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This week, our Councillors explore the recent explosion of conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the potential for greater Australia-South Korea defence collaboration and changes in the British countryside.  Disclaimer: The views expressed below by Councillors are their own. The Australian Institute of International Affairs New South Wales does not take policy positions. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  |  |  | | --- | | **Azerbaijan and Armenia: a new flashpoint?**  Armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh has [**intensified**](https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/why-azerbaijan-fighting) in recent weeks. Although internationally recognised as a part of the predominantly Muslim Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh is ethnically Armenian and mainly Christian Orthodox. Many analyses refer to long-standing historical grievances between these communities, but Jo Lacock in [**History Today**](https://www.historytoday.com/miscellanies/nagorno-karabakhs-myth-ancient-hatreds?utm_source=100+YEARS+ON%3A+ARMISTICE+CENTENARY+EBOOK+MAILING&utm_campaign=c51671cbb3-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_09_20_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c049dd5c6e-c51671cbb3-602789) argues that the real problems are more recent, originating partly from Soviet-era border arrangements which exacerbated regional tensions. The region was seized by Armenia in the 1990s as the Soviet Union disintegrated; the most recent fighting is the most serious since a ceasefire was signed in 1994. Last weekend media reported a Russian-brokered ceasefire, but more recent reports suggest this has not held. The conflict threatens to involve major regional players: Armenia has a defence treaty with Russia, while Azerbaijan is reportedly receiving military assistance and defence supplies from Turkey and Israel. An [**ASPI report**](https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/nagorno-karabakh-conflict-could-quickly-turn-into-regional-war/) foresees other outside involvement, including Iranian support of Armenia. Image credit: [**The Economist**](https://www.economist.com/europe/2020/10/10/the-azerbaijan-armenia-conflict-hints-at-the-future-of-war) | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | These articles were selected by Ian Lincoln, President of AIIA NSW since 2017. Ian was in the Department of Foreign Affairs for 33 years including postings in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Pacific. He was later an appellate member of the Refugee Review Tribunal and has worked in a number of community organisations. | | | | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | A picture containing person, baseball, outdoor, player  Description automatically generated |  |  | | --- | | [**Australia-South Korea defence industry collaboration**](https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/australia-and-south-korea-can-and-must-deepen-defense-industry-cooperation/)  Defence industry cooperation between South Korea and Australia was first mooted in 2005 but has languished until recently. In The Diplomat, Tom Corben [**argues**](https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/australia-and-south-korea-can-and-must-deepen-defense-industry-cooperation/) that there are several factors, including a shared strategic outlook, that suggest a wider range of collaboration is necessary in areas ranging from autonomous vehicles to communications and surveillance systems. One potential area of collaboration is on developing a future nuclear propelled submarine. Seoul has extensive experience in nuclear energy, having played a key role in delivering the first nuclear power stations to the United Arab Emirates, and has recently announced a [**formal commitment**](https://www.defenseworld.net/news/27628/S_Korea_to_Develop_Nuke_Powered_Submarine#.X3mbdGgzbIU) to developing its own class of nuclear propelled submarine. Image credit: [**Morning Calm Weekly Newspaper Installation Management Command, U.S. Army**](https://www.flickr.com/photos/imcomkorea/3490949635/in/photolist-6ju2GP-2crPKw5-9ikNTu-ecgTM3-5yjYuB-qaTvva-bPDTZ4-27fbHvS-amfJt6-amiw57-ecbfJv-9PrF71-5SCjST-c16mgY-c16qZf-5EqWbG-c16tWy-bPDTGP-aFZmGv-c7dXYY-bPDTJp-aFZmx2-amiwio-9PrF6U-aFZmU4-bAMdqs-9PrF7m-8pU7Nf-4QLAvr-c16rb1-c16B7o-c16CBC-c16sUs-c16nhq-6wMPnP-9ikESh-ecgTQ1-5Y9teu-5ypsof-5ypjMd-6jxEq3-5yk1CZ-9ihAwD-6jtEbR-6jy2HQ-bXict3-9ihDy6-c7dYxm-9i9yiY-8UySHA) | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | This article was selected by Chris Skinner. Chris served thirty years in the Royal Australian Navy in warships that participated in the South East Asian Treaty Organisation, the Vietnam War and surveillance of the North-West Indian Ocean. He joined the AIIA NSW Council in 2019. