

Asia

North East Asia

➔ **China/Japan Tensions continued between Japan and China over contested island chain in East China Sea; meanwhile, Tokyo and Canberra announced landmark military pact.** Amid recent tensions over Chinese military activity in Asia-Pacific region, Australian PM Scott Morrison and Japanese PM Yoshihide Suga 17 Nov met in Japan's capital Tokyo to discuss recent developments in South and East China Seas; meeting culminated in Reciprocal Access Agreement to bolster defence ties, allowing Japanese and Australian troops to conduct training and joint operations, and permitting rapid deployment of defence forces to each country. Both leaders same day expressed "serious concerns" about situation in East China Sea, vowing "strong opposition to any coercive unilateral actions". Chinese state media 18 Nov criticised deal that "clearly targets China" and "further accelerates the confrontational atmosphere" in region, while Commander of U.S. Navy Seventh Fleet Vice Admiral William Merz 19 Nov welcomed pact as "encouraging to everybody in the region". Following incursion of two Chinese coastguard vessels into Japanese territorial waters in mid-Oct, President-elect Joe Biden 12 Nov confirmed during phone conversation with PM Suga his commitment to strengthening U.S.-Japan alliance to achieve free and open Indo-Pacific, and that Article 5 of 1951 Japan-U.S. Security Treaty – specifically U.S. obligation to defend Japan should its territories come under attack – would be applied to Okinawa Prefecture and Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. Chinese FM Wang Yi 24 Nov met with Japanese FM Toshimitsu Motegi in Tokyo where both agreed to continue communication on issues regarding East China Sea and to ease restrictions on business travels imposed in wake of COVID-19 by end of month.

➔ **Korean Peninsula Regional tensions over alleged arms development continued while international actors maintained pressure on Pyongyang.** Following briefing by National Intelligence Service, lawmaker in Seoul 3 Nov claimed Pyongyang is building two new submarines, including one capable of firing ballistic missiles. North Korean State media 4 Nov accused Japan of building missile system, describing developments as "challenge to regional peace and stability". After Pyongyang revealed previously unseen intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in Oct, U.S. navy 17 Nov tested for first time intercontinental missile defence system from Kwajalein Atoll in Republic of Marshall Islands, successfully intercepting ICBM. Following International Atomic Energy Agency meeting in Austria's capital Vienna, Director General Rafael Grossi 18 Nov said nuclear "activity is taking place" at Kangson facility near Pyongyang. Meanwhile, police in South Korea's capital Seoul early Nov sent cases to prosecutors' office against human rights groups, reportedly for breaking inter-Korean exchange law by sending balloons with anti-Pyongyang leaflets across border. Seoul 4 Nov claimed to have detained citizen from north who had crossed border near Goseong county previous evening; govt did not say whether he was civilian or member of military. UN special rapporteur on North Korea's human rights situation 19 Nov sent letter to Seoul and Pyongyang requesting information on Sept killing of South Korean official in border incident.

South Korean FM 8-11 Nov visited Washington for talks, including with Sec State Pompeo on U.S.-ROK alliance, while U.S. President-elect Biden and South Korean President Moon 12 Nov reaffirmed commitment to alliance and peaceful Korean peninsula during phone call. U.S. 19 Nov announced sanctions on North Korean company operating in Russia and Russian construction company for “exportation of forced labour from North Korea”, accusing companies of using forced labour to “generate revenue” for govt. German officials 17 Nov accused Russia and China of preventing UN Security Council from determining whether Pyongyang had violated fuel sanctions. Chinese FM Wang Yi 26 Nov met South Korean President Moon in Seoul to discuss stalled denuclearisation talks and potential visit of Chinese President Xi to capital.

