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Dear Readers,

The AiR team is presenting this week's brief on the latest events and developments in domestic politics, constitutional law, human rights, international relations and geopolitics in Asia.

I wish you an informative read and extend special greetings to readers in Burkina Faso and Kenya which celebrate National Day and Independence Day this week.

With best regards,

Henning Glaser

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Law and Politics in East Asia

China/Hong Kong: Joshua Wong jailed for 13 and a half months, pro-democracy media tycoon denied bail

(dql) Last Thursday, leading pro-democracy activist Joshua Wong was sentenced to 13 and a half months in jail. Early last week he had pleaded guilty to organizing and inciting an illegal assembly during an anti-government rally in June last year. Observers say, that he did so "to speed up the process, as they knew they could not win in this court," and to avoid a possible maximum of five years in prison.

Human Rights Watch called the ruling “outrageous,” and a move to deter future criticism against the government. Along with Wong, two other pro-democracy activists were also sentenced to ten and seven months in prison respectively, on charges related to the same protest. [Aljazeera] [Deutsche Welle]

Meanwhile, Hong Kong media tycoon and democracy advocate Jimmy Lai was charged with fraud and denied bail over flight risks. Lai is one of the most vocal critics of the Hong Kong government and founder of Apple Daily, a popular tabloid often openly critical of the Chinese Communist Party. His arrest is also seen

among government critics as a move to further curb freedom of press and expression in Hong Kong. [NPR]

Japan: Law on intro-fertilization births passed

(dql) Last week, Japan's parliament passed a bill to amend the country's civil law to recognize as legal parents married couples who have children through donated eggs and sperm. The new law clarifies that a woman who gives birth using a donated egg is the child's mother, and not the donor, and that a husband who consents to his wife giving birth with donated sperm will be unable to deny his fatherhood. Furthermore, it grants children the right to seek disclosure of the identities of the egg or sperm donors. [Japan Times]

South Korea: Legal battle between Ministry of Justice and prosecution escalates

(dql) The legal battle between the Justice Ministry and the prosecution over the former's order to suspend General Prosecutor Yoon Seok-youl is heating up after both sides have taken further legal actions against each other.

The Ministry filed an appeal against the Seoul Administrative Court's injunctions against an order of Justice Minister Choo Mi-ae to suspend Prosecutor General Yoon Seok-youl from duty. Yoon, meanwhile, filed a complaint last Friday with the Constitutional Court. He argues that provisions of the Prosecutor's Discipline Act, under which the Justice Minister is set to convene a disciplinary committee which will determine the disciplinary actions to be taken against him, are unconstitutional. Under the Act, the disciplinary committee consists of seven members, including the Justice Minister and the Vice Minister, with the former having the authority to appoint the other five panel members, among them two prosecutors and three outside experts. Given that in this case, it is the Justice Minister herself who attempts to punish Yoon, his lawyers argue that fairness in the procedure is not ensured. [Korea Herald] [Yonhap]

These moves are the latest in a legal battle between Ministry of Justice and the prosecution which was triggered by the Minister of Justice Choo Mi-ae's order to suspend Yoon from duty over allegations of the

latter's misconducts and power abuse, including "improper" meeting with media executives, inspecting judges handling controversial cases and interfering with the prosecution's investigations to safeguard people close to him. Minister Choo also announced that she would push for disciplinary penalties against him.

Yoon, however, was successful with a request for an injunction against the suspension, approved by the Seoul Administrative Court. In another setback to Choo, also the Justice Ministry's inspection committee which convened to discuss Choo's decision, found that it was unjust to suspend Yoon from duty and to call for disciplinary measures against him. [AiR No. 48, December/2020, 1]

South Korea: Parliamentary committee passes bill banning anti-North Korean leaflet campaigns

(dql) The Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee of the South Korean parliament last week passed a controversial bill which allows punishments of up to three years in jail or fines of up to more than 27.000 USD for those who distribute anti-North Korean leaflets at the military demarcation line.

With political parties being deeply divided over the bill, its passage was secured by the votes of committee members from the ruling Democratic Party of Korea (DPK), while opposition party members boycotted the vote out of objection. The DPK justified the bill with the safety of residents in the border area. Opposition lawmakers, however, criticized the DPK's decision as a "pathetic submission to the North" at the expense of South Koreans' right to freedom of expression. The criticism refers to a complaint of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's sister Kim Yo-jong who in June strongly condemned a leaflet campaign by a South Korean civic group, which tried to drop from balloons leaflets critical of North Korea's human rights situation at the inner-Korean border, and announced retaliatory actions. [Korea Herald 1] [AiR No. 24, June/2020, 3] [AiR No. 23, June/2020, 2]

Human Rights Watch and other critics called on the National Assembly to reject the bill, warning that if passed the bill would violate citizens' rights to freedom of expression and would make engaging in humanitarianism and human rights activism a criminal offense. [Human Rights Watch] [Korea Herald 2]

Despite these criticisms, the bill is expected to be approved by plenary vote in the National Assembly later this month without problems, given that the DPK holds the absolute majority in the 300-seat parliament.

Taiwan: Court rejects news channel's efforts to prevent closure

(nm) The Taipei High Administrative Court on Monday rejected a request for an injunction by Chung T'ien Television (CTiTV) to prevent the closure of its CTi News channel. The channel's six-year licence is set to expire on 11 December after CTiTV's application for its renewal had been rejected by the National Communications Commission (NCC) in November.

In its ruling, the court stated CTiTV could not prove it had a high chance of winning the lawsuit against the NCC adding that it could not see how the rejection would lead to "unrecoverable damage or urgent harm" to the company – both conditions for granting an injunction under Taiwanese law.

The news channel voiced disappointment over the court's failure to take into consideration the "significant and immediate danger" of its decision to freedom of the press, the "weak legal basis" of the NCC's decision, as well as the "political interference that might have occurred." It announced that it would appeal to the Supreme Administrative Court. [Focus Taiwan] [Taipei Times]

CTi News is among the harshest critics of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and known for being friendly toward China. The NCC had cited for its rejection of the license renewal the news channel's repeated violations of broadcasting regulations as well as direct and indirect interference in the station's news production by its major shareholder, Taiwanese tycoon Tsai Eng-meng who openly shows support for the Chinese Communist Party. [AiR No. 47, November/2020, 4]

Taiwan: Cabinet releases plans to control property speculation

(dql) Taiwan's Cabinet has made public a five-point plan to rein in real estate market speculation. It contains proposals to curb the so-called flipping of pre-sold houses: the practice of buying a property, holding on to it for a short time and then selling it for a profit.

It also aims to crack down on the buying and selling of properties under a company's name in an attempt reduce tax liability. [Focus Taiwan]

The plan comes at a time when the government is concerned about housing prices in the capital Taipei, where mortgage burdens make up more than 50% of household expenses. [Taipei Times]

Law and Politics in South Asia

Bangladesh sends Rohingya to controversial island

(lm) Bangladesh has begun transferring several hundred Rohingya refugees from camps near the Myanmar border to a settlement on what the UN and rights groups worry is a dangerous low-lying island prone to cyclones and floods. [The Straits Times]

Formed from a buildup of silt in the Bay of Bengal only 20 years ago, Bhasan Char island now hosts shelters for at least 100,000 Rohingya refugees as well as a three-meter embankment to prevent flooding. Since April, around 300 Rohingya have been living on the island, sent there after being picked up at sea. Earlier this month, Bangladesh said it planned to move another 2,500 families to the silt island in a first phase. [The Guardian]

However, the islands exposure to extreme weather and distance from the mainland in emergencies have caused concern. The United Nations office in Bangladesh issued a terse statement on December 3 saying it had not been 'not involved' in the relocation exercise and had not been allowed to independently

assess the 'safety, feasibility and sustainability' of the island as a place to live. [United Nations Bangladesh]

Further, accusing Bangladeshi authorities of pressuring the Rohingya community, currently confined to crammed camps in the southern district of Cox's Bazar [see AiR No. 23, June/2020, 2], rights groups say refugees have been listed without their consent. [Amnesty International]

The Bangladesh government, meanwhile, is insisting that the Rohingya refugees are willing to shift to the island. Claiming that the remote island offers the Rohingya community a shot at a better life, Bangladesh's foreign minister last week said that relocation process was being delayed only because of pressure from international agencies and NGOs. [Anadolu Agency] [Dhaka Tribune]

India: Government to held press responsible for content from foreign sources

(lm) The Press Council of India (PCI), a statutory body regulating print media in the country, on November 25 published a media advisory, saying that Indian newspapers must verify any extracts they publish from foreign publications. Declaring that 'unregulated circulation of the foreign content is not desirable', the advisory body further warned that the 'reporter, publisher and editor of such newspaper shall be responsible for the contents irrespective of the source from which it is received'. [The Wire] [The Straits Times]

With Indian media facing pressure to report favorably on the government's policies, officials often chafe at critical reports in foreign publications. Noting that many Indian newspapers license and reproduce reports and analysis from international publications such as The New York Times, Wall Street Journal and The Economist, the Editors Guild of India urged the PCI to withdraw its 'ominous-sounding' advisory, saying it would have disturbing implications. [The Hindu]

The government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made several rules to restrict foreign journalists and publications in India already. For instance, just four days after online news portals and over-the-top (OTT) content providers such as Netflix had been brought within its purview [see AiR No. 47, November/2020, 4], the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) issued a notification asking the companies to comply with the 26 percent cap on Foreign Direct Investment

(FDI) sanctioned last year. This has made operations difficult for several foreign publications running India branches, and is expected to be the reason behind the closure of HuffPost India earlier last week. [Scroll.in]

India: Third phase of local elections in Kashmir completed

(lm) Kashmiris on December 4 voted in the third out of eight phases of the first elections since the revocation of Article 370 and the subsequent bifurcation of the former state of Kashmir [see AiR No. 32, August/2019, 1]. During the first phase, nearly 52 percent of the people voted on November 28, while the second round held on December 1 saw 49 percent voting amid tight security.[Al Jazeera]

Until December 22, nearly six million voters across the Jammu and Kashmir union territory's 20 districts are eligible to elect 280 members of the newly created District Development Councils (DDC). While they are aimed at strengthening the system of local self-government of villages in the union territory, the DDC will have no power to legislate or amend laws in the region now directly run from New Delhi. Elections are also being held to fill over 12,000 vacant seats in panchayats (village councils) and more than 230 in urban local bodies. [AiR No. 47, November/2020, 4]

In the run-up to the elections, the region's two bitter rivals – the National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), had come together for the first time as part of People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) to contest the elections [see AiR No. 42, October/2020, 3].

