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This week, our Councillors examine the situation in Jordan, Japanese literature and the way ahead in Myanmar.  Disclaimer: The views expressed below by Councillors and interns are their own. The Australian Institute of International Affairs New South Wales does not take policy positions. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  | | --- | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | A colorful flag on a palm tree  Description automatically generated with medium confidence | | [**Jordan: Watch This Space**](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/04/05/jordan-in-turmoil/)  Jordan, a close ally of the US, has been the one apparently stable country of the Middle East but its future may be cast into doubt following the detention of former Crown Prince Hamzah bin Hussein at the beginning of April. He has been a critic in the past of the royal house and the government, and from his house arrest in his palace has released a lengthy [**video in English**](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-56626370) accusing them of corruption and mismanagement. Many Jordanians believe that Saudi Arabia or Israel, or both, are trying to destabilise the government.  Bruce Riedel, writing for the Brookings Institute, [**questions**](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/04/05/jordan-in-turmoil/) whether Prince Hamzah intends to overthrow the regime or is merely complaining about the economy. There is plenty to question, with 23 percent unemployment in 2020 and 95,000 new cases of Covid-19 in the week 23 March to 5 April. Earlier in March, the health minister resigned because of critical shortage of oxygen in hospitals. Image credit: [**Marc Veraart**](https://www.flickr.com/photos/marcveraart/2759473891/in/photolist-5cR2s4-N53YAM-oULwL-7xE4WA-2bQ7Jdp-2kQuk7P-2kQx89G-2kQuk9s-2kQuMry-5cVkGQ-6axwG3-et8dmz-Hc7Xd1-294QmYb-6atnRR-6atqcP-7xAoL8-5cR16x-5cVjJj-2bKNxUj-7xEgpb-6axwWY-9X3GUX-5cVked-5cVm2E-5cR1Rg-N548Xc-5cR1AX-5cR1FF-6GraaB-2kNdrYk-2kQuGPp-7o1CYE-294Qntj-7xAiYZ-5cR1ut-7xEbMU-5cVkRb-2aJhRKf-2arBAWn-5tswhp-5twNkJ-2arBFEa-N53YwZ-2arBGkD-294Qyrw-5tx2Du-2bQ7ME4-294QE3b-32cvgw) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | This article 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. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | A picture containing text  Description automatically generated |  |  | | --- | | [**The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With the Sea**](https://www.penguin.com.au/books/the-sailor-who-fell-from-grace-with-the-sea-9781784875428)  Yukio Mishima’s classic ‘The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea’ is well known for its towering literary success. However, beneath the surface of this short but poignant novel lay remarkable insights into post-war Japan. The story [**follows**](https://www.penguin.com.au/books/the-sailor-who-fell-from-grace-with-the-sea-9781784875428) the actions of an adolescent boy, Noboru Kuroda, living in the seaside city of Yokohama. He and a group friends are secretly part of a ‘gang’ who reject conventional morality and are convinced of their intellectual superiority. The group vow to take revenge on a new father figure in Noboru’s life, who to the gang represents everything antithetical to mankind. Through this novel, Mishima, himself a staunch conservative, created a parable for the dying ideals of Japanese exceptionalism. It is a haunting allegory written during a time of enormous national change and cultural unease. Image credit:[**Kaz Empson**](https://flickr.com/photos/kazempson/50746955172/in/photolist-2kjkpLY-29HbT4U-6VYbQt-2j7Gv7z-2iQeogB-2kybeef-FReYm5-GHNvfF-G2whQP-iiVhD3-wTRfQH-bdvYW6-2ihXKH2-2geHwM5-3Fg36k-2jTqv2T-2jpPe3W-2jRkcxf-2b3gXwj-2jTqiFr-2b15KqA-2j7XQGi-d7vyQo-kJhjGC-2iepp8S-UtEHqy-2iJu8Bg-2j6sEET-UWF7NN-2hMNDSN-UEaM9k-TsDFww-Tp68rF-2htNKk4-2j6tBjb-2jNoE6c-2kg82T2-KTaUL7-BGjoCk-278eZiT-5fLZHj-bwK2c-dXF9oc-cLFdtS-qex9q9-VmjbgH-UDuupG-2kMAH1r-2iKkoTS-2hxcNgv) | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | This book was selected by Chris Khatouki. Chris is an AIIA NSW councillor and has spent the last year working for the Gyeongsangnam-do Office of Education in South Korea. He is currently undertaking a PhD at UNSW, having previously graduated with First Class Honours in International Relations from the University of Wollongong, where he also received the University Medal. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | A group of people marching with a flag in the background  Description automatically generated with low confidence | | [**An ASEAN way to resolve the Myanmar crisis**](https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/03/21/an-asean-way-to-resolve-the-myanmar-crisis/)  ASEAN has prided itself on being a successful regional organisations, with an impressive record in its handling of both economic and political affairs; so [**writes**](https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/03/21/an-asean-way-to-resolve-the-myanmar-crisis/) Kavi Chongkittavorn. But the Myanmar coup of 1 February has jeopardised the 10-member bloc’s dream of being one big, happy ASEAN family of 655 million: 55 million of its people are now living in uncertain times throughout Myanmar. ASEAN understands full well that if the Myanmar imbroglio continues down its current path, it will only corrode its centrality and widen divisions within the group. The crisis is therefore a test that will determine whether ASEAN puts its people first and foremost, and whether there are limits to ASEAN's effectiveness as a bloc for our neighbourhood’s uncertain decades ahead. Image credit: [**Mil.ru**](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2021_Myanmar_Armed_Forces_Day_07.jpg) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **From the Interns** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | In addition to our Councillors, we invite 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 Rachel Bell Macdonald and Alice Nason discuss the evolving conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and the relationship between Biden's foreign policy platform and his commitment to representing the interests of the American middle class.   