➡ **Taiwan Strait** **Cross-strait tensions remained high amid intense Chinese and U.S. military activity and Washington’s diplomatic and military support for Taipei.** Taiwanese defence ministry claimed series of Chinese military aircrafts entered Taiwanese Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) during month, including: one Y-8 reconnaissance plane 1 Nov; two Y-8 anti-submarine aircrafts, two SU-30s, two J-10s and two J-16s 2 Nov; one Y-8 anti-submarine plane 4, 10, 12, 22 and 23 Nov; one Y-8 plane and one Y-8 anti-submarine plane 11, 16, 17 and 24 Nov. In response, Taiwan scrambled jets, broadcast radio warnings and tracked planes with air defence system on each occasion. Meanwhile, U.S. continued military activity in region as well as support for Taiwan. U.S. State Department 3 Nov cleared potential sale of four aerial drones to Taiwan; Chinese foreign ministry 4 Nov said U.S. had sent wrong and grave signals with deal. Taiwanese Naval Command 9 Nov confirmed that contingent of U.S. Marines arrived to train troops for four weeks at Tsoying Naval Base; Chinese state media 11 Nov said U.S. training would not affect cross-strait military balance. Plane tracker Aircraft Spots 17 Nov claimed two U.S. Air Force B1-B bombers entered China’s ADIZ; Beijing-based Probing Initiative 22 Nov reported five U.S. Air Force reconnaissance aircraft and two aerial tankers flew south of Taiwan’s ADIZ; U.S. Air Force 24 Nov flew two supersonic heavy bombers into East China Sea. U.S. Rear Admiral Michael Studeman 22 Nov made unannounced visit to Taiwan. U.S. also increased diplomatic support for Taiwan: Washington 6 Nov urged World Health Organization (WHO) to invite Taiwan to major meeting focused on COVID-19; WHO member countries 9 Nov rejected request. U.S. Sec State Pompeo 12 Nov said “Taiwan has not been a part of China”; Beijing next day said that U.S. interference “will be met with a resolute counterattack by China”. Beijing 11 Nov urged U.S. to “stop any kind of official exchanges or contacts with Taiwan” ahead of Taiwan-U.S. economic talks held virtually and in-person in Washington 20 Nov; talks concluded with deal to establish “institutionalised dialogue mechanism”.

South Asia

➔ **Afghanistan High-intensity hostilities continued as Taliban attacked areas around Kandahar, while U.S. announced troop drawdown and intra-Afghan peace process remained stalled.** Taliban activity surged from late-Oct until 3-4 Nov, including series of large-scale attacks and operations in three districts surrounding Kandahar (south), country's second-largest city; U.S. reportedly stepped up aerial bombardment of Taliban positions, allowing govt forces to re-enter contested districts; assault in Kandahar largely ended by 10 Nov. Elsewhere, Taliban ended self-imposed restrictions on attacking district centres, particularly in north, with attacks in Badghis (north west) and northern Balkh, Kunduz and Jowjzan provinces, including on main highway in latter; operations included Taliban 18 Nov seizing district centre in Badakhshan (north east) in surprise attack on govt forces that caused heavy casualties. However, more mountainous areas during month saw fall in conflict activity with onset of winter weather conditions. Car bomb in Ghazni province (centre) 29 Nov killed at least 30 members of security forces. In major announcement, Washington 17 Nov said it would reduce total number of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan from 4,500 to 2,500 by mid-Jan, raising concern over potential surge in Taliban activity thereafter. Islamic State-Khorasan Province 2 Nov killed over 20 people in attack on Kabul University and 21 Nov killed at least eight in rocket attack in capital Kabul. Meanwhile, intra-Afghan talks in Qatar's capital Doha remained stalled. Taliban and govt representatives 15-18 Nov appeared to agree on compromise over procedure and protocol for negotiations; however, agreement fell apart before being officially confirmed, reportedly under pressure from President Ghani who opposed substance and circumstances of agreement. U.S. Sec State Pompeo 21 Nov travelled to Doha to meet with govt and Taliban negotiators. At conference in Geneva, donors 24 Nov pledged some \$12bn in aid for next four years.

