

## November 2018

## INTERNATIONAL

## Migration

Nov. 25—Hundreds of migrants from Central America break away from a larger crowd of peaceful protesters in Tijuana, Mexico, and rush toward a US border crossing into California. US Customs and Border Protection agents fire tear gas to push them back. They are among several thousand, mostly from Honduras, who made their way on foot to Mexico and are now camped out in Tijuana, hoping for a chance to claim asylum in the US. President Donald Trump sought to make their “caravan” an issue in US congressional elections earlier in the month, portraying it as a security threat and ordering a military deployment of some 5,000 troops to the border.

## Trade

Nov. 21—The annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, held in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, is overshadowed by a US-China trade war and ends without the usual joint statement for the 1st time in its history. Heading the US delegation, Vice President Mike Pence accuses China of drowning its partners in “a sea of debt” and compromising their independence. Chinese President Xi Jinping, in his address, criticizes US protectionism and unilateralism in setting \$250 billion in tariffs on Chinese goods, and defends China’s Belt and Road Initiative against charges that it sets debt traps for developing nations.

Nov. 30—In Buenos Aires for the G20 summit of leading economies, Trump and his counterparts from Mexico and Canada, Enrique Peña Nieto and Justin Trudeau, sign the new trilateral pact that is replacing the North American Free Trade Agreement, after months of contentious negotiations and threats from Trump. However, it still requires ratification by Congress.

## FRANCE

Nov. 24—A protest movement that began in smaller towns over a planned hike in fuel taxes spreads to Paris. Around 8,000 marchers wearing the fluorescent yellow hazard vests that French drivers are required to carry erect barricades and light fires on the Champs-Élysées near the presidential palace. Police respond with tear gas and water cannons. The “*gilets jaunes*” (yellow vests)—a largely rural grass-roots movement—vow to continue their protests and air a wider array of grievances, including high unemployment and the labor-market reforms and other pro-business policies of President Emmanuel Macron.

## ISRAEL

Nov. 14—Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman resigns in protest after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agrees to a cease-fire with the militant group Hamas in the Gaza Strip. In 2 days of clashes, Palestinian militants fire 100s of rockets into southern Israel in retaliation for a botched mission into Gaza by Israeli commandos that left 7 Palestinian fighters dead. Israel responds with dozens of airstrikes on suspected Hamas and Islamic Jihad sites in Gaza. Lieberman says the cease-fire ended Israeli military operations too soon and calls for early elections. The withdrawal of his small party Yisrael Beiteinu from Netanyahu’s government leaves the ruling coalition with a bare majority of 61 of 120 parliamentary seats.

## ITALY

Nov. 21—The European Commission for a 2nd time rejects the budget proposed by Italy’s populist government, which seeks to boost spending to stimulate the economy, though its national

debt is already double the Eurozone limit. The commission’s action is the 1st step toward the possible imposition of fines on Italy for violating EU fiscal rules.

## SAUDI ARABIA

Nov. 20—Trump rejects the findings of US intelligence agencies and signals that he will continue to support Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who has faced international condemnation for allegedly ordering the Oct. 2 murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. While the CIA has reportedly concluded that the Saudi heir apparent authorized the killing, Trump issues a statement equivocating, “maybe he did and maybe he didn’t!” He praises Saudi Arabia as a large purchaser of US arms, while blaming Iran for the war in Yemen, where a Saudi-led coalition has been criticized for causing heavy civilian casualties with indiscriminate airstrikes. On Nov. 15, the US imposed sanctions on 17 Saudis allegedly involved in Khashoggi’s death; officials said no further actions were expected.

## SRI LANKA

Nov. 13—The Supreme Court suspends a Nov. 10 order by President Maithripala Sirisena to dissolve Parliament. He issued the order after lawmakers rejected his Sept. 26 edict dismissing Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and replacing him with former President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

## TAIWAN

Nov. 24—President Tsai Ing-wen resigns as chairwoman of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) after heavy losses in local elections leave the party in control of just 6 of the nation’s 22 cities and counties, down from 13 before the election. The Kuomintang, the China-friendly opposition party, wins control of Taichung and Kaohsiung, the nation’s 2nd and 3rd largest cities. The DPP’s losses reflect widespread dissatisfaction with the pro-independence ruling party over the sluggish economy and worsening relations with China since Tsai was elected president in 2016.

## UKRAINE

Nov. 25—Russian coast guard vessels fire shots at 3 Ukrainian naval ships and seize them in disputed waters near Crimea, the former Ukrainian territory that Russia invaded and annexed in 2014. The Ukrainian parliament Nov. 28 votes to approve President Petro Poroshenko’s plan to declare martial law in response to the incident, despite concerns that it could result in the postponement of a presidential election scheduled for March. Polls show Poroshenko trailing 2 challengers.

## UNITED KINGDOM

Nov. 25—The European Union reaches an agreement with British Prime Minister Theresa May in Brussels that paves the way for the UK to leave the EU in March 2019. Under the agreement, the UK would still be required to follow EU rules and regulations at least until December 2020, while negotiators work out the details of a longer-term relationship. EU leaders warn that there can be no renegotiation of any of the fundamental terms even if the British Parliament rejects the deal. The 585-page agreement, which would be legally binding, includes a key provision that would ensure that the border between the British province of Northern Ireland and EU member nation Ireland remains open, if necessary by keeping the entire UK in a customs union with the EU. ■