

Asia

North East Asia

➔ **China/Japan Tensions continued between Japan and China over contested island chain in East China Sea amid ongoing Chinese maritime presence.** Japan's defence ministry 2 Aug announced plans to deploy medium-range anti-aircraft and air-ship missile units along with 500-600 troops to Ishigaki Island by end of 2022 in response to China's growing military capabilities and presence. After China's annual summer fishing ban in East China Sea ended 16 Aug – marking start of period in which waters likely to become more congested and tense – 40 Chinese fishing vessels were spotted 18 Aug on high seas around disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. Japanese media 12 Aug reported Japan's Coast Guard issued 80 exclusion orders in 2021 to Chinese fishing vessels suspected of illegally operating in territorial waters around disputed islands. Japan 19 Aug said that it would assign one of its largest patrol ships as early as Nov to Ishigaki Island, which has jurisdiction over maritime security of islands. At least 106 Chinese coast guard vessels entered into contiguous zones of disputed islands throughout month.

➔ **Korean Peninsula Pyongyang severed inter-Korean hotline reestablished late July amid tensions surrounding annual joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises.** South Korea 8 Aug confirmed it would hold annual joint military exercises with U.S. on 10-26 Aug; Kim Yo-jong, senior North Korean official and sister of leader Kim Jong-un, 10 Aug pressured South Korea by warning that conducting the joint exercises would damage resolve of two Koreas to rebuild relations. Notwithstanding warnings, U.S. and South Korea 10 Aug began joint military exercises in limited form and with no ground troop activities. In protest at the exercises, North Korea same day ceased answering daily pro forma calls via cross-border hotlines between two Koreas that were restored late July and described by two Koreas as indicating a shared wish to have better ties. Head of North Korean ruling party's United Front Department Kim Yong-chol 11 Aug vowed to make South Korea and U.S. "pay dearly" for their military activities, and said that they had squandered opportunity for improved inter-Korean relations. U.S. and South Korea militaries 16-23 Aug held pre-scheduled Larger Combined Command Post Training. U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Sung Kim 21 Aug arrived in South Korean capital Seoul for four-day trip, and 23 Aug met with South Korean counterpart, Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Noh Kyu-duk; following meeting, Kim said U.S. "does not have hostile intent toward" North Korea. International Atomic Energy Agency 27 Aug reported that North Korea appeared to have restarted nuclear reactor at Yongbyon site; U.S. senior official 30 Aug said report reflects urgent need for dialogue and confirmed U.S. is seeking to address issue with Pyongyang.

➔ **Taiwan Strait Cross-strait tensions continued between Beijing and Taipei as U.S. announced new arms deal with Taiwan and China conducted military exercises.** After U.S. Deputy Sec State Wendy Sherman late July met Chinese FM Wang Yi, raising concerns over Beijing's conduct across Taiwan Strait, U.S. State Dept 4 Aug approved arms sale to Taiwan valued at up to \$750mn;

China 17 Aug said U.S. was breaching commitments on arms sales to Taiwan made under 1982 Joint Communiqué. U.S. warship 28 Aug sailed through Taiwan Strait, eighth transit in 2021. U.S. also continued to deepen unofficial engagement with Taipei. Notably, U.S. and Taiwan 11 Aug held first meeting on coastguard-related cooperation; China 13 Aug expressed its opposition. Partly in response to U.S. arms sales, China 17 Aug conducted military drills near Taiwan's southern coast, with warships and 11 aircraft. At least 34 Chinese military aircraft entered Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone during month, according to Taiwan's defence ministry. In rare interview with international media, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen 10 Aug stated that international concern over Taiwan Strait would prompt more cautious approach by Beijing, Taiwan would not give in to military pressure, and Beijing should cease crackdowns on Hong Kong and Xinjiang province, also rejected "one country two systems" model; China 11 Aug rebuked remarks. In response to Taiwan's July decision to open representative office in Lithuania's capital Vilnius, China 10 Aug announced plan to withdraw its ambassador to Lithuania and has reportedly suspended direct rail freight between two countries; U.S. officials publicly expressed support for Vilnius. Representatives of Taiwan's and Japan's ruling parties 27 Aug held first ever security dialogue.

