

# Beyond Ballots 2016

**22nd December**

## **A LA UNE**

A difficult year for democratic stability is coming to an end. Southeast Asia too was not spared, with some worrying developments in Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia and the Philippines. Even Indonesia, generally perceived as a democratic success story, is no exception to [the democratic decline in Southeast Asia](#).

Can an international donors' package of \$2.2 billion make a difference in the Central African Republic? Considering [the country's weak institutional framework, on-going violence and humanitarian crises](#), some would give a rather sceptical answer.

As President Joseph Kabila refused to step down at the end of his second five-year term, [protests have risen in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#): 20 people have been killed during demonstrations in Kinshasa and human rights defenders denounce arbitrary arrests.

## **DEMOCRACY LIBRARY**

Is the democratic progress achieved in Myanmar giving way to a "dictatorship of the majority"? In the context of increasing criticism directed towards Aung San Suu Kyi, Sergio Rodriguez Prieto examines [the country's institutional paralysis and long-standing ethnic fragmentation](#).

Following a recent Doing Development Differently (DDD) workshop, a report by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Building State Capability Program at Harvard University [draws key lessons from 43 case studies and encourages development practitioners to consider the DDD approach](#).

A recent [comparative analysis of shrinking spaces for civil society actors in the Western Balkans](#), published by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, argues that only profound civil participation and engagement can foster solid democratisation in the region.

## **COMING-UP**

Asma Jilani Jahangir, a Pakistani human rights lawyer and activist, who co-founded and chaired the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, will give the 2017 Amartya Sen Lecture at the London School of Economics on 17 January 2017. Her lecture is entitled "Religious Intolerance and its Impact on Democracy" and will begin at 18:30. Further information can be found [here](#) in due time.

15th December

## **A LA UNE**

The [referendum on the constitution](#) in Kyrgyzstan has several democracy observers worried but passed with a high number of yes votes

The Gambia is showing that democracy supporters shouldn't count their chickens before they've hatched as [President Jammeh clings to power](#).

As Venezuela is on the verge of a financial crisis, [talks between the government and the opposition](#) have fallen through.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Who will support democracy now? In openDemocracy, EPD argues that the EU and its member states must [step up their democracy support](#) in this time of unpredictable change.

In Brookings, Vanessa Williamson and Norman Eisen analyse the actual impact of [open government](#).

As the future [Trump presidency brings uncertainty](#) to the US foreign policy in the Middle East, Elliott Abrams calls for further [US democracy support](#) in the Arab World.

8th December

## A LA UNE

Opinion polls suggest that little will change in the Macedonian political landscape on December 11<sup>th</sup>, as a lack of external pressure to promote a more pluralistic political system and a prevalent [ethnic-based political debate](#) means that the two political parties responsible for the recent scandal will most likely [stay in power](#).

A [testing year for democracy in Africa](#) is closer to its end, with some positive news: The Gambia's election turned into a shock defeat for the authoritarian President Yahya Jammeh, while Dos Santos confirmed that he will not be seeking re-election in Angola's 2017 elections.

As President Park Geun-hye approval rating diminishes and hundreds of thousands of citizens continue to protest, [the South Korean crisis is coming to a head](#): the country could experience a turning point similar to 1987.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Has [EU enlargement policy](#) failed? As breaches of democratic standards seem to increase in candidate countries, Erwan Fouéré urges the European Commission to adopt a more forceful and determined approach, ensuring the respect of human rights, the Rule of Law, and the inclusion of CSOs.

The dictatorships of central Asia are now at a [crossroads](#): in Uzbekistan, after the confirmation of Shavkat Mirziyoyev as president, research by ICG questions the [new administration's prerogatives](#) and relationship with Russian, Chinese, and European neighbours.

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To what extent is Ghana a consolidated democracy? In the framework of the [elections of 7 December](#), Carnegie points at the concentration of power in the executive as a factor undermining the country's electoral and judicial institutions.

## COMING-UP

Between 18-19 January 2016, the ICDPCP 18<sup>th</sup> Conference on Democracy, Political and Civic Participation will take place in London, bringing together leading academic experts, researchers, and practitioners working in these fields.

Further information on the conference can be found [here](#). Registration is possible via this [link](#).

1st December

## A LA UNE

Is the new era of civic activism in Kazakhstan already at its end? After the arrest of two prominent activists, [the Kazakh Ministry of Development and Innovation has announced plans to launch a 'Great Firewall'](#) that would undermine online activism.

In the context of corrupted parliamentary voting and on-going investigations on election malpractice, Somalia's presidential elections – previously scheduled for 30 November – [have been postponed for a third time](#).

After the Petrobras corruption scandal and the impeachment of former President Dilma Rousseff, [the new political movement Agora! strives to counterbalance calls for a return to military rule in Brazil](#).

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

[What went wrong with democracy assistance in the DRC?](#) Tom O'Bryan finds that recent international efforts have been underfunded, geographically narrow and have focused too little on supporting political parties and on reinforcing public institutions, such as electoral management bodies or courts.

Acknowledging the EU's interest in strengthening relations with countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Istituto Affari Internazionali [questions recent trends in EU's development and security policies](#) and gives recommendations for a way forward.

On the basis of a global survey on 87 countries, International IDEA gives policy recommendations [encouraging the institutionalisation of risk management in elections](#).

Are liberal democracies around the world at risk of decline? Research by Yascha Mounk [questions the irreversibility of democratic processes](#), finding a correlation between low public support for democracy and deconsolidation of once democratic systems.

## COMING-UP

Between 7-9 December 2016 the fourth Open Government Partnership (OGP) will take place in Paris: Heads of State, ministers, MPs, local authorities, CSOs, researchers and journalists from 70 countries will share their experiences and push forward the OGP agenda in the fields of transparency, citizen participation, and democratic innovation.

Further details on the event can be found on this [page](#).

24th November

## **A LA UNE**

The Lebanese popular movements of 2015 are turning themselves into [reformist parties](#) that could challenge the country's political establishment during parliamentary elections next summer.

On December 1<sup>st</sup> [Gambian voters will go to the polls](#) where the fractious opposition parties hope to finally oust autocratic President Jammeh, in power since 1994, through forming a broad coalition.

What is happening behind the scenes in Russia? Carnegie looks at the political machinations behind the [arrest of the long-serving Minister of Economic Development Ulyukayev](#), charged with taking a \$2m bribe.

