



THE STATESMAN'S YEARBOOK 2017

THE POLITICS, CULTURES AND
ECONOMIES OF THE WORLD



'...an invaluable compendium for generations of
researchers, writers and politicians to draw on.'
— Zak Cope, academic researcher and author



**THE
STATESMAN'S
YEARBOOK
2017**

‘We don’t have to be imprisoned by the past.’

Barack Obama (1961—)

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THE POLITICS, CULTURES AND
ECONOMIES OF THE WORLD

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PREFACE

Welcome to the 153rd edition of *The Statesman's Yearbook*—a concise reference work containing over 1,500 pages of data on the political, economic and social landscape of all the countries of the world plus territories.

The 2017 edition includes a thought-provoking essay on the history and current state of democracy, which has undergone a radical transformation as many countries see more and more polarized parties and candidates being highly influential at elections, holding the balance of power or even taking power. Who would have thought even ten years ago that a professional comedian would become a country's president in 2016, as happened in Guatemala?

As well as the essay, our preliminary pages also include a factsheet with fascinating figures and information about democracy. In late 2015 we ran an essay competition on our website and we are pleased to include the winning piece in this year's book too.

In addition to information on nation states, we have an extensive section on major international organizations and

leading think tanks. This year for the first time we're including data for individual countries on civil and criminal justice world rankings from a renowned annual survey.

We also have an accompanying website at www.statesmansyearbook.com, for which a site license is required to access most of the content. This is updated regularly throughout the year and contains additional material that isn't included in the book. One of the features is our archive going back to the first edition in 1864. In 2014 we added to our website a series of infographics, special features on prominent world leaders and 'snapshot' articles, written by Palgrave Macmillan authors on a range of topics relevant to our readership all of which is free for everyone to enjoy.

We always welcome feedback on the book and our website. Please email us on sybcomments@palgrave.com.

Nicholas Heath-Brown
Publisher, *The Statesman's Yearbook*

**Explore the world at
www.statesmansyearbook.com**

The original version of this book was revised.

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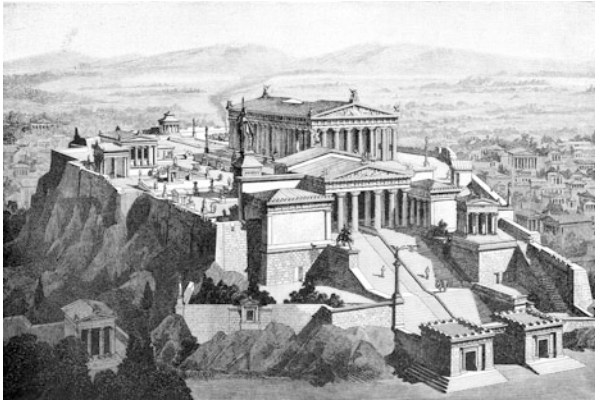
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WHAT FUTURE FOR DEMOCRACY?

Barry Turner investigates democracy's role in the modern world



Ancient Athens—the cradle of democracy
© Ivy Close Images/Alamy Stock Photo

Democracy is in poor health. Freedom House, a watchdog group which reports on political rights and civil liberties, calculates that of 195 countries assessed over the last eight years, there has been a net decline in freedom. Democracy has languished in Bangladesh, Kenya, Thailand and Venezuela and would appear to be in terminal collapse in Russia and Turkey.

Expectations that the Arab Spring would spread democracy throughout the Middle East have been disappointed. Meanwhile, in the US and Europe where modern democracy was born and nurtured, there is widespread disillusionment with a system of government that is prone to inefficiency and to a none too subtle form of corruption which favours the wealth and power of a small minority.

If voting patterns are anything to go by, political participation is in sharp decline. According to the OECD, levels of voting in national and local elections are down 70 per cent on 30 years ago. In several of what are dubbed 'advanced' countries there is a disturbing trend towards authoritarianism, a desire for a strong leader who will sort things out. Shades of the 1930s begin to close in.

And it has all happened so quickly. A mere quarter century ago, at the end of the Cold War, futurologists were as one in declaring that unrepresentative governments, of whatever political hue, had no future. What has gone wrong? Before venturing into muddy waters it would be as well to agree on what we mean by democracy. Commonly-held features can be identified—the right to vote in open and honestly managed elections, liberty of conscience, freedom of speech, universal education, minimum living standards, the protection of minority rights and the private ownership of property. But none of these are absolutes. Even the interpretation of something as apparently fundamental as freedom of speech fluctuates wildly between democracies. Similarly, across the range of democracies, the right to vote is more or less free depending upon the electoral system in place.

Throughout history there have been ebbs and flows in the direction and interpretation of democracy. The early Athenians were the first to practise a form of government by which citizens could debate and decide collectively on matters of general concern. The idea made no sense to Plato and Aristotle who argued that democracy, in handing power to the commonality, was a recipe for the destruction of the state. It was a contention that was to be echoed down the ages by the promoters of strong government led by a political messiah, royal or otherwise. A more

charitable view of the commonality was fed into the mainstream by Christianity. With each person judged to be spiritually equal in the sight of God, every individual was able to claim certain rights which a ruler was bound to respect.

Pre-eminent among the post-medieval philosophers, Thomas Hobbes attempted a rational foundation for the exercise of sovereign power by deducing that citizens willingly ceded some of their rights in return for protection. Their freedom was to do whatever they liked outside whatever was explicitly forbidden by law. With the advance towards a more structured society, elitism prevailed. The concept of private property was intrinsically linked to the state, and only by its mandate could it exist. However, in denying the authority of the Church, the Protestant Reformers experienced self-government in religious and social matters and got a taste for true democracy. During the English Civil War (1642–49), the Puritan Colonel Rainboro famously asserted, 'the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the richest he'. It followed that 'every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent put himself under that government'. In rejecting a distinction between those born to rule and the rest who were born to obey, he made an argument familiar today in countries groping towards some form of democracy.

A century on from the English Civil War, upheavals on both sides of the Atlantic restored democracy to the forefront of political discourse. In America, the newly created states began with a clean political slate on which to draw the framework for government at regional and national level. The constitution-makers stressed individual rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as the essential safeguard against government abuse of power. What emerged was a hands-off type of administration that suited the vigorous, self-reliant society that was pioneering the new America.

The contrast with France in the wake of its own revolution could not have been greater. Maximilien Robespierre, the dominant figure of the Revolution, defined democracy as 'a state in which the sovereign people, guided by laws which are its own work, does by itself all it can do well, and by delegates all that it could not'. In other words, having chosen their representatives, the people had to accept what was enacted in their name. The two ideals remain distinct and thus a source of confusion in any discussion of the function and organization of democracy. Following to varying degrees the example of France, other European countries tend to favour the state over the individual. In the US, the reverse holds good.

As depicted in popular history, the 19th to the early 20th centuries was a people's march towards liberal democracy. But with the expansion of civil rights, the creation of political parties and wider participation in elections came counter-movements aimed at restraining democracy, driven by fear of rule by the mob. At its mildest the philosophy of restraint was expressed by Edmund Burke, who argued that once elected, representatives should be permitted to exercise independent judgment without pandering to popular opinion. But this was too subtle for uncompromising authoritarians who leaned on nationalism, with religious overtures, as the strongest antidote to democracy. When, as in Europe's revolutions of 1830 and 1848, regimes were overthrown, they were quickly succeeded by other authoritarian rulers.

At the same time, the resort to violent revolution proved the need for every ruler, of whatever persuasion and power, to be able to draw on a generous measure of popular support. If democracy has within it the assumption of government by consent, every government, however dictatorial, has within it an element of democracy. Nationalism, furthermore, can implode. This became



The fall of the Berlin Wall was a triumph for democracy
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clear after 1914 when hundreds of thousands of young patriots marched off to slaughter in northern France. Their sacrifice brought the old European order crashing down.

With the widening of the franchise, notably to women, the framework of modern Western democracy was put in place. But it was not secure. Two forces threatened to overwhelm democracy—fascism and communism. Each movement usurped the name of democracy for its own ends. Democracy's finest hours came in 1945 with the defeat of fascism and in 1989 with the collapse of Soviet communism. By 2000 the number of democracies had increased from 66 in 1987 to 121. The momentum of the freedom march was judged to be unstoppable. But we were wrong. Democracy has stalled and there is now a real threat of a roll-back.

In the wide-ranging debate on what needs to be done to revitalize democracy, politicians are inclined to believe that once economic growth is back on track all will be well. It could happen. Anything *could* happen. But the emergence from recession should not fool us into believing that democracy is in the clear. The fault lines go much deeper. For one thing, our technology-driven industrial revolution destroys more jobs than it creates. Andrew McAfee of MIT's Sloan School of Management estimates that 50 per cent of current jobs will eventually be automated out of existence. The almost inevitable scarcity of employment is the biggest single threat to democracy. When a rising generation feels itself economically and politically emasculated, it is liable to lash out at those held to be responsible, notably elected politicians who have failed to deliver on their promises. Riots in American inner cities and in the French suburbs are a disturbing pointer to the future.