South Asia

↓ **Afghanistan In rapid takeover, Taliban regained control over country, prompting fall of govt and ending 20-year U.S. occupation; uncertainty over new political order fuelled domestic and international security concerns.** In dramatic shift, govt 15 Aug collapsed and Taliban gained control of most territory, including all border crossings and major urban centres – with notable exception of Panjshir Valley province (north). As Taliban reached capital Kabul, President Ghani 15 Aug fled abroad, along with many other govt officials. Govt's fall prompted mass exodus of Afghans fearing Taliban retaliation, notably causing chaos at Hamid Karzai International Airport; two bombs 26 Aug exploded outside Kabul airport, reportedly killing as many as 200 Afghans and 13 U.S. service members; Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) claimed responsibility. Following Taliban's takeover, U.S. mid-Aug froze Afghanistan's central bank reserves in U.S. while International Monetary Fund and World Bank suspended payments to country; UN and humanitarian organisations called for continued assistance to country amid dire humanitarian crisis. Regional and international partners to Afghanistan had yet to announce positions on sanctions, financial aid and recognition of new govt by month's end, waiting for Taliban to make meaningful compromises in new political order. Taliban's rapid advances in early Aug partly due to local 'surrender deals' which granted safe passage to security forces in return for weapons and district centres as insurgents late July to mid-Aug launched simultaneous attacks on provincial capitals in south, east and north. Following initial hearty resistance, particularly in Helmand province (south), Kandahar city (south) and Herat province (west), insurgents captured provincial capitals in lightly defended areas. Taliban 6 Aug held first provincial capital in Nimroz province (south west), gaining control of last remaining border crossing to Iran under govt oversight; 7 Aug captured capital of Jawzjan province (north); 9 Aug captured provinces of Sar-e Pul (north) and Kunduz (north), second largest city in

north; 12 Aug captured Ghazni (centre), Kandahar (south), Herat (west) and Badghis (north west). Loss of Herat and Kandahar, notably important cities, seemed to have broken security forces' moral, who following day had abandoned provincial capitals of Helmand (south), Logar (east), Uruzgan (south), Zabul (south) and Ghor (centre) provinces.

➔ **Bangladesh** **Amid ongoing security concerns, authorities rejected U.S. plea to host Afghan refugees, and reiterated 1.1mn Rohingya refugees granted temporary shelter only.** Security officials 16 Aug expressed concern that Taliban's military victory in Afghanistan could galvanise homegrown militants; FM Momen next day said Bangladeshi terrorists, trained in Afghanistan, were "identified and uprooted" but govt would remain alert. Counter-terrorism police 11 Aug arrested three alleged New Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh militants in capital Dhaka; two alleged Ansar al-Islam militants 23 Aug in Khulna city; and one suspected Ansar al-Islam militant 25 Aug in Moulvibazar district. Meanwhile, FM Momen 2 Aug said Dhaka does not consider Rohingyas "refugees", but "forcibly displaced Myanmar citizens", will continue to prioritise repatriation. Rohingya refugees continued to flee Bhasan Char camp situated on flood-prone island; notably, after boat carrying around 40 Rohingyas capsized off Chittagong's coast, authorities recovered 18 dead bodies, and local residents rescued 14 others who were then brought back to Bhasan Char. Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar camps 25 Aug defied ban on outdoor protests to mark four years of asylum. Meanwhile, NGO Human Rights Watch 16 Aug highlighted credible evidence of routine enforced disappearances at hands of security forces over past decade, including about 86 people still missing. Police 18 Aug lodged cases against 155 Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leaders and activists after security agencies prevented them from visiting party founder Ziaur Rahman's grave in Dhaka previous day. Awami League (AL) activists 13 Aug allegedly killed opposition BNP leader and wounded two others in Noakhali district. Clash between paramilitary force responsible for internal security and AL leaders and activists 18 Aug left seven dead in Barisal district. Govt 11 Aug ended late-July COVID-19 lockdown despite rising COVID-19 infections and deaths; Health Minister Zahid Maleque next day warned that overcrowded hospitals could no longer accommodate COVID-19 patients.