Indian farmer's protests prevail

(lm) Indian farmer unions called for a one-day nationwide strike on December 8 after days of blockading New Delhi in a bid to force the government to repeal its new market-friendly agricultural laws many fear will damage their livelihoods [see AiR No. 39, September/2020, 5]. Tuesday's strike, called Bharat Bandh, comes after five rounds of talks between farmers' unions and the government failed. The sixth round of talks is scheduled for December 9. [Deutsche Welle]

Hundreds of thousands of farmers have camped near New Delhi since November 27, blocking entry into the

capital [see AiR No. 48, December/2020, 1]. Moreover, clashes with police, who used tear gas, water cannons and baton charges to disperse demonstrators prompted expressions of concern from several political leaders in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. [The Guardian]

Nepal: Protests to call for restoration of monarchy despite government ban

(lm) Nepal's monarchist and Hindu nationalist Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), royalist groups and pro-monarchy citizens ratchet up demonstrations calling for the restoration of the monarchy and a Hindu state. The RPP launched a movement for the restoration of the monarchy from the southern city of Hetauda on December 4, followed the next day by rallies in another southern city and the capital, Kathmandu. [Nikkei Asia Review]

The party has been holding demonstrations in major cities since last month. Sporadic pro-monarchy protests have previously been seen over the last 12 years, and the current wave of rallies started on a small scale in June in Kathmandu. [AiR No. 48, December/2020, 1]

A day after hundreds of people took to the streets in Kathmandu on December 1 to demand the restoration of the Nepalese monarchy, the district administration of Kathmandu imposed restrictions on protests and rallies, citing the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, the Ministry of Home Affairs the same day issued a circular to all district administrations throughout the country to quell the pro-monarchy demonstrations -- by force if needed. Opposition lawmakers criticized the decisions, expressing concerns the move may be part of a larger plan to systematically narrow public spaces for protests in a way that curtails dissenting voices. [The Himalayan Times] [The Kathmandu Post 1] [The Kathmandu Post 2]

Nepal: PM Oli shuns communist party meetings, calls all-party meeting instead

(lm) Nepal's Prime Minister and co-chair of the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP), PK Sharma Oli, on December 7 called a meeting of all parties represented in the parliament to discuss the current political developments. Previously, Oli skipped a meeting of the NCP's Standing Committee, forcing the meeting to be

re-scheduled. He also chose not to attend a meeting of the NCP's Secretariat, originally scheduled for December 2. [The Himalayan Times 1] [The Himalayan Times 2] [Hindustan Times]

In a letter sent to the Standing Committee meeting on Sunday, Oli reiterated his stance that his intra-party opponent Dahal should unconditionally withdraw his political proposal tabled during the Secretariat meeting. Furthermore, the prime minister accused his rival of working towards the dissolution of the party by tabling an 'allegation paper' against him. [AiR No. 48, December/2020, 1]

The intra-party feud had deepened after co-chair and Oli rival Pushpa Kamal Dahal last month presented a 19-page proposal accusing the prime minister of defying party norms and values, disobeying party committees' decisions, and making appointments to constitutional bodies without consulting top leaders [see AiR No. 46, November/2020, 3]. In a 38-page rebuttal published late last month, PM Oli accused Dahal of hatching plot to dislodge his government, adopting double standards vis-à-vis the Millennium Challenge Corporation agreement signed with the United States [see AiR No. 37, September/2020, 3], and promoting factionalism in the party. [The Himalayan Times 2]

Having fallen into minority in all key bodies of the party — Secretariat, Standing Committee and Central Committee – in the run-up to the Secretariat meeting, the Oli-led faction was preparing to pitch for a joint proposal with party o-chair Dahal, hoping to resolve the dispute through consensus. The Dahal-led faction, however, threatened to take all the documents to the Standing Committee and the Central Committee, where the majority's decision should prevail. [The Himalayan Times 3]

Pakistan: Provisional provincial status granted to Gilgit Baltistan

(lm) Prime Minister Imran Khan on December 2 said that the newly formed government in the Pakistan-administered region of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) would work on a priority basis to grant 'provisional provincial status' to the region. Last month, Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party and its ally Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen Pakistan (MWM) had emerged as the largest political alliance in the provincial assembly elections, despite failing to achieve a clear majority [see AiR No. 46, November/2020, 3]. [The Hindu]

In the run-up to the hotly disputed elections, Khan had announced on November 1 the granting of 'provisional-provincial status' to GB. To date, Islamabad has fallen short of declaring the strategic region as its fifth province, ostensibly to protect its claim on the entirety of Kashmir in the event of a resolution of the Kashmir dispute with India. As a consequence, the region has been caught in constitutional limbo and denied representation in Pakistan's national legislature [see AiR No. 44, November/2020, 1].

Geopolitical observers remark that elevating the status of Gilgit-Baltistan has been encouraged by neighboring China, at least in part. The region is home to the Moqpondass, a region selected for one of the proposed nine priority Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The project, said to be Beijing's largest-ever overseas investment, stretches from China's Xinjiang to the Chinese-operated port of Gwadar on the Arabian Sea. [South China Morning Post]

While the region's political and legal status remains unclear, an unstable security environment provides yet another challenge for both Beijing and Islamabad, who are keen to expand the project into GB [see article in this edition]. In a dossier released following the recent artillery duel between Indian and Pakistani forces in Kashmir [see AiR No. 46, November/2020, 3], Islamabad accused New Delhi of attempting to stir nationalist and sectarian tensions in GB through covert operations. The dossier, which was handed over to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres last week, included evidence that Indian intelligence agencies were funding the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and ethnic Baloch armed separatist groups that conducted attacks from Afghan soil, aimed at destabilizing Pakistan and undermining its economic partnership with China [see AiR No. 46, November/2020, 3].

Pakistan: Court declares former PM Sharif 'proclaimed offender' in corruption cases

(lm) The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on December 2 declared supreme leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Nawaz Sharif in absentia a 'proclaimed offender' over his prolonged absence from the proceedings pertaining to two corruption cases. Sharif, who was jailed in a corruption case in 2018, has been residing in London since November last year after a court granted him indefinite bail to seek medical treatment. [The Economic Times]

In October, the IHC had issued a proclamation against Sharif in the two references– Al-Azizia and Avenfield –and had ordered advertisements to be published in two British newspapers calling for him to appear before court until November 24 [see AiR No. 41, October/2020, 2]. The court last week then had adjourned the hearing of appeals in the cases [see AiR No. 48, December/2020, 1].

The former prime minister is facing a number of corruption charges in Pakistan and is considered by the courts to have absconded. He is also facing sedition charges for accusing the military of political interference [see AiR No. 41, October/2020, 2, AiR No. 37, September/2020, 3].

Pakistan: Court questions government's new social media rules

(lm) The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on December 4 raised questions over the government's new social media rules, observing that criticism was essential for democracy and discouraging it would have a detrimental impact. The IHC Chief Justice also expressed his displeasure over the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) counsel citing the example of India to justify social media curbs. [The Nation]

The court was hearing a petition filed by the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) against the recently approved regulations titled 'Removal and Blocking of Unlawful Online Content (Procedure, Oversight and Safeguards) Rules 2020'. The PBC contended that the rules violated rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

The government approved the social media rules last month despite criticism from human rights activists and organizations. One of the new rules requires a social media company to remove, suspend or disable access to any online content within 24 hours, and in emergency situations, within six hours, after being intimated by the authority, even though the rules do not define what constitutes emergency cases. Earlier this year, Pakistan's government had passed the "Citizens Protection (Against Online Harm) Rules 2020" that required social media companies to disclose any information or data demanded by any designated investigation agency, whenever asked [see AiR No. 7, February/2020, 3]. [The Express Tribune]

Law and Politics in Southeast Asia

Cambodia: Senior opposition members announce return

(nd) Following the commencement of a mass trial against opposition figures last week [AiR No. 48, December/2020, 1], senior members of the dissolved Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) announced their return from self-exile to face criminal charges. The trial prompted the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia to express serious concerns about the politically motivated proceedings for lacking legal grounds and recognition of due process rights.

