

April–July 2013

INTERNATIONAL

Arms control

April 2—The UN General Assembly, by a vote of 154 to 3, with 23 abstentions, approves the 1st treaty to regulate the global conventional arms trade, subjecting sales to human rights criteria. Iran, Syria, and North Korea are the only nations that vote against the treaty, which can take effect once it is ratified by 50 nations. The US is not expected to ratify it, due to gun rights lobbying.

Balkans

April 19—The prime ministers of Serbia and Kosovo sign an agreement under which Serbia accepts the sovereignty of Kosovo over its own territory, including an ethnic Serb enclave in northern Kosovo now controlled by Serbia. Kosovo pledges to grant broad autonomy to the Serb enclave. Serbia has refused to recognize Kosovo since the latter declared independence from Serbia in 2008.

May 30—A UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague, the Netherlands, acquits 2 top aides to the late Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian leader during the 1990s Balkan wars. The court rules that the men were not responsible for atrocities committed by military units that fought under their command in Bosnia and Croatia.

July 11—Appellate judges at the tribunal reinstate genocide charges against Radovan Karadzic, leader of the Bosnian Serbs during the 1992–95 Balkan war. The charges were dropped by a lower court in 2012.

European Union

April 2—Revised official statistics show that the combined jobless rate in the 12 nations that belong to the euro zone stood at 12% in January and February, a new high since the introduction of the euro in 1999.

Israeli-Palestinian conflict

July 19—After weeks of shuttle diplomacy, US Secretary of State John Kerry says Israeli and Palestinian leaders have agreed to restart direct peace talks for the 1st time since 2010.

July 27—Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announces the release of 104 Palestinian prisoners as a goodwill gesture to prepare for the peace talks. Many of the prisoners have been held for more than 20 years for terrorist attacks.

AFGHANISTAN

June 18—The Taliban say they are ready for peace talks with the US. The militant Islamist group opens a political office in Qatar intended to facilitate negotiations.

AUSTRALIA

June 26—Prime Minister Julia Gillard resigns after losing a Labor Party leadership vote to former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, whom she had similarly ousted in 2010. Rudd is sworn in as prime minister June 27.

BANGLADESH

April 25—A garment factory building collapses in Savar, near Dhaka, killing more than 1,000 workers.

June 27—The US says it will suspend Bangladesh's trade privileges to apply pressure for improvements in workers' rights, though the reduced tariffs do not apply to garment imports.

BRAZIL

June 21—More than 1 million people join protests in cities across Brazil. The protesters' concerns include poor public services, official corruption, and police brutality. President Dilma Rousseff pledges measures to address their grievances.

CAMBODIA

July 28—According to preliminary election returns, the long-ruling Cambodian People's Party of Prime Minister Hun Sen wins 68 of the 123 seats in the National Assembly, down from 90 in the previous election. The opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) wins 55 seats, nearly double its previous total. CNRP leader Sam Rainsy alleges irregularities and claims victory.

CHAD

June 30—Former President Hissène Habré is arrested in Senegal to face charges for torture and some 40,000 political killings committed during his 1982–90 rule. He has lived in exile in Senegal since being overthrown in 1990.

CHINA

June 7—President Xi Jinping begins 2 days of meetings with US President Barack Obama on an array of issues at an estate in Rancho Mirage, California.

June 29—State television reports that the government has begun a security operation in the far western region of Xinjiang after an outbreak of violence between Uighurs, a Muslim ethnic minority, and police. In July 2009, riots in Xinjiang reportedly left about 200 dead.

CROATIA

July 1—Croatia becomes the 28th member of the EU. It is the 2nd ex-Yugoslavian nation to join, after Slovenia. The 8-year application process included numerous reforms and arrests of Croatian and Bosnian war criminals.

CZECH REPUBLIC

June 16—Prime Minister Petr Necas announces his resignation, 2 days after prosecutors bring abuse-of-power charges against his chief of staff, Jana Nagyova, and the current and former chiefs of military intelligence, for allegedly spying on Necas's estranged wife and others. Necas later admits to an affair with Nagyova.

EGYPT

June 30—Millions of demonstrators demand the resignation of President Mohamed Morsi, Egypt's 1st democratically elected leader, on the 1-year anniversary of his election. The protesters blame Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamist group to which he belongs, for incompetence in office and for seeking to impose religious values.

July 1—The Egyptian military issues an ultimatum demanding that Morsi resign and "meet the demands of the people."

