

Asia

North East Asia

↓ **China (internal)** Amid growing global concern and criticism about reports of mass detentions of hundreds of thousands of Muslims (mainly Uighurs but also ethnic Kazakhs), Xinjiang regional legislature 9 Oct revised its 2017 anti-extremism regulations, retroactively authorising existence of political re-education and detention centres, which officials say are aimed at countering terrorism and religious extremism and achieving social stability and security. Regulations state that so-called “vocational training centres” will “carry out national common language, laws, regulations, and vocational skills education and training, organise and carry out anti-extremist ideological education, psychological correction, [and] behaviour correction”. Radio Free Asia 2 Oct reported Chinese authorities moving large number of Uighur detainees out of Xinjiang to facilities across country due to “overflow of inmates”. Using satellite imagery, BBC 24 Oct reported more than doubling in size of camps and security facilities since 2017 to total 440 hectares across 44 sites; *AFP* investigation 25 Oct cited Chinese govt documents indicating at least 181 camps exist and local govt departments in charge of such facilities may have procured police batons, cattle prods and handcuffs. UK foreign minister said diplomats who visited Xinjiang confirmed reports of mass internment camps were “broadly true”.

↑ **China/Japan** Japanese PM Abe 25-27 Oct made first visit to China since 2011, touted by both sides as “historic” in improving state relations. China and Japan agreed on currency swap mechanism, discussed bilateral trade and investment, and infrastructure cooperation in third countries. Business representatives signed agreements valued at \$18bn. Japan and U.S. continued joint military exercises flying B-52 bombers over East China Sea and Sea of Japan 10 Oct and holding “training for operations to retake control of enemy-held remote islands” 14 Oct.

➡ **Korean Peninsula** North and South Korea 15 Oct held high-level talks at border village Panmunjom, agreeing on steps toward implementing April Panmunjom Declaration, including general-level military talks on de-escalation and demilitarisation of demilitarised zone, or DMZ (26 Oct), sub-committee meeting on forestry cooperation (22 Oct), and groundbreaking ceremony for connection and modernisation of railways and roads across border scheduled to take place late Nov/early Dec. South Korean media 31 Oct reported National Intelligence Service had observed North Korea preparing for international inspections at its Punggye-ri nuclear test site. U.S. Sec State Mike Pompeo’s fourth visit to Pyongyang 7-8 Oct included reportedly “good and productive” talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un; sides discussed implementation of June Singapore Joint Declaration and plans for second U.S.-DPRK summit, expected to take place early 2019. Pompeo also visited Japan and South Korea, after which he tweeted that he looked forward to ensuring “progress on inter-Korean relations is in lockstep with progress on denuclearization”. After trilateral consultation with South Korea and Japan, U.S. 19 Oct suspended large joint air defence military exercise with South Korea planned for Dec “to give the diplomatic process every opportunity to continue”. During mid-Oct

Europe trip, South Korean President Moon met with French, UK and German leaders, asking them to play a role in future UN sanctions relief on North Korea if and when it denuclearises; Moon met with resistance and cautions against pursuing sanctions relief until Pyongyang takes concrete steps toward denuclearisation. South Korean opposition voiced objection to Moon administration's 23 Oct decision to ratify inter-Korean military agreement without National Assembly approval, branding it unconstitutional.

➡ **Taiwan Strait** President Tsai in 10 Oct National Day Address said "China's unilateral diplomatic offensive and military coercion" harms cross-strait relations. U.S. VP Mike Pence in 4 Oct speech criticised China for actions "that threaten the stability of the Taiwan Strait" (see South China Sea). Taiwan 4 Oct complained China was blocking its proposals at Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum; 22-23 Oct accused China of meddling in its upcoming local elections. Several thousand demonstrators held pro-independence rally in Taipei 20 Oct, called for referendum. Taiwan held joint air, sea and land military exercises 9 and 16-17 Oct, simulating defending against Chinese People's Liberation Army attacks on its bases. Two U.S. warships sailed through Taiwan Strait 22 Oct, sparking Chinese complaints. China's defence minister 25 Oct warned against challenging China's sovereignty over Taiwan. Beijing 31 Oct warned Taipei against official exchanges or military contacts with U.S. and "consequences" from "colluding with foreign forces to damage peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait"; de facto U.S. ambassador to Taiwan told reporters that efforts to decide Taiwan's future by anything "other than peaceful means" are "grave concern" to U.S..