Most of the oppositional politicians fled after the dissolution of the CNRP in November 2017, which was followed by a more broader crackdown on civil society, land rights activists, and the independent press, enabling Prime Minister Hun Sen to win all seats in the National Assembly in the 2018 elections.

The returning group of exiles will not include acting CNRP president Sam Rainsy though, who is in exile since 2016 and has tried to return to Cambodia in November 2019 but was denied air-travel after the Cambodian government declared to refuse the plane permission to land if he would be on board.

The now announced attempt to return is along-sided by similar governmental threats and will also be difficult to manage due to travel restrictions with regards to Covid-19, prompting the impression, that the respective CNRP leaders' primary aim is to bring international attention to the repressive political

situation, possibly resulting in more Western pressure for change. [The Diplomat] [Radio Free Asia]

Cambodia: Sister of disappeared Thai dissident to present evidence to court

(nd) The sister of an exiled Thai dissident, reportedly abducted in Cambodia in June, offered evidence to a Cambodian judge in order to open an official investigation into her brother's disappearance. Cambodia has denied an abduction took place and said no investigation was planned. The decision to not open investigations was criticized by Amnesty International in a statement on Tuesday. According to Human Rights Watch, a 2018 issued arrest warrant alleged the dissident in Thailand of violating the Computer Crime Act by operating a Facebook page critical of the Thai government from Cambodian soil where he had taken refuge earlier residing in Cambodia since 2014, the year of the military coup in Thailand.

From 2016 to 2018, several Thai exiles were abducted or vanished in neighboring countries, with the tortured bodies of murdered exiles in Laos found floating in the Mekong river. The victims were associated with Thailand's Red Shirt political movement, who continued to protest from exile. [The Diplomat] [Prachatai]

Indonesia: Series of investigations in top-level corruption cases continues

(nd/dql) In a second high-level corruption case within weeks, Indonesia's social affairs minister has turned himself in to the anti-corruption authorities for taking bribes related to Covid-19 aid contracts. The anti-corruption commission (KPK) accused the minister of receiving at least 17 billion rupiahs (US$1.2 million) in illegal fees from two companies who won a government contract to supplying food packages to the poor. He is now facing a potential life sentence for stealing public money. Last week, now-resigned Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Minister Edhy Prabowo was arrested on suspicion of taking bribes connected to the export of lobster larvae. [See also AiR No. 48, December/2020, 1] This follows recently convicted Youth and Sports Minister Imam Nahrawi and Social Affairs Minister Idrus Marham.

Against this context, President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo came under criticism for having awarded state honors inter alia to six judges on the Constitutional Court which will decide on petitions against Jokowi’s so-called Omnibus Law. The bill amends nearly 80 laws for the sake of enabling Indonesia to compete for more manufacturing investment, but which, however, prompted heated street protests nationwide. To award exactly these judges before making such an important decision is seen by many as entering a conflict of interest on behalf of the President.

Only recently, in August parliament quickly approved an amendment to the Law on the Constitutional Court rising the maximum term-length for a judge from 5 to 15 years, and the retirement age from 60 to 70. [The Diplomat] While these changes seem rational and appropriate as such, they and the likewise principally acceptable awarding of honor medals to the justices are situated in a context that could have sparked some caution to avoid an impression of inappropriate favors.

All these recent cases and incidents highlight how pervasive corruption remains in Indonesia whose 1998 started reform and democratization project developed in the shadow of corruption with one institution after the other being tainted and with president Jokowi, like so many other representatives, judges and government members before him, having promised to eradicate corruption and provide an accountable, “clean” government. Indonesia ranked 85th out of 180 nations in the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index compiled by Transparency International. [South China Morning Post] [Asia Times] [The Diplomat] [Jakarta Globe]

Indonesia: Islamic extremists killed by police

(nd) At least six supporters of extremist Indonesian cleric Rizieq Shihab, leader of the Islamic Defenders Front, were shot dead at a clash with police forces. Police said officers followed their car on a highway, when the suspects attacked the officers, using guns and sharp objects. The car was driving to a police station where Rizieq was summoned to be questioned for his alleged breach of Covid-19 health protocol during his daughter's wedding and when he returned from his self-exile in Saudi Arabia last month. [See also AiR No. 46, November/2020, 3]

Arriving back home, Shihab was welcomed back by a large crowd of supporters at the airport. Shihab's Islamic Defenders Front pursues an agenda for the Islamization of the Indonesian society, referring to a "moral revolution" that Shihab deems necessary. Initially backed by the Indonesian military, some police generals and political elites, FPI started as a civil group acting as an Islamic moral police force. With their transformation to an Islamist pressure group, FPI organized high numbers of religious and political mass protests, which were deemed to incite violence in the name of Islam, for it strongly opposes the Pancasila doctrine, the foundational philosophy of Indonesia, including the idea of religious pluralism. Rizieq organized massive street protests against Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, the ethnic Chinese and Christian former governor of Jakarta, who was sentenced in 2017 on charges of blasphemy, after allegedly profaning the Quran. [South China Morning Post] [Channel News Asia]

Indonesia: A new political dynasty in the making?

(dql) As Indonesia will hold local elections in nine provinces, 224 regencies and 37 cities this Wednesday, observers speculate whether a new political dynasty is in the making as President Joko Widodo's eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming, is running for mayor in Solo city, the same post with which the President started his political career in 2005, while his son-in-law Bobby Nasution is a mayoral candidate in Medan, the country's fourth-largest city. Gabrin is believed to win in Solo, while observers expect a tough race between him and the incumbent mayor, especially as Jokowi failed to win in Medan in the last two presidential elections

The possible Jokowi dynasty draws attention to the persistence of powerful families dominating politics in the world's third largest democracy. The president's main backer and chair of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, Megawati Sukarnoputri, is the daughter of Indonesia's first president Sukarno and became the first female head of state in 2001. Her daughter Puan Maharani, currently speaker of the lower house in parliament, has been touted as a potential contender in the presidential election 2024. Former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's eldest son is the chair of the Democratic Party, while his second son is a member of parliament. [Bloomberg]

Indonesia: Change of leadership in Islamic organization

(nd) The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), a semi-official body for Islamic affairs, just concluded its 10th summit, where it selected its new leadership board, an indicator of the organization's near-future direction. At their latest summit end of November, cleric Miftachul Akhyar was selected as MUI's new general chairman, who is also the current supreme leader of NU, Indonesia's largest Islamic organization. Miftachul is described as moderate-to-conservative and announced a cooperative stance towards the Widodo administration. As a further step, several controversial clerics were removed from leadership positions, who were infamous for supporting the 2016–17 Defending Islam rallies against Ahok, Former Chinese-Christian governor of Jakarta, and rather moderate to progressive clerics were appointed instead.

MUI is a quasi-autonomous non-government organization ('quango'), which means they receive governmental funding but are not considered a government agency. Quangos can issue religious edicts (fatwa) that guide followers on various aspects of everyday life. Besides MUI, Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah and Islamic Union (Persis) can issue independent fatwas. Within the last fifteen years, though, MUI's power has increased significantly, and their fatwas with respect to doctrine (aqidah) and blasphemy taking precedence over the other organizations, with regulations putting them as a governmental partner for Islamic affairs and certain products to require a MUI-issued certificate.

Under the chairmanship of now Indonesia's Vice President Ma'ruf Amin and his predecessor, MUI has made his understanding more conservative, highlighted by issuing controversial fatwas against several religious minority groups, and the LGBTQ community.

With respect to cooperation with the government, the new leadership of MUI is likely to make a difference and be more receptive to their policies, while even mainstream Islamic cleric tends to share a conservative stand towards religious minorities.

[East Asia Forum]

Malaysia: Anwar calling for a confidence vote

(nd) After the international credit rating agency Fitch has lowered Malaysia's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating, opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim proposed a confidence vote against the Perikatan Nasional (PN) government. Fitch had commented that besides the negative impact of the Covid-19 on Malaysia's fiscal position, the current razor-thin, two-seat parliamentary majority of the governing coalition implies persistent uncertainty about future policies. [Malaymail]

Philippines: Complaint against Supreme Court Justice

(nd) Supreme Court Associate Justice Mario Victor Leonen is facing an impeachment complaint for a constitutional violation for allegedly delaying pending cases, not disposing of at least 37 cases within 24 months as mandated by Section 15 (1), Article VIII, in relation to Section 16, Article III of the Constitution, which mandates the prompt action and speedy disposition of cases.

Additionally, Leonen did not file his Statements of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALN) during his tenure at the University of the Philippines, as mandated by Section 17, Article XI of the 1987 Constitution, thereby betraying public trust, according to the complaint. [Manila Times]

Philippines: Duterte rules out Christmas cease-fire with communist guerrillas

(nd) Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte denied the traditionally observed cease-fire with the communist guerrillas during the Christmas season and also rejected the resumption of long-stalled peace talks. "There will be no cease-fire ever again under my term as president. For all intents and purposes, the cease-fire is dead," Duterte said. Military officials welcomed the president's decision, claiming the rebels were "notoriously insincere."