➔ **Bangladesh Intercommunal unrest broke out with attacks on Hindu minority, while authorities continued crackdown on critics.** Tens of thousands 2 Nov joined religious groups in capital Dhaka in protest against French President Macron's defence of Prophet Muhammad caricatures. Meanwhile, month witnessed numerous attacks against Hindu community: assailants 1 Nov burned five Hindu homes in Comilla district after Hindu was accused of defending French cartoons deemed blasphemous; same day authorities in Noakhali district arrested two Hindus accused of making derogatory remarks about Islam; house of Hindu accused of defaming Islam on social media attacked in Brahmanbaria district 4 Nov; local NGO working on minority rights 3 Nov said sectarian violence had killed at least 17 people since March. Police 12 Nov arrested mosque leader for leading Oct lynching of man in Lamonirhat district following his alleged desecration of Quran in mosque; police also charged 30 people for assaulting police officers and damaging public property. Govt continued to suppress opponents, including through crackdown on Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, country's largest religious party, and its youth wing Islami Chhatra Shibir: police 10 Nov detained seven Shibir activists in Bogra district on charges of planning anti-state violence; 14 Nov arrested 25 female Jamaat activists in Kushtia district for allegedly planning sabotage acts and further 43 Jamaat and Shibir activists in Feni district on same charges. Following govt use in recent months of controversial Digital Security Act to silence critics and

journalists, PM Hasina 2 Nov said “spreading false propaganda” does not count as “freedom of speech”. Violence marred Awami League (AL) win in by-elections in Dhaka and Sirajgang districts 12 Nov, including bomb explosions at Dhaka polling station and arson attacks on AL buses; opposition Bangladesh National Party called for recount, alleging intimidation and electoral irregularities. Operations against suspected militants continued; police 7 Nov detained four suspected New Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh members in Bogra district while paramilitary Rapid Action Battalion arrested four other alleged members, including Rajshahi regional chief, during 20 Nov raid in Sirajganj. FM Momen 14 Nov blamed Myanmar, International agencies and NGOs for hindering efforts to relocate Rohingya refugees.

↓ **Kashmir Cross-border tensions escalated sharply amid deadly incidents along Line of Control (LoC) dividing Pakistan and Indian-administered Kashmir, while insecurity persisted inside Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).** Violence along LoC rose between New Delhi and Islamabad, with India suffering highest military casualty toll since April. Pakistan military said Indian fire 13, 22 and 25 Nov killed one soldier and 17 civilians. In turn, Indian officials claimed several attacks: 8 Nov clash with three militants attempting to infiltrate Indian side of LoC in Kupwara district, killing four soldiers; 13 Nov clash along LoC, killing five soldiers and six civilians, and Pakistani shelling same day, injuring 19 civilians; 21 Nov said Pakistani firing killed one soldier, and cross-LoC Pakistani firing injured two civilians; 27 Nov claimed two soldiers killed by Pakistani cross-LoC firing. Meanwhile in J&K, security forces 1 Nov killed leader of Kashmir’s largest militant group, Hizbul Mujahideen, on outskirts of regional capital Srinagar. In Pulwama district, militants 5 Nov killed one civilian and injured another in two separate attacks, and security forces next day killed two militants. Security forces 19 Nov killed four alleged Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) militants on highway leading to Srinagar; New Delhi 21 Nov lodged protest with Pakistan’s top diplomat, alleging four suspected JeM militants had infiltrated from Pakistan intending to carry out major terror attack. India 23 Nov claimed to have killed another intruder along international border, while militants 26 Nov killed two soldiers in Srinagar. Opposition alliance raised clampdown on its leaders and activists as authorities 25 Nov arrested Peoples Democratic Party youth wing leader on alleged terrorism charges. Pakistani FM Qureshi 14 Nov accused India of “financial and material sponsorship” of multiple Pakistani terrorist groups; Delhi next day rejected allegations. India 23 Nov shared file with UN Security Council members, alleging infiltration and attempted attacks by Pakistani militants in J&K; Pakistan’s UN ambassador next day responded by accusing India of sponsoring Pakistani terrorist groups. Organisation of Islamic Cooperation 28 Nov called on India to rescind 5 Aug actions that changed status of J&K; India next day rejected call. First District Development Council local election held 28 Nov.