South Asia

↓ **Afghanistan** Hostilities and attacks intensified ahead of 20 Oct parliamentary elections, which were marred by insecurity and organisational and technical problems, while Taliban killing of powerful Kandahar police chief prompted concerns for security in southern region and cast shadow on idea of peace talks. Ten candidates killed in run-up to elections (various dates); Taliban claimed 407 attacks on election day, including suicide bombing near polling centre in Kabul killing at least fifteen and blocked roads; govt reported 193 security incidents. Preliminary figures indicated about four million votes cast (out of nine million registered voters) in 32 of 34 provinces; vote postponed for security reasons in Ghazni and Kandahar provinces (taking place in latter 27 Oct), while polls failed to open in many districts elsewhere. Observers anticipating further political tensions and turbulence when results are announced, expected for 20 Nov. In attack claimed by Taliban, gunman 18 Oct shot dead Kandahar provincial police chief Gen Abdul Raziq, provincial chief of National Directorate of Security, and TV cameraman, in governor's palace in Kandahar city, also injuring several including provincial governor, two Afghan and one U.S. military commanders, and U.S. civilian and translator; top U.S. military commander in Afghanistan Gen Austin Miller narrowly escaped. Govt claimed increase in offensive operations ahead of election including in Farah, Kandahar, Faryab and Maidan Wardak provinces. Taliban claimed to have overrun at least four districts in Maidan Wardak, Paktika and Ghazni provinces. Taliban 3 Oct claimed to have removed Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP) from half of Wazir Tangi in Khogyani, Nangarhar province. Month saw apparent decrease in IS-KP activity, with

group claiming suicide attack 2 Oct on office of election candidate in Kama district, Nangarhar province, killing over a dozen; and 29 Oct suicide bombing targeting election commission HQ in Kabul, killing staff member and police officer. New U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad 12 Oct reportedly led delegation talking to Taliban in Qatar; Taliban said they discussed “ending occupation” and working toward peaceful resolution to Afghan conflict. Reports emerged that U.S. did not fully inform Afghan govt; several non-Taliban political factions voiced concerns of potential U.S. appeasement of Taliban.

➡ **Bangladesh** Court cases involving leading opposition figures, including Bangladesh National Party (BNP) leader Khaleda Zia, continued ahead of general elections planned for Dec 2018 or Jan 2019. Court 10 Oct handed down death sentence to nineteen out of 49 defendants convicted of involvement in 2004 grenade attack on rally of PM Hasina (leader of then-opposition Awami League, AL) which killed some 24 and wounded 300; those sentenced include former minister from then-ruling, now opposition BNP Lutfuzzaman Babar; Tarique Rahman, self-exiled son of imprisoned BNP leader Zia, given life sentence in absentia. BNP condemned verdict as “manifestation of political vengeance” by ruling AL and announced countrywide protests. Court 29 Oct sentenced Zia – jailed in Feb for five years – to further seven years jail on corruption charges. BNP 13 Oct formed Jatiya Oikya Front (United National Front) alliance with other opposition parties to contest upcoming general elections, naming former foreign minister and veteran of various govts Kamal Hossain as leader. Editors of sixteen newspapers 15 Oct protested newly-passed Digital Security Act in Dhaka, claiming act would curb press freedom and demanding removal of various sections; govt dismissed concerns. Govt 30 Oct agreed to start repatriation of Rohingya refugees back to Myanmar mid Nov following bilateral meeting in Dhaka.