Globalization has become a hate word for the disaffected. While the dismantling of international trade restrictions has reduced the number of people in absolute poverty, at the same time the gap between rich and poor countries has widened, as has the gap between rich and poor within each country. Inequality is on display for all to see in the games played by powerful interest groups who make no pretence of representing the general public. Cosy capitalism feeding on greed is apparent everywhere as powerful lobbies vie with each other for a bigger share of government favours and handouts. Leading companies are now so powerful as to be beyond government (i.e. democratic control) and can frustrate political mandates by relocating the hub of their activities to wherever the profit is greatest and interference minimal. The commercial world's big players no longer think of national boundaries as setting any limit on their activities.

Public cynicism at the way business succeeds in manipulating governments is diluted by party pledges to spend, spend, spend. But this has done nothing to improve the health of democracy. Quite the reverse. With the state taking on more and yet more responsibilities, the machinery of government has become dependent on an overweight bureaucracy that is remote from the lives of ordinary citizens. A safe generalization is that bureaucracy feeds on itself to become ever fatter.

Those in power profess their enthusiasm for communicating with the people but they do so in a hectoring, propagandist manner aimed more at manipulation than enlightenment. Taking its cue, the media treats politics as a knockabout contest, a branch of the entertainment industry with not quite the pulling power of sport. The gulf between government and people is nowhere better demonstrated than in the evolution of the European Union, a noble idea that is foundering on the refusal of the administrative elite to accept the need for public accountability.

There are those, an increasing number, who argue that democracy in the Western tradition is simply no longer workable. For inspiration they look to China and other vibrant Asian economies where authoritarianism is tempered by self-government in small things that can be decided without upsetting the system. Technocrats in political guise are able to plan long-term policies that are said to be too complex for the vagaries of democracy dependent on promises and bribes of popular election.

While conceding that in our interconnected world it makes sense to delegate decision-making to experts in such matters as global warming, safeguarding computer networks, cracking down on money laundering and combating terrorism, the all-embracing rule by technocrats throws up too many fears of the abuse of power. Scant regard for human rights and the arrogance of unelected officials suggest that the path of 'managed' capitalism is anything but smooth.

Instead of giving up on democracy, we should focus on making it work better for the 21st century. A start could be made by recognizing that democracy creates many of its own problems by trying to do too much. The top heavy welfare state, unsustainable in the long run, spreads its favours too widely. If democracy is to be saved, the resources of the state must be redirected towards those of the greatest need. This means putting a brake on the hand-out of goodies to the relatively wealthy. In the US the housing subsidy to the richest fifth, by allowing mortgage interest to be tax deductible, is four times the amount spent on public housing for the poorest fifth.

Targeting the outcasts—the socially deprived who, under the present system, have little hope of breaking out of the poverty cycle—will greatly improve their life chances. But the challenge is not simply to raise standards to achieve greater equality of opportunity. Rather, we should be looking to creating a society which evens the balance between earning a living and the time allocated to family and to life enrichment.

One way of encouraging voters to play a more active role in determining how their country should be run is demonstrated in the direct democracy practised in Switzerland where 50,000 signatures



The Guy Fawkes mask is now a symbol of political protest
 © Agencja Fotograficzna Caro/Alamy Stock Photo

on a petition, just over one per cent of the total of qualified voters, are enough to submit any new countrywide law to a vote of the whole people. With twice that number of signatures a proposal for a new law can be voted on, effectively sidelining parliament.

Critics argue that what suits a small, relatively uncomplicated society is less obviously attractive to a large, diverse country. A more serious objection has to do with framing referendum questions that can be clearly understood. Furthermore, the resort to a nationwide vote on sensitive issues can offend human rights. In Switzerland a 2009 poll banned the construction of minarets attached to mosques—even though the Swiss constitution protects freedom of religion. It is easy to imagine that an over-hasty resort to a referendum in the wake, say, of a terrorist atrocity could lead to a majority vote for the return of barbaric punishments. Abrupt changes in public mood are no guide to good government.

This is not to dismiss the value of referendums but merely to suggest that they must be judged in relation to other aspects of a working democracy. It is relevant to note that Switzerland has a long tradition of linking referenda to devolution. The delegation of power away from the centre is vital to the re-energizing of democracy. There are encouraging signs that national politicians are beginning to realize this. In Britain, until recently a highly centralized state, devolution to Scotland and Wales is being extended to clearly identifiable regions such as Greater Manchester. France is beginning to move the same way with a new regional structure that is close to German federalism, the favoured model for decentralization.

The only way forward for the EU as a whole is for more democracy, not less. Democracy may not always produce the 'right' results according to the mandarins but the alternative is a breakdown in the system and the collapse of what until now has been one of the more successful exercises in international co-operation. The policy of subsidiarity, so often discussed for the EU, so seldom practised, should now be implemented in full. More European legislation should be referred to national parliaments in draft form; each member state should be free to decide its own tax policies; the Council of Ministers should meet in public and the European Parliament should be given increased powers.

A foremost concern must be the role of money in democratic elections. Even if wealth alone is not a guarantee of electoral success, the fact that it is near impossible to aspire to high office without strong financial support is a denial of democratic rights. Those who donate expect to be rewarded. Clearly spending limits

need to be imposed but the much favoured alternative of relying on state subsidy tends to benefit the established parties. The better solution is to put a strict upper limit on individual and company donations, monitored by an independent watchdog. One of the welcome side effects of this would be the encouragement of parties to broaden their support.

Despite the current tribulations, there is comfort for true democrats in knowing that while there are open and free elections, politicians who are ineffectual or who take too much upon themselves while ignoring those who put them in power are certain, eventually, to meet their comeuppance. In Italy, the voters dismissed an oligarchic prime minister who discovered that wealth and media power are not in themselves enough to secure re-election. Democracy in Nigeria triumphed in 2015 when the incumbent president was ejected in a largely peaceful election, an example to much of the rest of Africa where democracy is respected more in theory than in practice.

There is comfort too in knowing that while the authority of elected assemblies is increasingly called into question, citizens are finding other ways of making their opinions count. While, by clever manipulation of the media, pressure groups representing dubious causes can exercise an influence out of all proportion to their popular appeal, there is a profusion of voluntary organizations, including leading charities, which engage the interest and energy of those who might otherwise belong to political parties.

Consumers also have the potential to make their wishes known. Every company needs its market; a threat to withdraw the market by ceasing to buy a particular product concentrates minds wonderfully. The role of consumer democracy in restraining business pretensions should not be underrated. Meanwhile, the potential of the internet to stimulate democracy by disseminating information and by promoting dialogue has still to be tested. Though an increasing proportion of news and comment is appearing online in countries where the media is otherwise tightly controlled, the censors are already at work. Even in the older democracies the freedom of the internet and its ability to create dissent is being cited within political circles as justification for official secrecy. For democracy to thrive this, of all exclusions, is in urgent need of demolition. The model here is the Swedish constitution, which rules that legal justification is required before a public authority can refuse access to documents or information.

Above all, politicians need to remind voters of the virtue of freedom. Democracies are typically richer than non-democracies, are less likely to go to war and have a better record of fighting corruption. Democracy allows for the voice of the people to be heard. It is in the nature of democracy that it will always be a shifting concept, defined at any one time by a mix of high ideas and socio-economic practicalities. What may fit one country at a particular time may not necessarily suit all. But the fundamentals are clear enough.

Those of us who are lucky to live in relatively free societies must recognize the need to protect and nourish what we have, the better to support those who, sooner or later, will want to join the club.

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2,500 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY: DID YOU KNOW?

Democracy, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is ‘a system of government in which all the people of a state or polity ... are involved in making decisions about its affairs, typically by voting to elect representatives to a parliament or similar assembly’.

Democracy as a form of government is generally considered to have been born in ancient Athens, with Cleisthenes (born c. 570 BC) regarded as ‘the father of Athenian democracy’. Our word *democracy* comes from the Greek *demokratia* meaning ‘rule by the people’.

Writing in the fourth century BC, Aristotle said: ‘If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost.’ The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, meanwhile, states that ‘the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government’.

The world’s oldest extant elected parliament is Iceland’s *Alþingi*, established around 930 AD.

With 834m. eligible voters as of 2014, India is the world’s largest democracy.

The first nation to grant universal adult suffrage—that is to say, votes for all adult citizens regardless of economic or social status or gender—was New Zealand in 1893.

The most common minimum age for voting in national elections is 18, although Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador and Nicaragua all extend the right to 16-year-olds. Voting is also extended to those aged 16 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia if they are in employment, and in Hungary and Indonesia if they are married.

The election for the presidency of Cabo Verde held in 2001 was decided by just 12 votes (out of more than 153,000 votes cast).

It is estimated that candidates and their supporters at the 2012 US Presidential election spent in excess of US\$7bn., making it the most expensive election in the country’s history.

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit’s 2014 Democracy Index (based on 60 indicators), the five best-functioning democracies in the world are (in descending order) Norway, Sweden, Iceland, New Zealand and Denmark.

The five lowest-scoring nations (of 167 included in the survey) were (in descending order) Syria, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Central African Republic and North Korea last.

Since 2007 the United Nations has observed 15 September as International Day of Democracy.

87.8% of the world’s countries were formal democracies as of 2011, up from 44.7% in 1985. Nonetheless, over a third of the world’s population was living under authoritarian regimes, with China accounting for more than half of the global population not residing in a formal democratic system.

Between 1960 and 1979, three-quarters of Africa’s leaders were deposed by violent means. That figure had fallen to 19% in the period 2000–05.