July 3—The military ousts Morsi and his government, suspends the constitution, and forms an interim government until new elections can be held. Morsi and other Brotherhood leaders are arrested. Chief Justice Adli Mansour is named interim president. Violent street clashes ensue between Morsi backers and opponents, leaving dozens dead over the following days.

July 8—Police and soldiers open fire on Muslim Brotherhood protesters in Cairo, killing more than 50 and wounding 100s.

July 16—A new 34-person cabinet is sworn in, including women and Christians. No members of the Muslim Brotherhood are appointed.

July 24—The US halts delivery of 4 F-16 fighter jets to Egypt in a sign of disapproval of the military's actions, but does not cut off \$1.5 billion in annual aid.

July 27—Security forces kill more than 70 Muslim Brotherhood protesters in Cairo. The attack brings the death toll since the coup to over 200.

GREAT BRITAIN

April 8—Margaret Thatcher, the 1st female prime minister of Britain, who held office from 1979 to 1990, dies at age 87. She is remembered for her controversial free-market reforms and defeating Argentina in the 1982 Falklands War.

July 16—The House of Commons approves a bill legalizing gay marriage in England and Wales.

GUATEMALA

May 11—Former military ruler Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt is convicted of genocide, for mass killings of members of the Maya-Ixil ethnic group during his 1982–83 rule.

May 20—The Constitutional Court overturns the Ríos Montt verdict on a technicality.

May 24—Former President Alfonso Portillo is extradited to the US to face money-laundering charges.

ICELAND

April 27—A center-right bloc of the Independence Party and the Progressive Party wins a general election, taking 38 seats in the 63-seat parliament. The center-left coalition that governed for the past 4 years is ousted amid public discontent with its economic austerity policies.

INDIA

July 17—In the northeastern state of Bihar, 23 children die after eating a school lunch made with cooking oil stored in a container previously used to hold pesticide. In 2001 India's Supreme Court ordered nationwide free school lunches, addressing widespread malnutrition, but the program is beset by corruption and food poisoning.

July 30—The government says it will create the nation's 29th state, Telangana, with territory from the southeastern state of Andhra Pradesh. Telangana's capital will be Hyderabad, India's 6th-largest city.

IRAN

June 14—Moderate cleric Hassan Rouhani wins a presidential election with 50.7% of the vote in the 1st round, in a field of 6 candidates. During the campaign, Rouhani called for normalizing relations with the West, improving the economy, and allowing more individual rights, particularly for women.

ITALY

April 20—The parliament reelects President Giorgio Napolitano, 87, to a 2nd term, in an attempt to break a deadlock that has prevented a new government from being formed since an inconclusive general election in February.

April 24—Napolitano appoints Enrico Letta, leader of the center-left Democratic Party, to form a government.

April 28—Letta and his cabinet are sworn in after he forms a coalition with the center-right People of Liberty party led by former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

June 24—A Milan court convicts Berlusconi of paying for sex with an underage prostitute and abusing his power in an attempted cover-up. The court sentences him to 7 years in prison, and bans him from public office for life. Berlusconi vows to appeal the verdict. In May, an appeals court had upheld a conviction against him in a separate tax fraud case.

JAPAN

April 5—The Bank of Japan announces a \$1.4 trillion monetary stimulus plan to end years of deflation, pledging to double the amount of money in circulation and raise the annual inflation rate to 2%. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pressured the central bank to take such action to complement his government's fiscal stimulus spending.

July 21—A coalition led by Abe's Liberal Democratic Party wins a majority in the upper house of parliament, further strengthening Abe's position, but falling short of the 2/3rds majority needed to revise the constitution.

LEBANON

July 22—EU foreign ministers say they have agreed to designate the military wing of the Lebanese Shiite militant group Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, a move long sought by Israel and the US.

LIBYA

May 5—The parliament approves a law that bans former members of the late leader Muammar el-Qaddafi's regime from holding government office.

MALAYSIA

May 5—Prime Minister Najib Razak's National Front coalition, which has ruled the country since 1957, officially wins a new majority in a general election but loses seats as well as the popular vote. The People's Alliance opposition coalition, led by former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, alleges fraud.

MALI

June 18—The government signs a peace accord with Tuareg separatists to transfer control of rebel-occupied areas to the military.

July 28—Mali holds elections for the 1st time since a March 2012 coup and an uprising in the north by Tuaregs and Islamic extremists.