➡ **India (non-Kashmir)** In Chhattisgarh state, several members of security forces and suspected Maoist rebels killed in clashes during month; in Dantewada district, suspected Maoists 28 Oct attacked Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader, leaving him severely injured. Security forces 18 Oct killed female suspected Maoist leader and captured four other suspected Maoists including three women near border between Andhra and Odisha states.

➡ **Kashmir** In Indian-administered Kashmir, first of four rounds of local elections in Jammu and Kashmir state – first since 2005 – began 8 Oct amid boycott by two mainstream parties and violence between militants and govt. Ruling Bharatiya Janata Party made some advances, winning around 100 wards in valley: Congress won 175; both benefited from National Conference and People’s Democratic Party boycott of the polls over govt’s “lack of clarity” on legal challenge to Article 35-A of Constitution, which provides special rights and privileges to Jammu and Kashmir’s permanent residents. Tensions rose in valley after security forces 11 Oct reportedly killed high profile Hizbul Mujahideen militant Manan Wani in Hardwara, Kupwara district (north west); separatists organised complete shut-down next day. Police 21 Oct killed three suspected militants during overnight fighting in Laroo village, Kulgam district (south); unexploded shell from clashes detonated later same day, killing seven civilians and leading to mass protests throughout south Kashmir; separatists held second complete shutdown 22 Oct. Clashes between militants and police left two alleged Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) militants, one civilian and one

policeman dead in capital Srinagar 17 Oct. Army claimed to have killed three militants who were trying to cross Line of Control (LoC, dividing Pakistan and Indian-administered Kashmir) in Baramulla district (north west) 18 Oct. Security forces 25 Oct claimed to have killed four militants in clash in Anantnag district (south) and two in Baramulla district (west). Tensions between Pakistan and India remained high following India's late Sept cancellation of bilateral meeting on sidelines of UN General Assembly; Pakistani PM Khan 21 Oct condemned "cycle of killings of innocent Kashmiris" by Indian security forces; Indian govt said Pakistan should "address its own issues".

➡ **Maldives** Following his defeat in Sept presidential elections, outgoing President Yameen 10 Oct filed challenge to results in Supreme Court (SC), alleging vote rigging; SC 21 Oct unanimously rejected challenge citing lack of evidence, finding no basis to overturn result. SC 30 Oct overturned exiled former President Nasheed's prison sentence for terrorism.

➡ **Nepal** Internal dissent within ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) continued to raise concerns about stability of govt. Senior NCP leaders criticised PM KP Oli for monopolising party decisions, including on appointments of provincial-level leaders; widespread censure by NCP members' senior and rank-and-file members toward an eventually scrapped but haphazard plan to elect senior leader Bamdev Gautam into parliament after having a sitting MP resign also stoked internal discord. Govt's sluggish performance and failure to empower provincial authorities in line with 2015 constitution also hampering governance and creating tensions between federal and provincial govts. NCP Co-chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal warned Province 2 (the only province out of seven in total composed of Tarai-only districts) to not "overtake" the federal govt after it endorsed provincial-level police act 13 Oct; Dahal argued the act contravened the constitution and undermined transition to federalism. Province 2 govt deferred threats to further adopt new legislation on civil service and a public service commission for a month following federal govt assurance it would enact necessary laws within that time; federal govt also claimed it would authorise provinces to handle internal security matters until a federal police act is issued.

➡ **Pakistan** Govt faced growing internal challenges with signs of more robust opposition and worsening economic crisis, as well as tensions with neighbouring countries and international partners. Days before 14 Oct by-elections for several national and provincial assembly constituencies, National Accountability Bureau (NAB) 5 Oct arrested leader of parliamentary opposition and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president Shahbaz Sharif on corruption charges. Shahbaz – released on parole for 17 Oct special parliamentary session – denounced "unholy alliance" between Ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) and NAB; PTI claimed it had no role in arrest. PML-N and Pakistan People's Party (PPP, whose co-chair, former President Zardari, also faces corruption investigations) cooperated in some constituencies; PML-N won four parliamentary seats, PTI lost three. Amid worsening economic downturn, finance minister and central bank governor 11 Oct met International Monetary Fund (IMF) director reportedly seeking \$8bn in loans; IMF insisted on greater transparency about Pakistan's debts. Govt 23 Oct announced loans of \$6bn from Saudi Arabia following Khan's visit to Saudi economic conference in Riyadh 22-23 Oct. Govt 1 Oct reportedly reduced Chinese loans under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) for rail projects from \$8.2bn to \$6.2bn,