Outside of China and the petro-chemical states, the world’s 25 richest nations are all formal democracies.

As of 2015, nine independent countries used the word ‘Democratic’ in their full, official names: Algeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, North Korea, Laos, Nepal, São Tomé e Príncipe, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste.

As of April 2013, 20.8% of those elected to parliament around the world were women, up from 11.7% in Jan. 1997.

Rwanda has the largest percentage of female parliamentarians of any nation, with 63.8% of the lower house comprising women.

Speaking in the UK’s House of Commons in 1947, Sir Winston Churchill remarked: ‘Many forms of Government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.’

GAH-KAI LEUNG ON EDWARD SAID

Gah-Kai Leung's essay on Edward Said was chosen as The Statesman's Yearbook essay competition winner for 2015

Edward Said's name has remained fixed in my memory since I first encountered it while still in secondary school. At the time, I had become conscious of my Chineseness and in particular the fact that my parents came from Hong Kong, an ex-British colony. I had been trying to understand the fact that my English literature syllabus consisted mostly of dead white Britons, while excluding people like me from elsewhere in the Anglosphere. It turned out that Said had been wrestling with this same question some four decades before. He did not run for any offices, but his legacy shows that sometimes in politics it is the diplomacy of ideas, not gunboats, which wins the day.

Said is best remembered for *Orientalism*, first published in 1978, which argued that Western perceptions of the East—or the Orient—were tainted by colonial prejudices and that more importantly, this was necessary to rationalize the imperial project. He assembled evidence ranging from Delacroix paintings to Flaubert novels to travel writing in order to interrogate the Orient's almost mythological hold on the Western imagination. These works of art and culture essentialized the East as backward, feminine, exotic and threatening while simultaneously constructing the West as developed, masculine, familiar and benign. *Orientalism* has since become the foundational text in post-colonial studies, which investigates how a country processes the political and cultural ramifications of colonialism. It is required reading in universities and has gone on to influence fields as wide-ranging as history, sociology, literature, anthropology, development studies and international relations. It is arguably his greatest achievement.

Said rose to become professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University, but did not confine himself to the comfortable surroundings of the academy. His fears of a twentieth-century Orientalism and its destructive consequences for foreign policy saw him travel the world delivering impassioned speeches to packed audiences. He criticized the Israeli presence in the Middle East—going as far as calling it the longest running military occupation in modern times—and denounced American aggression in the same region. This made him something of a firebrand among his Columbia peers, but also won him many admirers. He put the 'public' into the term 'public intellectual'.

Throughout his career, Said continued to write books which together catalogue in both personal and political terms the legacies of colonialism, from his memoir *Out of Place* to his groundbreaking *Culture and Imperialism*. In the latter, Said implored readers not to try to 'classify others or put them in hierarchies' and above all not to 'constantly reiterate how "our" culture or country is number one'. Said did not live to see the present age, but this quotation demonstrates his remarkable prescience in an era still living in the shadow of the war on terror, still dominated by the rise of Islamic State abroad and immigration crises at home, still riven by ideological, cultural and religious tensions. It is time to reconsider his work. We need Edward Said more than ever.

Gah-Kai Leung

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www.statesmansyearbook.com

2015 IN 1,000 WORDS

Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabab, Boko Haram, the Taliban—all manifestations of a militant Islamist ideology that again left a trail of violence across many countries in 2015. In Syria, particularly, Islamic State's extremist jihadist quest to establish a caliphate across the Middle East further aggravated the civil war between the domestic opponents and supporters of President Assad's regime and also the fragile relations between their proxy international backers—Western and conservative Gulf Arab nations on one side and Iran and an increasingly assertive Russia on the other. In addition, Russia's military intervention in Syria provoked a diplomatic crisis with Turkey when a Russian jet was shot down for allegedly violating Turkish airspace. Elsewhere, assaults by Boko Haram caused hundreds more civilian deaths in Nigeria, and sectarian divisions fuelled a Shia rebellion in Yemen. Moreover, a resurgent Taliban prompted a partial postponement of the US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, while Al-Qaeda and Islamic State took advantage of factional and sectarian strife to establish themselves in an unstable Libya. More specifically, there were devastating attacks inflicting hundreds of civilian deaths in France (in Paris), in Tunisia (in Sousse and Tunis), in Kenya (in Garissa, by Somalia-based Al-Shabab), in Turkey (in Ankara) and in Egypt (where a Russian civil airliner was brought down by a bomb).

Meanwhile, the European Union was confronted by its worst humanitarian crisis in recent times as over a million foreign refugees and migrants—principally from Syria, Iraq, Kosovo, Albania and Afghanistan seeking an escape from conflict, oppression or economic deprivation—streamed into the continent by often dangerous routes and illegal means. In turn, such an uncontrolled movement of people undermined internal EU free movement conventions, prompted national border closures and fuelled xenophobic populism in some EU countries.

EU leaders also had to contend with ongoing economic stagnation in the eurozone, poor relations with Russia in the wake of that country's more aggressive stance towards Ukraine and other neighbours, the threat of a Greek exit from the single currency and UK demands for EU institutional and sovereignty reform. In Greece, voters in two general elections and a national referendum backed a new left-wing Syriza government that rejected the economic austerity programme being imposed by the EU and IMF, but was nevertheless forced to negotiate further conditional bailout credit lines. Meanwhile, the election of an all-Conservative government in the UK saw Prime Minister David Cameron press for a repatriation of powers from Brussels to the British parliament amid growing public disaffection with EU membership. At the same time the UK election decimated Liberal Democrat parliamentary representation and prompted a change of leadership—and a left-wing policy lurch—in the opposition Labour Party.

In Myanmar the veteran human rights campaigner Aung San Suu Kyi led the opposition National League for Democracy to victory in parliamentary elections, heralding the end of repressive military control of the country, while the electoral success in Nigeria of former military dictator Muhammadu Buhari marked the first democratic handover of political power to an opposition candidate since the country's independence. There were also

important polls ushering in other new leaders in Sri Lanka, Poland, Portugal, Canada and Argentina, as inconclusive voting in Spain led to coalition negotiations stretching into 2016. Meanwhile, Malcolm Turnbull deposed Tony Abbott as the Liberal Party prime minister of Australia, and women were allowed to vote and stand for public office for the first time in Saudi Arabia in municipal elections.

Major diplomatic achievements included the signature of a comprehensive agreement between Iran and the United Nations Security Council's five permanent members—China, France, Russia, the UK and the USA—plus Germany, lifting a number of US, EU and UN sanctions on Iran in return for a scaling down of the country's nuclear development activities. Also, the USA and Cuba reopened their respective embassies, 54 years after diplomatic ties had been severed in 1961. In Colombia the government and the leftist rebel group FARC agreed a Cuban-brokered deal aiming to end a conflict spanning over 50 years. And for its efforts to build democracy in Tunisia since the 2011 revolution, the National Dialogue Quartet, representing trade unionists, lawyers, human rights activists and employers, won the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize.

In social affairs the ebola virus, mainly concentrated in West Africa, was gradually contained during the year having claimed around 11,000 lives, while the Chinese communist government announced the abandonment of the country's controversial one-child policy in force for the previous 35 years. Ireland became the first country to legalize same-sex marriage by national referendum.

The world economy remained constrained as the rate of growth in China—a principal driver of global performance—slowed to its lowest level for more than 20 years, generating stock market turbulence. The IMF nevertheless voted to add the yuan as the fifth member of its special drawing rights (SDR) currency basket alongside the US dollar, Japanese yen, British pound and the euro. The year also saw the finalization of the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trading accord between 12 countries representing 40% of the world's economy (although excluding China). Corporate malpractice meanwhile came to light as major German motor manufacturer and exporter Volkswagen admitted installing sophisticated computer software in its diesel cars to cheat pollution emissions tests. Alleged top-level administrative corruption also tainted the reputations of FIFA and the IAAF, the international sporting authorities governing football and athletics.

In another bad year for disasters, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan suffered crippling earthquakes, killing thousands, while avalanches in Afghanistan claimed 300 more lives. In China explosions at an industrial warehouse in Tianjin laid waste a 2-km surrounding area, and in Saudi Arabia hundreds died in a stampede of Muslim worshippers near Makkah (Mecca) in the hajj pilgrimage. As well as the downing of the Russian airliner over Egypt, a German passenger aircraft crashed in the French Alps in an apparent suicidal act by the co-pilot.

Amid further weather extremes, 2015 was deemed the warmest year on record, underlying a landmark UN climate change agreement reached in December on limiting the global average temperature rise.