In 2016, Duterte offered key cabinet position to left-wing activists to initiate peace negotiations. His hard stand now reflects his drastic deviation from this initial position after fights between military and rebels resumed again and again. For over half a century, the communist insurgency has raged mostly in the

Philippine countryside, with an estimated 3,500 armed guerrillas remaining. [Channel News Asia]

Philippines: Journalist summoned for cyber libel

(nd) For the second time this year, Philippine journalist Maria Ressa was summoned by court for charges of cyber libel for sharing a news screenshot. Both the Rappler reporter and the magazine itself face a bunch of criminal charges for publishing critical stories about president Rodrigo Duterte and his war on drugs. Time magazine named Ressa as a Person of the Year in 2018. [Channel News Asia]

Thailand: PM acquitted by Constitutional Court; protests followed

(nd) Following a Constitutional Court ruling on Wednesday last week, PM Prayuth Chan-ocha was acquitted in ethics case, ruling he was not guilty of a conflict of interest for continuing to live in a military residence after his retirement in 2014. The complaint was brought by the Pheu Thai party, the largest opposition grouping in Parliament, and could have been the end of his tenure. The court argued that in recognition of their service retired senior offices are allowed to stay In military housing.

Before and after the judgment was rendered, protesters gathered in front of the court, commenting that the justice system has lost its integrity, and the decision will fuel more anger. Parallel to the military, the court is considered a supporter of the royalist establishment and guided by politics, with three Thai prime ministers been ousted by court rulings in the past 12 years, among them populist billionaire Thaksin Shinawatra in 2006.

Meanwhile, social media displays an increase in discontent with the government and highlights support for the student-led protests among members of the army, police and civil servants, expressing discontent with the way protesters were treated. Despite its random nature, the spread post attracted attention of authorities, with the army commenting that commanding officers were reviewing the social media activity of soldiers to prevent breaches of army rules.

General (ret) Prayuth came to power by a coup in May 2014 and was elected Prime Minister in 2019, the first

elections after the Coup. Ongoing pro-democracy protests demand his resignation, constitutional reform and a reform of the monarchy. [South China Morning Post]

Thailand: Constitutional court rules two orders of post-coup military government unconstitutional

(nd) The Constitutional Court has dismissed two orders of Thailand's post-coup military government – the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) - of General Prayuth who still is the Prime minister (see above). The decision comes in response to a petition filed by a leading law professor, Worachet Pakeerut of Thammasat University, who was summoned to a military facility after the 2014 coup and charged later for refusing to obey the order – precisely NCPO orders No. 29/2557, and 41/2557, both issued May 2014.

The Court decided that such orders that forcibly summoned people to military camps and punish them for not doing so violate section 26 and 29 (1) of the Constitution of 2017.

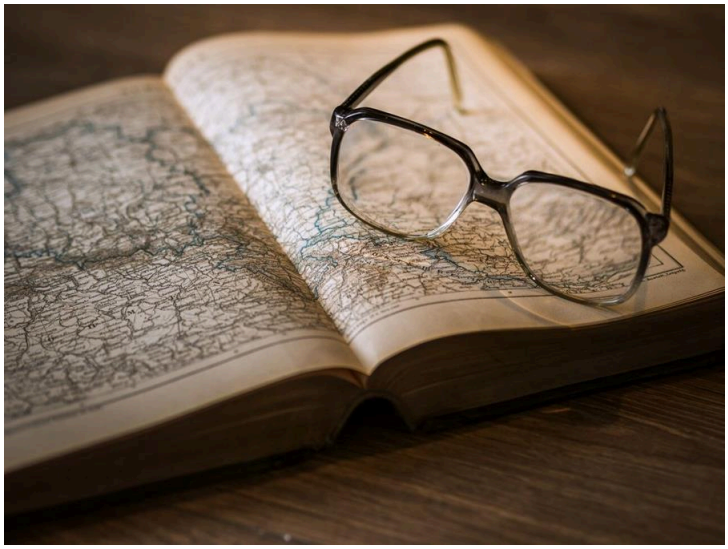
Regarding the claimed violation of Section 26 of the 2017 Constitution, the judges decided unanimously, regarding a violation of Section 29 (1), they decided with a majority vote. The first NCPO order in question allowed the coup-group to summon a person to military barracks where people suspected of working against the military government often where detained for "attitude adjustment". The second NCPO order criminalized the violation of such an NCPO summon. Section 26 of the 2017 Constitution protects the rights or liberties of a person against the enactment of conflicting laws, while Section 29 (1) contains the presumptions of innocence for a subject or defendant in a criminal case. The recent decision might pave the way to contest other NCPO Orders as well. [Prachatai]

Thailand: Rising number of protesters charged under lese majeste laws

(nd) The number of protesters accused under Article 112 of the Criminal Code, the infamous lese majeste law, has risen to at least 23, the most widespread use of the law in years, which was not invoked for three years straight. This aspect gave rise to the assumption it is used as a political tool.

Lese majeste carries a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison, and its abolishment is part of the 10-point manifesto the protest group read publicly in August. Literally only criminalizing "insults or threats" made against the King, the Queen, the Regent, and the Heir Apparent, the laws are often cited for the prosecution of any critical discussion about the monarchy. Amnesty International Thailand commented the laws do not meet international human rights standards and should not be used. [Khaosod]

International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia



China is NATO's "full-spectrum systemic rival", NATO commissioned report says

(dql) The "NATO 2030: United for a New Era", an expert report on the reform of the alliance commissioned by the NATO Secretary General, calls China "a full-spectrum systemic rival," warning against seeing China only as "a purely economic player or an only Asia-focused security actor." It explains that while China "does not pose an immediate military threat to the Euro-Atlantic area on the scale of Russia," NATO allies nevertheless "feel China's influence more and more in every domain". That applies to Beijing's growing defense ties with Moscow, the development of weapons with global reach, extensive space-based capabilities, and a growing nuclear arsenal as well as its infrastructure projects including Belt and Road, Polar Silk Road, and Cyber Silk Road.

The report generally advises to consolidating NATO by "enhancing political cohesion and convergence" as its core task in "an era of strategic simultaneity, in which numerous interconnected threats face the Alliance at the same time." With regards to China the report calls on NATO to "enhance its understanding of China's capabilities, activities, and intentions that affect Euro-Atlantic security," including risks, threats, and opportunities," and to demonstrate "political cohesion and remain a platform for consultation on China's actions and Allies' reactions."

To this end, the report recommends the creation of a "consultative body," that gathers NATO allies, and other institutions and partners as relevant to "discuss all aspects of Allies' security interests vis-à-vis China." [NATO] [The Diplomat]

The report comes a year after French President Emmanuel Macron in November 2019 diagnosed NATO's "brain dead" stressing the need for a reassessment of the "reality of what NATO is in the light" of the US commitment under US President Donald Trump and his plans to withdraw troops from Afghanistan, Germany, Iraq, and Somalia. [BBC] [New York Times]

Chinese state-run media outlet Global Times was quick to cite Chinese experts to criticize the report and present NATO as an "outdated organization" without justification for its existence unless it manages to "set an enemy and vigorously hype threats from the enemy," which, however, are "imaginary out of victim paranoia." [Global Times]

New US Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) to be established and 'reciprocal' legislation demanded to counter China

(dql) Last week the US congress agreed on 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) with more than 740 billion USD allocated for defense spending, including a 2.2 billion USD budget for a new Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) over two years aimed to target China by boosting US deterrence and defence posture, increasing readiness and capability in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as deepening cooperation with allies and partners including India, Australia and Japan.

In addition to the PDI, the bill requires US President to create a whole-of-government strategy to impose costs on China to deter industrial espionage and the large-

scale theft of personal information, while the defense secretary mandated to create a "continuous assessment activity" to study the industrial bases of China and other foreign adversaries, with its first assessment due Aug. 1. [Defense News] [Deccan Herald]

Meanwhile, the annual report to Congress of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission – a congressional commission responsible for monitoring and investigating national security and trade issues between the US and China – has called on US lawmakers to prioritize the principle of "reciprocity" in future legislation to face Beijing. The report identified for such legislations a number of areas covering the treatment of journalists, market access for internet companies, the ability of non-governmental organizations to engage with civil society and diplomats' freedom of travel.

Further recommendations of the commission include expanding the authority of the Federal Trade Commission to monitor and take foreign government subsidies into account when vetting company mergers, and directing the Department of State to produce an annual report on China's actions in the UN and its agencies aimed at subverting the principles and purposes of the organization. [Bloomberg] [South China Morning Post]

China-US relations: Diplomatic tensions flare up over jailing of Hong Kong pro-democracy activists, scrapped Chinese culture programs and new US visa restrictions

(dql) Diplomatic tensions between China and the US have flared up after a court in Hong Kong handed down prison sentences against Joshua Wong and other pro-democracy activists (see above).

