for the moment instead of reciprocating in kind.

The Deputy Foreign Ministers of China and Vietnam held a video meeting in their respective functions as General Secretaries of the Steering Committee for Vietnam-China Bilateral Cooperation last Thursday,

discussing the South China Sea dispute among other things. Details of the conversation were not provided. In the same week, the Chinese-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) announced that it would lend $100 million to a Vietnamese bank to prop up its lending to private businesses suffering from the coronavirus pandemic.

On the other hand, Vietnam appears to have cancelled a contract with an oil rig off its coast near the Vanguard Bank, a reef near the Spratly Islands within Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and payed compensation to the parent company. One year ago, the Vanguard Bank became the place where Chinese and Vietnamese coast guard ships met in a tense and prolonged stand-off (see AiR No. 29, July/2019, 3). Hanoi did not publicly comment on rescinding the contract, but it comes at a time when China has increased its incursions into Vietnamese waters, deploying a China Coast Guard vessel to the Vanguard Bank last recently and a survey vessel into Vietnam's EEZ in June.

According to experts, Vietnam may feel emboldened by the vocal and assertive US positioning and increasing US military presence in the region. Even though the Chinese and Vietnamese economies are very much intertwined with Vietnam having a significant trade deficit, the South China Sea dispute is the decisive factor for the country's geopolitical alignment against China (see also last week's AiR No. 28, July/2020, 2). [South China Morning Post 2] [Nhan Dan] [Radio Free Asia]

Philippines and China easing tensions, superpowers´ ties deteriorate

(mp) The Philippines and China held a one-hour phone conference on Tuesday to reaffirm their friendly bilateral relationship and to promote cooperation despite contentious maritime issues and rising tensions, after Washington had called Beijing's claims in the South China Sea "completely unlawful." China in response accused the US of militarizing the territory, provoking conflict, and causing instability.

Manila further called a four-year-old ruling by a court in The Hague, which China has never recognized, a "milestone" and "non-negotiable" for the international order and reaffirmed its importance. Beijing invited the Philippines to jointly secure peace and stability in the South China Sea by bilateral talks. [Nikkei Asian Review]

In a related development, the US Ambassador to the Philippines in a lengthy statement expressed his country´s support for Manila, proposed a deeper partnership, and thereby referred to the area as the "West Philippine Sea." This term, which also includes zones disputed by Beijing, and has mainly been used by Manila, was regarded as highly provocative towards China. Consequently, his Chinese counterpart, Ambassador Huang, urgently warned Southeast Asian countries about Washington´s efforts to enter the South China Sea disputes and subsequently interfere with the region´s political stability. [South China Morning Post]

Upcoming Online Events

24 July 2020 @ 4:00 pm ICT, German-Southeast Asian Center of Excellence for Public Policy and Good Governance (CPG), Asian Governance Foundation (AGF), Hanns Seidel Foundation, Thailand

Asia in Review (AiR) online panel discussion series

on law and politics in Asia

Thai Politics after the Lockdown

This online panel discussion aims to discuss the outlook for Thai politics post-lockdown with a focus on inner-party and coalition stability both on the side of the government and the opposition and seeks to outline possible scenarios of how the constitutional process might develop in times that are widely expected to be testing for the economic, social, and political system alike.

Among the panelists are:

Bhokin Bhalakula, Assoc. Prof. Dr., former Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand and President of the Thai Parliament

Pita Limjaroenrat, Member of the House of Representatives and Leader of the Move Forward Party

Kasit Piromya, former Foreign Minister of Thailand and former Ambassador

Abhisit Vejjajiva, former Prime Minister of Thailand and former Leader of the Democrat Party

Panitan Wattanayagorn, Assoc. Prof. Dr., Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University; Chairman of the Prime Minister's Security Advisory Committee

The event, moderated by veteran journalist and writer ***Michael Vatikiotis***, will be livestreamed on the CPG and Hanns Seidel Foundation Facebook pages at https://www.facebook.com/CPGTU an https://www.facebook.com/HannsSeidelFoundationThailand/.

For more information, please visit [CPG].

22 July 2020 @ 3:30 pm EDT, Center for Strategic & International Studies, USA

Online Event: Covid-19's Next Cascade of Crises & Choices Before the World's Leaders

This event will discuss the latest Global Humanitarian Response Plan for Covid-19 and how inaction at this moment could harm world interests as well as those of the U.S.

Please visit [CSIS] for details about the event.

22 July 2020 @ 11:00 am EDT, The Heritage Foundation, United States

VIRTUAL EVENT: Scholars and Scribes Review the Rulings: The Supreme Court's 2019-2020 Term

In this event, scholars and scribes will break down some of this term's main cases, talk about the historic

new procedures utilized during the pandemic, and discuss what it all means.

Please find further details here: [Heritage].

22 July 2020 @ 10:00 am AEST, Lowy Institute, Australia

In conversation with Jeffrey Goldberg, editor in chief of The Atlantic

This conversation will cover this year's presidential election in the U.S., the global implications of the coronavirus pandemic, and America's looming cold war with China.