WORLD POPULATION DEVELOPMENTS

1950		
1. China		544,113,000
2. India		376,325,000
3. USSR		180,980,000
4. USA		157,813,000
5. Japan		82,199,000
6. Indonesia		69,543,000
7. Brazil		53,975,000
8. UK		50,616,000
9. West Germany		49,986,000
10. Italy		46,599,000

2015		
1. China		1,376,049,000
2. India		1,311,051,000
3. USA		321,774,000
4. Indonesia		257,564,000
5. Brazil		207,848,000
6. Pakistan		188,925,000
7. Nigeria		182,202,000
8. Bangladesh		160,996,000
9. Russia		143,457,000
10. Mexico		127,017,000

2050		
1. India		1,705,333,000
2. China		1,348,056,000
3. Nigeria		398,508,000
4. USA		388,865,000
5. Indonesia		322,237,000
6. Pakistan		309,640,000
7. Brazil		238,270,000
8. Bangladesh		202,209,000
9. Congo, Democratic Republic of the		195,277,000
10. Ethiopia		188,455,000

Source: United Nations World Population Prospects (2015 Revision)

LARGEST URBAN AGGLOMERATIONS

1950		
1. New York-Newark, USA		12,338,000
2. Tokyo, Japan		11,275,000
3. London, United Kingdom		8,361,000
4. Osaka, Japan ¹		7,005,000
5. Paris, France		6,283,000
6. Moscow, USSR		5,356,000
7. Buenos Aires, Argentina		5,098,000
8. Chicago, USA		4,999,000
9. Calcutta, India		4,513,000
10. Shanghai, China		4,301,000

¹Plus major neighbouring cities, including Kobe and Kyoto.

2015		
1. Tokyo, Japan		38,001,000
2. Delhi, India		25,703,000
3. Shanghai, China		23,741,000
4. São Paulo, Brazil		21,066,000
5. Mumbai (Bombay), India		21,043,000
6. Mexico City, Mexico		20,999,000
7. Beijing, China		20,384,000
8. Osaka, Japan ¹		20,238,000
9. Cairo, Egypt		18,772,000
10. New York-Newark, USA		18,593,000

¹Plus major neighbouring cities, including Kobe and Kyoto.

2025		
1. Tokyo, Japan		37,876,000
2. Delhi, India		32,727,000
3. Shanghai, China		29,442,000
4. Beijing, China		26,494,000
5. Mumbai (Bombay), India		25,207,000
6. Dhaka, Bangladesh		24,331,000
7. Mexico City, Mexico		22,916,000
8. São Paulo, Brazil		22,899,000
9. Cairo, Egypt		22,432,000
10. Karachi, Pakistan		22,009,000

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division, World Urbanization Prospects (2014 Revision)

KEY WORLD FACTS

• World population in 2016	7,433 million (3,749 million males and 3,683 million females)
• World population under 30 in 2016	3,733 million
• World population over 60 in 2016	929 million
• World population over 100 in 2016	477,000
• World median age (both sexes)	29.9
• Number of births worldwide every day	384,000
• Number of deaths worldwide every day	157,000
• Number of women married before the age of 18	720 million
• Number of women married before the age of 15	250 million
• World economic growth rate in 2015	3.1% (3.4% in 2014)
• Number of illiterate adults	757 million
• Number of unemployed people	197 million
• Average world life expectancy	73.7 years for females; 69.2 years for males
• Annual world population increase	83.1 million people
• Number of people living outside country of birth	232 million, or more than 3% of the world's population
• Fertility rate	2.5 births per woman
• Urban population	53.6% of total population
• World trade in 2013	US\$38,093 billion
• Annual world defence expenditure	US\$1,676 billion
• Number of cigarettes smoked	5,800 billion a year
• Number of internet users	3.4 billion
• Number of emails sent per day	205.6 billion
• Number of Facebook users	1.6 billion
• Number of mobile phone users	7.1 billion
• Percentage of women in national parliaments	22.6%
• Percentage of senior management positions held by women	24%
• Number of people living in extreme poverty	836 million
• Number of people living in slums	863 million
• Number of undernourished people	795 million
• Number of overweight adults	1.9 billion
• Number of obese adults	600 million
• Number of people lacking clean drinking water	663 million
• Number of people lacking basic sanitation	2.4 billion
• Number of people living with HIV/AIDS	36.9 million
• Number of people suffering from depression worldwide	350 million
• Annual carbon dioxide emissions	35.7 billion tonnes

RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

Each country's entry in *The Statesman's Yearbook* includes a section on Further Reading, containing recommended books that go into more detail on the country in question. Among the titles published in 2015 that have been added for the 2017 edition are:

Agenda Dynamics in Spain by Laura Chaqués Bonafont, Anna M. Palau and Frank R. Baumgartner. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Anonymous Soldiers: The Struggle for Israel, 1917–1947 by Bruce Hoffman. Knopf, New York.

Blood, Dreams and Gold: The Changing Face of Burma by Richard Cockett. Yale University Press, New Haven and London.

Boko Haram: Inside Nigeria's Unholy War by Mike Smith. I.B. Tauris, London.

Britain and the Crisis of the European Union by David Baker and Pauline Schnapper. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Deng Xiaoping: A Revolutionary Life by Alexander Pantsov and Steven Levine. Oxford University Press, New York.

The Euro Experiment by Paul Wallace. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine by Serhii Plokhy. Allen Lane, London.

God's Bankers: A History of Money and Power at the Vatican by Gerald Posner. Simon & Schuster, New York.

Great Catastrophe: Armenians and Turks in the Shadow of Genocide by Thomas de Waal. Oxford University Press, New York.

The History of Modern France: From the Revolution to the Present Day by Jonathan Fenby. Simon and Schuster, London.

Indonesia's Ascent: Power, Leadership, and the Regional Order by Christopher B. Roberts, Ahmad D. Habir and Leonard C. Sebastian (eds.). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

The Invention of Russia: The Journey from Gorbachev's Freedom to Putin's War by Arkady Ostrovsky. Atlantic Books, London.

ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror by Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan. Regan Arts, New York.

Kissinger: 1923–1968: The Idealist by Niall Fergusson. Allen Lane, London.

The Maldives: Islamic Republic, Tropical Autocracy by J. J. Robinson. C. Hurst & Co., London.

Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's Partition by Nisid Hajari. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston.

North Korea Confidential: Private Markets, Fashion Trends, Prison Camps, Dissenters and Defectors by Daniel Tudor and James Pearson. Tuttle Publishing, Clarendon, Vermont.

Reagan: The Life by H. W. Brands. Doubleday, New York.

The Rebel of Rangoon: A Tale of Defiance and Deliverance in Burma by Delphine Schrank. Nation Books, New York.

Restart: The Last Chance for the Indian Economy by Mihir Sharma. Random House India, Gurgaon.

The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution by Patrick Cockburn. Verso, London.

Russia and the New World Disorder by Bobo Lo. Brookings Institution Press/Chatham House, London.

Turkey and the European Union by Senem Aydın-Düzgit and Nathalie Tocci. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

CHRONOLOGY

April 2015–March 2016

Week beginning 5 April 2015

In Haiti, foreign minister Duly Brutus resigned and was subsequently replaced by Lener Renaud on an interim basis.

A new coalition government comprised of the Estonian Reform Party, the Social Democratic Party, and the Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica was approved by parliament in Estonia. Taavi Rõivas remained prime minister and key cabinet positions were retained by members of the previous government.

A cabinet reshuffle took place in Malawi. Atupele Muluze became minister of home affairs and internal security while other key portfolios remained unchanged.

Enele Sopoaga was sworn in as prime minister of Tuvalu.

Week beginning 12 April 2015

Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir was re-elected to a fifth term as president of Sudan, claiming victory in the first elections held since the secession of South Sudan in 2011. Bashir took 94.0% of the vote against 15 other candidates. However, several opposition parties had boycotted the elections citing the government's repressive measures against civil society and the media.

Miguel Engonga Obiang Eyang became finance and budget minister of Equatorial Guinea.

Week beginning 19 April 2015

Parliamentary elections took place in Finland. The Centre Party (KESK) won 49 seats, the Finns Party (PS) 38, the National Coalition Party (KOK) 37, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) 34, the Green League (VIHR) 15, the Left Alliance (VAS) 12, the Swedish People's Party (SFP) 9 and the Christian Democrats (KD) 5. One representative from the province of Åland was also elected. Prime minister Alexander Stubb of the KOK resigned later that month to allow the formation of a new government that would be led by Juha Sipilä of KESK.

Almaz Baketayev was appointed acting finance minister of Kyrgyzstan following Olga Lavrova's resignation earlier in the month.

Loretta Lynch was sworn in as attorney general of the United States, making her the first African-American woman and second woman to hold the position.

Faure Gnassingbé was re-elected president of Togo, receiving 58.8% of the vote against Jean-Pierre Fabre with 32.5% and three other candidates. Turnout was 60.9%.

Week beginning 26 April 2015

Parliamentary elections took place in Benin. The Cowry Forces for an Emerging Benin–Amana Alliance supporting president Yayi Boni won, taking 33 of 83 seats, ahead of Union Makes the Nation with 13.

Nursultan Nazarbayev was again re-elected president of Kazakhstan, extending his mandate by another five years. He subsequently reappointed prime minister Karim Masimov at the head of an unchanged government.

A cabinet reshuffle took place in the Comoros. Abdoukarim Mohamed was appointed minister of external relations and Houmed M'saidie minister of the interior.

South Korean prime minister Lee Wan-koo, who had been implicated in a bribery scandal, had his resignation accepted by

president Park Geun-hye. The premiership remained vacant following Lee's departure.

In Saudi Arabia, the second cabinet reshuffle since King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud's accession to the throne three months earlier took place. Salman's nephew and interior minister Prince Mohammad bin Naif bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud was designated as the new heir apparent to the throne, becoming deputy prime minister. Additionally, Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir became foreign minister, taking over from Prince Saud Al-Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud who retired having held the position since 1975.