potentially straining relations with Beijing. Tensions also increased with Iran and Afghanistan over border incidents, as Iranian Sunni militant group Jaish al-Adl – reportedly based in Balochistan – 16 Oct kidnapped fourteen Iranian border guards close to border, and Pakistani and Afghan border forces 15 Oct clashed near city of Chaman in Balochistan (south west). FM Shah Mahmood Qureshi 2 Oct met with his U.S. counterpart Mike Pompeo and U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton to discuss Pakistan’s role in bringing Afghan Taliban to peace talks and U.S. suspension of financial assistance to Pakistani military over alleged Pakistani assistance to Afghan Taliban. Militant attacks continued, including roadside bombs killing three paramilitaries in Balochistan 2 Oct and three soldiers in South Waziristan (north west) 11 Oct. Financial Action Task Force visited Pakistan 7-18 Oct and expressed concern at govt’s lack of progress in improving anti-money laundering and counter-terror financing laws. PTI 12 Oct withdrew legislation to amend blasphemy law under apparent pressure from Islamist hardliners.

📌 🇱🇰 **Sri Lanka** President Sirisena’s 26 Oct decision to withdraw his United People’s Freedom Alliance (UPFA) from national govt and form new govt with controversial former president Mahinda Rajapaksa as new PM plunged country into constitutional crisis, provoking unrest and prompting concerns over progress of reforms and ethnic reconciliation. Sitting PM Ranil Wickremesinghe and his United National Party (UNP) rejected Rajapaksa’s appointment as violating constitutional procedures and called for vote in parliament to test what Wickremesinghe claimed was his majority support. Sirisena 27 Oct prorogued parliament until 16 Nov, giving time to Rajapaksa to win over UNP parliamentarians needed to gain majority. Sirisena 29 Oct appointed first dozen ministers to his new cabinet, including crossovers from UNP, and named new senior officials to ministries and govt departments. Parliament Speaker Karu Jayasuriya 28 Oct affirmed Wickremesinghe as sitting PM and called on Sirisena to reconvene parliament; leader of Tamil National Alliance (TNA) R. Sampanthan same day called for speaker to reconvene parliament; leftist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) 29 Oct also rejected suspension of parliament. U.S. 28 Oct, followed by UK, EU and Canada 29 Oct, called for Sirisena to immediately reconvene parliament. In 29 Oct meeting with foreign diplomats, Sirisena defended legality of Wickremesinghe’s sacking, pledged to continue to “strengthen democracy, human rights, media freedom, peace and reconciliation”. Attorney general 31 Oct refused to endorse Wickremesinghe’s sacking. Pro-Rajapaksa govt employees stormed state TV stations 26 Oct and evicted Wickremesinghe-appointed staff; one person shot dead 28 Oct, two injured, by bodyguard of UNP Petroleum Minister Arjuna Ranatunga as crowds of Rajapaksa supporters tried to prevent Ranatunga from entering his office. Tens of thousands joined peaceful UNP-organised rally in Colombo rejecting “illegal” appointment of Rajapaksa as PM, calling for return of parliament. Parliament 10 Oct approved law to establish Office of Reparations to provide relief to victims of civil war, second of govt’s four promised transitional justice mechanisms.

South East Asia

➡ **Cambodia** EU 5 Oct notified Cambodia that it would initiate process to withdraw Cambodia’s “Everything But Arms” trade preferences due to deterioration of human rights in kingdom. Without clear improvements, Cambodia set to lose

\$676mn annually to EU tariffs affecting 40% of exports. Cambodia called move “an extreme injustice”. EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini met with PM Hun Sen 18 Oct on sidelines of Asia-Europe Summit in Brussels, raising EU concerns about rights situation in Cambodia; told reporters she did not hear anything that would avert sanctions.