➔ **India (non-Kashmir) Anti-Maoist operations continued throughout month; meanwhile, India and China held disengagement talks amid tensions over disputed border.** Isolated anti-Muslim attacks took place throughout month: ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) supporters 11 Nov attacked mosque in Easter Champaran district in Bihar state, injuring at least four; four men 15 Nov also lynched Muslim in Uttar Pradesh. BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh state 22 Nov approved decree criminalising forceful religious conversion through marriage; law seeks to address so-called “love jihad”, conspiracy theory according to

which Muslim men marry Hindu women to convert them to Islam in order to alter country's demographic balance. Meanwhile, anti-Maoist operations and Maoist violence continued. In Chhattisgarh state (centre), security forces 3-26 Nov killed six Maoists in Bijapur and Kanker districts; Maoists 3-28 Nov killed three civilians and one police officer in Dhamtari, Lohardaga and Sukma districts. Also in centre, police 6 and 7 Nov killed Maoist in Balaghat district, Madhya Pradesh state. In east, security forces killed Maoist in Malkangiri district, Odisha state, and night of 21-22 Nov shot and killed three Maoists in Gaya district, Bihar state; Maoists 21 Nov shot and killed civilian in Chatra district, Jharkhand state. In Kerala state (south), security forces 3 Nov shot and killed Maoist in Wayanad district. Internationally, Indian and Chinese military officials 6 Nov held "candid, in-depth and constructive" talks on disengagement of forces along Line of Actual Control and agreed to continue dialogue and ensure that their border troops "exercise restraint and avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation". After relations between India and Nepal deteriorated following border row in May, India's army chief 4-6 Nov visited Nepal and held talks with his counterpart and Nepali PM Oli in bid to reset bilateral ties (see Nepal). India, U.S., Japan and Australia held largest annual Malabar military exercises in over a decade in Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea, respectively 3-6 Nov and 17-20 Nov.

➡ **Nepal Intra-party dispute between PM KP Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal, chair of ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP), threatened to destabilise govt and split party.** Dahal 13 Nov presented report at NCP secretariat meeting listing series of decisions made by Oli without proper internal consultation within party; Dahal's report urged Oli to make "sacrifice" and indirectly called on him to resign. Oli 28 Nov countered with a separate report rejecting Dahal's allegations and issued thinly veiled threats that Dahal could come under scrutiny via transitional justice processes underway to address abuses committed during ten-year conflict (1996-2006) when he was leading Maoist rebellion. Oli 21 Nov met with opposition Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba, fuelling speculation that Oli- and Dahal-led factions may compete to reach an alliance with other major parties to retain parliamentary majority in event of formal NCP split. Meanwhile, bilateral relations with India continued to improve – notwithstanding unresolved border disputes – following 3-6 Nov visit by Indian Army Chief Gen. MM Naravane and 26-27 Nov visit by Indian FM Harsh Vardhan Shringla to capital Kathmandu; Naravane had suggested in May that Nepal was encouraged by China to raise border issue with India. Three Chinese Communist Party officials 24 Nov reportedly arrived to, among other things, voice Beijing's concerns regarding Sept allegations that Chinese security forces had encroached into northern Nepali district of Humla; Chinese MFA 2 Nov dismissed reports as lacking factual basis. Chinese Defence Minister Wei Fenghe 29 Nov visited Kathmandu to discuss military cooperation.