Temir Sariyev was sworn in as prime minister of Kyrgyzstan, succeeding Dzhoomart Otorbayev who had resigned a week earlier following government turmoil surrounding the country's financial crisis. Sariyev's cabinet included several new appointments, with Adylbek Kasymaliev becoming finance minister and Oleg Pankratov economy minister. Other key positions remained unchanged.

Week beginning 3 May 2015

Avigdor Lieberman resigned as foreign minister of Israel, declaring that he would not join Binyamin Netanyahu's new government which was being formed at the time.

Despite polls suggesting a very close result, the Conservative Party won an outright majority of 331 seats at general elections in the United Kingdom. The Labour Party won 232 seats, down from 258, and the Liberal Democrats lost 49 seats taking their total tally down to 8. However, the Scottish National Party made huge gains, increasing its share of seats at Westminster by 50 to 56 and becoming the third largest party. As a consequence, prime minister David Cameron was able to form a new all-Conservative administration, changes to which included Michael Gove as secretary of state for justice and Sajid Javid as secretary of state for business, innovation and skills. Conservative ministers holding key portfolios before the election retained their positions.

Week beginning 10 May 2015

In a cabinet reshuffle in Chile, Jorge Burgos became interior minister, Rodrigo Valdés finance minister and José Antonio Gómez defence minister. Other key portfolios remained unchanged.

David Granger of A Partnership for National Unity (in coalition with the Alliance for Change) was elected president of Guyana, winning with 50.3% of the vote.

In Micronesia, Peter M. Christian was appointed president.

Macedonian prime minister Nikola Gruevski reshuffled his cabinet following protests in the capital against his government. Mitko Chavkov became interior minister while other key portfolios remained unchanged.

Andreja Katič was sworn in as defence minister of Slovenia, taking over from Janko Veber. Veber had been dismissed the previous month following allegations he had illegally utilized Slovenia's military intelligence to assess the privatization of the state's telecommunications service.

A cabinet reshuffle took place in Algeria. Noureddine Bedoui became interior minister and Abderrahmane Benkhalfa finance minister.

In Guatemala, Alejandro Maldonado was sworn in as vice president following the resignation of Roxana Baldetti the previous week amid a corruption scandal.

In Israel, prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu's new five-party coalition government was approved by the Knesset. Included in the cabinet were Silvan Shalom as deputy prime minister and interior minister, and Moshe Kahlon as finance minister. Netanyahu took on the foreign affairs portfolio himself.

Week beginning 17 May 2015

In Burundi, Alain Aimé Nyamitwe was sworn in as minister of external affairs and Emmanuel Ntahomvukiye as minister of national defence following a cabinet reshuffle.

Salamah Hammad was appointed interior minister of Jordan.

In Guatemala, Eunice Mendizábal became interior minister.

Week beginning 24 May 2015

Andrzej Duda won presidential elections in Poland, taking 51.5% of the vote against Bronisław Komorowski with 48.5% in a second round run-off.

Parliamentary elections took place in Suriname in which the National Democratic Party won 26 of 51 seats. The V7 coalition was second with 18 followed by A-Combination with 5. Two other parties won a seat each.

In Madagascar, president Hery Rajaonarimampianina lost a parliamentary vote of no confidence by 121 votes to 4. Opposition parties (holding a majority of seats in parliament) claimed that he had violated the constitution and parliamentary conventions since coming to power in January 2014. However, his attempted impeachment was later dismissed by the constitutional court in June.

A new coalition government led by Juha Sipilä of the Centre Party was appointed in Finland. It included Timo Soini as deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, and Petteri Orpo as interior minister. Former prime minister Alexander Stubb—who had been replaced by Sipilä—joined the government as finance minister.

Week beginning 31 May 2015

Raimonds Vējonis won presidential elections in Latvia after five rounds of parliamentary voting. Vējonis, who was the incumbent defence minister, defeated three other candidates.

Ameenah Gurib-Fakim was elected president of Mauritius.

In Sudan, Ibrahim Ghandour was sworn in as foreign minister.

Week beginning 7 June 2015

Parliamentary elections took place in Turkey. The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) lost 53 seats compared to the polling in 2011, taking 258 of 550 seats with 40.9% of the vote. Opposition parties increased their representation in parliament with the Republican People's Party gaining 132 seats (25.0%), the Nationalist Movement Party 80 (16.3%) and the People's Democratic Party 80 (13.1%). The elections were marred by violence amid accusations of fraud and corruption, but were judged to be fair by European Parliament and OSCE observers.

In Vanuatu, the government of prime minister Joe Natuman lost a confidence vote in parliament by 27 votes to 25. The following day Sato Kilman took over as premier for the fourth time and appointed a new cabinet that included Hosea Nevu as minister of internal affairs and Serge Vohor as minister of foreign affairs.

Chiril Gaburici announced his resignation as prime minister of Moldova following allegations he had falsified his school diplomas. Natalia Gherman took over as interim prime minister later in the month.

Romanian prime minister Victor Ponta survived a parliamentary vote of no confidence, which gained only 194 of the required 278 votes.

Week beginning 14 June 2015

The Palestinian Fatah– Hamas unity government led by prime minister Rami Hamdallah resigned following claims by president Mahmoud Abbas that it was unable to function in Gaza. Abbas subsequently asked Hamdallah to form a new government.

In Benin, a new government was sworn in. Lionel Zinsou was appointed prime minister, heading a cabinet that included new appointees Salio Akadiri as foreign minister and Placide Azandé as interior minister. Other key portfolios remained unchanged.

Parliamentary elections took place in Denmark. The Social Democratic Party won 47 of 175 mainland seats with 26.3% of the vote, the Danish People's Party 37 with 21.1%, the Liberal Party 34 with 19.5%, the Unity List—the Red-Greens 14 with 7.8% and the Liberal Alliance 13 with 7.5%. Other parties won ten seats or fewer. Although the Social Democratic Party won the most seats, the Liberal Party-led 'Blue bloc' took 90 seats compared to 85 for the Social Democratic Party-led 'Red bloc'.

French prime minister Manuel Valls survived a parliamentary vote of no confidence, which gained only 198 of the required 289 votes. The vote was called by opposition parties denouncing Valls' decision to bypass parliament in pushing through a number of economic reforms using an obscure constitutional mechanism.

Hwang Kyo-ahn was sworn in as prime minister of South Korea following Lee Wan-koo's resignation in April.

Week beginning 21 June 2015

Luis Carlos Villegas became defence minister of Colombia.

In Spain, Íñigo Méndez de Vigo y Montojo took over from José Ignacio Wert as minister of education, culture and sport.

Week beginning 28 June 2015

A new government was appointed in Denmark following elections held earlier in the month. Lars Løkke Rasmussen, who had previously served as prime minister from 2009–11, returned to the premiership, leading a Liberal government that included Kristian Jensen as foreign affairs minister and Claus Hjort Frederiksen as finance minister.

The ruling National Council for the Defence of Democracy– Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD–FDD) won parliamentary elections in Burundi, taking 77 of 100 seats with 60.3% of the vote. Despite opposition parties officially boycotting elections they remained on the ballot and won 23 seats, of which the Hope for Burundians coalition took 21 with 11.2% and Union for National Progress 2 with 2.5%.

In Madagascar, prime minister Jean Ravelonarivo survived a parliamentary vote of no confidence, which received only 95 of the required 101 votes.

The Afghan parliament rejected Masoum Stanikzai's candidacy for the defence portfolio. Stanikzai, who had been acting as interim defence minister, was the second nominee to be rejected by parliament during Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai's presidency.

Week beginning 5 July 2015

A referendum on whether to accept financial bailout conditions offered by the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank took place in Greece; 61.3% of voters rejected the terms of the deal that was described by prime minister Alexis Tsipras as 'humiliating'. Finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, who had clashed with EU leaders during the negotiations, resigned the following day and was replaced by Efkleidis Tsakalotos.

In a cabinet reshuffle in Zimbabwe, Ignatius Chombo was sworn in as home affairs minister. Other key portfolios remained unchanged.

A cabinet reshuffle took place in Laos, including Khammanh Sounvileuth taking over as interior affairs minister and Brig.-Gen. Somkeo Silavong as public security minister.

Raimonds Vējonis was sworn in as president of Latvia, becoming the EU's first head of state affiliated to a green party. Raimonds Bergmanis subsequently took over the defence portfolio recently vacated by Vējonis.

Gen. Pak Yong-sik was confirmed by the North Korean government as the country's new defence minister. His predecessor, Hyon Yong-chol, had allegedly been executed in April on insubordination charges.

Week beginning 12 July 2015

The 'Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action' was signed between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States—plus Germany. The treaty, which had been subject to a number of delays and extensions since the adoption of its precursor (the 'Joint Plan of Action') in November 2013, lifted a number of US, EU and UN sanctions on Iran in return for a scaling down of the country's nuclear development activities.

Dési Bouterse was re-elected as president of Suriname. He ran unopposed.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dragan Čović took over the eight-month rotating presidency chairmanship.

In Estonia, Marina Kaljurand was sworn in as foreign minister, replacing Keit Pentus-Rosimannus who resigned at the start of the month.

Week beginning 19 July 2015

A major cabinet reshuffle took place in Burkina Faso amid rising tensions between prime minister Isaac Zida and military officials. President Michel Kafondo took over the defence portfolio from the prime minister, in addition to the security portfolio held by Col. Auguste Denise Barry. Zida subsequently handed over the foreign affairs portfolio to Moussa Nebie.