➔ **Indonesia** Security forces responded harshly to peaceful protests in support of the right of self-determination in Papua prompting international criticism, while concerns over risks of new jihadist attacks remained. Govt accused Vanuatu of fuelling tensions late Sept after it voiced support for West Papuan self-determination movement at UN General Assembly and called for UN Human Rights Council to investigate rights abuses in region. UK-based TAPOL and U.S.-based East Timor and Indonesia Action Network reported authorities late Sept arrested over 120 peaceful protesters – including 39 in West Java – who voiced their support for right to self-determination; also said that at least five Papuans were tortured in Sept and one died in police custody. Military early Oct reported one Papuan killed in operation seeking members of West Papua Liberation Army in Puncak Jaya regency, Papua province; local rights activists reported two members of Liberation Army and five civilians including two children killed in land and air operations. Jakarta-based Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict released report 18 Oct warning that Islamic State (ISIS)-linked Jamaah Ansharut Daulah, blamed for May Surabaya bombings, is still a threat and could launch attacks in west and central Java. Organisers of movement promoting moderate Islam cancelled mass rally in Yogyakarta late Oct to avoid violence after some of its supporters burned flag of outlawed Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir.

➔ **Myanmar** Chair of UN-appointed Fact Finding Mission Marzuki Darusman 24 Oct briefed UN Security Council on Sept final report into rights violations in Rakhine State and other parts of Myanmar, which gave further details to back up its findings of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and possible genocide by Myanmar military, and called for removal of military leadership, restructuring of institution and end to its political role; report also rejected general economic sanctions. Darusman said thousands of Rohingya still fleeing “ongoing genocide”. Myanmar and Bangladesh officials 30 Oct agreed to start repatriation of refugees mid-Nov. EU 5 Oct announced it is considering revoking Myanmar’s access to “Everything But Arms” preferential trade scheme, which can be withdrawn in case of “serious and systematic violation” of human and labour rights; campaign groups criticised move which could seriously affect garment industry employing some 450,000 people, mostly young women from poor rural families, calling instead for expansion of targeted sanctions on individuals including Commander-in-Chief. At UN Human Rights Council late Sept, members approved resolution establishing body to consolidate evidence of crimes against Rohingya into case files linked to specific perpetrators, to pave way for future international prosecutions. Australia 23 Oct imposed sanctions on five senior military officials, aligning with U.S. and EU. Govt and representatives of ten non-State armed groups met in summit in Naypyitaw 15-16 Oct, third anniversary of signing of Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement; no real progress in overcoming main issues deadlocking peace process, including military demands that armed groups accept principle of non-secession before further dialogue on federalism and security sector reform. Conflict in Kachin and Northern Shan states still eased due to

monsoon season and summit, although clashes starting to increase in Northern Shan.

➡ **Philippines** Violence and clashes involving New People's Army (NPA) and Islamic State (ISIS)-linked militants continued, while govt mulled extension of martial law in Mindanao to secure 2019 elections and plebiscite on Bangsamoro Basic Law. Security forces clashed with NPA, armed wing of Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), including in Mindanao, where military reported it had seized control of NPA camp in Surigao del Norte 5 Oct. Military 17 Oct said it had captured five senior NPA leaders at checkpoint in Laguna province, south of Manila, accused of plot to oust Duterte. Alleged NPA attacks included one on road-building project in neighbouring Negros Oriental (centre) 18 Oct; and several deadly attacks on police in various provinces including in Camarines Sur (centre) and Aurora (north of Manila) 16 Oct. Military suggested NPA involvement in 20 Oct killing of nine farmers (including two minors) in Negros Occidental. Military 17 Oct said NPA attempting to incite unrest to push Duterte to declare martial law. Duterte 20 Oct said communist rebels should lay down their arms and would receive benefits including housing in return; communist leader Jose Maria Sison same day said ready to resume peace talks with govt. On one-year anniversary of end of five-month siege of Marawi City by ISIS-linked militants, Bangsamoro activist group reiterated complaints about official rehabilitation of destroyed city and alleged human rights violations by military. Presidential spokesperson 19 Oct said govt may again extend martial law in Mindanao, set to expire 31 Dec. Military continued operations against ISIS-linked Abu Sayyaf in south, including on Jolo island and in Mindanao's Lanao del Sur, including three marines and seven suspected militants reported killed in clash in Patikul, Sulu 26 Oct. Military 22 Oct reported it had killed alleged key leader of ISIS-linked Ansar Al-Khilafah Philippines (AKP) in Mindanao's Sarangani province, who they said was involved in 16 Sept explosion in General Santos city. Several killed in clashes between military and ISIS-linked Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters in Mindanao's Maguindanao province. UN General Assembly 12 Oct re-elected Philippines to another three-year term on UN Human Rights Council, in move govt said vindicated Duterte's crackdown on drugs.