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As resentment grows in Southern Algeria, the International Crisis Group [looks in-depth at economic, political, and societal issues in the country](#) arguing that the central government should deal with shortcomings of governance and decentralise its policy making.

Following the release of the EU Joint Communication "[Towards a renewed partnership with ACP countries after 2020](#)", Kaleidos Research argues [EU-ACP relations](#) should be adapted to a new global sustainable development agenda with a stronger focus on Policy Coherence and civil society engagement.

## **COMING-UP**

On December 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> the German Development Institute (DIE) in partnership with the University of Bath Institute for Policy Research (IPR) will organise the conference "A new social contract for MENA countries: Experiences from Development and Social Policies" in Bonn, questioning the role that social citizenship can play in the construction of a more just social order in the MENA region.

Further information on the event, as well as its draft programme, can be found [here](#).

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What does Trump's presidency imply for Eastern Europe? If the US adopted an isolationist approach, [Eastern European countries would lose a key security bulwark against Russia](#) and could be prompted to further increase their military spending.

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Taking account of Western donors' approaches towards governance support in African states, [Rosie Pinnington warns of aligning expected results with the interests of ruling elites](#): particularly 'politically smart' and 'locally led' models of democracy support should not enforce the status quo, but rearrange power dynamics instead.

What will a pro-Russian Moldovan presidency mean for Europe? Paul Ivan analyses the main controversies of the campaign, arguing that the EU [should not underestimate Dodon's capacity to undermine EU-Moldovan relations](#).

## COMING-UP

On November 22<sup>nd</sup> the panel discussion "Gangnam Blues: South Korea between Boom and Crisis", taking place at the Bertelsmann Stiftung's offices in Berlin, will offer commentary on the latest economic, political, and social developments affecting the Korean peninsula. Further details on the event can be found [here](#). Registration is possible via this [link](#).

10th November

## A LA UNE

Washington D.C. has turned red, with [Trump elected for president](#) and both the House and the Senate now republican. In a thought-provoking article in the New Yorker, Caleb Crain considers the diverging [philosophical arguments for "epistocracy" over democracy](#) in light of the controversial nature of the elections.

After low electoral turnout during the September national elections in Jordan, the [youth movement \*Shaghaf\*](#) is striving to train local-level representatives, encourage political debate, and better connect representatives with their electorate.

Protests last Sunday following a ruling preventing elected [Hong-Kong pro-independence politicians](#) from taking office are likely to lead to further clashes in the coming weeks.

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Is Cuba on its way to political change? Casey Cagley points at [several similarities between Cuba today and the Myanmar](#) of 10 years ago, arguing that Cubans fighting for change might learn some lessons from what happened in Myanmar.

In the wake of the US election, Giovanni Grevi looks at the future for Europe: Trump's most likely focus on US internal policy might be counterbalanced by stronger [EU foreign, security, and defence policy](#).

How can democracy contribute to [development and growth in Africa](#)? A paper by ISS argues that well managed, clean and competitive elections might be the answer, providing a counterbalance to the effects of neo-patrimonialism.

## COMING UP

In the framework of lecture series looking at Agenda 2030, on 15 December 2016 senior researchers and representatives of DIE and the World Bank will meet in Bonn to discuss the topic "Inequality: Strategies for Inclusion in a Polarising World".

Further details on this meeting can be found [here](#). Registration is possible via this [link](#).

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The gruesome death of a fishmonger has sparked [nationwide protests](#) in Morocco that some compare to the 2010 Tunisian uprisings.

A glass-half-empty election? Characterised by [contrasting and uncertain polls](#) and the fragmentation of an undecided electorate, the bout between Clinton and Trump is seen by many as a [wider crisis of Western democratic politics](#).

DemDigest provides an overview of [Pakistani democracy](#), with links to various analyses: despite a relatively vibrant civil society and independent media, it remains under threat due to the power of the military establishment.

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Who is pulling the strings behind the South Korean presidency? “[Choi Soon-sil-gate](#)” has raised protests and calls for impeachment, with serious repercussions on the country’s strategic position in [foreign affairs](#).

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Is there a second chance for [EU-Armenia relations](#)? After the failed attempt at an AA and DCFTA, Kostanyan and Giragosian suggest a way forward, encouraging further differentiation and flexibility in the EU approach towards third countries.

Mohamed El-Ansary considers the role of [public prosecution in Egypt’s recent history](#), showing how this “independent” institution has contributed to the crackdown on dissent following the 2013 military’s ouster of President Morsi.

## COMING UP

Between 16-19 November 2016 the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy 2016 will take place in Donostia/San Sebastian (Spain), and will focus on local and regional democracy issues, as well as worldwide social movements.

Further information on the event and its final programme can be found [here](#).

27th October

## A LA UNE

How stable is Egypt? Shortages of basic food and soaring food prices are [fuelling discontent](#) and the government has been forced to make unpopular cuts to a subsidies programme while waiting for a loan from the IMF.

In the framework of the [worldwide decline of democracy](#), Brian Klaas argues that xenophobic and populist tendencies inside the West seriously put into question democratic transitions elsewhere.

Is Venezuela facing a democratic crisis? The [attempts to find a compromise](#) between the country’s government and the opposition have recently been undermined by the suspension of the process to carry out a [recall referendum on President Maduro](#).

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Are multiparty elections a path from authoritarianism to democracy, or rather a source of authoritarian stability? A [paper by V-Dem](#) considers how experiences with multiparty

elections in authoritarian states influenced patterns of survival and transition from 1946-2010.

In the latest issue of the Journal of Democracy that focuses on the [anti-democratic “spectre haunting Europe”](#), Takis Pappas delineates three categories of political parties that are currently challenging Europe’s liberal-democratic consensus.

The [2016 CONCORD Aidwatch Report](#) shows that the rise of negative political narratives regarding immigrants and refugees challenges the quantity and quality of official development assistance in several EU countries.

## COMING UP

On 8 November the University of Antwerp will organise a debate entitled “The struggle for democracy after the Arab Spring”, questioning the type of transition undertaken by countries that are currently characterised by civil war, strife, and the rise of jihadism.

Further details on the debate and on its speakers can be found [here](#). Registration is possible via this [form](#).