MEXICO

July 15—The Mexican government announces the capture of Miguel Ángel Treviño, head of the Zetas drug cartel. The Zetas have been responsible for much of the worst violence in the country's drug war, which has left more than 70,000 dead since 2007.

MONGOLIA

June 26—President Tsakhia Elbegdorj wins reelection to a 2nd 4-year term, taking 50.9% of the vote in the 1st round. He has presided over rapid economic growth driven by mining of natural resources.

NEW ZEALAND

April 17—The parliament votes to legalize gay marriage, making the country the 1st in the Asia-Pacific region to do so.

NIGERIA

May 15—The Nigerian military begins an offensive against the radical Islamist group Boko Haram. Thousands of refugees flee to Cameroon, Niger, and Chad. A state of emergency is imposed on the 3 northern states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe.

NORTH KOREA

April 2—The government, after issuing a series of warlike threats against South Korea and the US in recent weeks, says it will restart a nuclear reactor in order to build nuclear weapons.

April 8—North Korea says it is suspending operations at an industrial complex it runs jointly with South Korea in the North Korean border town of Kaesong.

PAKISTAN

April 19—Former military ruler Pervez Musharraf, who returned from 4 years of exile in March, is arrested and put under house arrest.

May 11—Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz party wins a general election, taking more than 120 seats in the 272-seat parliament. Sharif was ousted in a military coup in 1999 and went into exile until 2007.
 June 24—Sharif says Musharraf will be tried for treason.

PANAMA

July 16—Panamanian officials seize a North Korean freighter in the Panama Canal, after discovering Soviet-era missile equipment concealed by a cargo of Cuban sugar. The North Korean crew violently resists when Panamanian marines board the ship, and the captain attempts suicide. Cuba and North Korea both acknowledge the military cargo, asserting that it is being legally sent to North Korea for refurbishment under contract. UN Security Council sanctions prohibit arms transfers to North Korea.

PARAGUAY

April 21—Tobacco tycoon Horacio Cartes wins a presidential election, returning the conservative Colorado Party to power. The party had ruled for 6 decades, until 2008, when Fernando Lugo was elected president. The Senate removed Lugo from office in 2012.

PORTUGAL

July 11—President Aníbal Cavaco Silva calls for the center-right government of Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho to form a power-sharing coalition with the left, and for elections to be held in June 2014. Passos Coelho has been weakened by popular discontent with budget austerity measures and an economic recession.

July 23—After coalition talks collapse, Cavaco Silva says the government should stay in office until the end of its term in 2015.

QATAR

June 25—Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, 61, the nation's emir, or absolute ruler, abdicates and passes power to his son Sheik Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, 33. Under Sheik Hamad, Qatar pursued an increasingly assertive foreign policy.

RUSSIA

April 12—The US imposes sanctions, including travel bans and asset freezes, on more than 20 Russians, most of whom are linked to the 2009 death in prison of Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, who was jailed after he alleged a massive fraud by tax officials. A new US law, the Magnitsky Act, calls for penalties against violators of human rights in Russia.

June 30—President Vladimir Putin signs a bill banning homosexual "propaganda."

July 12—A Moscow court convicts Magnitsky and his former client, investment manager William Browder, of tax evasion. The case against Magnitsky is reportedly Russia's 1st posthumous prosecution. Browder, based in London, is tried in absentia and sentenced to 9 years in prison.

July 18—A court convicts Alexei Navalny, a leader of the protest movement against Putin and a Moscow mayoral candidate, of embezzlement and sentences him to 5 years in prison. Navalny's supporters insist the charge was politically motivated, and 1000s demonstrate in Moscow.

July 19—The same court releases Navalny pending his appeal of the conviction, allowing him to pursue his mayoral candidacy.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

What Current History authors were saying . . .

5 years ago

What is needed for success in China's environmental protection effort is far more fundamental: an environmental revolution of a magnitude equal to the sweeping economic reforms launched by Deng Xiaoping almost three decades ago.... President Hu Jintao similarly must remove the political and economic impediments preventing the Chinese people from attaining a cleaner environment.

ELIZABETH ECONOMY
China's Next Revolution
 September 2008

10 years ago

An important lesson that the Chinese Communist Party seems to have taken from the European events of 1989 is that it needs to do a much better job than its Soviet-bloc counterparts did at supplying those it governs with appealing material goods and forms of entertainment. Happiness through consumption is now trumpeted more than salvation through personal self-denial, and stability is the great watchword—just as Huxley imagined it would be in the Year of Our Ford 634.