In cabinet changes in the Central African Republic, Samuel Rangba was sworn in as foreign minister and Dominique Saïd Paguindji as public security minister.

The USA and Cuba reopened their respective embassies in Havana and Washington, D.C. 54 years after diplomatic ties were severed in 1961. Relations had been normalized following months of secret negotiations between the two countries held in Canada and Vatican City State.

Presidential elections took place in Burundi. Incumbent president Pierre Nkurunziza won with 69.4% of the vote against his nearest rival, Agathon Rwasa, with 19.0%. Several opposition parties boycotted the election amid controversy over Nkurunziza's eligibility for a third term. However, their names (including Agathon Rwasa, who had called for a boycott) appeared on the ballot paper nonetheless. Turnout was 73.4%.

In the Maldives, vice president Mohamed Jameel Ahmed lost a parliamentary vote of no confidence by 78 votes to 2. He was replaced by Ahmed Adeb.

Week beginning 26 July 2015

Valeriu Streleț of the Liberal Democratic Party became prime minister of Moldova following Chiril Gaburici's resignation in June. His new government included Anatol Șalaru as defence minister, Vladimir Cebotari as justice minister and Ruxanda

Glavan as minister of health. Other key portfolios remained the same.

In Georgia, corrections minister Giorgi Mghebrishvili became interior minister. He took over from Vakhtang Gomelauri, who had been appointed head of the state's security agency.

Week beginning 2 August 2015

In Bhutan, Lyonpo Damcho Dorji was appointed foreign minister taking over from Rinzin Dorji.

Despite opposition from president Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj, Mongolian prime minister Chimed Saikhanbileg dismissed all six Mongolian People's Party members from his cabinet following a parliamentary endorsement.

Andrzej Duda was sworn in as president of Poland following his victory at the elections in May. He took over from Bronisław Komorowski, whose five-year term came to an end following a narrow defeat to Duda over two voting rounds.

Week beginning 9 August 2015

A cabinet reshuffle took place in the Republic of the Congo. Jean-Claude Gakosso became foreign minister with all other key portfolios remaining unchanged.

In Libya, the prime minister of the Tobruk-based government, Abdullah al-Thamay, announced his resignation on television after being blamed for the lack of amenities and security by members of the public. However, he withdrew his offer to resign the following week.

In Guinea-Bissau, the government of prime minister Domingos Simões Pereira was dismissed by president José Mário Vaz following a series of disagreements, notably over the allocation of aid money and the appointment of a new armed forces chief. Baciro Djá was sworn in as Pereira's replacement eight days later.

The inauguration of a new government in Suriname included Ashwin Adhin as vice-president, Niermala Badrising as foreign minister, Ronni Benschop as defence minister, Gillmore Hoefdraad as finance minister and Mike Noersalim as home affairs minister.

Brig.-Gen. Williams Mansilla Fernández was appointed defence minister of Guatemala.

Week beginning 16 August 2015

In Malawi, president Peter Mutharika reshuffled his cabinet following allegations of ministerial corruption. Jean Kalilani became minister of home affairs and internal security, taking over from Atupele Muluzi who became minister of lands, housing and urban development.

The United National Front for Good Governance alliance led by the United National Party won parliamentary elections in Sri Lanka. Taking 106 of 225 seats, the UNFGG increased its share of seats by 46 but failed to gain a majority, with the United People's Freedom Alliance (led by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party) winning 95 seats. Four other alliances and parties took the remaining 24 seats.

Turkish prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu returned his mandate to president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan after failing to find a coalition partner to form a government following the June election. At the request of the president, Davutoğlu subsequently formed an interim government to oversee fresh elections scheduled to take place in November. Included in the cabinet were Selami Altınok as interior minister and Feridun Hadi Sinirlioğlu as foreign minister.

In the Netherlands, the government of prime minister Mark Rutte survived a parliamentary vote of no confidence by 120 votes to 13. The motion was put forward by the Eurosceptic politician Geert Wilders over Rutte's backing of a proposed aid package for

Greece, which reneged on a pre-election promise that no further assistance would be given to the debt-stricken country.

Alexis Tsipras resigned as prime minister of Greece and called for new elections, stating that 'Greeks would have to decide whether he had represented them courageously with the creditors' during the financial bailout talks with European Union institutions and the IMF. A week later, Vassiliki Thanou-Christophilou was appointed head of an interim government that included Antonis Maniatis as interior minister and Petros Molyviatis as foreign minister.

In a cabinet reshuffle in Thailand, Apisak Tantivorawong became finance minister and Don Pramudwinai foreign minister.

Week beginning 23 August 2015

A cabinet reshuffle took place in Chad in response to deadly attacks in the capital by the Nigeria-based Islamist Boko Haram group. Ahmat Mahamat Bachir was appointed public security and immigration minister and Abdelkerim Seid Bauche minister of territorial administration.

In Burundi, Gaston Sindimwo was sworn in as first vice-president and Joseph Butore as second vice-president following president Pierre Nkurunziza's re-election in July. Pascal Barandagiye was named interior minister and Aimée Laurentine Kanyana justice minister in the new cabinet, with other key posts unchanged.

Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto reshuffled his cabinet, with José Antonio Meade moving from the ministry of foreign affairs to the social development ministry—a move widely regarded as a precursor to a potential presidential bid by Meade in 2018. Claudia Ruiz Massieu took over the foreign affairs portfolio.

Week beginning 30 August 2015

Giorgi Kvirikashvili was sworn in as foreign minister of Georgia, taking over from Tamar Beruchashvili.

Guatemalan president Otto Pérez Molina resigned after prosecutors presented evidence of his involvement in the same customs ring scandal that had prompted the resignation of alleged co-colluder and vice-president Roxana Baldetti in May. Vice-president Alejandro Maldonado Aguirre took over the presidency on an interim basis. Having been stripped of his immunity from prosecution by Congress, Molina was subsequently arrested and jailed.

Samuel Weymouth Tapley Seaton was sworn in as governor-general of St Kitts and Nevis. Seaton had been acting as governor-general since May when Sir Edmund Wickham Lawrence was removed from office by the new government.

A new cabinet comprised chiefly of members of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the United National Party was appointed in Sri Lanka. It included S. B. Nawinne as minister of internal affairs, north western development and cultural affairs and Mangala Samaraweera as minister of foreign affairs.

Week beginning 6 September 2015

In the first round of presidential elections in Guatemala, Jimmy Morales of the Frente de Convergencia Nacional took 23.8% of the vote, Sandra Torres of the Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza 19.8% and Manuel Baldizón of the Libertad Democrática Renovada 19.6%. 11 other candidates received less than 7% of the vote each. Turnout was 71.1%. A run-off between Morales and Torres was scheduled to take place seven weeks later.

A new government led by prime minister Baciro Djá was named in Guinea-Bissau. However, two days later the supreme court ruled that Djá's appointment in August was unconstitutional, stating that parliament had not been properly consulted. Djá immediately resigned as prime minister.

The People's National Movement won 23 of 41 seats at parliamentary elections in Trinidad and Tobago. PNM leader Keith Rowley was sworn in as prime minister two days later, taking over from Kamla Persad-Bissessar whose United National Congress took only 18 seats. Rowley's cabinet included Colm Imbert as finance minister and Dennis Moses as foreign minister.

In Hungary, István Simicskó took over from Csaba Hende as defence minister. Hende had resigned amid an influx of migrants illegally entering the country and delays in the construction of a 160-km (100-mile) fence between Hungary and Serbia.

In Northern Ireland, Peter Robinson temporarily stood aside as first minister after parties rejected a proposal to adjourn power-sharing institutions in the wake of allegations that the IRA had been involved in a recent murder in Belfast. Robinson stated that the continued existence of IRA structures 'pushed devolution to the brink' following Sinn Féin's denial that the organization still existed. He appointed Arlene Foster to serve again as acting first minister, having previously done so in 2010.

A cabinet reshuffle in Gabon, which aimed to create a unified government before the 2016 elections, included Pacôme Moubelet Boubeya as interior minister and Mathias Otounga Ossibadjou as defence minister. However, a number of opposition members turned down positions in the cabinet.

Ardouin Zéphirin was appointed interior minister in a cabinet reshuffle in Haiti. Other key portfolios remained unchanged.

Parliamentary elections took place in Singapore. The ruling People's Action Party won 83 of 89 seats (with 69.9% of votes cast) and the Workers' Party took six seats (with 12.5%). Seven other parties failed to gain any seats.

Egypt's prime minister Ibrahim Mahlab resigned amid a corruption probe into another cabinet member and following widespread national criticism of his government's performance. Sherif Ismail, who had served as minister of petroleum and mineral resources since July 2013, was appointed prime minister a week later with key portfolios remaining unchanged.

The Ugandan internal affairs minister Aronda Nyakairima died of a heart attack while conducting official duties abroad.

Week beginning 13 September 2015

The European migrant crisis reached its peak to date when Hungary received 5,809 refugees in a single day at its border fence and Germany temporarily suspended its Schengen Accord border obligations with Austria. Approximately 500,000 migrants—mostly from Syria, Iraq, Kosovo, Albania and Afghanistan—had arrived in the European Union since the beginning of 2015, with EU states struggling to agree on how to distribute the new arrivals fairly.

