

April–July 2019

INTERNATIONAL

European Union

May 26—In elections across all 28 EU member nations for the European Parliament, populist and Euroskeptic parties increase their share of seats to about 25%, up from about 20% in the 2014 elections. Right-wing populists gain ground in Italy, Poland, and Hungary, where Euroskeptic parties are already in control, and in Britain, where the Brexit Party led by Nigel Farage takes over 31% of the vote. Parties on the left also increase their numbers in the EU's only directly elected body, notably in Germany, where the Greens win more than 20% of the vote.

Trade

May 10—Accusing Beijing of derailing negotiations on a bilateral trade agreement, US President Donald Trump raises tariffs from 10% to 25% on \$200 billion worth of imports from China. Trump suggests he is prepared to hike tariffs on nearly all other Chinese goods unless China accepts his terms. China sets retaliatory tariffs on \$60 billion in US goods.

WikiLeaks

April 11—WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is arrested by British police for jumping bail after he is evicted from the Ecuadoran embassy in London, which harbored him for nearly 7 years. US prosecutors in Virginia unseal an indictment charging Assange with conspiring with former US Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to steal classified documents. Ecuador says it suspended Assange's citizenship after relations became strained over his behavior.

May 23—US prosecutors indict Assange on 17 counts of violating the Espionage Act for publishing classified military and diplomatic documents in 2010.

ALGERIA

April 2—Following weeks of mass protests that started in February, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika resigns. Bouteflika, 82, held office for 2 decades but has been incapacitated for several years. His resignation comes hours after the army chief of staff, Gen. Ahmed Gaid Salah, says he should be declared unfit and suggests he is surrounded by a corrupt inner circle. However, Bouteflika appoints an interim government led by loyalists, saying it will organize elections.

AUSTRALIA

May 18—After trailing in opinion polls, the center-right governing coalition led by Prime Minister Scott Morrison wins 77 seats in the legislature, 1 more than needed to form a majority. Morrison is known for hardline conservative policies on immigration and climate change. In 2018, he became the country's 5th prime minister in 5 years due to chronic infighting in his Liberal Party.

AUSTRIA

May 27—Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, of the conservative Austrian People's Party, is ousted by a no-confidence vote in parliament. The vote follows the release of a secretly recorded video in which his coalition partner, Vice Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache of the far-right Freedom Party, offers to secure state contracts for a woman claiming to be a niece of a Russian oligarch.

CHINA

June 15—Carrie Lam, Hong Kong's chief executive, yields to mass protests and indefinitely suspends a bill that would allow crimi-

nal suspects to be extradited to mainland China for trial. However, she does not withdraw the measure outright as demanded by the protesters, who see it as a grave threat to Hong Kong's autonomy and civil liberties. Lam also faces criticism after police use tear gas and rubber bullets against protesters when some try to storm the Legislative Council building. Protests continue through July.

CZECH REPUBLIC

June 23—About 250,000 people join a protest in Prague calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Andrej Babiš over corruption allegations. The demonstrations are the nation's largest in the postcommunist period.

EGYPT

April 23—Election authorities announce that 89% of voters in a 3-day referendum approved constitutional reforms that will allow President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who seized power in a 2013 coup, to remain in office until 2030 with increased control over the judiciary and the legislature.

GREECE

July 7—The center-right New Democracy party wins an election with 40% of the vote and garners 158 seats in the 300-seat parliament, scoring a landslide victory over the ruling left-wing Syriza party, which takes 31%. New Democracy's leader, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the son of a former prime minister, will replace Prime Minister Alex Tsipras. In 2015, Tsipras came to power as a populist determined to defy austerity policies imposed by Greece's creditors—the EU and the International Monetary Fund—but then gave in to their demands. Despite a partial economic recovery, unemployment remains above 18%.

INDIA

May 23—Official results are announced for elections for the Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party wins over 37% of the vote, its highest share ever, and 303 of the 543 seats, up from the 282 it won in 2014. The opposition Congress party takes just 52 seats. More than 600 million Indians cast ballots in a record-setting turnout of 67%; voting took place in 7 phases from April 11 to May 19.

INDONESIA

April 17—Voters go to the polls for a presidential election pitting incumbent Joko (Jokowi) Widodo against Prabowo Subianto (a former general and son-in-law of the late dictator Suharto), whom he defeated in the 2014 election.

May 20—Final results show Jokowi has won a 2nd term, taking 55.5% of the vote, improving on his 2014 showing.

IRAN

April 8—Trump designates Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a foreign terrorist organization, clearing the way for economic sanctions on the military unit and other parties linked to it. It is the 1st time the US has imposed the designation on another country's military.

June 13—Two oil tankers passing near Iran in the Gulf of Oman are disabled by explosions that US officials blame on Iran. Four tankers were attacked in the same waters in May.

June 20—Iran shoots down a high-altitude US surveillance drone that it says entered its airspace. Trump authorizes a retaliatory attack on Iranian military targets but then calls it off. He says the

next day that he canceled the strike after learning that 150 Iranians could be killed, which he deems disproportionate.

July 19—Iranian gunboats capture a British oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz, in apparent retaliation for Britain's recent seizure near Gibraltar of an Iranian tanker suspected of violating an EU embargo on Syria.

ISRAEL

April 9—In parliamentary elections, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's conservative Likud party and the centrist Blue and White alliance led by former military chief of staff Benny Gantz each win 35 seats in the Knesset.