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo denounced the verdict as "political persecution" of pro-democracy advocates, accusing the Chinese Communist Party of using the judiciary to suppress peaceful dissent, while his British counterpart Dominic Raab called on the Chinese government to end the stifling of opposition in the city. [Republic World] [Reuters]

Beijing and Hong Kong officials hit back, saying the sentences barely atone for the crimes of the arrested against China and accusing foreign countries of

defaming the judiciary over its handling the cases. [South China Morning Post]

Meanwhile, the Trump administration last week announced the termination of five cultural-exchange programs with China, saying that these programs were "operated by the (Chinese) government as soft power propaganda tools." The programs included the Policymakers Educational China Trip Program, the U.S.-China Friendship Program, the U.S.-China Leadership Exchange Program, the U.S.-China Transpacific Exchange Program and the Hong Kong Educational and Cultural Program. Under all of these programs, US officials were allowed to travel in China at Beijing's expense. [CNBC]

The decision to stop the programs came shortly after new visa restrictions were imposed by Washington limiting stays in the US by members of China's Communist Party and their family members to ten months, down from previously ten years.

In a related, latest development visa restrictions were also announced applying to Chinese Communist Party officials or anyone else believed by the US to participate in propaganda or influence operations linked to the Chinese Communist Party's United Front Work Department. The announcement did not contain details of those restrictions. [Reuters] [VoA]

Meanwhile, the US Justice Department revealed that – following an FBI investigation this summer – over 1.000 researchers who had hidden their affiliation with the Chinese military left the US, with the exodus starting in the wake of the arrests of six Chinese researchers accused of lying on their visa applications about their ties to the People's Liberation Army. [Washington Post]

In latest development, the US on Monday imposed financial sanctions and a travel ban on 14 vice-chairpersons of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, the country's top legislative body, over their alleged role in the disqualification of elected opposition lawmakers of Hong Kong's Legislative Council. [Reuters] [AiR No. 46, November/2020, 3]

China-US trade relations: New Chinese firms blacklisted, and no changes on tariffs for the moment

(dql) The US Department of Defense last week added four Chinese firms to a blacklist of Chinese companies

considered to be owned or controlled by the Chinese military. Among them is Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation (SMIC), China's largest chipmaker, along with China National Offshore Oil Corporation, an offshore oil and gas producer; China Construction Technology Co. Ltd., a large construction science and technology company; and China International Engineering Consulting Corp., China's largest engineering consulting firm. With these latest additions, the total of Chinese companies listed as military-owned or -controlled stands currently at 35. [CNBC]

Meanwhile, President-elect Joe Biden revealed in an interview that President Trump's 25% tariffs imposed on China under the 'Phase One' trade deal will remain in place at the start of his administration. He added that he plans to fully review the current US policy on China and seek to speak with key allies in Asia and Europe to get the US "back on the same page" with them. [New York Times]

Cross-strait relations: Taiwan to implement special visa for Hong Kongers amid prison sentences for pro-democracy activists

(nm) Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) – the Taiwanese agency responsible for policy towards China – announced that will introduce a special set of immigration rules for people from Hong Kong to ease the visa rules for professionals and outstanding graduates from Hong Kong who wish to work or further their studies in Taiwan. Additionally, a proposal to establish a "green lane" between Hong Kong and Taiwan aims to expedite the process for Hong Kong businesspersons who seek to invest in Taiwan. However, details are still being discussed and the proposals will only be implemented once the relevant agencies work out the specifics.

Concerning the question of whether entry restrictions for Hong Kong pro-democracy activists will be relaxed, too, the MAC said that it will revise the relevant procedures if the existing ones prove inadequate.

The announcement of the proposals comes after three prominent Hong Kong activists received prison sentences on last Thursday for their involvement in mass protests last year. While Taiwan's government has called the prison sentences regrettable, the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DDP) accused China

and the Hong Kong government of creating political terror.

In an earlier move, the Taiwanese government had opened in July an office to help Hong Kongers who seek legal residency. According to the MAC, most of those reaching the office inquired about how to emigrate to Taiwan through investment and how to apply for schools. In 2019, almost 6,000 Hong Kongers had relocated to Taiwan, in a sharp increase compared to 2018. [Focus Taiwan 1] [Focus Taiwan 2] [DW]

Taiwan-US relations: US Congress commission recommends enhanced relations with Taiwan

(nm) The United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission (USCC), a commission created by the US Congress to monitor security and trade issues, has recommended that the director of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) be nominated by the president, subject to Senate advice and consent. This procedure would effectively treat the AIT director – the unofficial US representative to Taiwan and currently an internal State Department appointment – as an ambassadorial nomination.

The recommendation is part of the commission's annual report in which it examines key aspects of the US-China relationship, including competition; economic and trade relations; security, politics, and foreign affairs; Taiwan; and Hong Kong. The commission called 2020 a "pivotal" year for cross-strait relations, citing China's nationality security law in Hong Kong as well as its "intensifying military activities around Taiwan". It further calls for urgency in discussing "whether the United States should alter its longstanding policy toward Taiwan". It also warned that the actions taken by the US government in the next few years will have "far-reaching consequences" for Taiwan, the region, and the United States' standing in the world.

It also recommends amending the TAIPEI Act to encourage the US to use its membership in international organizations to "oppose any attempts by China to resolve Taiwan's status by distorting the language, policies, or procedures of the organization". Furthermore, Congress should evaluate strengthening "economic relations with Taiwan in key sectors where there are unique reciprocal opportunities", starting with the tech sector. Furthermore, Congress should encourage the President "to include Taiwan in

multilateral efforts to coordinate and strengthen supply chain cooperation and security".

The USCC is a bipartisan commission established by Congress in 2012. Its recommendations are non-binding, but have come to be increasingly influential with US lawmakers. The full report and parts of it are accessible [here]. [USCC] [Reuters 1][Focus Taiwan 1]

Further US support for Taiwan was expressed in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Bill, unveiled last week. A summary released by the House Armed Services Republicans states that the bill "supports U.S. efforts to help Taiwan develop capable, ready, and modern defense forces necessary for Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability and requires annual reports on the progress DoD (Department of Defense) is making to deny the strategic goals of a competitor against a defense partner". The bill also includes provisions to push for a medical partnership between the US and Taiwan. [Reuters 2] [Taiwan News] [Focus Taiwan 2]

For a policy report and recommendations on US-Taiwan relations, see [CSIS].

Taiwan: Boosting military capabilities with US technology and help

(dql) Taiwan is reportedly likely to acquire from the US two key components – an integrated combat system and a digital sonar system – next month as part of its ongoing construction of the nation's first indigenous submarine, which begun last month. The indigenous submarine project was initiated by the government in 2016 in a bid to strengthen the country's aging fleet of four submarines with eight new diesel-electric models, the first of which could enter service by 2025. [Focus Taiwan 1]

Meanwhile, Taiwan's military announced that the upgrade of eighteen F 16A/B jet fighters belonging to Taiwan's Air Force has been completed in the first 11 months of the year, under a joint Taiwan-US program aimed to help Taiwan boost its air defense capabilities. The 18 upgraded warplanes are part of the 141 16A/B jet fighters Taiwan had asked the US to help modernize in 2011 under a 3.8 billion USD joint venture between Aerospace Industrial Development Corp. (AIDC) and Lockheed Martin Corporation. [Focus Taiwan 2]

In a latest development, the Trump administration on Monday notified Congress of its planned sale of a new 280 million USD Field Information Communications

System (FICS) to Taiwan, in a bid to assist the modernization of the island's military communications. The suggested sale marks the 11th arms deal to Taiwan under Trump. [Taiwan News]

Taiwan-Norway relations: National identity case to be taken to European Court of Human Rights

(nm) A group of Taiwanese in Norway plan to bring a case on the designation of their national identity to the European Court of Human Rights after Norway's Supreme Court rejected their appeal to change their nationality from "China" to "Taiwan" on their residency permits.

The group argues that listing Taiwanese nationals as Chinese violated Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, protecting the right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence, and did not confirm to the facts. He also hopes to raise public awareness in Europe of Taiwan's predicament in the international community and the threat to democracy posed by authoritarian regimes.

Norway changed the nationality shown on the permits from "Taiwan" to "China" in 2010, presumably in a move to appease China after the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Liu Xiaobo, a Chinese dissident. [Focus Taiwan] [Taipei Times]

Taiwan-Japan: Annual economic meeting to be held in Q1 2021

(nm) Taiwan and Japan are set to hold their annual bilateral economic and trade meeting in the first quarter of 2021, an official of the Taiwan-Japan Relations Association (TJRA) – an organization representing Taiwanese interests in Japan – stated last week. Since the 2020 meeting – which regularly would have been held in October or November – was delayed by the global pandemic, the meeting will still be considered the 2020 edition as Japan's fiscal year ends in March.

Japan is Taiwan's third-largest trading partner after China and the United States, while Taiwan was Japan's fourth-largest trading partner in 2019. [ITA]

Meanwhile, the Japanese side has voiced "deep concerns" on a nearly decade-long Taiwanese ban on

Japanese food imports from areas affected by the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. The ban stems from concerns over the threat posed to food safety by possible nuclear radiation contamination. It was introduced by the then-ruling Kuomintang (KMT) government, while the currently ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has considered lifting the ban since it took office in May 2016.