20th October

## A LA UNE

At the end of the political transition in 2012, the federal government of Somalia announced that it would organise democratic elections in 2016 – instead, a [complex clan-based electoral system](#) will lead to a new government in November.

Despite the adoption of binding international legal commitments, Mexico is far from complying with human rights norms: this “[compliance gap](#)” could be attributed to domestic institutional and social factors, such as the regime type, the independence of the judiciary, and the strength of civil society.

Can a vote in Maine revitalise US democracy? Larry Diamond argues that a vote there to use [ranked-choice voting \(RCV\)](#) could send a powerful signal for reform.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

A briefing by International Crisis Group analyses current political and social [tensions in the DRC](#): after President Kabila’s attempt to stay in power beyond his second and last constitutionally-permitted term, violent protests have spread in the country.

In openDemocracy, Ben Graham Jones looks at the [future of electoral observation](#), highlighting three trends that may have an impact on methodology in coming years.



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A policy brief by EPC analyses [public anxiety and dissatisfaction affecting democracies](#), arguing that in order to face these challenges, democratic societies need to undertake reflection and embark on renewal in line with core liberal principles.

## COMING UP

Between 7-9 November the World Forum for Democracy will be held in Strasbourg and will focus on the relationship between education and democracy, exploring the ways in which education bridges social divides.

More information on the event and its full programme can be found [here](#). Registration is possible via this [form](#).

13th October

## A LA UNE

On October 16 [Montenegro](#) will go to the polls to elect its 86-seat parliament: 18 electoral lists are competing in the [campaign](#), which is deeply divided among those who favour and those who oppose European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

In the context of the political, social, and food crisis affecting [Venezuela](#), Maduro is progressively loosing control of the legislature, while the army – the main political force shaping the country's politics – is growing more influential.

Lincoln Mitchell analyses the outcomes of the recent [Georgian parliamentary elections](#): despite high competition for votes, the potential for a throwback to one-party governance and the underdeveloped political pluralism will be clear challenges moving forward.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Graeme Ramshaw of WFD looks at [theories of change](#) for political parties and parliaments and asks several pertinent questions for practitioners and evaluators alike.

Will the EU 'lose' Moldova? The EU's and US' [support of Vlad Plahotniuc](#) might counterbalance Russian influence, but risks eroding the already-waning pro-Western and pro-European sentiment in the country in the long-run.

International IDEA and Clingendael recently released a report on [the influence of organised crime on elections and political parties](#): the Georgian, Mexican, and Malian cases illustrate global trends such as the role of money in politics and the high degree of polarisation of the political spectrum.

## COMING UP

On October 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> 2016 the Anna Lindh Foundation will launch the third edition of its “Euro-Mediterranean Forum on Intercultural Dialogue” in Valetta, with the aim of strengthening intercultural dialogue in the Mediterranean region.

You can find more information on the event [here](#) and the full agenda [here](#).

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6th October

## A LA UNE

The controversial referendum recently held in the [Republika Srpska](#) has revealed the shortcomings of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s political system, whose [destabilisation](#) is sure to negatively impact the entire Balkan region.

The EU has denied that the planned EUR 13.6bn [aid package presented at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan](#) is conditional upon the return of Afghan asylum-seekers to their home country.

Following the unexpected rejection of the peace deal with FARC rebels during last Sunday’s [referendum](#), the EU has announced that it would suspend the EUR 600m [development fund](#) earmarked for Colombia.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Tom Carothers uses the lenses of systemic exclusion and inclusive governance to [understand the connection](#) between state fragility and the growing global trend of closing space for civil society.

The European Parliamentary Research Service has released a briefing on [e-voting](#), whose development might speed up, simplify, and reduce the costs of elections, lead to higher electoral turnout, and have a positive impact on democracy.

In the aftermath of Islam Karimov's death, a briefing by International Crisis Group analyses [Uzbekistan's current transition process](#) and questions the regional, international and European interests in re-engagement.

## COMING UP

Between 16-19 October the 20<sup>th</sup> Forum 2000 Conference "The Courage to take Responsibility" in Prague will bring together politicians, philosophers, authors, dissidents, experts and artists, focusing on the crisis of democratic leadership and the current world's challenges.

You can find more information on the event and its full programme [here](#). You can register via this [web registration system](#) by October 7<sup>th</sup> 2016.

29th September

## A LA UNE

In the coming weeks Azerbaijan will announce the results of its controversial [constitutional referendum](#), which according to many will give unprecedented power to President Ilham Aliyev.

For the first time in 15 years the EU will not introduce any resolution to the UN condemning the human rights' record of [Myanmar](#): that is what Federica Mogherini confirmed after having praised the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi.

On 8 October a parliamentary election will take place in [Georgia](#), and for the first time of the country's recent history there is no charismatic saviour dominating headlines.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

The Institute For Integrated Transitions (IFIT) has released a [guide](#) whose aim is to provide those in transition contexts with a better understanding of the Western aid machine for democracy and peace building.

The European Parliament's research service gives worrying evidence of the [human rights situation in Russia](#), where freedom of expression, human rights activists, access to justice, and equal treatment of ethnic minorities and migrants are undermined on a daily basis.

# Beyond Ballots 2016

[CEPS](#) has published a policy brief questioning the system of EU Special Representatives: these figures continue to play a key role in the EU foreign and security policy although there is clear room for improvement.

## COMING UP

On October 27<sup>th</sup> the Pontis Foundation will be organising an international conference entitled “Development and Democracy” in Bratislava, setting the priorities of the Slovakian Presidency of the Council of the EU and offering to NGOs, policy-makers, academics, and individuals the opportunity to debate on democratisation, migration, and development issues.

You can find more information about the event [here](#) and address further questions to [ana.desiatnikova@nadaciapontis.sk](mailto:ana.desiatnikova@nadaciapontis.sk).

22nd September

## A LA UNE

Indian president Narendra Modi is facing his most [difficult challenge](#) so far after an attack against an army-base in Kashmir rekindled tension over the future of the contested region.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, [deadly demonstrations](#) against the president and attacks against the opposition are escalating, as the decision to delay elections remains unchanged.

Vladimir Putin’s party is the clear winner of the Russian [parliamentary elections](#) but now faces a [challenging political agenda](#).