May 6—A truce reportedly brokered by Egypt halts the worst outbreak of violence between Israel and Palestinians in Gaza since a 2014 war. Over 2 days, Palestinian militants fired 100s of rockets into southern Israel, killing 4 Israeli civilians. Israeli airstrikes left 22 Palestinians dead, including militants and civilians.

May 30—Netanyahu announces that he has been unable to piece together a majority coalition after a dispute among smaller right-wing parties over legislation to end military draft exemptions for Orthodox Jews. A new election is set for Sept. 17.

LIBYA

April 4—The Libyan National Army, a militia commanded by Gen. Khalifa Haftar that controls most of the country's eastern territory, begins an offensive against forces loyal to the UN-backed Government of National Accord in Tripoli, the capital. The offensive soon stalls but leads to 100s of civilian casualties. Libya has been consumed by factional power struggles since the overthrow of Muammar el-Qaddafi's regime in 2011.

MEXICO

June 7—Trump announces that Mexico has agreed to take action to reduce the number of migrants crossing the country on their way to the US border. In return, he suspends his threats to impose tariffs on all Mexican exports to the US.

NORTH KOREA

June 30—Trump and North Korean ruler Kim Jong-un hold a meeting in the Demilitarized Zone. Trump briefly steps into North Korea, becoming the 1st US president to do so. The 2 agree to resume negotiations over the North Korean nuclear program. The talks collapsed at the previous Trump-Kim summit in Hanoi, Vietnam, in February.

July 26—The South Korean government says North Korea tested a new type of short-range ballistic missile in violation of UN resolutions. Another test follows on July 30.

RUSSIA

July 27—Riot police in Moscow arrest more than 1,300 participants in an unauthorized demonstration against election officials' decision to bar opposition and independent candidates from a September city council election. Opposition leader Alexei Navalny is jailed for organizing the demonstration, 1 of the country's largest in recent years. He suggests July 29 that he may have been poisoned in prison.

SOUTH AFRICA

May 8—In elections for the National Assembly, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) wins 58% percent of the vote, enough to retain power but its worst showing since apartheid ended in 1994. The ANC has been tarnished by corruption and its failure to improve conditions for many poor blacks.

SPAIN

April 28—In the 3rd general election since 2015, the Socialist Party, led by incumbent Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, wins 123 seats in the 350-seat parliament. The newly formed far-right, anti-immigrant Vox party wins 24 seats with just over 10% of the vote. In July, lawmakers reject Sanchez's bid to form a gov-

ernment after he fails to reach a coalition deal with the left-wing populist party Podemos.

SRI LANKA

April 21—More than 250 people are killed in a coordinated series of 8 bombings that include suicide attacks in Colombo, the capital, targeting 3 churches packed for Easter services and 3 international hotels. The Islamic State claims responsibility for the attacks.

June 3—All 9 Muslim cabinet ministers and 2 Muslim governors resign in protest after a Buddhist monk and member of Parliament, Athuraliye Rathana, launches a hunger strike to demand the removal of 3 of the officials, whom he accuses of being linked to the Easter bombings.

SUDAN

April 11—President Omar Hassan al-Bashir is removed from office by the military following nearly 4 months of mass protests against his authoritarian rule. The military says it will stay in power for 2 years before holding elections. Bashir came to power in a 1989 military coup. In 2009 and 2010, the International Criminal Court issued warrants for his arrest for war crimes and genocide in Sudan's Darfur region, but he was never taken into custody. He also oversaw the end of a civil war and the secession of South Sudan in 2011.

June 3—Security forces linked to the Darfur genocide attack a protest camp in Khartoum, the capital, killing at least 128 people, according to a doctors' group. Protest leaders reject a proposal by the military to hold elections in 9 months and vow to continue a civil disobedience campaign until the generals give up power.

July 5—Leaders of the protest movement announce that they have reached a power-sharing agreement with the military. The deal calls for elections in 3 years; in the interim, a general will run the country for the next 21 months, followed by a civilian leader for 18 months, along with a ruling council split between the two sides.

TURKEY

May 6—The election council annuls a narrow victory for opposition candidate Ekrem Imamoglu in the March 31 vote for Istanbul mayor after President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan alleges fraud and demands a rerun.

June 23—Imamoglu wins the do-over election by a much larger margin. Erdoğan's Islamist party loses control of Istanbul for the first time in 25 years.

UKRAINE

April 21—Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a comedian and political newcomer, is elected president with 73% of the vote. The incumbent, Petro Poroshenko, takes just 24%. Zelenskyy, the country's 1st Jewish leader, campaigned on an anticorruption platform.

UNITED KINGDOM

May 24—Prime Minister Theresa May announces that she will resign after repeatedly failing to win parliamentary approval for her agreement with the EU on the terms for Britain's withdrawal from the bloc. In April, the EU agreed to extend the deadline for ratification to the end of October.

July 23—Boris Johnson, a former foreign secretary and mayor of London, and a vocal advocate of leaving the EU, is selected by Conservative Party members to replace May. He takes office the next day. Johnson vows to withdraw from the EU by the Oct. 31 deadline, even without a deal.

VENEZUELA

April 30—Opposition leader Juan Guaidó, in an appearance with a small number of troops at a military base in Caracas, calls for a popular uprising to remove President Nicolás Maduro from office. The apparent coup attempt fizzles despite expressions of support for Guaidó from the US and other countries in the region. ■