On Sunday, Taiwan's representative to Japan said Taiwan should prohibit imports of Japanese food products with radiation but allow imports of food free of radiation. Analysts and Taiwanese government officials suggest that the ban could hinder Taiwan's efforts to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), a Japan-led Pacific trade pact. Due to Taiwan's exclusion from the Regional Comprehensive Partnership – the biggest regional trade deal ever which was established by China and 14 other countries in November – the participation in the CPTPP is of increasing importance to Taiwan, Hsieh added. [Focus Taiwan 1] [Focus Taiwan 2]

China-Russia relations: Deepening cooperation in space exploration

(dql) Amid their both countries' sour relations with the USA, China and Russia last week announced to expand their cooperation in space exploration and related technologies, with particular focus on satellite navigation by enhancing the compatibility of China's BeiDou and Russia's Glonass satellites, rivals to the US Global Positioning System (GPS).

A related joint communique, which also confirms both sides' willingness to deepen cooperation in the research and development of vaccines and medicines to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, was presented by Chinese Premier and his Russian counterpart Mikhail Mishustin via video conference. [South China Morning Post]

It comes at a time when China is accelerating the implementation of its ambitious space program, latest reflected in the landing of the country's third spacecraft on the moon, equipped with an explorer vehicle expected to collect rock material from the lunar surface for the first time in more than four decades. Last year, China became the first nation to land a spacecraft on the moon's little-explored far side. [VoA]

For sketch of the historical development of Sino-Russian outer space cooperation see Richard Weitz in

[Jamestown Foundation: China Brief]

Japan-UK relations: London to dispatch carrier strike group to waters near Japan

(dql) Japanese government sources revealed that the British navy will dispatch an aircraft carrier strike group, including the aircraft carrier Queen Elizabeth, to waters near Japan as soon as early next year. The group is expected to conduct joint exercises with the US military and Japan's Self-Defense Forces during its stay. [Nikkei Asian Review]

The announcement comes amid tensions between Japan and China over disputed islands in the East China Sea which flared up again when Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Japan in November. [AiR No. 48, December/2020, 1]

Japan-Indonesia relations: Japanese bank to invest in Indonesian sovereign wealth fund

(dql) The Indonesian government announced last week that the Japan Bank for International Cooperation has pledged to invest four billion USD in the country's soon-to-be launched sovereign wealth fund, with which Jakarta hopes to solicit 15 billion USD to finance infrastructure projects and the relocation of the country's capital from Jakarta to Borneo Island. [Jakarta Globe]

South Korea to deploy suicide military drones on trial

(dql) South Korea's military has announced plans to deploy suicide unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and gun-shooting drones on a trial basis next year after it revealed that it had signed contracts with companies to acquire three types of advanced attack drones – the suicide UAVs, drones capable of firing guns at ground targets, and small-sized drones equipped with surveillance and attack functions. [Army Technology]

Meanwhile, the defense budget for next year rose 5.4% on-year to a total of 52.8 trillion won (approx. 48 billion USD), with the bulk of the funds of almost 36 trillion won to be used for managing military assets and

forces, a year-on-year increase of 7.1%, while 17 trillion won will be spent on arms purchases and other projects to boost defense capabilities, up 1.9% compared with this year. [Janes]

North Korea-US relations: US Department to offer rewards for tips on sanctions evasions

(dql) The US Department of State last week announced that it will offer rewards up to 5 million USD for information about sanctions evasions that help North Korea continue the development of nuclear weapons including money laundering, the export of luxury goods to North Korea, and cyberoperations, among others.

It also accused China of "seeking to undo" the United Nations sanctions regime and of hosting at least 20,000 North Korean laborers in violation of UN bans, adding that in 2019 ships carrying prohibited coal or other sanctioned goods from North Korea to China were observed on more than 500 separate occasions, with Beijing not stopping them once. [Aljazeera]

India accuses China of helping rebel groups at Myanmar border

(lm) Indian officials accused China of supplying funds and weaponry to rebel groups that have stepped up attacks on its border with Myanmar in recent months, opening another front in the conflict between the two giants. The armed groups – including Myanmar's largest and best-equipped ethnic armed group, the United Wa State Army (UWSA) – are allegedly acting as Beijing's proxies by supplying weapons and providing hideouts to insurgent groups in India's north-eastern states, the so-called 'seven stars'. [South China Morning Post 1]

Moreover, multiple security agencies warned the Indian government that at least four of India's most wanted insurgent leaders were in the southern Chinese city of Kunming to train and source weapons as recently as mid-October. [The Straits Times]

While the direct or indirect support of armed ethnic groups, including the UWSA, gives Beijing leverage in all kinds of negotiations with Myanmar authorities, it has increasingly been considered as playing with fire in relation to at least two of Myanmar's insurgent groups.

In an implicit reference to Beijing, Myanmar's commander-in-chief alleged in July that domestic terrorist groups were being backed by 'strong forces' outside the country. A military spokesperson later clarified that the army chief was referring to the fact that fighters from the Arakan Army (AA) and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) had used Chinese-made weapons in a 2019 attack [see AiR No. 34, August/2020, 4].

Further, against the larger backdrop of the protracted border stand-off with India, China's military has been carrying out training in the mountains of Tibet in an effort to get soldiers used to the region's extreme conditions. In addition to high-altitude training, checkpoints along the Chinese border have been equipped with new surveillance gear, including observation cameras and drones. Latest developments come months after New Delhi had deployed its Special Frontier Force (SFF), a paramilitary unit consisting mainly of Tibetan and Gorkha paratroopers trained in mountain warfare, to the conflict zone [see AiR No. 36, September/2020, 2] [South China Morning Post 2]

Seeking the expansion of road width in a highway project adjacent to the Chinese border, India's Ministry of Defense, meanwhile, told the Supreme Court (SC) that situation on the ground at the India-China border has changed significantly this year and it has become imperative that men and equipment should move swiftly from army stations to the frontier. [India Legal] [Hindustan Times]

India summons Canada envoy over PM Trudeau's protest remarks

(lm) Speaking virtually to members of the Indian community in Canada to mark the 551st birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called images of the clashes 'concerning' and that Canada would 'always be there to defend the rights of peaceful protest'. India on December 4 then summoned Canada's High Commissioner to protest at the comments by PM Trudeau, warning that continued 'interference' in domestic affairs could harm bilateral relations. Indeed, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has already pulled out of the upcoming meeting of the Ministerial Coordination Group on COVID-19 scheduled to be held virtually next week. The meeting will be chaired by Canada. [Times Now News] [The Diplomat]

In Britain, which is home to a large Indian diaspora, thousands of people on December 6 converged on the Indian embassy, located in central London and groups marched around the Trafalgar Square area. Moreover, thirty-six British lawmakers from various parties – including some of Indian origin and others representing many constituents with links in the Indian state of Punjab – have written to British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, asking him to raise the issue of farmers' agitation with the Narendra Modi government. [Reuters] [Hindustan Times]

China, Pakistan to enhance defense ties, expedite infrastructure/investment projects

(lm) Following his trip to Nepal [see AiR No. 48, December/2020, 1], Chinese Defense Minister General Wei Fenghe arrived in Islamabad on December 1 to meet top officials, including President Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Kahn. During a meeting with Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa, the two militaries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to further enhance bilateral defense cooperation. [The Hindu] [Hindustan Times]

What is more, however, both sides also discussed ongoing projects under the China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor (CPEC), a flagship program under China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Prior to Wei's visit, China's recently appointed envoy to Pakistan last month had already met with the General Bajwa, who is also heading the CPEC Authority [see AiR No. 36, September/2020, 2], and conducted a 'comprehensive review' of the CPEC projects. [The Diplomat]

Significantly, Beijing's efforts to boost the CPEC come at a time when a crucial 10th meeting of the CPEC's Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) – the highest decision-making body of the CPEC – has been further delayed after both countries could not agree on a future roadmap for industrial cooperation. [Observer Research Foundation]

Pakistan's Parliament, meanwhile, is likely to vote on the CPEC Authority Bill 2020 in the second week of December. Last month, the Standing Committee on Planning and Development cleared the bill that had previously been blocked by opposition members. The legislation is likely to empower the Pakistan's Army, assigning CPEC projects under the jurisdiction of the CPEC Authority, instead of the Planning and Development Ministry. [The EurAsian Times]

India plans Brahmaputra dam to offset Chinese construction upstream

(lm) India is considering to build a 10-gigawatt (GW) hydropower project in its remote eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, following reports that China was moving ahead with plans to build mega-hydropower plants and dams across the 2,900-kilometer Brahmaputra River, with work on the projects scheduled to take 15 years [see AiR No. 48, December/2020, 1]. [Al Jazeera]

Originating in the northern side of the Himalayas, the Tsangpo-Brahmaputra is a trans-boundary river which flows through Tibet, India, and Bangladesh, making it a major river for irrigation and transportation in the region. While the projects are unlikely to break ground anytime soon, against the larger backdrop of the ongoing border stand-off, Beijing's move has already caused trepidation in New Delhi. For both India and China, the Tsangpo-Brahmaputra presents a geopolitical opportunity, as damming the perennial river would result in water security in an era of unprecedented shifting climate patterns.