➡ **Pakistan Political tensions remained elevated, particularly around Gilgit-Baltistan's election, and deadly militant violence persisted.** Political acrimony continued between govt and opposition Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) alliance featuring 11 opposition parties, including Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP); PM Khan 6 and 12 Nov accused alliance member and former PML-N PM Sharif of undermining army at "behest of India"; Sharif 13 Nov called Khan "puppet" controlled by undemocratic forces. Govt continued to use anti-corruption cases filed by National Accountability

Bureau to suppress opposition: court 11 Nov indicted Sharif, his wife, daughters and son, Hamza, who is opposition leader in Punjab Assembly; court 16 Nov indicted former PML-N PM Abbasi and finance minister Miftah Ismail. Tensions rose further after Khan's ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party 15 Nov won 22 of 33 seats in Gilgit-Baltistan's election, emerging as largest party; PPP and PML-N rejected results, alleging massive irregularities, and organised protests. Following three days of protests, Gilgit-Baltistan's caretaker govt 18 Nov sought army's assistance to control security situation. Despite govt's 18 Nov ban on gatherings due to COVID-19, PDM 22 and 30 Nov held large-scale rally in Peshawar and Multan, respectively; PDM local leaders 30 Nov detained for holding 22 Nov rally. Meanwhile, militant attacks continued. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, gunmen 1 Nov killed Ahmadi man in regional capital Peshawar; militants 18 Nov killed two soldiers in attack on military checkpoint in South Waziristan district; security forces 23 Nov claimed they killed Islamic State operational commander in Bajaur district; four employees of military-run Frontier Works Organization 26 Nov shot dead in North Waziristan district. In Balochistan province, grenade attack in regional capital Quetta 12 Nov injured at least seven, including three police. Counter-terrorism police 24 Nov claimed to have foiled militant suicide attack on police station near Lahore city, Punjab province. Thousands 7 Nov demonstrated against publication of French cartoons deemed blasphemous in Karachi city; some 3,000 protesters 30 Nov clashed with police in capital Islamabad. Internationally, Khan, FM Qureshi and intelligence chief Faiz Hameed 19 Nov visited Afghanistan's capital Kabul to reiterate support for reducing violence in Afghanistan, sides agreed to re-energise intelligence cooperation.

➔ **Sri Lanka Unshackled by 20th amendment to constitution, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa installed loyalists in senior judicial and security positions.** Following Oct passage of 20th constitutional amendment giving Gotabaya sweeping powers, newly created Parliamentary Council 10 and 23 Nov rubber-stamped Gotabaya's nominees for senior positions, including six Supreme Court justices, 14 Court of Appeal judges and Inspector General of Police. In address to nation on first anniversary of 2019 presidential election victory, Gotabaya 18 Nov stated that Sinhalese voters voted for him "because they had legitimate fears that the Sinhala race ... would be threatened with destruction in the face of various local and foreign forces and ideologies". Hardline nationalist retired Admiral Sarath Weerasekara, known for past threats against civil society activists and calls for ban of main Tamil political alliance, 26 Nov appointed as minister of public security in charge of police and civil defence force. With arrests and court orders blocking public commemorations, Tamils 27 Nov held small private Maaveerar Naal (Great Heroes Day, or Tamil Remembrance Day) ceremonies to remember family members killed during three-decade civil war. Amid second COVID-19 wave, health ministry committee 22 Nov reaffirmed govt's policy of mandatory cremation of all COVID-19 victims despite widespread criticism; opposition leader Sajith Premadasa 3 Nov accused govt of violating Muslim rights by cremating their dead; Organisation of Islamic Cooperation 4 Nov called on govt to "fulfil its human rights obligations by protecting and respecting the rights of its Muslim minority to practice their religion free from any discrimination". In sign of closer relations with China, ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna party 4 Nov held virtual "Advanced Seminar on Governance Experience" with senior Chinese

Communist Party officials and China's ambassador to Sri Lanka. India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval met Gotabaya and PM during 27-28 Nov visit to capital Colombo. At least eight people were killed and 50 injured from fire and police shooting as inmates in Mahara prison 29 Nov protested risks of rapid COVID-19 spread in prisons across island.