Hannes Hanso was sworn in as defence minister of Estonia.

In Australia, prime minister Tony Abbott was defeated by Malcolm Turnbull in a Liberal Party leadership ballot by 54 votes to 44. Turnbull took over from Abbott as party leader, and a day later was sworn in as the new premier. His cabinet retained many of the previous government's key ministers, with Marise Payne taking over the defence portfolio.

In Burkina Faso, president Michel Kafando and prime minister Isaac Zida were detained by members of the presidential guard loyal to ex-president Blaise Compaoré. However, a deal between the presidential guard and the regular army was agreed a week later and Kafando and Zida returned to power.

Carlos Correia was sworn in as prime minister of Guinea-Bissau, having served in the position on three previous occasions.

Week beginning 20 September 2015

Snap parliamentary elections took place in Greece following Alexis Tsipras' resignation from the premiership a month earlier.

The Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) won 145 of 300 seats with 35.5% of the vote, ahead of New Democracy (ND) with 75 seats and 28.1%. Smaller parties and coalitions took the remaining 80 seats. As a result, Tsipras was able to renew his Syriza anti-austerity coalition government with the Independent Greeks.

In Finland, prime minister Juha Sipilä's three-party coalition government won a parliamentary vote of confidence by 104 votes to 60. Opposition parties had tabled the motion following proposed cuts to education.

A deal between the Colombian government and the leftist rebel group FARC was agreed in Havana, Cuba. President Juan Manuel Santos and rebel leader Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri (aka 'Timochenko') stated that the two sides had agreed on a number of terms, including amnesty for FARC members, aiming to end the conflict that had spanned over 50 years. The government also agreed to increased development of rural areas and future political inclusion of FARC members. A final accord between the two sides was anticipated in 2016.

In a cabinet reshuffle in Mali, Sanogo Aminata Mallé was appointed justice minister and Col. Salif Traoré security minister.

Crispin Atama Tabe was sworn in as defence minister following a cabinet reshuffle in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Other key portfolios remained unchanged.

Week beginning 27 September 2015

Romanian prime minister Victor Ponta survived a parliamentary vote of no confidence, which only gained 207 of the required 275 votes needed to pass the motion.

In Denmark, Peter Christensen replaced Carl Holst as defence minister. Holst had stepped down after it emerged that he had accepted a large pay-off from his previous job as administrative chairman of the South Denmark (Syddanmark) region.

Lorella Stefanlli and Nicola Renzi were sworn in as Captains Regent of San Marino.

In Singapore, the new government was sworn in following elections earlier in the month. Prime minister Lee Hsien Loong's cabinet included Kasiviswanathan Shanmugam as home affairs minister, Vivian Balakrishnan as foreign minister and Heng Swee Keat as finance minister.

In Brazil, president Dilma Rousseff shuffled her cabinet in response to escalating costs associated with federal administration. Aldo Rebelo was sworn in as defence minister, Aloizio Mercadante as education minister and Marcelo Castro as health minister. All ministers were also required to accept a 10% pay cut.

Sushil Koirala resigned as prime minister of Nepal following the adoption of a new constitution.

Week beginning 4 October 2015

Parliamentary elections took place in Kyrgyzstan. The Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan won 38 of 120 seats followed by Ata-Zhurt (Fatherland) with 28, the Kyrgyzstan Party 18, Onuguu-Progress 13, Bir Bol 12 and Ata Meken 11. Turnout was 57.6%.

The Portugal Ahead alliance formed by the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the CDS–People's Party (CDS–PP) won the country's parliamentary elections, taking 102 of 230 seats with 36.9% of the vote. The Socialist Party (PS) followed with 86 seats and 32.3% with five other alliances and parties winning the remaining seats. Turnout was 55.9%. Incumbent prime minister Pedro Passos Coelho was subsequently asked by president Aníbal Cavaco Silva to form a government.

A new government led by prime minister Hailemariam Desalegn was formed in Ethiopia. The cabinet included new finance

minister Abdulaziz Mohammed but other key portfolios remained unchanged.

Greece's government led by prime minister Alexis Tsipras, which had taken office two weeks earlier, won a parliamentary vote of confidence by 155 votes to 144.

Week beginning 11 October 2015

Alyaksandr Lukashenka secured a fifth consecutive term in office by winning presidential elections in Belarus with 84.1% of the vote. Three other candidates contested the poll but, despite independent observers noting a slight improvement in electoral procedures over previous years, veteran opposition figures were still banned from taking part.

In Guinea, Alpha Condé was returned as president with 57.9% of the vote against Callou Dalein Diallo with 31.4% in only the second democratic elections to have ever taken place in the country. Outbreaks of violence were reported during the campaign phase of the election, and at least three people died in clashes between rival groups.

Jioji Konrote was elected president of Fiji through indirect voting.

Week beginning 18 October 2015

Parliamentary elections took place in Switzerland. The Swiss People's Party/Centre Democratic Union won 65 of 200 seats in the National Council with 29.4% of the vote, against the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland with 43 and 18.8%, FDP. The Liberals 33 and 16.4%, the Christian Democratic People's Party 27 and 11.6% and the Green Party 11 and 7.1%. Seven other parties took the remaining 21 seats and turnout was 48.4%.

The opposition Liberal Party led by Justin Trudeau won parliamentary elections in Canada taking 184 of 338 seats with 39.5% of the vote—an increase of 150 seats over the previous election, representing the largest ever gain by a political party in Canadian electoral history. The Conservative Party came second with 99 seats and 31.9 of votes, followed by the New Democratic Party with 44 and 19.7%, the Bloc Québécois 10 and 4.7% and the Green Party 1 and 3.5%. Turnout was 68.5%, up from 61.4% in 2011.

In the Solomon Islands, seven cabinet ministers including former prime minister Derek Sikua resigned from the government of Manasseh Sogavare citing concerns over his leadership style.

A cabinet reshuffle took place in Brunei. The sultan and prime minister, Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzadin Waddaulah, took over the foreign affairs portfolio and Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Kerna Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Abu Bakar bin Haji Apong was appointed home affairs minister. Other key posts remained unchanged.

Week beginning 25 October 2015

The first round of presidential elections took place in Argentina, in which Daniel Scioli of the Front for Victory won 37.1% of the vote against Mauricio Macri of the Let's Change coalition with 34.2% and Sergio Massa of the United for a New Alternative coalition with 21.4%. There were three other candidates. Turnout was 80.9%. A second round run-off between Scioli and Macri was scheduled to take place four weeks later. Parliamentary elections were also held, in which 130 of the 257 congressional seats that were not contested at the previous elections two years earlier were at stake. Following the elections the Front for Victory lost its majority in the Chamber of Deputies, but kept control of the Senate.

Alassane Ouattara was re-elected president of Côte d'Ivoire with 83.7% of the vote against Affi N'Guessan with 9.3%. Turnout was 54.6% with campaigning and voting carried out relatively peacefully despite a boycott by the main opposition party, the Ivorian Popular Front.

Jimmy Morales won presidential elections in Guatemala, taking 67.4% of the vote against Sandra Torres with 32.6% in a second round run-off.

In Haiti, Jovenel Moïse won 32.8% of the vote in presidential elections against Jude Célestin with 25.3% and Moïse Jean-Charles with 14.3%; 50 other candidates participated. Since no candidate received a majority of the vote, a second round run-off between Moïse and Célestin was scheduled to take place nine weeks later.

The Law and Justice Party (PiS) won parliamentary elections in Poland with 235 of 460 seats and 37.6% of the vote against the ruling Civic Platform with 138 seats and 24.1%, Kukiz' 15 (K'15) with 42 and 8.8%, Modern 28 and 7.5%, Polish People's Party (PSL) 16 and 5.1% and German Minority (MN) 1 and 0.2%. The PiS became the first party to achieve an absolute majority in a free election in Poland.

John Magufuli won presidential elections in Tanzania with 58.5% of the vote against Edward Lowassa with 40.0% and six other candidates.

Prime minister Pedro Passos Coelho's second cabinet was formed in Portugal following his Social Democratic Party's success at elections held earlier in the month. João Calvão da Silva was appointed interior minister but other key portfolios remained unchanged.

In a cabinet reshuffle in the Central African Republic, Chrysostome Sambia was sworn in as public security minister and Joseph Bidoumi as defence minister.

In Moldova, the government of prime minister Valeriu Streleț was dismissed by parliament after it lost a vote of no confidence by 65 votes to 18.

Bidhya Devi Bhandari was sworn in as Nepal's first female president a day after parliament had elected her to the post.

Week beginning 1 November 2015

The ruling New Azerbaijan Party won parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan, taking 70 of 125 seats. Civil Solidarity won two seats, with the remaining seats going to smaller parties and independents.

Snap elections took place that were called by Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan following the breakdown of coalition negotiations after elections five months earlier. The ruling Justice and Development Party regained its parliamentary majority by winning 317 of the 550 seats with 49.5% of votes cast, against 134 seats and 25.3% for the Republican People's Party, 59 seats and 10.8% for the People's Democratic Party, and 40 seats and 11.9% for the Nationalist Movement Party. Incumbent prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu was subsequently asked by the president to form a new government.

