

November 2017

INTERNATIONAL

Asia-Pacific

Nov. 9—In a state visit to Beijing at the start of a swing through Asia, US President Donald Trump says China deserves “great credit” for taking advantage of trade deals signed by his predecessors, and extols the “great chemistry” he has with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping. The conciliatory language contrasts sharply with Trump’s rhetoric on the campaign trail in 2016, when he accused China of “raping” the US with unfair trade practices, though aides say Trump pressed Xi behind the scenes over the large US trade deficit with China.

Nov. 10—Trump and Xi deliver starkly different messages in remarks at the opening session of an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in Da Nang, Vietnam. Trump vows that the United States will not “be taken advantage of anymore” in trading relations with other countries, while Xi calls for “more open” global trade.

Nov. 11—Meeting on the sidelines of the APEC summit, a group of 11 nations, not including the US or China, announce that they have revived negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which would be the largest multilateral trade agreement in history. Progress on the pact was derailed when Trump, who favors bilateral trade deals, withdrew the US shortly after taking office in January 2017.

AUSTRALIA

Nov. 15—Almost 62% of participants in a government postal survey agree that the law should be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry, despite a vehement campaign by opponents of the measure. The survey is nonbinding but Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull quickly makes good on a promise to honor the result by introducing legislation in parliament to legalize gay marriage, aiming to win passage by Christmas. Among Asia-Pacific countries, only New Zealand (2013) and Taiwan (May 2017) have legalized same-sex marriage.

GERMANY

Nov. 19—Coalition talks among Chancellor Angela Merkel’s center-right Christian Democrats, the pro-business Free Democratic Party (FDP), and the Greens collapse 2 months after the Christian Democrats finished 1st in nationwide elections for seats in the lower chamber of parliament, the Bundestag, but fell short of a majority, with just 33% of the vote. The FDP breaks off the negotiations after disputes over immigration policy, casting uncertainty over Merkel’s bid for a 4th term.

Nov. 24—After an appeal from President Frank-Walter Steinmeier for party leaders to act in the interest of national stability, Martin Schulz, leader of the center-left Social Democratic Party (SPD), says he will no longer oppose talks with the Christian Democrats on reprising a “grand coalition.” The SPD had its worst postwar election result after 4 years as Merkel’s junior coalition partner.

HONDURAS

Nov. 26—Both of the top 2 finishers claim victory in a presidential election in which the incumbent, Juan Orlando Hernández of the conservative National Party, seeks a 2nd term. A constitutional provision limited presidents to 1 term, but was invalidated by a 2015 Supreme Court ruling after Hernández packed the court with his appointees. (In 2009, President Manuel Zelaya was

ousted in a coup after calling for a referendum to overturn the term limit.) Hernández’s top challenger, former television star Salvador Nasralla, backed by a coalition of left-wing parties, takes an early lead in the protracted vote count. But Hernández pulls ahead in the week following the election, leading to violent street protests as Nasralla alleges fraud.

LEBANON

Nov. 4—Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigns from office in a video message broadcast from Saudi Arabia. He criticizes Iran and Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed Shia militia and political movement, which is part of the Lebanese power-sharing government, and suggests his life was in danger. Hariri’s unexpected move raises suspicions that Saudi Arabia coerced him into resigning as part of the Sunni kingdom’s struggle for regional preeminence against Shia Iran.

Nov. 11—Lebanese President Michel Aoun, who has refused to accept Hariri’s resignation, demands that Saudi Arabia allow him to return home.

Nov. 21—Hariri returns to Beirut after being allowed to travel to Paris, following a visit to Riyadh by French President Emmanuel Macron to intercede on his behalf. (Hariri holds both Saudi and French citizenship.) Hariri Nov. 22 says he is suspending his resignation pending talks with Aoun.

NORTH KOREA

Nov. 20—Trump designates North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism, a move that will add to US sanctions on the country in an attempt to pressure it to halt its nuclear weapons program. President George W. Bush removed the designation in 2008 as part of a deal to shut down the program, but North Korea reneged.

Nov. 29—North Korea conducts its 20th missile test of the year. The intercontinental ballistic missile demonstrates a potential range that would put the entire US mainland within its reach.

SAUDI ARABIA

Nov. 4—Dozens of the wealthiest, most influential figures in the kingdom, including 11 members of the royal family, are detained in what is billed as an anticorruption drive by the recently named crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, who has rapidly consolidated power. The detainees include the head of the national guard, Prince Mutaib bin Abdullah, and billionaire investor Prince Alwaleed bin Talal. Authorities reportedly demand that the detainees hand over assets to the government in exchange for their release.

ZIMBABWE

Nov. 15—Military commanders place President Robert Mugabe under house arrest. The apparent coup follows a Nov. 6 move by Mugabe’s party, ZANU-PF, to remove Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa, paving the way for Mugabe’s wife, Grace, to succeed him. Mugabe, 93, ruled the nation since independence in 1980.

Nov. 21—After initially refusing to do so, Mugabe formally resigns shortly after members of ZANU-PF commence impeachment proceedings against him.

Nov. 24—Mnangagwa, 75, is sworn in as president, and pledges to revive the economy and hold “free and fair elections” in 2018. Mnangagwa is a former intelligence chief implicated in some of Mugabe’s human rights abuses. ■