Malaysia’s opposition has accused the government of [gerrymandering](#) in order to keep Prime Minister Najib Razak from losing power.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

The Council of the EU released the [Country and Regional Issues](#) section of the [EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World in 2015](#), providing a short overview of the human rights situation and covering EU policy support on the ground on a country by country basis.

The Project on Middle East Political Science [analyses](#) the impact of transnational diffusion and cooperation in regional politics in the Middle East.

Alina Rocha Menocal looks at the role played by [elections](#), which are now almost universally present around the world with vastly varying democratic results.

## COMING UP

The Centre for European Policy Studies is organising an event under the framework of the 'EU-CIVCAP' project on "Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Forum: How to implement the EU Global Strategy" to be held on 29 September 2016 in Brussels.

You can find more information about the event [here](#) and you can register [here](#).

15th September

## **A LA UNE**

The results of the Thai referendum allowed the junta to claim legitimacy and changed [the country's political narrative](#). However, the regime is struggling to tackle the [deepening internal fractures](#).

The multiparty democracy that thrived in Africa after the end of the Cold War is [now at risk](#). Term-limits change represents [one of the main threats](#).

This phenomenon is also common in other areas of the world: a new constitutional reform will allow Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow to [rule for the rest of his life](#).

Corruption and organised crime put a damper on democratic progress in Guatemala. Despite the difficulties, the country seems to [be moving in the right direction](#).

## **DEMOCRACY LIBRARY**

A new publication by Carnegie [highlights](#) the importance of women's political empowerment in democracy support.

ECDPM released a [new study](#) exploring four possible scenarios for future EU-ACP Countries relations.

In OpenDemocracy, Devin Ackles [describes](#) the deadlock in Belorussian politics.

## **COMING UP**

The 2016 World Forum for Democracy, organised by the Council of Europe, will focus on the relationship between education and democracy, and will take place from 7 to 9 November 2016, in Strasbourg.

You can find more information [here](#).

8th September

## **A LA UNE**



# Beyond Ballots 2016

[Obtaining six seats](#) in Hong Kong's Legislative Council, anti-Beijing and pro-democracy leaders of the Umbrella protests [are shaking up](#) the city's political establishment.

Venezuela's opposition has failed to capitalise on the discontent with President Maduro so far. However, the nature and effectiveness of protests seems now [to be changing](#).

Abdel Fattah al-Sisi seems to [have decided to run for a second term](#), although Egypt's economic woes and a growing popular intolerance will stand in the president's way.

After one year of protests leading to last July's violent outbreaks, Armenia's PM Hovik Abrahamyan [stepped down](#) today, paving the way to a new coalition government.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

The European Parliament Think Tank [analyses](#) the role of Development Policy in the EU external relations.

In OpenDemocracy, Maxim Eristavi [explores](#) the responsibilities of Ukraine's political elite in the episodes of violence against journalists.

The Diplomat [describes](#) what the future holds for Uzbekistan after the first political transition in the country's history.

## COMING UP

The third edition of the Leuven-Montreal Winter School will focus on elections and voting behaviour and will take place from 25 February to 5 March 2017 at the University of Leuven.

You can find more information about it [here](#).

1st September

## A LA UNE

The impeachment process on Dilma Rousseff [has been completed](#), leaving clear trails of resentment. Despite the drama, Brazilian politics [is probably not going to change](#).

Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov's health woes have unfolded [speculations on his succession](#). As Central Asia is kept relatively peaceful by a handful of aging men, Uzbekistan could just be the [first spark of regional instability](#).

The Burmese government has started a five-day peace talk with 17 different ethnic groups. Recent developments give reasons for hopes, albeit [several challenges remain](#).

Violence broke out in Libreville yesterday, after Gabonese president [Ali Bongo won re-election](#) with a narrow majority. The opposition claims the vote was stolen.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

In the Guardian, Christopher de Bellaigue describes [Erdogan's demokrasi](#).  
Chatham House [explores](#) the current crisis of Southern Africa's Liberation Movements.

The New Yorker [presents](#) Ukraine's political developments through the story of Mustafa Nayyem and Serhiy Leshchenko, two journalists who became politicians after the Maidan Revolution.

## COMING UP

The European Endowment for Democracy and the Office of International IDEA to the EU are organising a panel discussion entitled "Money in politics: State-building, democracy and corruption in the Eastern Neighbourhood" to be held on 16 September in Brussels.

You can find more information about the event [here](#) and you can register [here](#).

25th August

## A LA UNE

After the ceasefire reached in June, Colombia and Farc rebels have finally [signed a historic peace agreement](#). Colombian citizens must now approve it via referendum, but a positive result [must not be taken for granted](#).

The political chaos in Libya is set to continue as the UN-backed government suffered a [no-confidence vote](#) by the Parliament in Tobruk last Monday. PM al-Serraj will [propose a new cabinet](#) in the following weeks.

The opposition in DRC is getting [increasingly vocal](#) against President Kabila's attempt to further postpone elections and now calls for a new 'ville morte' strike.

After 20 years of undisputed rule by the African National Congress, South Africa's new coalitions in local governments will face the challenge of [dismantling patronage politics](#).

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy and International IDEA have published a [discussion paper](#) analysing the role of money in politics and its influence on gender equality in Tunisia.

The New York Times Magazine has published a [long featured story](#) telling the story of the Arabian world since the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

In OpenDemocracy, Erwin Van Veen [examines](#) the difficult implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16.

# Beyond Ballots 2016

## COMING UP

The Balkan Civil Society Development Network is organising a debate entitled “Raising Standards, Declining Trends? Operating Environment for Civil Society in Enlargement Countries” to be held on 7 September 2016 in Brussels.

You can find more information about the event and registration [here](#).

## 18th August

### A LA UNE

The upcoming November presidential election in Nicaragua is already being questioned with [calls for boycott](#), as the [state of democracy](#) in the country remains worrying.

The [re-election](#) of Zambia’s president Edgar Lungu is being [contested by the opposition](#) with claims of manipulation and fraud.

Haiti is gearing up to have a [redo of an annulled presidential election](#) without external assistance.

The solution for Venezuela ever [overcoming the present crisis](#) lies in political dialogue, mediation and negotiation.

### DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

A [new investigation](#) by Amnesty International reveals the extent of torture and ill-treatment in Syrian detention facilities and the ordeal of the survivors.

