

GLOBAL UP-TO-DATE

A Monthly Newsletter by Centre for Governance Studies



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The world around us is changing rapidly. Wars, new turn in global politics, human rights issues are occurring every day, posing new challenges and concerns. Global Up-to-Date is an initiative by Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) which will work as a hub for explaining the contemporary global issues.

The regular briefs will focus and explain the issues related to International Politics, Economy, Security, Human Rights, and Development. There will be a monthly printed version newsletter containing briefs of all the contemporary global important issues. The online version contains regular updates of the pressing issues along with the PDF version of the news letter.

Note: The views expressed in this newsletter are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies of CGS.

From Budget to Breakdown: When a Budget Pushed Bulgarians to Protest

Tanzila Hosain Tonny



Photo: Valentina Petrova/Valentina Petrova

On December 11, 2025, the Bulgarian government, led by Rosen Zhelyazkov, resigned in response to extensive protests in Sofia, attended by thousands. Twenty days before Bulgaria's planned entry into the eurozone, this resignation took place ahead of a parliamentary vote of no confidence. Protesters claimed widespread corruption, a sentiment acknowledged by Zhelyazkov in a televised address after a controversial budget proposal was withdrawn the week prior.

The government's proposed 2026 budget, which critics claimed was the worst in thirty years, sparked the demonstrations in Bulgaria. The demonstrators claimed that the budget would have increased individual contributions to pension and social security programs, resulting in higher taxes to fund the salaries of high-ranking officials, government administration, and security organizations, rather than investing in social welfare programs. The proposed higher taxes and increased social security contributions came at a time when many young Bulgarians were already struggling with the cost of living, low wages, and limited job security. Protesters said that rather than benefiting productive industries like business or healthcare, which they believed were crucial for economic growth, the additional borrowing would mostly help government administration and security agencies. Despite government efforts to portray the protests as anti-Euro, demonstrators reject this framing. Rather, the movement has united citizens across the political spectrum around a common demand for the government's resignation, placing the cabinet under renewed pressure ahead of an opposition-led no-confidence vote.

The first significant demonstration, which targeted parliamentary budget proceedings and gathered 20,000 protestors, took place in Sofia on November 26. Although initially peaceful protests increased as a result of clashes with police, and turmoil during parliamentary committee meetings escalated tensions. On November 28, protests began to sweep across the country. The movement peaked on December 1st, when between 50,000 and 100,000 people demonstrated in Sofia, with Generation Z playing a crucial role through social media mobilization. Some protests descended into violence, leading to provocative remarks, injuries, and arrests. Even after the administration formally withdrew the budget on December 2, protests persisted with more general demands, including the downfall of the government, anti-corruption measures, electoral reforms, and policy accountability.

The proposed 2026 budget and preparations for Bulgaria's joining of the euro sparked the protests, which swiftly expanded into a larger movement against corruption and weak governance. Thousands of people in Sofia and other cities expressed their dissatisfaction with a political system that they believed to be unaccountable and controlled by powerful interests by calling for the downfall of the government, fair elections, and judicial reform. Fears of growing taxes, increased costs, and corruption of public funds continued to fuel public outrage even after the government withdrew the budget. The demonstrations highlighted widespread popular mistrust and calls for a political reset before to Bulgaria's entry into the eurozone, and the crisis resulted in the resignation of Prime Minister Rosen Zhelyazkov's cabinet. Demands for institutional accountability, government resignation, and an end to systematic corruption were outlined in the protests. A larger appeal for democratic and governance reform was reflected in the central messages, which centered on fair elections, judicial independence, and the necessity of refocusing public spending on social welfare. Their involvement is significant because it shows that young people, who are frequently characterized as indifferent, are becoming more politically conscious. They decided to use the streets as a means of making their opinions known rather than disengaging. Numerous demonstrators reported that this was their first time participating in a protest, indicating a potential long-term effect on civic engagement.

In response, the administration first ignored the protests and described them as anti-Euro or opposition-driven. It withdrew the proposed 2026 budget in response to growing opposition and attempted to reassure the public about budgetary restraint and joining the eurozone. Nevertheless, the public's dissatisfaction was not mitigated by these actions. The government's last response to the situation was Prime Minister Rosen Zhelyazkov's resignation, which was subsequently approved by parliament, marking the government's final response to the crisis.