➔ **India** **Maoist violence continued in south and centre, farmers marked nine months of protests, and inter-province tensions remained high in north east.** Maoist violence continued. In Telangana state (south), exchange of fire between militants and police 1 Aug killed one Maoist in Bhadradi Kothagudem district. In Chhattisgarh state (centre), Maoist IED attack 5 Aug killed one labourer and injured eleven civilians in Dantewada district; Maoists 20 Aug killed two paramilitary police personnel in Narayanpur district; security forces 24 Aug killed two Maoists in Sukma district. In Bihar state (east), Maoists 25 Aug killed two suspected police informers in Jamui district. Farmers' protests against agriculture laws marked nine months on 26 Aug; Punjab chief minister 11 Aug urged PM Modi to withdraw laws, warned that protests had potential of posing security threats as Pakistan-supported forces were trying to exploit farmers' anger. In north east, following late-July border dispute between Assam and Mizoram police forces, which left six Assam policemen dead, Assam residents 8 Aug lifted unofficial economic blockade on Mizoram state in place for ten days following govt intervention. Unidentified assailants 14 Aug bombed school in Hailakandi district,

Assam state; authorities in Mizoram 17 Aug alleged Assam police opened fire on three Mizo civilians. Following 12th round of military talks with China about unofficial border known as Line of Actual Control (LAC), govt 6 Aug confirmed Indian and Chinese forces had disengaged from Gogra area of Eastern Ladakh, with sides having also verified dismantlement of all temporary structures, creating wider buffer zone. India mid-Aug held military exercises in East Sikkim district, close to LAC. Chinese media 25 Aug reported military drills in Tibet, described by Chinese commentators as warning to India.

➡ **India-Pakistan (Kashmir) Pakistan-India tensions ran high amid regional security concerns over Afghanistan and anniversary of India's revocation of special status for Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).** India, as UN Security Council (UNSC) president, 6, 17 Aug held meetings on security developments in Afghanistan, during which India's External Affairs Minister Jaishankar 17 Aug told UNSC Pakistani-based militant groups operating with "impunity and encouragement"; Islamabad denied allegations, protested India's decision to deny requests to attend UNSC meetings. Pakistani FM Shah Mahmood Qureshi 12 Aug blamed Indian intelligence for 14 July attack that killed ten Chinese workers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. On two-year anniversary of end of J&K special constitutional status, Pakistan's foreign ministry 5 Aug summoned India's High Commissioner to Islamabad to register "unequivocal rejection of India's illegal and unilateral actions since 5 August" in J&K; People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration, J&K opposition coalition, same day held protests in J&K while Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) celebrated anniversary of revocation. Political and religious leaders from Kargil and Ladakh regions 1 Aug met and rejected union territory status, demanding statehood and safeguards against outsiders buying land or obtaining jobs; govt 10 Aug told parliament two people only had purchased property in J&K since Aug 2019. Counter-insurgency operations and militant attacks continued. Police 14 Aug claimed to have foiled terrorist attack planned for following day (India's Independence Day), arrested four alleged Jaish-e-Mohammed militants. Security forces 3 Aug and 7 Aug killed two alleged Lashkar-e-Tayyaba militants in Bandipora and Budgam districts. Clashes between militants and security forces 6 Aug left two alleged militants dead in Rajouri district, 12 Aug killed five in Kulgam district including two civilians, and 17 Aug left one security personnel and one militant dead in Rajouri. Militants 3 and 7 Aug killed two police officers in Srinagar city and Kulgam; 9 Aug killed BJP member and wife in Anantnag district; 19 Aug killed leader of pro-BJP Apni party leader in Kulgam. Series of grenade attacks in Rajouri, Handwara and Baramulla districts 13 Aug, 16 Aug killed two including two-year-old.