Franck McLoughlin makes a case for [electoral justice systems](#) in democracy-building processes in the latest Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance policy paper.

Quartz wonders: is [Internet freedom](#) a tool for democracy or authoritarianism?

What has commanded to the fate of the Middle East over the past 13 years? Scott Anderson tries to find an answer through the [itineraries](#) of six people from Libya to Iraq in the New York Times Magazine.

## COMING UP

The Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies organises an International Seminar on ‘The New Global Strategy of the European Union’. This event will be held on 1 September 2016 in Leuven.

You can find more information [here](#) and register at [ggs.conference@kuleuven.be](mailto:ggs.conference@kuleuven.be)

11th August

## **A LA UNE**

Thai voters have [unexpectedly approved](#) the new military-backed constitution, strongly condemned by human rights groups and political parties. Many see this as a [preference for economic stability](#) over a fully-fledged democracy.

Zambians [elect their new president](#) today, but the country's democratic credentials are [increasingly in doubt](#).

The timeline presented by Venezuelan authorities for a recall referendum against President Maduro [makes early elections unlikely](#), preventing the opposition to take power.

Ethiopian security forces have killed almost 100 people in attempt to suppress a storm of [anti-government protests](#) taking place throughout the country.

## **DEMOCRACY LIBRARY**

Foreign Policy published "[Tunisia: In Sun and Shadow](#)", an in-depth investigation of the country's rocky path to democracy.

Can nationalism be beneficial for democracy? Marc Plattner [discusses](#) this in the Democracy Digest blog.

In OpenDemocracy, Dominika Bychawska-Siniarska [analyses](#) characteristics and implications of Azerbaijan's new draft constitution.

## **COMING UP**

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, in cooperation with International IDEA, is organising an expert meeting entitled "Engaging with political parties in fragile and conflict-affected settings". This event will be held on 15 September 2016 in The Hague.

You can find more information [here](#) or you can write to [info@kpsrl.org](mailto:info@kpsrl.org).

4th August

## **A LA UNE**

The Tunisian Parliament voted this weekend to dismiss PM Habib Essid from his position. However, many think [he was not given enough time](#) to pass the reforms needed. President Essebsi wants to replace him with his son-in-law, [drawing criticism](#) from both the opposition and Essebsi's own Nidaa Tounes party.

# Beyond Ballots 2016

On the eve of the Olympic games, Brazil's political situation remains very tense. [Thousands have taken the streets](#) both in support of and against the government, while former president [Lula will stand trial](#) for obstruction to justice.

Amid a growing sense of disillusionment, South Africa's ruling African National Congress [has taken an early lead](#) in local elections, but will possibly lose key cities for the first time since 1994.

Nicaragua's president Daniel Ortega [has chosen his wife](#), the government's spokeswoman and new age spirituality enthusiast, as his running mate, provoking the ire of the opposition.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

International Crisis Group has released a [new report](#) taking stock of the first four months of Myanmar's new government.

The Guardian [explores](#) 1MDB, the huge financial scandal that has riveted Malaysia's Najib Razak and brought protesters to the streets.

The Atlantic Council [analyses](#) the difficult situation of press freedom in Ukraine.

## COMING UP

The Swiss Peace Foundation is organising a 4-day training course on National Dialogue and Peace Mediation, to be held from 13 to 17 February 2017 in Basel.

You can find more information on the course [here](#) and apply [here](#).

28th July

## A LA UNE

With Erdogan's purges [getting increasingly tough](#), Turkey's war against the Kurds has faded from the headlines, but [is continuing](#) relentlessly.

Last week, the African Union [launched](#) a visa-free passport for all its members. Considering obstacles and challenges, this initiative [might be too ambitious](#).

As Colombian opposition is campaigning for the "no", the referendum on the peace deal that will take place later this year [could lead to a surprise outcome](#).

One year after the adoption of a new Constitution, Nepal's political instability [is hindering](#) every attempt to tackle the most pressing national issues.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

The United Nations Economic and Social Council has released its [annual report](#) on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

ECDPM has published a [discussion paper](#) focusing on the EU approach to policy coherence for sustainable development

Chatham House [discusses](#) the risks of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on regional stability.

## COMING UP

Friends of Europe is organising a Policy Insight debate with Professor John Esposito on “Political leadership, Islam and integration” to be held on 8 September 2016 in Brussels.

You can find more information about the event [here](#).

21st July

## A LA UNE

What is next for Turkey? Reuters [resumes](#) what happened and the Atlantic [looks at](#) Erdogan’s agenda following the failed coup.

The Council of the EU [has officially backed](#) José Luis Zapatero and his colleagues as mediators between the Venezuelan government and the opposition. In the meanwhile, Nicolas Maduro [is resorting to the military](#) as a last-ditch effort to stay in power.

Prominent Belorussian journalist Pavel Sheremet [was killed in a car explosion](#) yesterday. Sheremet was highly critical of the Kremlin and worked for the independent news website Ukrayinska Pravda.

Has Mugabe’s 36-year long rule ever been this close to coming to an end? The government is facing rising discontent and [increasingly larger protests](#).

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

The new Journal of Democracy [examines](#) why the seemingly promising gain for freedom from the Soviet breakup have produced disappointing results.

International IDEA has released an [in-depth publication](#) assessing the quality of democracy in Latin America.

The Istituto Affari Internazionali [explores](#) the practical implications of the new EU Global Strategy for the Middle East and North Africa in the next 10 years.

## COMING UP

# Beyond Ballots 2016

EPD, International IDEA, ENoP and EED are organising, in collaboration with the EEAS and the European Parliament (EP), a day-long event on the occasion of the International Day of Democracy, to be held at the EP on 28 September 2016. Speakers will include the EP President Martin Schulz.

For more information you can write to [kengodfrey@epd.eu](mailto:kengodfrey@epd.eu) and [communications@epd.eu](mailto:communications@epd.eu).

14th July

## A LA UNE

In the last five years, Kenya's reforms have led to a [substantial improvement of the judiciary](#). On the other hand, the government [is imposing](#) increasingly stricter restrictions on NGOs.

Despite [socio-economic progress](#) in recent years, the status of democracy in Nicaragua [is widely questioned](#).

Is there a new war in South Sudan? Clashes between rival military factions [have broken out](#) in Juba, plunging the country back into chaos less than one year after the ceasefire.