South East Asia

➡ **Indonesia Suspected jihadist group carried out deadly attack in Central Sulawesi while UN warned of escalating violence in Papua in past months.** In Central Sulawesi province, suspected jihadist armed group East Indonesia Mujahideen (MIT) 27 Nov killed four civilians and burned down six houses, including Christian place of worship, in Lembantongoa village, Sigi regency; around 150 families reportedly fled to neighbouring village amid continued search for perpetrators; President Widodo 30 Nov said killings were "beyond the limits of humanity". Previously, police 17 Nov announced killing of two suspected jihadists in Parigi Mutong regency, Central Sulawesi. Meanwhile, UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights 30 Nov warned of escalating violence in past weeks and months in Papua and West Papua provinces and risks of renewed tensions, notably ahead of 1 Dec West Papuan independence day; raised case of 22 Nov police shootout which killed one teenager and injured another on Limbaga mountain, Gome district, Papua province; also noted that security forces 17 Nov reportedly detained 84 people in Merauke Regency, Papua province, ahead of public consultation on implementation of Special Autonomy Law.

➡ **Myanmar Ruling party won landslide election victory while fighting eased in Rakhine State.** General elections 8 Nov resulted in landslide victory for ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) party, gaining 99% of elected seats in seven Burman-majority regions and 58% of elected seats in ethnic-majority states, securing 83% of elected seats in Union Parliament overall; Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) won three seats in Burman-majority regions and 16% of seats in ethnic-majority states; ethnic parties for their part won 25% of seats in ethnic-majority states, only giving them 10% of elected seats overall; military gets automatic 25% bloc. USDP 10 Nov alleged in Facebook video "many contentious events during the whole voting process", urging voters to send evidence of illegal acts, and 11 Nov called on govt to hold another "free, fair, [and] unbiased" vote rerun as soon as possible. Amid govt's cancellation of vote in most of Arakan National Party (ANP)'s strongholds in Oct, ANP won largest bloc of seats in Rakhine State Parliament; Rakhine parties however remained short of majority. Arakan Army (AA) 12 Nov released statement for first time in support of holding elections, calling on govt and military to ensure that elections could be held by 31 Dec in all cancelled Rakhine State constituencies; within hours of release, military welcomed statement and committed to support holding elections in cancelled areas; election commission had yet to respond on possible polls by end of month. Meanwhile, violence eased in Rakhine State throughout month. In Shan State in north, unidentified assassins 22 Nov shot and killed Htike Zaw, MP-elect for ruling NLD party.

➔ **Philippines Clashes in south between militant groups and security forces continued and low-intensity fighting involving communist rebels persisted.** In Maguindanao province in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), clan violence and clashes between insurgents and security forces continued at relatively lower levels than Oct. Clan firefight 20 Nov killed two people in Mohammad Ajul, Basilan province. Meanwhile, several elements of Islamic State-linked Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) surrendered in Basilan and Tawi-Tawi provinces late Oct-early Nov; military 3 Nov intercepted seven ASG members on coast of Parang, Sulu archipelago, killing them in subsequent clashes on seas; security forces 20 Nov clashed with ASG elements in Panamao and Kalingalan Caluang provinces. Implementation of Bangsamoro peace process continued as govt 17 Nov deployed first batch of Joint Peace and Security Team to support decommissioning and disarmament process of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) combatants. Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) also continued parliamentary sessions and 1 Nov passed Administrative Code, which defines governing rules and principles of BARMM governance. Govt efforts to rehabilitate Marawi city remained delayed as govt, BTA and Lanao del Sur continued to fight spread of COVID-19 in region; Task Force Bangon Marawi chair Del Rosario 19 Nov confirmed rehabilitation still on track with third of rehabilitation already completed. Clashes between communist New People's Army and armed forces continued throughout month in Visayas islands in centre, Mindanao island in south and Luzon island in north, killing at least ten combatants and civilians, and injuring two.