In parliamentary elections in Belize, the ruling United Democratic Party won 19 of 31 seats with 50.5% of votes cast and the People's United Party 12 with 47.8%. Turnout was 72.7%.

Justin Trudeau was sworn in as prime minister of Canada alongside his new Liberal cabinet, which included Bill Morneau as finance minister, Stéphane Dion as foreign minister and Harjit Sajjan as defence minister. Justin Trudeau became the first child of a previous premier, Pierre Trudeau, to hold the position.

Victor Ponta resigned as prime minister of Romania following public demonstrations over alleged government corruption triggered by a deadly fire in a Bucharest nightclub. Sorin Cîmpeanu took over on an interim basis.

In Kyrgyzstan, a new government led by incumbent prime minister Temir Sariyev was appointed with key portfolios remaining unchanged.

A cabinet reshuffle took place in Nepal. Bishnu Prasad Paudel became finance minister and Bhim Bahadur Rawal defence minister.

John Magufuli was sworn in as president of Tanzania alongside vice-president Samia Suluhu Hassan.

Week beginning 8 November 2015

Parliamentary elections took place in Croatia. The Patriotic Coalition led by the Croatian Democratic Union won 59 seats, the Croatia is Growing coalition led by the Social Democratic Party of Croatia 56 and independent candidates running under the 'Bridge of Independent Lists' platform 19, with the nine remaining seats going to smaller parties and coalitions.

In the first openly contested elections to take place in Myanmar since 1990, the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won 255 of 330 elected seats. The ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party won 30 seats, the Arakan National Party 12 and the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy 12. A further 14 seats went to seven smaller parties and independent candidates, with seven vacant owing to insurgent activity. 110 seats were constitutionally reserved for the military. The results meant that the NLD had the parliamentary majority needed to elect its nominee to the presidency.

Omar Zuhair Malhas was sworn in as finance minister in Jordan following a minor cabinet reshuffle.

Adam Shareef Umar became defence minister of the Maldives.

In Paraguay, Diógenes Martínez took over from Bernardino Soto as defence minister.

The government of Portuguese prime minister Pedro Passos Coelho, which had only been appointed three weeks earlier, lost a parliamentary vote of no confidence by 123 votes to 107. The vote, backed by an alliance of left-wing parties, was tabled in response to austerity measures planned by Coelho.

In a cabinet reshuffle in Macedonia, two members of the left-wing opposition were appointed to ministerial posts following a political crisis that had stretched back to July. Oliver Spasovski became interior minister and Frosina Remenski labour and social affairs minister.

In Nigeria, new cabinet ministers were sworn in. Among the new appointments were foreign minister Geoffrey Onyeama, interior minister Abdulrahman Dambazau and finance minister Kemi Adeosun. Other key portfolios remained unchanged.

Jioji Konrote was elected president of Fiji following a parliamentary vote.

Week beginning 15 November 2015

In Poland, a new government led by Beata Szydło of the Law and Justice Party was sworn in. Appointments in this first non-coalition cabinet since 1989 included Mariusz Błaszczak as interior minister and Witold Waszczykowski as foreign affairs minister.

Rose Akol was sworn in as internal affairs minister of Uganda.

Following the resignation of Victor Ponta, a new government with Dacian Cioloș as prime minister was appointed in Romania. Petre Tobă became interior minister, Lazăr Comănescu foreign affairs minister and Anca Dana Dragu public finance minister.

Week beginning 22 November 2015

With 51.4% of the vote, Mauricio Macri of the Let's Change coalition won the Argentinian presidential elections in a second round run-off against Daniel Scioli of the Front for Victory who took 48.6%. Four other candidates contested the first round held four weeks earlier.

In Turkey, prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's government was sworn in. Many of the ministers in the cabinet had previous experience in their portfolios, including Efkân Ala as interior minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu as foreign minister and Bekir Bozdağ as justice minister.

Havo Moli was sworn in as foreign minister of Vanuatu.

A new coalition government led by António Costa of the Socialist Party was appointed in Portugal. Taking over from the conservative administration of Pedro Passos Coelho that had been ousted two weeks earlier, the cabinet included Mário Centeno as finance minister and Augusto Santos Silva as foreign affairs minister.

Week beginning 29 November 2015

Roch Marc Christian Kaboré was elected president of Burkina Faso with 53.5% of votes cast, defeating Zéphirin Diabré with 29.7% and 12 other candidates. Turnout was 60.0%.

Week beginning 6 December 2015

Parliamentary elections took place in Venezuela. The opposition Unidad Democrática (Democratic Unity Roundtable, MUD) won 109 seats and the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (United Socialist Party of Venezuela, PSUV) 55 with the remaining three seats reserved for indigenous peoples.

Latvian prime minister Laimdota Straujuma announced her resignation, citing a need for a newly energized government. She would retain the position until the appointment of a new candidate.

Mauricio Macri was sworn in as president of Argentina following his victory in the presidential election run-off held three weeks earlier, taking over from Cristina Fernández de Kirchner who had been constitutionally barred from running for a third consecutive term. Macri was joined by new vice-president Gabriela Michetti and a cabinet that included minister of foreign affairs Susana Mabel Malcorra and finance minister Alfonso Prat Gay.

The ruling Unity Labour Party won parliamentary elections in St Vincent and the Grenadines, taking eight of 15 seats against the New Democratic Party with seven. Incumbent prime minister Dr Ralph E. Gonsalves retained his post with new additions to his cabinet including veteran politician Louis Straker as foreign affairs minister.

The majority of newly-elected Tanzanian president John Magufuli's cabinet ministers were sworn in. Included in the government were Charles Kitwanga as minister of home affairs and Augustine Mahiga as minister of foreign affairs, with the finance portfolio remaining vacant until later in the month when Philip Mpango was appointed to the post. Other key positions remained unchanged from the previous administration.

Week beginning 13 December 2015

Pravin Gordhan was appointed finance minister of South Africa. Gordhan, who had previously served in the post between 2009 and 2014, succeeded David van Rooyen who was removed from office by president Jacob Zuma just three days after taking over from Nhlanhla Nene.

Parliamentary elections in Egypt concluded, with the Free Egyptians Party emerging as the largest faction with 65 seats. Held in two phases stretching over more than six weeks with run-off elections two weeks later, 351 seats went to independent candidates and 245 to party representatives.

Incumbent president James Michel won presidential elections in the Seychelles with 50.2% of the vote against Wavel Ramkalawan with 49.8% in a second round run-off. Four other candidates took part in the first round held earlier in the month.

Week beginning 20 December 2015

Parliamentary elections took place in Spain. The Popular Party (PP) won 123 of the 350 seats with 28.7% of votes cast; the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), 90 with 22.0%; Podemos (including En Comú Podem, Compromís and En Marea), 69 with 20.7%; Citizens (Ciudadanos), 40 with 13.9%; Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC-CAT SI), 9 with 2.4%; and Democracy and Freedom (DL), 8 with 2.3%. Four other parties shared the remaining 11 seats. Turnout was 73.2%.

In Brazil, Nelson Barbosa took over as finance minister from Joaquim Levy whose policies had been the subject of widespread congressional opposition.

A cabinet reshuffle took place in South Korea. Hong Yun-sik was sworn in as interior minister and Yoo Il-ho as finance minister. Other key portfolios remained unchanged.

Georgian prime minister Irakli Garibashvili unexpectedly resigned. Giorgi Kvirikashvili, also of the Georgian Dream party, took over a week later.

Mohamed Said Fofana resigned as prime minister of Guinea along with his cabinet. Mamady Youla took over six days later, heading up a new government that included Makalé Camara as foreign affairs minister and Malado Kaba as finance minister.

Week beginning 27 December 2015

Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu took over the interior portfolio following the departure of Silvan Shalom, who had resigned over sexual harassment allegations.

Roch Marc Christian Kaboré was sworn in as president of Burkina Faso following his victory at elections held a month earlier. He took over from acting president Michel Kafondo, who had led the transitional government since November 2014.

In Switzerland, Johann Schneider-Ammann was sworn in as president for 2016 alongside Doris Leuthard as vice-president. They had been elected to their respective positions by the federal council three weeks earlier.

Week beginning 3 January 2016

A new government was appointed in Guinea by president Alpha Condé. It included Malado Kaba as finance minister and Makalé Camara as foreign affairs minister.

Paul Kaba Thiéba was appointed prime minister of Burkina Faso. His government, which included Simon Compaoré as interior minister and Alpha Barry as foreign minister, was sworn in six days later.

Henrique Tokpah was sworn in as internal affairs minister and Marjon Kamara as foreign affairs minister in a cabinet reshuffle in Liberia.

Tunisian prime minister Habib Essid reshuffled his cabinet. Hédi Majdoub became interior minister and Khemaies Jhinaoui foreign minister, with other key portfolios remaining unchanged.

In a cabinet reshuffle in Venezuela, Aristóbulo Istúriz became vice-president, replacing Jorge Arreaza who was appointed minister of higher education, science and technology. Additionally, Rodolfo Medina took over at the ministry of banking and finance.

Week beginning 10 January 2016

Aryeh Deri was sworn in as interior minister of Israel, taking over from prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu who had held the post on an interim basis following the resignation of Silvan Shalom the previous month.

In the Marshall Islands, Casten Nemra took office as president. New cabinet appointments included Daisy Momotaro as internal affairs minister and Kessai H. Note as foreign minister.