In Al-Monitor, Mustafa Akyol argues that those who believe that Turkey's recent foreign policy choices will also bring reconciliation within the country [will probably remain disappointed](#).

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

[A new investigation](#) by Amnesty International has revealed an unprecedented spike in enforced disappearances in Egypt since early 2015.

The Open Dialogue Foundation published [a new report](#) detailing cases of Ukrainian citizens illegally detained in the Russian Federation.

Carnegie [asserts](#) that the contribution of rising democracies to democracy support has been weaker than Western policymakers had hoped.

## COMING UP

The [Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy 2016](#), "From Local Participation to Global Coexistence", will take place from 16 to 19 November 2016 in San Sebastián, Spain. The 4-day event will focus on the role of social movements and local governments in transparency, accountability, delegation and participation.

7th July

## A LA UNE

6 months after the elections, the new Burmese government [is not dismantling](#) the authoritarian practices of the military junta. Freedom of speech remains [one of the most concerning issues](#).

New large strikes and protests have sparked in Zimbabwe, where the country's situation is making Mugabe's position [increasingly frail](#).

In Iran, a large pay slip scandal [is unsettling](#) the whole political establishment and putting under serious threat the prospects of President Rouhani's re-election.

The Venezuelan government is currently detaining 96 political prisoners. Americas Society and Council of the Americas [highlight](#) the most emblematic cases.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

The Fund for Peace has published the [2016 Fragile States Index](#). Surprisingly, Hungary is the country that has worsened the most in 2016, while Sri Lanka is the most improved.

Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty [examines](#) the situation in Tunisia 5 years after the Jasmine Revolution.

Quartz [describes](#) the "post-factual democracy", where opportune agendas and impracticable promises have replaced truth and evidence.

## COMING UP

The International Peace and Development Training Centre is organising a 3-day training programme entitled "Making Early Warning, Prevention & Peacebuilding Work", to be held on 19-21 October 2016, in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

You can apply and find more information [here](#).

30th June

## A LA UNE

Federica Mogherini presented the new EU Global Strategy "[Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe](#)" at yesterday's European Council.

As the Venezuelan opposition is stepping up efforts to oust President Maduro, the government is doing its best to [stall the process](#).

In Sri Lanka, the rising of a [new Sinhala-Buddhist ultra-nationalist movement](#) could undermine the country's reconciliation process.

The Mongolian People's Party [won the parliamentary elections](#) in a landslide, defeating the ruling Democratic Party in a vote highly influenced by economic concerns.



# Beyond Ballots 2016

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

The Directorate-General for External Policies of the European Parliament [calls for](#) an EU Strategy for relations with Iran after the nuclear deal.

David Van Reybrouck [argues](#) that referendums and elections are outmoded instruments of public deliberation and need to be updated to save democracy.

Using the example of Madagascar, Foreign Policy [explains](#) how labelling fake democracies as full-fledged can harm real democracies.

## COMING UP

On the occasion of the International Day of Democracy, International IDEA is organising an interactive conference on the opportunities, limitations and future prospects of participatory democracy and active citizenship, to be held on 15 September 2015, in Stockholm. The event will consist of three seminars and workshops.

You can find more information about the event [here](#).

23rd June

## A LA UNE

The Colombian government and the FARC [have officially agreed to a cease-fire](#), an important step to putting an end to a 52-year long conflict.

Good news also from Tunisia. Last week, [the Parliament passed a law](#) likely to increase women's representation across the country in next year's local elections.

Despite their formal commitment to democracy, South American regional organisations have never taken a strong stance vis-à-vis Venezuela. However, recent political changes in the region [might get things moving](#).

On 31 May, Mohamed Abdelaziz, the historic leader of the Saharawi Republic, passed away. [What is next for Western Sahara?](#)

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

The Council of the EU released the [2015 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World](#), describing how the EU addresses human rights and democracy challenges in its external policy.

The European Policy Centre published [a collection of six essays](#) focusing on the EU's multilateral approach in foreign policy within the context of the forthcoming EU Global Strategy.

Washington Monthly [analyses](#) one of the most serious headaches of Myanmar's new government, namely the Rohingya issue.

## COMING UP

The Berlin Graduate School of Social Sciences and the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies are organising an event entitled "Egypt's Civil Society on the Brink? Politics from Below Five Years after the Revolution", to be held on 16 July 2016 in Berlin. The event will bring together professionals and researchers and will feature workshops and a panel discussion.

You can find more information about the event [here](#). The deadline to apply has been extended to 30 June.

15th June

## A LA UNE

Last week, the EU [approved a €500 million loan](#) to consolidate Tunisia's democratic mechanisms. Despite the successful democratic transition, the economic problems at the root of the Arab Spring [have not been addressed successfully](#).

The Thai referendum on the new constitution is approaching and [the junta is now resorting to soft power](#) to build trust and political support in the rural areas.

Libyan National Army's General Haftar has never showed enthusiasm towards the Government of National Accord. His popularity and numerous allies now risk to [worsen the country's political divide](#).

Press freedom is a major casualty of the current Burundian crisis. However, shattered TV and radio channels [are gradually being replaced](#) by new media.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

ECDPM explores the EU's approach to the 11<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund regional programming and the prospects for supporting regional integration in a [new discussion paper](#).

The Institute for Security Studies [analyses](#) SADC's new guidelines for elections observation, calling for the inclusion of civil society and a stronger focus on post-electoral violence.

# Beyond Ballots 2016

Politico Magazine [argues](#) that despite the Cuba-US rapprochement Fidel Castro and the elders of the Party are trying to resist reforms.

## COMING UP

Friends of Europe is launching the 2016 Security Jam report on 30 June 2016 in Brussels. The final report features 10 recommendations, “The 10 Steps for a Safer World”, and a road map of concrete initiatives. It will be discussed by EEAS and US officials, Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders and Amnesty International.

You can find more information on the event [here](#).

## 9th June

### A LA UNE

Turkish president Erdogan signed a new law stripping parliamentary immunity for MPs. The opposition sees it as a [strategy to remove the pro-Kurdish party](#) from the Parliament.

Two weeks ago, Azerbaijani investigative reporter Khadija Ismayilova was released from prison. Foreign Policy [profiles](#) “the world’s most famous dissident journalist”.