The strategically vulnerable Indian state of Assam and nearby regions border Tibet in the north and are connected to the rest of the country by the narrow Siliguri Corridor, also known as the 'Chicken's Neck' [see AiR No. 48, December/2020, 1]. Thus, India is concerned that Beijing may build a dam around a so-called 'great bend', where the Tsangpo-Brahmaputra curves southward before entering India and where the river gains substantial volume of water. [Asia Times]

Indian PM Modi invites British PM Johnson as chief guest for Republic Day celebrations

(lm) Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has formally invited British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to be the chief guest at India's 70th Republic Day celebrations next month, making him the first British PM since John Major in 1993 to attend the parade. The invitation was extended by Modi to Johnson during their phone conversation on November 27. [The Hindu]

The timing of the invitation is noteworthy, as the transition period for Brexit ends on December 31 and it's almost certain that the United Kingdom will go for a

'hard Brexit' - a clean break from Europe which will entail the UK giving up membership of the EU's single market, allowing it to trade freely with EU members without restrictions. To reduce the adverse effects of the economic disruption, the UK has been looking for trading opportunities elsewhere. In mid-November Prime Minister Johnson announced a major addition to the UK government's ability to attract foreign investment, in the form of a newly established Office for Investment. Shortly thereafter, India and the UK held ministerial talks to review their progress towards a bilateral post-Brexit Enhanced Trade Partnership, which could lead to a free trade agreement in the future. [Hindustan Times]

To entice India's neighbor Bangladesh into closer embrace, the UK has also proposed establishment of a UK-Bangladesh Trade and Investment Dialogue aimed at deepening the trading relationship between the two countries. A government to government (G2G) trade meeting between the two countries will be held in January. This comes after the British government last month announced that goods from Bangladesh will continue to relish duty-free access to the UK after the termination of the Brexit transition period. [The Daily Star] [Dhaka Tribune]

Maldives foreign minister meets Indian and Chinese envoys

(lm) The Maldives foreign minister and finance minister on November 30 met with China's envoy to the Maldives to talk about economic recovery and development cooperation. Earlier this month, Beijing agreed to defer repayment for loans which were secured via state-owned companies. [Raajje]

In a fresh effort to normalizing ties with Maldives, a country that has habitually oscillated its support between India and China in recent years, India's High Commissioner to the Maldives met with the country's foreign minister on December 1. Traditionally, India is considering the Maldives part of its strategic backyard. [Raajje]

Ongoing talks between China and the Maldives come at a time, when Male is estimated to have accumulated $1.5 billion in debt to Beijing, equivalent to 45 percent of the island nation's national debt. China has already reduced this year's loan repayment to $75 million from the scheduled $100 million under the G20 'Debt Service Suspension Initiative', and agreed to partially suspend debt repayment applicable to $600 million in

loans for a period of approximately four years [see AiR No. 44, November/2020, 1].

To counter China 's growing financial footprint in South Asia, New Delhi has provided a host of support measures to the Indian Ocean archipelago in the past [see e.g. AiR No. 33, August/2020, 3, AiR No. 38, September/2020, 4], having injected more than $2 billion trough loans, grants, credit lines and currency swaps. Most recently, both countries last week participated in the 4th National Security Adviser (NSA)-level meeting on Maritime Security Cooperation [see AiR No. 48, December/2020, 1]. [Nikkei Asia Review]

India test-fires anti-ship supersonic cruise missile

(lm) While its troops remain battle-ready, facing Chinese forces along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, India on December 1 test-fired an anti-ship version of its BrahMos supersonic cruise missile. Days earlier, a land-attack version of BrahMos was test-fired from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands territory. [Hindustan Times]

Since July, India's Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) has succeeded in testing multiple missiles [see e.g. AiR No. 43, October/2020, 4, AiR No. 42, October/2020, 3]. In October, the DRDO had successfully tested an 'extended range' variant of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile off the coast of Balasore in Odisha [see AiR No. 40, October/2020, 1].

British mercenaries investigated over Sri Lanka war crimes

(lm) British mercenaries who were involved in the Sri Lankan civil war are being investigated for potential war crimes by the British Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), the UK force responsible for investigating accusations of war crimes or human rights abuses. The MPS launched a scoping exercise in March into allegations of war crimes committed by the firm, and this has now been elevated into a fully-fledged inquiry – the first of its kind. [bbc]

At the suggestion of Thatcher-era politicians, private security company Keenie Meenie Services (KMS) trained an elite unit of the Sri Lankan police called the Special Task Force (STF) to fight Tamil separatists. The STF has been implicated in a number of human rights

abuses, including a 1987 massacre at a prawn farm in eastern Sri Lanka, in which 85 Tamil civilians died. KMS also taught the country's air force and allegedly provided or flew helicopter gunships that took part in massacres. [The Hindu]

Much of the evidence concerning KMS's involvement in Sri Lanka has come from declassified UK government documents and freedom of information requests submitted by an investigative journalist who is also taking the Foreign Office to an information tribunal over the release of files relating to the extent of UK diplomatic support for the training of Sri Lankan security forces by the company. [The Guardian]

Indonesia France close to a jet deal

(nd) Indonesia might soon purchase 36 Dassault Rafale multi-role jets with the French Minister of Defense commenting the contract signature was still pending, but "very well advanced."

In 2019, France sold eight Airbus helicopters to the Indonesian Air Force. More recently, the US reportedly pressured Indonesia to shelve an arms deal with Russia about SU-35 jets. A plan to jointly build fighters with South Korea came into trouble as well. [Asia Times]

Indonesia, US talks on bilateral defense cooperation

(nd) On Monday, US defence secretary, Christopher Miller, met his counterpart, Prabowo Subianto, as well as Foreign Affairs Minister Retno Marsudi and Air Chief Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto. They highlighted the importance of their bilateral defense partnership for a free and open South China Sea and Indo-Pacific region.

Analysts view this most recent visit as an attempt by the Trump administration to cements its hard stance on China for the coming Biden administration, therefore Indonesia being a good partner for its territorial dispute with China and a military in need of modernization. Still, US assumptions of a willingness to confront China are mostly falsely calculated, for most ASEAN countries have actively said already they did not want to be dragged into the Chinese-US conflict. China, through its infamous and court-rejected nine-dash-line, claims almost the entirety of the South China Sea, with Vietnam, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the

Philippines, and Taiwan having conflicting claims and experiencing intrusions by Chinese vessels into their exclusive economic zones (EEZ).

On Tuesday, Miller headed to the Philippines, with Duterte lately taking a harder stance against China with his famous invocation of a 2016 arbitration ruling rejecting China's historic claims to most of the South China Sea. Still, China's regional investments and development of vaccinations against Covid-19 will remain vital for the region and make a cooperation necessary. [South China Morning Post]

Myanmar: Japanese influence on peace talks in Rakhine state

(nd) As reported now, a special Japanese envoy held meetings with local politicians in November in Rakhine state where balloting during the elections was canceled almost entirely due to clashes between the Myanmar military (or Tatmadaw) and the Arakan Army (AA). Just after the election, the AA called for substitute elections to be held. There was no fighting since and talks happening between the conflicting parties, agreeing on a temporary ceasefire.

With China deeply involved in investment projects in the country under its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Japan seems to be its only rival for influence in Myanmar, with Japan's investment and involvement in the reconciliation process expected to continue and being viewed positively by the population. [Irrawaddy]

Thailand: US Senate resolution in support of pro-democracy protesters

(nd) Nine US senators introduced a Senate Resolution in support of Thailand's pro-democracy movement, opposing violence and repression from authorities and emphasizing human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as well as bilateral ties. Reiterating Thailand's status as an ally, the Senators urged to engage in a peaceful dialogue to find a way to reform. [Prachatai]

The proposal was supported by some US foreign affairs experts earlier this week. Yet, analysts argue President-elect Joe Biden will be unlikely to take a hard stand on Thailand due to the need to contain China's position in the region. [Bangkok Post]

Thai government might reject electricity from Laos' hydro-power dam over environmental and security Concerns?

(nd) After the Lao government moved forward with its plans to build the Sanakham Dam on the Mekong River [See also AiR No. 48, December/2020, 1], the Thai government as the biggest potential buyer of the water-produced electricity wants to first assess the project's impacts on Thailand, especially concerning ecological consequences and national security related cross-border issues. According to Lao government officials, the project is crucial to Laos' plan to become the "Battery of Southeast Asia" by selling power to other countries, after having built dozens of hydro-power dams on the Mekong. The projects are still controversial due to their environmental impact, displacement of villagers without adequate compensation, and questionable financial arrangements. [Radio Free Asia]

Vietnam condemns both China and Taiwan's 'illegal' acts in South China Sea

(lm) Vietnam has condemned Taiwan for holding live fire drills in what Hanoi considers its rightful waters in the South China Sea, saying the military exercises conducted on November 24 off the disputed Spratly Islands archipelago constituted a 'grave violation of Vietnamese territory.' [Hanoi Times] [VN Express]

Hanoi also protested Chinese authorities' decision to grant permission for two domestic cruise ships to depart on an itinerary to the disputed Paracel Islands, further condemning the deployment of a newly commissioned hospital ship to the South China Sea. [The Maritime Execute] [Janes] [The Star]

Announcements

Upcoming Online Events

9 December 2020 @ 11:00 am – 1:30 pm ICT, CPG/Hanns Seidel Foundation, Thailand

Asia in Review (AiR) online panel discussion

The next Crisis?

The Impact of Climate Change on Communities in Southeast Asia

This online panel discussion will explore role ASEAN can play in mitigating Climate Change in order to sustain the stability and economic growth achieved so far by the group.

More information available at [CPG].