➡ **Nepal PM Deuba faced criticism for his role in enabling split in largest opposition party as former PM and senior communist leader Madhav Kumar Nepal pledged to join ruling coalition.** PM Deuba's cabinet remained skeletal, with only four ministers appointed seven weeks after govt formation and Deuba overseeing 17 ministries. Lingering tensions within opposition Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist, or UML) delayed ruling coalition's plans to expand cabinet as Deuba sought support from UML leading figure and former PM Madhav Kumar Nepal; Nepal – whose support was critical to Deuba winning vote of confidence in mid-July – 18 Aug formally split from UML and announced formation of Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Socialist), now fourth

largest party with 23 seats in 271-member House of Representatives; new party 26 Aug announced it would join coalition govt. Deuba faced criticism for issuing ordinance 18 Aug lowering criteria for formation of new political party to enable UML's breakup in move observers claimed was reminiscent of previous PM Oli-led govt's reliance on "ruling by ordinance".

➡ **Pakistan Taliban's victory in Afghanistan heightened concerns regarding associated security risks for Pakistan, while deadly militant violence persisted.** Following Taliban takeover of Afghan capital Kabul in mid-Aug, President Alvi 17 Aug said that Islamabad wants assurances "that Afghan territory will never be used against any other country"; govt same day said they would make decision on recognising Taliban govt "after consulting with regional and international powers". Military 27 Aug told journalists "cordial" relations were expected with incoming Afghan govt, which would take "effective measures" against Pakistan Taliban. Cross-border gunfire from Afghanistan 30 Aug killed two Pakistani soldiers; military retaliated, claiming it killed two or three attackers. Meanwhile, militant attacks and security operations persisted. In Balochistan province, Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) militants 8 Aug killed two police officers in provincial capital Quetta; security forces 10-11 Aug claimed to have killed five BLA militants in Quetta; attack on Frontier Corps vehicle 14 Aug killed one soldier in Loralai district; BLA militants 20 Aug in suicide attack in Gwadar district killed two children and injured Chinese national; bomb blast 21 Aug killed one officer and two soldiers in Gichik area; BLA militants 26 Aug killed four security personnel in Ziarat and Panjgur districts. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, militant attacks 1, 6 Aug killed three soldiers in North Waziristan and Khyber districts; 2 Aug killed police officer providing security to polio vaccination team in Dera Ismail Khan district. In South Waziristan, counter-insurgency operations 13, 18 Aug left two soldiers killed. Elsewhere, other violent attacks took place. Notably, in Sindh province's capital Karachi, grenade attack 15 Aug killed 13 relatives of Awami National Party leader and of Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami local leader; clash between two Sunni factions 18 Aug left one dead. In Punjab province's Bahawalgar city, grenade attack targeting Shia Muharram procession 19 Aug killed at least two and injured more than 50; counter-terrorism police 18 Aug arrested two alleged al-Qaeda members in Lahore city. Also in Punjab, Muslim mob 4 Aug vandalised Hindu temple in Bhong city after release of eight-year-old Hindu boy accused of blasphemy 24 July; 7 Aug 50 people suspected of participating in attack arrested.

➡ **Sri Lanka Supreme Court suspended regulations linked to controversial Terrorism Act, while govt faced rising popular protests and spiralling COVID-19 cases.** Supreme Court 5 Aug issued interim order suspending application of regulations issued by President Rajapaksa under controversial Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) to establish "deradicalisation" programme for alleged religious extremists; ruling follows petitions by journalists and activists who claim regulations violate constitution. Seven UN special mandate holders 9 Aug requested govt withdraw regulations, calling them "contrary to Sri Lanka's international legal obligations". Govt 10 Aug indicted 25 individuals suspected of involvement in 2019 Easter bombings; magistrate same day remanded former minister and head of All Ceylon People's Congress Rishad Bathiudeen, detained under PTA for alleged involvement in Easter attacks. Influential Catholic Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith 13 Aug rejected president's response to bishops' request