In the last weeks, [political unrest has surged in Papua New Guinea](#) amid calls for PM Peter O’Neill to resign over corruption scandals.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

ECDPM and the Istituto Affari Internazionali published a [working paper](#) underlining how the new EU Global Strategy and the 2030 SDG agenda provide an opportunity to refresh the EU’s approach to development cooperation.

The Legatum Institute released the [2016 Africa Prosperity Report](#). The best results are achieved in the countries with stronger civil liberties and personal freedom.

The Institute for Economics and Peace published the [2016 Global Peace Index](#) highlighting the fact that we live in a (slightly!) less safe world than 2015.

## COMING UP

The European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA) is offering a three-day training course called “The practical methodological guide for brave project managers”, which will take place from 6 to 8 July 2016 in Pula, Croatia.

More information about the programme is available [here](#).

2nd June

## A LA UNE

King Abdullah II of Jordan appointed a new Prime Minister playing a caretaker role before the next elections, which will occur in a delicate transition period for the country. [What is next for Jordan?](#)

A Senegalese African Union-backed court has found Chad's ex-dictator Hissène Habré [guilty of crimes against humanity](#). Al-Jazeera [explains](#) why this verdict is so significant.

The Thai military junta is getting increasingly paranoid about dissidents and thoughtcrime arrests are becoming [dangerously absurd](#).

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

After the signing of the Nuclear deal, Iran is being gradually reintegrated into the international society. A [new report](#) by CEPS offers recommendations for a comprehensive EU strategy for relations with Iran.

Since 2013, international aid to Ukraine has increased exponentially. [How is the country using this money?](#)

The dispersal of power in the Middle East allows smaller countries to take on bigger roles. Carnegie [profiles](#) these "swing states" and the opportunity they represent for the European diplomacy.

## COMING UP

The Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) is organising a panel discussion, entitled "EU enlargement and the role of CSO in the Western Balkans' democratic development" on behalf of the European Commission DG – NEAR, to be held on 7 June 2016 in Berlin. You can find more information about the event and the registration [here](#).

26th May

## A LA UNE

In this week's [Council conclusions](#), the EU calls the DR Congo to create the necessary conditions for a free, peaceful and transparent electoral competition. Joseph Kabila's unwillingness to organise new elections leaves room to [worrying scenarios](#).

Yesterday, Ukrainian pilot and celebrity Nadyia Savchenko, whose arrest was strongly criticised by the West, [has been released](#) as a part of a prisoner swap with two Russian agents. On the same day, internationally honoured investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova was also freed after Azerbaijan's Supreme Court [reduced her prison term](#).

# Beyond Ballots 2016

Last week, surprisingly large protests erupted in Kazakhstan after the government had passed a contentious land reform. However, the legislative change seems to be merely [the spark for the demonstrations](#).

Has Tunisia's Ennahda Party decided to abandon political Islam? Al-Jazeera [explores](#) the results of the party's congress.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

In the context of the EU Spring project, a [newly published paper](#) analyses the approach and instruments of the EU in democracy assistance to the Middle East and North Africa.

Amid the constant flow of bad news from Ukraine, the Kyiv Post [explains](#) the reasons why the country should be optimistic about its future.

DRI [examines](#) Sri Lanka's current political transition and the challenges the country will have to face in order to strengthen its political stability and economic prosperity.

## COMING UP

The Instituto de Estudos Politicos is organising, in association with the International Forum for Democratic Studies, the Estoril Political Forum 2016. This edition will be entitled "Democracy and its Enemies – New Threats, New Possibilities" and will take place from 27 to 29 June in Estoril, Portugal.

You can find the full programme [here](#) and you can register [here](#).

19th May

## A LA UNE

After Dilma Rousseff's chaotic impeachment, it looks as if [Michel Temer's new cabinet](#) was purposely formed to fuel controversy. Meanwhile in Cannes, Brazilian film celebrities [joined the opposition in accusing the new president](#) of a coup d'état.

One month after the election of the new Burmese government, Aung San Suu Kyi [is accused of violating human rights](#) due to the way she is handling the Rohingya issue.

Like many African leaders before him, DR Congo's President Joseph Kabila aims to stay in power over his mandate. According to the Institute for Security Studies, [the African Union should not stay silent](#).

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

In view of the new EU Global Strategy to be presented in June, CONCORD published a [paper](#) calling for a long-term approach rooted in human rights and sustainable development.

Is Moldova a success-story of European integration? New Eastern Europe [says](#) its recent political developments are making things difficult for the EU.

Since Russian annexation of Crimea, national minorities have been subjected to systematic violations of human rights. The Policy Department of the DG for External Policies of the European Parliament has just released [a study](#) on this issue.

## COMING UP

Friends of Europe is organising two conferences to discuss the relationship between the Arab world and democracy. The first one, entitled “Islam and the Challenge of Muslim Democrats” will take place on 31 May in Brussels; the second one, entitled “Time for Peace – Europe’s challenge in Africa and the Middle East” on 1 June. You can find more information about these events [here](#) and [here](#) respectively.

12th May

## A LA UNE

Today’s [Council conclusions](#) from EU Foreign Ministers show that the EU’s collective Official Development Assistance in 2015 increased by 15% compared to 2014. Despite this positive trend, transparency and commitment to international standards remain [two significant issues](#).

Rodrigo “The Punisher” Duterte has won the Philippine presidential elections. Many observers have compared him to Donald Trump, even going so far as to say his unpredictability could be [more of a threat to the world](#).

Southern Africa is experiencing very difficult times. Ethnically-driven riots in Zambia and corruption scandals in South Africa [are undermining the progress](#) of two of the most promising African democracies.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Is Western aid beneficial for Ukrainian reforms? The Washington Post [explores](#) the relationship between foreign assistance and corruption in post-communist Ukraine.

The Brookings Institute [analyses](#) non-state social orders in South Asia and the ways in which Western organisations might be able to engage with members of these communities more effectively.

# Beyond Ballots 2016

Finally some good news! In Colombia, KAS [underlines](#) how the peace agreement between the government and FARC guerrillas is just one of the reasons that the country's future looks bright.

## COMING UP

NED is organising a conference entitled "Is Democracy Healthy in Latin America?" that will take place on 19 May 2016 in Washington, DC. Panellists will focus on the current state of democracy in Latin America and will discuss different issues, such as corruption, capacity of democratic institutions and the role of the international community.