If you are interested in joining the webinar, please register [here].

22 July 2020 @ 1:00 pm WET, Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law, U.K.

Global Legislative Responses to Coronavirus

This event shows how states around the world struggled to provide legislative responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. It examines the role of the legislature, executive, and courts and discusses whether "regular" laws are sufficient or there is a need for emergency measures.

Please find registration details here: [Bingham Centre].

22 July 2020 @ 10:00 am EDT, Middle East Institute, USA

MEI Defense Leadership Series: Episode 5 with U.S. NAVCENT, Fifth Fleet, and Combined Maritime Forces Commander Vice Admiral James Malloy

This virtual conversation focuses on the present and future challenges and opportunities facing U.S. maritime goals.

The event will be broadcasted live. Please find registration details here: [MEI].

22 July 2020 @ 3:00 pm GMT+2, Institute for Security Studies, South Africa

Common African positions: achievable goal or wishful thinking?

This webinar will reflect on how African states can ensure that their political positions lead to collective action and discuss how to strengthen Africa's voice in multilateral diplomacy.

Details are available at [ISS].

22 July 2020 @ 2:30 pm EDT, Brookings, USA

The opioid crisis in America: Vulnerable groups, law enforcement, and international supply

This webinar will explore the opioid epidemic in the U.S., how law enforcement works, and the role of international supply control measures. The panel will take questions from the audience.

See [Brookings] for additional information.

23 July 2020 @ 12:30 pm CDT, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, USA

LIVE STREAM: Anne Applebaum on Autocracy's Seductive Lure

This event will examine what it will take to re-install faith in representative government in a time when authoritarian politicians and parties are entering the mainstream.

If you are interested in joining, please find further details at [Chicago Council].

23 July 2020 @ 5:30 pm AEST, Australian Institute of International Affairs, Australia

Why has the U.K. Dropped Foreign Policy from Brexit Negotiations?

This event will examine why the U.K. dropped foreign policy from Brexit negotiations, what the consequences are, and how the U.K. might pursue partnerships and initiatives beyond the E.U.

Follow [AIIA] for further details.

23 July 2020 @ 11:00 am EDT, The German Marshall Fund of The United States, USA

A Pivot To Asia? NATO at 71

This zoom event will debate on how NATO can further construct a coherent and informed China policy and what pressures may prevent NATO from pursuing such efforts. It will also discuss what tools the alliance might use to counter China's global ambitions.

Event information is accessible at [GMFUS].

23 July 2020 @ 4:00 pm IST, Observer Research Foundation, India

Russia-India relations and pandemic: Test of the global governance

This webinar will explore the role of the two strategic partners Russia and India in the post-covid world order, challenges faced by global institutions after the pandemic, and the future of BRICS.

Further information is accessible at [ORF].

23 July 2020 @ 12:00 pm EDT, Hudson Institute, USA

Pushing Back Against Chinese and North Korean Missile Threats: Strengthening the U.S.-Japan Deterrence Strategy and Joint Missile Defense Posture

In this video event, panelists will talk about the path of the US-Japan defense cooperation and how the Japanese government is utilizing the suspension of its Aegis Ashore deployment plan to review the country's national security strategy.

Follow [Hudson] for further details.

23 July 2020 @ 3:00 pm EDT, Inter-American Dialogue, USA

ONLINE EVENT: Race and Policing in the U.S. and Brazil

This debate discusses what recent cases of police violence in the U.S. and Brazil reveal about systemic racism, what parallels exist, and what the prospects are for police reforms in both countries.

To access the discussion, please visit [The Dialogue].

23 July 2020 @ 12:00 pm BST, International Institute for Strategic Studies, USA

Looking into the Libyan powder keg

This webinar will discuss how militias and foreign-backed mercenaries have exploited the fragmentation of state authority during the Libyan conflict and what the risks in recent initiatives to reform military and security institutions are.

Please check [IISS] for details.

23 July 2020 @ 11:30 am E.T., Institute for Policy Studies, United States

IPS Webinar Series: Coronavirus Authoritarianism and the Far Right

This webinar will reflect on how authoritarian leaders could take advantage of the covid-19 pandemic to concentrate their power further and cover the role of the far right.

If you are interested in joining the event, visit [IPS] for further information.

24 July 2020 @ 1:00 pm PT, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, USA

The Challenges of Reimagining Policing: A Comparative Perspective

This event explores the evidence base for reforms on the policy agenda, including community policing, external oversight, and the use of new technology.

Please check [FSI] for details.

24 July 2020 @ 1:30 pm EDT, Center for Strategic & International Studies, USA

Online Event: A Conversation with Dr. Anthony Fauci

This conversation with the Director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases and member of the White House Coronavirus Task Force will discuss strategies to keep the coronavirus outbreak under control.

Please visit [CSIS] for details about the event.

24 July 2020 @ 10:00 am EDT, Brookings, USA

How Africa is tackling COVID-19

This event will discuss what has been happening in Africa during the coronavirus crisis, which measures have been useful, political and security implications as well as what the rest of the world can learn from Sub-Saharan African public health practices.