for effective investigations and prosecutions into terror attacks, and called for prosecution of former president Sirisena, now allied with govt, for failure to prevent bombings. Meanwhile, nationwide protests continued throughout month, including farmers contesting president's chemical fertiliser ban, teachers demanding better pay and students, teachers and trade unions demonstrating against govt-proposed Kothilawala National Defence University bill that critics say marks first step toward end of free public university education. Govt responded with aggressive crackdowns on protesting leaders, including numerous arrests; senior judges, with govt encouragement, reportedly took unprecedented step of instructing magistrates to ban protests on COVID-19 health grounds. Govt 4 Aug postponed scheduled parliament debate of university bill. Facing rapid rise in coronavirus cases, with daily death rate passing 200, and weeks of increasingly urgent calls from health experts for strong action, govt 20 Aug imposed island-wide lockdown. President 30 Aug declared state of emergency and issued price controls on essential items, as the economic and currency crises deepened. Govt made overtures to select civil society leaders; notably, Rajapaksa 3 Aug met Sri Lanka Collective for Consensus. However, longstanding fears of govt plans to restrict NGO freedoms surfaced again as cabinet 10 Aug approved proposal for new unified law for all NGOs, citing concerns about terrorist financing.

South East Asia

➡ **Myanmar Acts of resistance and deadly clashes between regime and insurgents continued amid deadly COVID-19 wave; regional bloc ASEAN appointed special envoy for Myanmar.** Bombings in urban areas increased, notably around anniversary of 8 Aug 1988 ("four eights") uprising, which activists across country marked with flash demonstrations. Targeted assassinations of military personnel, alleged informants and members of paramilitary Pyusawhti network continued; notably, series of bombs and shootings 7-9 Aug targeted junta officials and military officers chiefly in Yangon city. During raid in Yangon, regime forces 10 Aug arrested three and seized homemade bombs, while five activists jumped from building to avoid arrest, killing two and sparking widespread shock on social media. Security forces next day arrested over 30 youths in Yangon amid parallel administration National Unity Govt's talk of so-called "D-Day" operation to unseat junta. Series of explosions 26-27 Aug hit several locations in Yangon and Mandalay regions. Elsewhere, civil resistance group Yaw Defense Force 23 Aug ambushed military convoy on Gangaw-Kale highway, Magwe region, reportedly killing some 30 soldiers. COVID-19 crisis worsened, with hundreds dying daily in Yangon. On diplomatic front, South East Asia regional body ASEAN 4 Aug confirmed Brunei's second FM Erywan Yusof as bloc's special envoy to Myanmar. During virtual ASEAN-European Union (EU) Ministerial Meeting, EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borell 6 Aug called for "meaningful dialogue" between regime and parliamentary committee in exile, National Unity Govt, ethnic minority groups and pro-democracy forces. In response, State Administration Council FM Wunna Maung Lwin expressed opposition to contact between ASEAN special envoy and aforementioned entities, rejected ASEAN-mediated dialogue with opposition. In first official contact, U.S. Deputy Sec State Wendy Sherman 4 Aug called National Unity Govt FM Zin Mar Aung; U.S. 10 Aug announced provision of \$50mn for Myanmar people in humanitarian assistance. Separately, U.S. 6 Aug announced

charges against two Myanmar nationals detained on U.S. soil for allegedly organising attack on Myanmar's Permanent Representative to UN who had aligned with National Unity govt. In sign of gradual recognition of military-backed State Administration Council, China 11 Aug transferred \$6mn to junta under regional cooperation fund.

➡ **Philippines Low-level violence persisted in south, while clashes between govt forces and communists killed at least two dozen.** In Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in south, violence between govt and armed groups persisted, while smaller elements of Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and Islamic State-linked Abu Sayyaf Group surrendered to govt. IED allegedly planted by BIFF militants 6 Aug killed one soldier and injured seven soldiers in Datu Hoffer municipality, Maguindanao. Ten BIFF militants 13 Aug surrendered to military in Shariff Aguak town, Maguindanao. Campaign against Abu Sayyaf Group continued; notably, nine militants 11 Aug surrendered to military in Indanan town and further four 14 Aug surrendered in Talipao town. Meanwhile, fighting between govt security forces and communist New People's Army continued at relatively higher levels than July in Visayas islands in centre, Mindanao island in south and Luzon island in north, killing at least 24 and injuring eight during month. Notably, military 16 Aug confirmed deaths of 16 communist fighters during raid on suspected hideout in Dolores municipality, Eastern Samar province. Leaders of ruling party PDP-Laban 6 Aug endorsed President Duterte as VP candidate in 2022 elections, ahead of conclusion of presidential term in 2022; Duterte 24 Aug confirmed he would run for vice presidency. False information on lockdown restriction 6 Aug circulated online, prompting scuffles amid vaccination rush in capital Manila and cities of Las Pinas and Antipolo. COVID-19 daily cases 20 Aug reached over 17,000, highest peak since pandemic began.