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | A picture containing grass, outdoor, mountain, fence  Description automatically generated |  |  | | --- | | [**English Pastoral: An Inheritance**](https://www.penguin.com.au/books/english-pastoral-9780241501214)   Discussions about the future of agriculture and the food industry tend to focus on either how to feed the rapidly expanding global population or on the need to preserve the environment and natural resources. The voice of the farmer is rarely heard, but these are the people who have to find practicable solutions to achieving both of these legitimate goals. James Rebanks is one of a rare breed of farmers who write movingly and poetically about this day-to-day struggle and the challenges of balancing production with sustainability. The book [**English Pastoral**](https://www.penguin.com.au/books/english-pastoral-9780241501214), published by Penguin, is the story of his family and their farm in the English Lake District, which in just three generations has changed beyond recognition. Image credit: [**Robert J Heath**](https://www.flickr.com/photos/67769979@N06/20038670816/in/photolist-wwKqGq-2cJ4WbN-2j72aJR-Zm5SLN-6aAAiW-2i5kku5-2hHFWtX-2jN2TST-2hJKRus-2idre4G-2hJLSx3-2hJHpPA-2eNrKRp-273g7DD-2i5vgv8-L4hMc6-bmXw5v-2b8yRB7-LiFjw9-Wp9jJP-27BPPpJ-LVEsSH-5pWWG-9nRRK3-WkfUNB-RjNvRV-2jDB5GM-bmyGyM-eiNtQX-ann36k-25GXEox-4USaSr-pa1YiZ-6zgmBA-BykmiV-j1px6y-j1nMsm-2eF9Z7E-24fK2GQ-ycmN1-aji6wE-7BRy4D-6zfAW5-6zfCk5-6zcii6-bWFo2o-2hJhy3u-6zcjDB-6zbyTR-2gDrUVQ) | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | This book was selected by Jocelyn Chey AM. Jocelyn is an Adjunct Professor at the Australia-China Relations Institute, University of Technology Sydney, Visiting Professor at the University of Sydney and an Adjunct Professor at the Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture at Western Sydney University. She was previously a senior officer in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Jocelyn is a Fellow of Australian Institute of International Affairs. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **From the Interns** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | In addition to our Councillors, we invite one of our interns to share with you what they have found insightful or interesting in the world of international affairs over the past week. This week, Marcus McCulloch explores continuing unrest in Belarus and an increasingly bleak outlook for Taiwanese sovereignty.  Disclaimer: The views expressed below by interns are their own. The Australian Institute of International Affairs New South Wales does not take policy positions. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | A group of people standing in front of a building  Description automatically generated |  |  | | --- | | [**Lukashenka's talk offers could trap him or protesters**](https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/10/13/belarus-lukashenko-talk-protesters-russia/)   In the face of months of enormous and persistent protests, Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has continued to cling to power. Lukashenka was unwilling to undertake a brutal crackdown, according to Vladislav Davidzon in [**Foreign Policy**](https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/10/13/belarus-lukashenko-talk-protesters-russia/), because such a move would invite revolution and potential Russian intervention. Last weekend, Lukashenka tried something new: he met with imprisoned members of the opposition to discuss constitutional reform. However, hopes that this represented a genuine move towards reconciliation were dashed the following day when government forces violently attacked a protest in Minsk, arresting hundreds and indiscriminately beating protesters. The situation will almost certainly continue to deteriorate. Image credit: [**Marco Fieber**](https://www.flickr.com/photos/marcofieber/22361778233/in/photolist-RpmziK-7o9tZy-2dq2YYY-A52XAz-B1ZHxa-cpAAdJ-2hu3xPi-ahWMr5-2fPzZ9C-2d8hY68-2hvVbCQ) | | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  |  |  | | --- | | [**Keep an eye on Taiwan**](https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/10/taiwan-us-china-donald-trump/616657/)   Taiwan, [**writes**](https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/10/taiwan-us-china-donald-trump/616657/) Michael Schumann in The Atlantic, is "one of those flash points that has never flashed". But many commentators fear that this may change. Taiwanese people increasingly identify themselves as separate from the mainland, and President Tsai Ing-wen is attempting to navigate a path of economic independence. Beijing is becoming increasingly assertive in the region after successfully clamping down protests in Hong Kong. Trump's haphazard approach has not helped things: public overtures of support for Taiwan anger China. His mercurial approach to foreign affairs also undermines the credibility of US defence commitments to the island. While war remains unlikely, Taiwanese sovereignty is far from safe. Image credit: [**總統府**](https://www.flickr.com/photos/presidentialoffice/27056662981/in/photolist-YzxaWq-CNaarn-CNab1t-CCRCwz-Hbyop9-HdUtgk-HdUuzT-HdUqcK-HjWaok-HjWa4T-HdUrsa-GpzrE6-GpzrqZ-BSbtVs-ETqDuA-DMVJTQ-QBViZC-EyKuPP-RccXFV-2ig5B27) | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | These articles were selected by Marcus McCulloch. Marcus is undertaking Honours in Political Economy at the University of Sydney, writing a thesis on industrialisation in the Soviet Union. He is a keen debater, and recently reached the finals of the World Universities Debating Championship in Bangkok. Marcus has been interning with AIIA NSW since February 2020 | | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **What else we're reading** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | * The ABC [**looks at**](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-10-11/us-election-voting-changed-by-secret-australian-ballot-history/12726686) how the secret 'Australian ballot' was gradually adopted for elections in the United States. * A FiveThirtyEight podcast [**considers**](https://fivethirtyeight.com/videos/how-president-trump-could-still-win-re-election/) how US President Donald Trump could potentially win his bid for re-election. * In the Australian Financial Review, Professor James Curran from the University of Sydney [**weighs up**](https://www.afr.com/world/north-america/why-president-biden-will-expect-australia-to-muscle-up-on-china-20201011-p563xk) how a Biden presidency could act towards allies such as Australia. * Ankit Panda [**reflects on**](https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/a-nuclear-north-koreas-wake-up-call/) the recent midnight military parade in Pyongyang celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Worker's Party of Korea, and the prominent display of a 'new strategic weapon'. * Released last week, the Lowy Institute's updated [**Pacific Aid Map**](https://pacificaidmap.lowyinstitute.org/) examines close to 40,000 aid projects from 64 donors across the Pacific Islands region. * As Myanmar gears up for general elections in November, Crisis Group [**explores**](https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/312-identity-crisis-ethnicity-and-conflict-myanmar) the country's complex relationship between ethnicity, national identity and conflict. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **Letters to the Editor** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **Get involved!**  We're committed to keeping conversations about international affairs going, so get involved in our Letters to the Editor section!  Each week, we publish letters from our subscribers about what they think of the issues we’re discussing.  You can take part in the conversation by emailing us with your comments on each week’s articles. There are just a few simple guidelines: letters should be no more than 100 words in length, and should only be about the previous week’s articles. Please include your name and affiliation, and a mobile number (which won't be published). If you are a university student, please include your university and current degree.  Send all letters to the editors at [**aiianswletters@gmail.com**](mailto:aiianswletters@gmail.com) by Wednesday at 5pm Sydney time for the chance to be published in the following week's newsletter. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | | | |
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