



EURASIA SECURITY WATCH

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Related Categories: Islamic Extremism; Middle East; Turkey

EGYPT'S LEADER TRIES TO RULE AS A ONE-MAN SHOW AFTER A YEAR IN OFFICE President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi's Egypt, a person is either with or against him, a sentiment aptly expressed by pro-government TV host, Tamer Amin: "Whoever has a problem living in this country should grab his passport and leave." Since Mr. el-Sisi came to power in 2014, widespread death sentences have been handed out to Islamists, parliamentary elections have been repeatedly delayed, and the government has been accused of torturing and arresting citizens with impunity. Mr. Sisi apparently still "enjoy[s] strong popularity among large sectors of the population who see him as the only figure strong enough to lead." However, there are growing concerns about Mr. Sisi's authoritarian tendencies. As one Egyptian professor writes: "The nation's legislative institution has disappeared, political party activism is suspended and no one is left on the scene except the president." (Associated Press June 6, 2015)

GEORGIA'S LEADER WARNS OF RUSSIAN EXPANSION

In May, Georgia's president, Giorgi Margvelashvili, warned of the threat Russia poses to its neighbors, citing Russia's exploitation of instability in Ukraine to seize Crimea in 2014, as well as the Russian seizure of territories in his own country in 2008. "If they have some kind of unstable environment in their country, their sovereign country, [Russia] will be quick to solve the problem through Kalashnikov[s]," said Mr. Margvelashvili. The Georgian president also mentioned the danger of Russian propaganda, as Moscow seeks to shape perceptions about the Ukraine conflict and make Georgians question their desire to join Europe. According to President Margvelashvili, "The [propaganda's] basic message is that Europeans don't care about you, you are abandoned, you don't have a choice and the Georgian European choice is doomed." (Associated Press May 19, 2015)

LIBYAN GAINS MAY OFFER ISIS A BASE FOR NEW ATTACKS

The Islamic State's Libyan affiliate has seized Sirte and Harawah, coastal cities east of Tripoli, and staged a suicide bombing in nearby Misurata, Libya's third largest city. The Washington Post writes: "The Islamic State's growth could further destabilize a country already suffering from a devastating civil war. And Libya could offer the extremists a new base from which to launch attacks elsewhere in North Africa." According to security experts, there are up to 3,000 fighters in Libya loyal to the Islamic State. Until now, militia commanders in Misurata have been hesitant about "taking on the Islamic State," however, according to Frederic Wehrey of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the bombing in Misurata has led to a rethinking of priorities. "[The commanders] see the threat, and they are really focused on it now." (Washington Post June 6, 2015)

TURKEY'S NEW PARLIAMENT FEATURES FOUR KEY PARTIES

Following recent parliamentary elections in Turkey, four parties will control Turkey's 550-seat parliament: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP), the "center-left and staunchly secular" Republican People's Party, the "right-wing" Nationalist Movement Party, and the People's Democratic Party, a "new force in parliament and the primary voice for Turkey's 20 percent Kurdish minority." The results were seen as a significant defeat for the ruling AKP, which lost its parliamentary majority and dropped some 70 seats from its previous total of 327. (Associated Press June 8, 2015)

TROVE SEIZED IN SYRIA OPENS WINDOW ON ISIS

American intelligence agencies recovered 4 to 7 terabytes of data from a raid on May 16 that killed an Islamic State leader, information that has already proved useful in helping the U.S. to identify and carry out an airstrike on another ISIS leader on May 31. "I'll just say from that raid we're learning quite a bit that we did not know before," a senior State Department official told reporters last week. "Every single day the picture becomes clearer of what this organization is, how sophisticated it is, how global it is and how networked it is." (New York Times June 8, 2015)