➔ **South China Sea Tensions persisted between China and claimant parties.** Filipino National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon 5 Nov said that plan to establish maritime militia forces to help counter China's own use of maritime militias was yet to be finalised over concerns that it would be "misconstrued". China's National People's Congress 4 Nov posted draft law that would allow Chinese Coast Guard to use weapons against foreign ships involved in illegal activities in Chinese-claimed waters if they fail to obey Chinese orders. At 37th summit of regional organisation ASEAN, Vietnamese PM Phuc 12 Nov opened meeting by affirming bloc's commitment to maintain South China Sea (SCS) as zone of "peace, stability, and security"; Vietnamese govt 18 Nov released statement as chair of committee noting that they had discussed situation in SCS, "during which concerns were raised by some leaders". Netherlands MFA 13 Nov issued statement calling on EU to "express itself more often and more strongly on developments in the South China Sea that violate the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea". U.S. National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien 23 Nov reaffirmed U.S. support to Philippines and Vietnam so as to "deter China"; China's embassy in Manila 24 Nov criticised O'Brien's remarks as reflecting "Cold War mentality and wantonly [inciting] confrontation". Indonesia's navy chief 23 Nov announced move of naval combat force (Guspurla) headquarters to Natuna islands from Indonesia's capital Jakarta to better protect interests in SCS. Asia Maritime Transparency Institute 25 Nov reported that China Coast Guard ship 5402 19 Nov harassed drilling rig in Malaysia's exclusive economic zone, 44 nautical miles from Malaysia's Sarawak state; Royal Malaysian Navy ship KD Keris manoeuvred around 5402 near Luconia Shoals for several days.

➔ **Thailand** **Mass anti-govt protests continued with dozens injured as parliament rejected proposals for substantive constitutional change.**

House Speaker Chuan Leekpai 3 Nov said he had approached three former PMs to establish reconciliation committee, protest leaders next day dismissed committee as “farce”. In capital Bangkok, thousands of anti-govt protestors 8-18 Nov gathered in different locations, while hundreds of yellow-shirt royalists throughout month mobilised in demonstrations reportedly organised by interior ministry. As parliament 17 Nov debated seven bills on constitutional amendments, submitted separately by coalition govt, opposition MPs and civic group Internet Law Reform Dialogue, thousands of anti-govt protesters descended on parliament and clashed with police and royalist counter-demonstrators in most violent day of protests since July; dozens injured, including at least six who suffered gunshot wounds. Lawmakers 18 Nov rejected draft amendments favoured by protesters and instead approved two motions paving way for discussions on limited constitutional changes; parliamentary committee due to scrutinise two bills before second reading scheduled for Jan. PM Prayuth 19 Nov said “all laws” would be brought to bear against protesters, raising possibility of activation of dormant lèse-majesté law. Protest 25 Nov originally planned for Crown Property Bureau shifted to Siam Commercial Bank to highlight palace finances; large protests took place 27, 28 and 29 Nov at Lad Phrao, Bangna and 11th Infantry Regiment, respectively. Police 24 Nov summoned 12 protest leaders to face charges under lèse-majesté law. In deep south, gunmen 3 Nov shot and wounded senior navy officer in Bacho district, Narathiwat; suspected insurgents 6 Nov killed Muslim rubber grower in Sri Sakhon district in Narathiwat; IED same day targeting teacher-protection unit exploded in Rangae district in Narathiwat; IED 15 Nov targeted rangers in Reusoh district in Narathiwat; rangers 17 Nov clashed with at least five suspected insurgents in Sai Buri district, Pattani. Motorcycle-borne gunmen 24 Nov shot and wounded man in Sai Buri district, and body of man shot to death discovered in coconut plantation in Nong Chik district, Pattani; motorcycle gunmen same day shot and wounded soldier in Sai Buri.