The enormous protests in Bulgaria exposed a significant schism between the state and society, sparked by a controversial budget but deeply rooted in long-standing frustrations about corruption, inequality, and weak democratic accountability. What started as opposition to austerity measures has grown into a national movement demanding political legitimacy, institutional reform, and respect for citizens' economic and social reality. The prominent role of young people highlighted a shift in civic engagement, indicating that a new generation is no longer satisfied to be politically inactive. The resignation of the Rosen Zhelyazkov cabinet was an important shift in politics, but it did not address the underlying structural issues. As Bulgaria prepares to join the eurozone, the protests serve as a reminder that economic integration without serious governance reform risks increasing public distrust and political instability.

The Rise of the ‘Familial Terror Cell’: A Case Study of Australia, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka

Md. Saiful Islam Shanto



For many years, counterterrorism frameworks have largely understood radicalization as a process occurring outside the domestic sphere, driven by online platforms, extremist organizations, or peer networks. This assumption has been increasingly challenged by incidents demonstrating that ideological violence can develop and operationalize within family structures. Recent events have reinforced the need to reconsider the family not only as a site of socialization but also as a potential locus of extremist mobilization. The attack in Australia in December 2025, when examined alongside earlier cases in Indonesia in 2018 and Sri Lanka in 2019, illustrates an evolving pattern in which familial relationships function as the primary infrastructure of terrorist activity.

On 14 December 2025, an attack on Bondi Beach in Australia resulted in the deaths of 15 people, many of whom were members of the Jewish community. Australian authorities characterized the incident as a highly organized antisemitic assault. What distinguished this attack from many previous acts of violence was the composition of the perpetrators: a father and his adult son. Investigations indicated that the pair lacked a substantial online footprint signaling imminent violence and were not embedded in identifiable extremist networks. This absence of conventional indicators complicated intelligence detection and raised questions about prevailing models of threat assessment. Rather than reflecting spontaneous individual radicalization, the Bondi incident suggests a deliberate and sustained ideological formation occurring within the family unit itself.

This form of radicalization undermines the dominant “lone actor” framework that has shaped much counterterrorism policy in recent decades. While lone actors are typically conceptualized as socially isolated individuals influenced by online propaganda, familial cells operate through trust, authority, and emotional bonds. Communication within families does not generate the digital traces that intelligence agencies routinely monitor, and ideological reinforcement can occur through daily interaction rather than through formal recruitment channels. As a result, the domestic sphere becomes a space of relative invisibility from the perspective of state surveillance.

Comparable dynamics were evident during the coordinated suicide bombings in Surabaya, Indonesia, in May 2018. In that case, three families carried out attacks on churches and police installations, involving parents and children acting together. The operations were linked to Jemaah Ansharut Daulah, an extremist network aligned with the Islamic State. Although these families maintained external organizational ties, their effectiveness relied heavily on internal cohesion and unquestioned obedience within the household. The Surabaya attacks demonstrated that families could function as self-contained operational units, capable of planning and executing violence with minimal risk of internal defection.

A key distinction between the Surabaya case and the Bondi attack lies in organizational dependence. The Indonesian families required external ideological guidance and technical assistance, particularly in bomb construction. In contrast, the Australian attackers appear to have operated autonomously, relying on legally obtained weapons and locally available resources. This shift suggests a lowering of barriers to participation in familial terrorism, particularly in societies where access to weapons or tactical knowledge does not require affiliation with established extremist groups. The evolution toward smaller, ideologically autonomous family-based cells presents new challenges for prevention and intervention.

The Sri Lankan Easter Sunday attacks in April 2019 further complicate assumptions about the socio-economic drivers of familial radicalization. The Ibrahim brothers, who carried out suicide bombings targeting churches and hotels, came from a wealthy and socially prominent family. Their access to financial resources, education, and social capital enabled them to avoid suspicion while preparing the attacks. This case illustrates that familial terrorism is not confined to contexts of deprivation or marginalization. Instead, privilege and social integration can provide concealment and operational advantages.

Across these cases, the family emerges as a particularly effective site for ideological transmission. Hierarchical relationships, especially between parents and children, lend authority to extremist narratives and reduce the likelihood of internal dissent. Within such settings, beliefs may be framed not merely as political opinions but as moral obligations tied to loyalty, identity, and belonging. This dynamic complicates conventional deradicalization efforts, which typically aim to separate individuals from extremist peer groups. Severing ideological influence within families entails profound emotional and psychological consequences, particularly for younger members.

The rise of family-based extremist activity also challenges community-oriented security strategies such as public reporting mechanisms. When planning and preparation occur entirely within households, opportunities for external detection diminish significantly. Intelligence agencies designed to intercept communication between networked actors face limitations when ideological coordination relies on face-to-face interaction. Efforts to address this gap risk encroaching on privacy and civil liberties, raising difficult ethical and legal questions about surveillance within private spaces.