JEFFREY N. WASSERSTROM
China's Brave New World
 September 2003

SENEGAL

June 27—President Obama visits Senegal, the 1st stop of his 2nd presidential visit to sub-Saharan Africa. He visits a landmark of the slave trade and praises the continent's economic growth. In subsequent days he travels on to South Africa and Tanzania.

SYRIA

April 25—The US says its intelligence agencies have concluded “with varying degrees of confidence” that the regime of President Bashar al-Assad has used sarin gas during the Syrian civil war. Obama had suggested that the use of chemical weapons could lead to US intervention in the Syrian conflict, but he says on April 26 that he will act “prudently” to assess the facts.

May 5—Israel reportedly bombs Iranian missiles bound for Hezbollah via Syria.

June 13—US officials say Obama has authorized sending weapons to Syrian rebels for the 1st time, but only small arms and ammunition.

June 26—The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, based in Britain, estimates that the death toll in the 27-month-old conflict has exceeded 100,000, with civilians accounting for more than 1/3 of the total.

TUNISIA

July 25—A gunman kills opposition leader Mohamed Brahmi. The government the next day alleges that the killer belongs to an extremist group linked to Al Qaeda, and used the same gun in the February assassination of another opposition leader, Chokri Belaid. But many opposition supporters blame the ruling Islamist party, Ennahada.

TURKEY

May 11—Bombings in the southern town of Reyhanli, near the Syrian border, kill more than 40. The government alleges that a group with links to Syrian intelligence services is responsible. Turkey has supported the Syrian opposition against Assad and taken in tens of thousands of Syrian refugees.

May 31—Police use heavy amounts of tear gas against protesters occupying Gezi Park, next to Taksim Square in central Istanbul, in opposition to a plan to build a shopping mall there. The violence spurs large protests in Istanbul and dozens of other cities across Turkey, expressing broad opposition to the perceived authoritarian and anti-secular tendencies of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who leads the Islamic-based Justice and Development Party (AKP).

June 15—Police drive protesters from Gezi Park with tear gas and water cannons. Street battles continue into the next day throughout the city, as Erdogan holds a mass rally of AKP supporters in an Istanbul stadium. Since the start of the protests, clashes with police have left 4 dead and more than 8,000 injured.

UNITED STATES

April 15—Two bombs explode near the finish line of the Boston Marathon, killing 3 people and wounding more than 260.

April 19—One of the bombing suspects, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, 26, is killed in a shootout with police. The other suspect, his brother, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, 19, is captured in Watertown, Mass., outside Boston. The 2 are believed to have killed a campus police officer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The brothers are of Chechen origin.

April 22—Federal prosecutors charge Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who is a US citizen, with using a weapon of mass destruction and other crimes.

June 5—Citing leaked documents, the *Guardian* newspaper reports that the US National Security Agency (NSA) has collected data from Verizon, a US telephone company, on all phone calls made by its customers within the US.

June 6—In response to another leak, reported by the *Guardian* and the *Washington Post*, the US confirms that a 2nd NSA program, known as Prism, for nearly 6 years has been collecting overseas users' internet data from companies including Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, and Apple. The data include e-mails, videos, and photos.

June 9—Edward Snowden, 29, a former CIA employee who worked as a contractor for the NSA, reveals that he was the source of the leaks, in an interview with the *Guardian* in a Hong Kong hotel room.

June 21—The US charges Snowden with espionage and stealing government property.

June 23—Snowden arrives in Moscow on a flight from Hong Kong, which the US had pressed to extradite him.

June 30—Snowden applies for asylum in Russia. The *Guardian* reports that more leaked NSA documents from Snowden show that the US has spied on embassies and diplomatic missions of a range of allies, including the EU.

July 30—A military judge acquits Pfc. Bradley Manning of “aiding the enemy” by leaking some 700,000 US military and diplomatic files to the activist group WikiLeaks, which published them in 2010. But the judge convicts Manning on other charges, including multiple counts of violating the Espionage Act and stealing government property.

URUGUAY

April 10—The parliament approves legislation legalizing gay marriage. Uruguay becomes the 3rd country in the Americas to do so, following Argentina and Canada.

VENEZUELA

April 14—Nicolás Maduro, the chosen successor of the late President Hugo Chávez, who died in March, wins a presidential election with 50.6% of the vote, to 49.1% for challenger Henrique Capriles Radonski, according to official returns. Capriles alleges vote-rigging and demands a recount. ■