9 December 2020 @ 12:00 pm CET, Bruegel, Belgium

The silencing effect: Digital gender-based violence against women in leadership

This online event asks: How can women remain engaged, visible, and relevant in their professional spheres in a moment when digital spaces have become the main forum for public discussions?

For more information, please visit [Bruegel].

9 December 2020 @ 4:00 pm EST, Asia Society Policy Institute, United States

Where Great Powers Meet: America & China in Southeast Asia

In this online event, David Shambaugh, Professor of Asian Studies, Political Science, & International Affairs at George Washington University, will discuss his new book Where Great Powers Meet, assessing the global competition for power between the two countries in Southeast Asia. He will also examine how ASEAN and its member states exercise their own agency, maneuver, and align with one or the other power.

Please follow [Asia Society] for further information.

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9 December 2020 @ 4:00 pm CET, Clingendael, the Netherlands

A Fireside Chat on Brexit: Dutch, Irish and European Perspectives

This online chat between three of Ireland and the Netherlands' foremost commentators on Brexit will discuss where we stand, how we got here, and where this leaves Ireland, the Netherlands, and the EU.

For more information, please visit [Clingendael].

9 December 2020 @ 2:00 pm CET, Egmont Institute, Belgium

Tough love? Towards a more assertive EU trade policy

Against the backdrop of the EU's review of its trade and investment policy, the European Commission's new Chief Trade Enforcement Officer Denis Redonnet will present and discuss several of the EU's new or envisaged trade instruments that aim to tackle unfair trade practices as well as new enforcement policies. Open to EPC members, invitees, EU officials, and media only.

If you are interested in joining this policy dialogue, please follow [Egmont] for more information and registration details.

9 December 2020 @ 3:00 pm CET, Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, Spain

Global Terrorism: A Shifting Landscape

This online session co-organized with the Institute for Economics & Peace and the Royal United Services Institute will analyse global trends in terrorism and violent extremism.

For further information and registration details, please visit [CIDOB].

9 December 2020 @ 5:00 pm AEDT, Lowy Institute, Australia

In Conversation with India's External Affairs Minister Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar

This virtual discussion will cover topics such as India's relations with China considering recent border crashes, the impact of the global pandemic on India and its place in the world, and India-Australia relations.

Please access [Lowy] for more information and registration details.

9 December 2020 @ 6:00 pm EST, Asia Society Policy Institute, United States

China Has Politics Too | The Impact of Chinese Domestic Politics and Economics on the Future of U.S.-China Relations

In light of the 2020 US election and the Chinese Communist Party's 5th Plenum Meeting which solidified the country's next Five-Year Plan in economic and political terms, including the country's efforts to combat climate change, this live webcast asks: What do these developments mean for China's future and the future of US-China relations?

For more information, please visit [Asia Society].

9 December 2020 @ 6:30 pm EST, Hudson Institute, United States

2020 Year-End Celebration

Hudson Institute celebrates the end of the year with speakers President Tsai Ing-Wen of Taiwan, Senator Tom Cotton of Arkansas, and Representative Seth Moulton of Massachusetts.

For more information and fee-based registration, please visit [Hudson Institute] or [Hudson Gala].

10 December 2020 @ 12:30 pm CET, U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, Norway

Corruption and climate change interventions

This webinar asks: How can corruption affect initiatives to mitigate the effects of climate change? Speakers will draw on case studies and research to explore what the key challenges are, what donors and practitioners can do about them, and how best to communicate the challenge of corruption. Registration is required.

Details are available at [U4].

10 December 2020 @ 3:00 pm CET, Bruegel, Belgium

What will the EU's new migration policy do differently?

This panel discussion asks: What does the EU's new migration policy look like and is it likely to succeed?

For more information, please visit [Bruegel].

10 December 2020 @ 2:00 pm CET, European Council on Foreign Relations, France

Daring New Spaces – Summit on the European Public Sphere

In this joint event with the Progressives Zentrum, the German Federal Foreign Office and Stiftung Mercator, the Daring New Spaces Summit, civil society actors, journalists, and academics across Europe will explore future visions of a European public sphere and engage in interactive debates on policy proposals.

If you wish to participate in the event, please visit [ECFR] for more information and registration.

10 December 2020 @ 3:00 pm CEST, Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, Switzerland

Climate Change Impact on Global and Local Security Governance: Learning from Local Experiences of the Security Sector

This online seminar is organized in collaboration with the United Nations Office in Geneva and discusses the role of good governance of the security sector in preventing, mitigating, and responding to the impact of climate change at the global and local level. In particular, it aims to derive lessons from local experiences of security sector actors.

If you wish to participate in the seminar, please access [DCAF] for more information and registration.

10 December 2020 @ 4:00 pm CET, Clingendael, the Netherlands

A new era of transatlantic cooperation on global public goods?

This webinar organized in collaboration with the Brookings Institute discusses the effects of great power competition, four years of the Trump administration, and the pandemic on the liberal international order. It also considers areas of transatlantic convergence and divergence, in particular relating to China, climate change, and European security.

If you wish to join the webinar, please follow [Clingendael] for more information.

14 December 2020 @ 12:00 pm CET, Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, Spain

"Human Security in a Time of Covid-19" Online session with Mary Kaldor

This virtual seminar co-organized by the Institut Barcelona Estudis Internacionals will discuss competing conceptions of security in times of Covid-19.

For further information, please visit [CIDOB].

14 -15 December 2020 @ 2:00 pm CET, European Council on Foreign Relations, France

Dayton at 25: The future of Bosna and Herzegovina

This two-day conference marking the 25th anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement discusses the challenges facing the country and explores options for transatlantic cooperation in the Western Balkans.

For more information, please follow [ECFR].

14 December 2020 @ 2:00 pm CET, Egmont Institute, Belgium

Belgium in the UN Security Council 2019-2020: Multilateralism and the Security Council

Against the backdrop of the near end of Belgium's two-year membership of the UN Security Council, this series of three webinars will assess Belgium's achievements, identify lessons to be learned, and formulate new ambitions.
Two more webinars will take place on 16 and 18 December 2020, discussing The Security Situation in the Sahel and Children in Armed Conflict, respectively.

For further information, please visit [Egmont].

15 December 2020 @ 9:30 am CET, Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, Spain

Opening of the Jean Monnet Network on EU COnter-Terrorism (EUCTER)

This virtual event will open EUCTER, a research-led excellence network with the aim of advancing learning formats with a strong policy relevance in the area of EU counter-terrorism. The project covers three inter-related teaching and research areas: EU justice and home affairs, EU counter-terrorism, and EU external relations.

For more information and registration, please follow [CIDOB].

15-16 December 2020 @ 11:30 am CET, Bruegel, Belgium; Centre for Policy Research, India

Europe and India: Comparing approaches to global economic challenges

This webinar aims to compare the approaches of Europe and India to some of their common challenges and assess how far they converge or contrast with each other and what can be done to increase convergence through both multilateral and bilateral initiatives. The four sessions revolving around strategic environment, trade, climate change, and digital transformation will try to be as interactive as possible. Registration is obligatory.

If you wish to join wither one or both day of the webinar, please visit [Bruegel] for more information and registration details.

18 December 2020 @ 4:00 pm JST, The Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, Japan

Beyond coal – Towards net-zero emissions: A common challenge for Japan and Germany

This online event brings together high-level government representatives, businesses, think tanks, and NGOs from Japan, Germany, and other countries to discuss questions such as: What does a net-zero emissions pledge mean for the coal sector? What role can renewables and hydrogen play in domestic and overseas markets? How can Japan and Germany collaborate and encourage other countries to decarbonize, as part of their technology export strategies?
Registration is required and closed once capacity is reached.

For more information, please follow [IGES].

Recent book releases

John Kampfner, ***Why the Germans Do it Better: Notes from a Grown-Up Country,*** Atlantic Books, August 27, 2020, 320 pages, reviewed in [The Guardian].

Barack Obama, *A Promised Land*, Crown, November 17, 2020, 768 pages, reviewed in [The Independent].

Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, Random House, August 4, 2020, 496 pages, reviewed in [The White Review].

Jennet Conant, *The Great Secret: The Classified World War II Disaster that Launched the War on Cancer*, W. W. Norton, September 8, 2020, 400 pages, reviewed in [Undark].

Calls

The **Situations International Conference 2021** scheduled for May 21-22, 2021, in Ljubljana, Slovenia invites to submit papers. Closing date for submission is April 15, 2020. Find more about the call for papers at [Situations]

The **International Conference on International Relations and Diplomacy** to be held in March 15-16, 2022 in London, United Kingdom, invites to submit papers. Closing date for submission is December 15, 2020. More details available at [Waset]

The **12th Asian Conference for Arts and Humanities** (Sunday, May 23, 2021 to Wednesday, May 26, 2021, Tokyo, Japan) invites to submit papers until March 10, 2021. More details available at [Acah].

Jobs & positions

Beijing Foreign Studies University is offering a fixed term contract for the position of ***Assistant Researcher*** in Law. Closing date for applications is January 16, 2021. More information at [BFSU]

Aston University is offering a fixed term contract for the position of ***Research Associate***. Closing date for application is December 12, 2020. More details available at [Aston]

The **International Organization for Migration** is offering a ***Project Officer*** position with duty station in Ecuador. Applications can be submitted until December 21, 2020. For more information, see [IOM].

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