Taken together, the cases from Australia, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka indicate that familial terrorism should not be dismissed as anomalous or culturally specific. Rather, it reflects a broader structural adaptation to intensified counterterrorism measures targeting public and digital spaces. As extremist ideologies face increasing constraints in overt arenas, they may retreat into private domains where trust and authority are already established. The Bondi Beach attack underscores the urgency of recognizing this shift.

Future counterterrorism strategies must therefore incorporate a more nuanced understanding of family dynamics, socialization processes, and intergenerational transmission of ideology. Building resilience against extremist narratives requires engagement not only at the community level but also within households, through education, early intervention, and accessible support mechanisms. Without addressing the domestic dimension of radicalization, security responses risk remaining reactive and incomplete. The evidence suggests that the family has become a critical frontier in contemporary terrorism, demanding careful attention from policymakers, researchers, and practitioners alike.

From Inflation to Insurrection: Iran's Deepening Political Crisis

Tohfatur Rabbi Piyal



“Here I stand, broken by the burden of days.” Says Forough Farrokhzad.

In late December 2025, the Islamic Republic of Iran entered a period of acute political and economic instability driven by the rapid devaluation of its currency, record-high inflation, and intensifying public discontent. The Iranian rial reached historic lows against the United States dollar, trading at approximately 1.4 to 1.45 million rials per US\$1 in open markets by late December, a sharp deterioration compared with figures earlier in the year. This collapse of the currency significantly eroded purchasing power and exacerbated the cost of food, fuel, and essential goods.

Official data indicate that inflation in Iran exceeded 40 per cent in December 2025, with certain consumer categories such as food and health goods experiencing much steeper increases, including food prices rising by around 72 per cent year-on-year and health and medical item prices up approximately 50 per cent. These conditions compounded longstanding economic grievances linked to structural inefficiencies, fiscal mismanagement, and the cumulative impact of international sanctions that have constrained oil exports and access to global financial systems.

The initial trigger for public mobilisation occurred on 28 December 2025, when merchants and shopkeepers in Tehran's Grand Bazaar and other commercial districts closed their businesses in protest of the currency's collapse and associated price instability. Within days, these protests evolved into broader demonstrations involving workers, students, and unemployed youth,

spreading from Tehran to multiple provinces including Isfahan, Shiraz, Mashhad, Hamadan, and Qeshm. What had begun as expressions of economic hardship quickly incorporated political demands that challenged the state's legitimacy and capacity to govern responsively.

The protests were distinguished by their cross-class composition and geographic breadth. Bazaar traders, historically cautious and economic actors who typically avoid overt political confrontation, participated in closures and marches, signalling that economic distress had crossed a critical threshold and undermined the regime's economic legitimacy in the perceptions of key societal groups. The expansion of mobilisation into university campuses, industrial sectors, and urban neighbourhoods underscored the widespread nature of disillusionment with governance structures perceived as unresponsive to popular needs.

Official responses combined formal acknowledgement of economic hardship with measures that proved insufficient to restore confidence. Government actions included the appointment of a new central bank governor in an attempt to stabilise monetary conditions and statements by the president recognising the legitimacy of protesters' economic demands. However, these concessions did not address deeper systemic problems such as the absence of meaningful political reform, entrenched decision-making within a closed political system, and persistent economic isolation.

Security forces were deployed to contain the unrest, resulting in confrontations that drew international attention. Reports from independent observers and rights groups suggested that several dozen people were killed in clashes during the early days of the protests and thousands were detained. The enforcement of internet restrictions and other communicative controls further limited public expression and documentation, contributing to an environment in which dissent was suppressed rather than engaged with substantively.

In the contest over narrative authority, many demonstrators explicitly rejected state explanations of unrest as foreign-inspired, instead attributing responsibility to domestic economic mismanagement and political exclusion. The popular perception that longstanding socio-economic grievances were being ignored contributed to the erosion of the regime's legitimacy, as official rhetoric increasingly diverged from lived experience.

By the end of December, protests had subsided under state pressure but the underlying drivers of disaffection remained unresolved. The economy continued to exhibit profound fragility, long-standing sanctions impacts persisted, and political exclusionary practices limited avenues for institutional reform. The outlook for Iran's governance therefore remained uncertain, with the potential for intensified authoritarian consolidation, selective economic concessions without structural reform, or recurrent cycles of unrest. The events of this period illustrated that the crisis was systemic and not merely episodic, with implications for the state's capacity to generate sustained legitimacy through policy responsiveness.