➡ **South China Sea Region witnessed uptick in military activity as China as well as U.S. and its allies held naval exercises; Washington deepened diplomatic ties with claimant parties.** U.S. 1 Aug concluded joint naval exercise off Australian coast, involving 17,000 military personnel from Australia, UK, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea. U.S. 4 Aug announced further combined naval and amphibious exercise running until 27 Aug with Australia, Japan and UK, coinciding with global naval exercises, largest since 1981, that included two U.S. aircraft carriers and UK's carrier; China 4 Aug announced military drills in SCS 6-10 Aug reportedly in response to "US military's Indo-Pacific exercise", according to state-run media. Malaysian military 6-12 Aug carried out exercise "Taming Sari" in SCS, including test-fire of three live anti-ship missiles. On diplomatic front, U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken 3 Aug announced launch of "strategic dialogue" with Indonesia and reaffirmed commitment to freedom of navigation. Blinken 9 Aug reaffirmed that "it is the business" of U.S. to resolve dispute in SCS and urged every member to "peacefully resolve disputes"; Chinese Deputy Ambassador to UN Dai Bing same day responded that U.S. failure to ratify UN Convention on Law of the Sea gave it "no credibility" and that U.S. is "biggest threat to stability" in region. U.S. VP Kamala Harris 22-24 Aug visited Singapore, affirming "commitment to a longstanding relationship... with the Indo-Pacific region"; Harris 24 Aug rebuked China for "coercion" in SCS. In Vietnam 24-27 Aug, Harris told Vietnamese officials that U.S. supports upgrading ties from comprehensive to strategic partnership. China 27 Aug issued new regulations requiring, from 1 Sept, range of foreign vessels to notify authorities when entering what Beijing claims are China's territorial waters.

➡ **Thailand Regular and large-scale anti-govt protests resumed in capital Bangkok, leading to clashes with police, while violence continued in deep south.** Hundreds of anti-govt protesters 1 Aug demonstrated in Bangkok, demanding resignation of PM Prayuth Chan-ocha; protesters launched projectiles at police, injuring 13 officers, and police responded with water cannons, rubber bullets and tear gas, arresting 11 protesters. Over 1,000 anti-govt protesters 7 Aug clashed with police near Victory Monument en route to Government House; police used water cannons, tear gas and rubber bullets against demonstrators, leaving at least two civilians and three police officers injured. Protesters 10 Aug gathered for rally and clashed with police in Din Daeng district; police responded with tear gas and rubber bullets, arresting at least 48 people. Near-daily clashes continued 11-19 Aug in Din Daeng. During protest at Government House, 15-year-old protester was shot 16 Aug; police denied using live ammunition. Protesters 20 Aug marched to Swiss, U.S. and Chinese embassies to air grievances against govt. Police 24 Aug arrested seven men in Nakhon Pathom province with 18 small improvised “ping pong” bombs, allegedly for use in upcoming anti-govt rally. Meanwhile, media outlets and human rights lawyers 2 Aug petitioned Civil Court to void PM Prayuth’s late-July order to censor online criticism of govt’s COVID-19 response; court 6 Aug ruled emergency decree order was unconstitutional, forcing Prayuth 10 Aug to rescind order. Opposition 16 Aug filed no-confidence motions against PM and five other ministers, chiefly triggered by alleged mismanagement of pandemic. Violence continued in deep south. Security forces 2 Aug killed insurgent in Nong Chik district, Pattani province. At least 15 militants next day attacked ranger camp on Kolok River, (Tak Bai district, Narathiwat province) on Thailand-Malaysia border, killing one ranger and injuring four others. Pipe bomb 23 Aug injured one soldier in Myang district, Yala province. Militants 28 Aug ambushed cargo train in Rangae district, Narathiwat. Bomb same day in Muang district, Yala province, wounded local official.