Disclaimer: The views expressed below by our interns are their own. The Australian Institute of International Affairs New South Wales does not take policy positions. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | A group of people in military uniforms  Description automatically generated with low confidence | | [**What Happens Next in the Rising Violence Between Ukraine and Russia**](https://time.com/5953699/eastern-ukraine-russia-violence/?fbclid=IwAR1OMxSzFLJ-Fgqo3XYS2Fc72AU8qlE36JWv3VzhMOEj32TEQbId6yhK5KI)  Russia's recent military build up near the border of Ukraine is the largest since 2014, and comes off the back of a flare in fighting that has led to five Ukrainian casualties. With troops stationed 155 miles away from the Ukrainian border, an invasion seems unlikely, but it is close enough to set nerves on edge. Indeed, when asked why Moscow sent troops to his border, Ukrainian President Zelensky simply [**replied**](https://time.com/5954068/zelensky-ukraine-russia-standoff/), "They want us to be afraid". The movements have prompted G7 ministers to reaffirm support for Ukraine, whilst US Secretary of State Blinken has [**warned**](https://www.euronews.com/2021/04/12/g7-calls-on-russia-to-cease-provocations-on-ukraine-border), "there will be consequences". As the world guesses at the intentions of President Putin, Ian Bremmer, [**writing**](https://time.com/5953699/eastern-ukraine-russia-violence/?fbclid=IwAR1OMxSzFLJ-Fgqo3XYS2Fc72AU8qlE36JWv3VzhMOEj32TEQbId6yhK5KI) for Time, unpacks the situation. The troop build up, Bremmer says, is not a prelude to war, nor is it an attempt to occupy the separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. Instead, it is a move that Moscow hopes will prolong the limbo status of those separatist regions and hasten their quasi-independent status that Moscow is gunning for. Image credit: [**Vitaly V. Kuzmin**](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Internal_Troops_of_the_Ministry_for_Internal_Affairs_(Russia)_(494-19).jpg) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | This article was selected by Rachel Bell Macdonald. Rachel is a third year undergraduate student at the University of Sydney studying Politics and International Relations. She has a particular interest in international trade, US-China relations and geopolitical risk. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | A person in a suit and tie  Description automatically generated with low confidence | | [**Tracking Biden's Progress on a Foreign Policy for the Middle Class**](https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/04/06/tracking-biden-s-progress-on-foreign-policy-for-middle-class-pub-84236)  Biden's commitment to middle-class interests is central to his political narrative and was the backbone of his victorious presidential campaign. While he continues to recapitulate the concept in his domestic policy platform, transferring this idea into his foreign policy doctrine is a more difficult undertaking. In a recent article, Dan Baer at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace [**appraises**](http://https/carnegieendowment.org/2021/04/06/tracking-biden-s-progress-on-foreign-policy-for-middle-class-pub-84236) Biden's efforts to embody economic nationalism supporting the middle class in his preliminary foreign policy efforts. This article puts forward a framework that will have analytical utility going forward in understanding how Biden's appointments, foreign policies and outcomes relate to his domestic commitments, and acknowledges that relating his foreign policies to security and prosperity at home will be critical to resonating consistently with his base. Image credit: [**G**](http://https/commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joe_Biden_(49405107506).jpg)[**age Skidmore**](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joe_Biden_(49405107506).jpg) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | This article was selected by Alice Nason. Alice is an honours student studying Politics, International Relations and American Studies at the University of Sydney. She is currently writing an honours thesis on public diplomacy and alliance maintenance in the Indo-Pacific under the Trump presidency. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **What else we're reading** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | * On the Persuasion podcast, William Easterly [**discusses**](https://www.persuasion.community/p/-when-foreign-aid-fails-democracy) the limitations of foreign aid and the potential harm it can cause to communities. * Richard Schweid [**writes**](https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/03/27/an-ex-king-missing-millions-and-a-monarchy-in-crisis-478179)in Politico on the historical and current controversies surrounding the Spanish monarchy.   [**Writing**](https://www.afr.com/policy/foreign-affairs/bristling-at-new-nationalist-bark-will-only-bait-china-20210408-p57hm2) for the Australian Financial Review, James Curran reflects on Australia's historical struggle against nationalism in Asia, and the lessons it can apply in its dealings with Xi Jinping.   * David Runciman, Helen Thompson and Gary Gerstle on the Talking Politics podcast [**reflect**](https://www.talkingpoliticspodcast.com/blog/2021/313-hows-biden-doing) on Biden's first 100 days in office and what it might take to restore American's standing in the world. * Gorana Grgic of the United States Studies Centre [**analyses**](http://https/www.ussc.edu.au/analysis/the-international-politics-of-the-pandemic) trends of vaccine nationalism shaping international distribution efforts * From the Council of Foreign Relations, Sacks and Yoeli [**urge**](http://https/www.cfr.org/blog/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-should-be-world-bank-and-imfs-agenda) the IMF and World Bank to confront the debt diplomacy and regional economic instability that has emerged as a pitfall of China's BRI | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **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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