↓ **South China Sea** U.S. VP Mike Pence 4 Oct delivered hawkish speech signalling intensified U.S.-China strategic competition, while diplomacy continued. Pence's speech included numerous complaints including China's militarisation of features in South China Sea (SCS). Pence also said U.S. navy would continue to "fly, sail and operate" despite China's "reckless harassment", following close encounter between countries' naval vessels late Sept. China 5 Oct said "unwarranted" and "groundless" accusations harmed its interests and bilateral relations and further criticised U.S. policies 8 Oct during visit of U.S. Sec State Mike Pompeo to Beijing. U.S. Sec Defense James Mattis 16 Oct visited Vietnam for second time in 2018; and on sidelines of 18-20 Oct ASEAN defence minister's meeting in Singapore agreed with Chinese defence minister Wei Fenghe to make military ties play stabilising role in relations. ASEAN defence ministers 19 Oct formally adopted code and communication protocol to manage aircraft encounters over SCS; China and U.S. agreed in principle to adhere to protocol. Japan conducted multiple unprecedented military drills with UK, U.S. and Philippines at various locations across Indo-Pacific region, while PM Abe discussed Indo-Pacific and SCS cooperation with Australian, French, and Vietnamese counterparts. China and Thailand 20-29 Oct joined

Malaysia for joint maritime exercises off coast of Malaysia, and China and ASEAN members held first joint maritime military exercises 22-29 Oct. Chinese President Xi 25 Oct inspected PLA Southern Theatre Command, which covers SCS, and emphasised need to “concentrate preparations for fighting a war”.

➡ **Thailand** Personnel changes, and Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamad’s late-Oct visit to Bangkok, spurred media speculation about new momentum in moribund peace dialogue between Thailand and Mara Patani, umbrella group of Malay-Muslim separatist fronts (Malaysia serves as dialogue facilitator), however no specific initiatives or date for resuming talks were announced, and violence in deep south continued. Retired General Udomchai Thammasaroraj was appointed head of Thailand’s peace-dialogue delegation, and Lt General Pornsak Poonsawat replaced newly retired Lt General Piyawat Nakwanich as commander of Fourth Army Region. Mara Patani mid-Oct told media that it had been joined by three unspecified Patani-Malay nationalist groups; also said Mara Patani would submit new proposal for dialogue following Thai general election expected before May 2019. Main militant group, Barisan Revolusi Nasional Patani Melayu (BRN), in late Oct media interviews reiterated position that group is willing to engage in dialogue under condition that process is between Bangkok and BRN. Several killed including civilians in militant violence in deep south. Ahead of general election, political activity gathering pace despite junta’s ban on political campaigning. Electoral Commission considering investigating pro-Thaksin Shinawatra Pheu Thai Party for breaching election law, which could result in party’s dissolution. New pro-regime party, Palang Pracharat Party, late Sept announced that three senior executive members are sitting cabinet members; junta said they are not obliged to resign, but many politicians voiced objections to conflict of interest.