See [Brookings] for additional information.

24 July 2020 @ 3:00 pm IST, Observer Research Foundation, India

Fellows Seminar Series | U.S. and China: Decoupling in the era of COVID-19

This webinar will explore the idea of "decoupling" technology between the U.S. and China and its impact on the global economy.

To join the event, visit [ORF].

27 July 2020 @ 7:00 pm IST, Observer Research Foundation, India

Is the U.S. ready for an Indo-US partnership?

In a time of rising conflicts between the U.S. and China, this webinar will discuss the India-US partnership and its challenges and opportunities.

Please visit [ORF] to join the event.

27 July 2020 @ 3:00 pm BST, International Institute for Strategic Studies, USA

The future of the U.S. posture in the Gulf

This event discusses the future of the U.S. posture in the Gulf, the prospects for a rethinking of the U.S. postures after the presidential election, and under what circumstances the U.S. would recalibrate its defense.

Please check [IISS] for details.

27 July 2020 @ 12:00 pm EDT, Atlantic Council, USA

Another August surprise: What is Putin up to in Ukraine?

This event discusses the fear of some experts that Putin may launch a new strike against Ukraine later this summer and how Ukraine and the West can best prepare for further Russian aggression.

A detailed description is accessible at [Atlantic Council].

27 July 2020 @ 4:00 pm EDT, Atlantic Council, USA

Germany's role in the future of transatlantic defense

This event examines Germany's agenda for European defense initiatives during its E.U. Presidency, the country's operation abroad from Afghanistan to Mali, and transatlantic security collaboration. Further, it will include a discussion on US-German defense relations and questions from registered participants.

A detailed description is accessible at [Atlantic Council].

27 July 2020 @ 8:00 pm E.T., Institute for Policy Studies, United States

No Warming, No War: Connecting Militarism with the Climate Crisis

This webinar hosts panelists from the U.S., Mexico, and the Philippines who will uncover global links between militarism and climate change. The webinar will be held in English and Spanish; live interpretation is available.

If you are interested in joining the event, visit [IPS] for further information.

27 July 2020 @ 10:00 am EDT, Foreign Policy Research Institute, USA

China's security footprint in Central Asia

This zoom event will discuss China's increasingly important role in Central Asia and how we can assess China's impact on the area today.

Visit [FPRI] to register for this event.

28 July 2020 @ 1:00 pm EDT, Center for Strategic & International Studies, USA

Online Event: The 19th Amendment 100 Years Later: A Conversation with Valerie Jarrett

Celebrating the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote in the U.S., this conversation will discuss the importance of political participation and how to encourage young people to vote.

Please visit [CSIS] for details about the event.

28 July 2020 @ 2:00 pm EDT, Brookings, USA

Disinformation, social media, and foreign interference: What can go wrong in the 2020 elections?

This interactive discussion will put a spotlight on the U.S. general elections and how to tackle potential problems such as media manipulation, election interference, voting obstacles, and disinformation.

See [Brookings] for additional information.

28 July 2020 @ 10:30 am UTC+8, Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy: Similarities and Differences between Trump and Biden

This talk will give an insight into the anticipated similarities and differences between Donald Trump's and Joe Biden's mindset and approach towards the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, including the future President's impact on China, the ASEAN and the Quad.

If you are interested in joining the event, visit [ISEAS] for further information.

28 July 2020 @ 11:00 am EDT, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, USA

Webinar — 'Defender in Chief': A book talk with John Yoo

This book presentation explores Donald Trump's presidential power, constitutional norms, and the relationship between the presidency and the rest of the U.S. federal system.

To access the event, please visit [AEI].

28 July 2020 @ 9:30 am EDT, Atlantic Council, USA

Asia's response to US-China tensions and COVID-19: A conversation with Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and David M. Rubenstein

In this event, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee will discuss Singapore's response to Covid-19, the importance of strengthening international cooperation, the regional response to US-China tensions, and more.

A detailed description is accessible at [Atlantic Council].

29 July 2020 @ 4:30 pm ET, Hoover Institution, USA

American Challenges Abroad at a Time of Plague, Protest, and Panic at Home

Senator Tom Cotton and Victor Davis Hanson will discuss about “American Challenges Abroad at a Time of Plague, Protest, and Panic at Home”.

Please find details here: [Hoover].

29 July 2020 @ 1:00 pm CDT, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, USA

LIVE STREAM: The Diplomatic Dissent Channel

This event examines the importance of the dissent channel, which allows U.S. diplomats a medium to criticize policy without fear of consequences. It will reflect on some of the most significant diplomatic episodes from recent administrations.

If you are interested in joining, please find further details at [Chicaco Council].

29 July 2020 @ 12:00 pm BST, Royal United Services Institute, U.K.

Peacebuilding During a Health Crisis: Lessons from the Africa Ebola Epidemic

This webinar discusses lessons learned from the ebola epidemic in Africa and how such experiences might help to form a response to the covid-19 pandemic.

To access the discussion, please visit [Rusi].

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