The event will be livestreamed [here](#).

5th May

## A LA UNE

Due to political tensions, monopolies, corruption and organised crime, Latin America's press freedom [has deteriorated dramatically](#) in the past year.

On the eve of World Press Freedom Day, Egyptian police stormed the Press Syndicate arresting the journalists who staged a sit-it. This incident [raises further concerns](#) about the future of press freedom under El-Sisi's regime.

The EU's reluctance to speed up the accession process in the past years and the current indulgency vis-à-vis human rights violations [may have significantly contributed](#) to strengthening Erdogan's grip on power.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Are international elections observers effective? Foreign Policy [explores](#) troubles and shortcomings of EU monitoring missions, providing the example of Uganda.

Many analysts consider Russia's current political regime unstable. In a newly published paper, the European Council for Foreign Relations [boldly predicts](#) that without radical change Putin's regime will collapse within the next year.

While Myanmar is gradually strengthening its democracy, Thai military junta's rule appears stronger than ever. The Irrawaddy [compares the two countries](#) and suggests that Thailand could learn from its neighbours.

## COMING UP

The German Institute of Global and Area Studies is holding an event titled "How to Foster Good Governance and Anti-Corruption in European Development Aid" on 19 May 2016 in Berlin. Speakers will discuss the relation between European aid and promotion of good governance in the EU's neighbourhood and African partner countries, focusing specifically on

the examples of Egypt, Tunisia, Ghana and Tanzania. You can find more information about this event [here](#).

## **28th April 2016**

### **A LA UNE**

The Turkish opposition fear that the principle of secularism will be removed from the Constitution, after Parliamentary speaker Ismail Kahraman called for a [religious national charter](#). Despite this, the rise of Daesh may [strengthen secularism](#) within Turkish society.

The United Malays National Organisation has been ruling Malaysia since its independence, but today its power is seriously contested. Corruption scandals and an increasingly severe crackdown on the free press are making PM Najib Razak's position [progressively precarious](#).

A [controversial new Chinese law](#) forces foreign NGOs to register with public security officials. Campaigners describe the government's offensive against civil society as the worst in nearly three decades.

### **DEMOCRACY LIBRARY**

The western model of democracy is facing increasingly difficult challenges and losing credibility at the international level. Carnegie Europe [has looked at](#) possible approaches to non-Western forms of democracy.

The Istituto Affari Internazionali published a [working paper](#) focusing on the importance of youth empowerment in consolidating Tunisia's fragile democracy.

How can the African Union play a significant role in democracy-building on the continent? International IDEA takes on this issue in a [newly published analysis](#).

### **COMING UP**

This year's World Press Freedom Day celebrations will take place from 2 to 4 May 2016 in Helsinki, Finland. The annual UNESCO/Guillermo Cano Prize ceremony will be held on 3 May 2016 and will be awarded to Azeri investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova.

You can find more information about the event and the World Press Freedom Day [here](#).

## **21st April 2016**

### **A LA UNE**

EU leaders offered more assistance to Libya's new unity government at the [FAC meeting](#) in Luxembourg on Monday. Despite criticism, al-Serraj's cabinet is [gathering more support](#) both domestically and internationally.



# Beyond Ballots 2016

South Africa's President Jacob Zuma is marred in several scandals, but is firmly defending his position. As citizens are showing a growing contempt for the President, the [ANC might ditch Zuma to save itself](#).

El-Sisi regime's crackdown on civil liberties has made life of CSOs worse than under Hosni Mubarak's rule, [says a prominent Egyptian activist](#) in the New York Times.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

The European Think Thank Group published a [new briefing](#) underlining the importance of democracy and human rights for the EU in the context of the upcoming EU Global Strategy for external affairs.

Ukraine is struggling to implement anti-corruption reforms primarily due to the obstacles of entrenched oligarchical interests. The European Council on Foreign Relations analyses this issue in a newly published [policy brief](#).

Freedom House released the ["Nations in Transit" 2016 report](#), which reveals a worrying democratic decline in Eastern Europe and growing political instability in Central Asia.

## COMING UP

The Institute for European Studies at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and Egmont biannually organise the 'European Union in International Affairs' (EUIA) Conference. The fifth edition will take place from 11 to 13 May in Brussels.

The conference agenda can be found [here](#) and it is possible to register [here](#).

## 14th April 2016

### A LA UNE

What does Arseniy Yatsenyuk's resignation mean for Ukraine? Probably even more risks for Petro Poroshenko's rule, [says Carnegie Europe](#). Some consider current Odessa Oblast governor and former Georgian president [Mikhail Saakashvili as a possible replacement](#).

Turkey was considered as a beacon of democratic development in the early 2000s. Nowadays, Turkey's drift back into authoritarianism has not only damaged its own democracy, but [has also undermined its pro-democracy foreign policy agenda](#).

Central Africa is home to some of the longest-serving and most authoritarian African presidents. However, a vibrant civil society is emerging [thanks to social media](#).

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Since 2011 elections, Ennahda has been the most important voice in Tunisia's emerging democracy. [Brookings explores](#) the goals and narratives of the Tunisian "Muslim-Democrat" party.

What is the role of non-state actors supported by Russia? [Chatham House analyses](#) the proxy groups used by the Kremlin to promote its foreign policy objectives.

The new [Journal of Democracy examines](#) the Myanmar's new power configuration and the challenges the new government will have to face.

## COMING UP

The European Development Days 2016 will take place in Brussels on 15-16 June. Organised by the European Commission, this forum brings the development community together over 2 days each year.

Registration is now open on the forum's [website](#).

## 7th April 2016

### A LA UNE

The Panama Papers show once again [the importance of investigative journalism](#) to reveal the truth and push for reforms when parliaments prevaricate.

The recent outbreak of hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh is the most serious escalation since 1994. [The International Crisis Group explains](#) the complex reasons behind this renewed violence.

Democracy remains no closer to return to Thailand as the [new constitution drafted by the junta](#) might transfer more power from elected officials to the military.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

A newly [published briefing](#) by the European Parliamentary Research Service analyses the complex African democratic landscape, focusing on power alternation and presidential term limits.

An interview with Colombian [hacker Andrés Sepulveda](#) caused a stir throughout Latin America and the United States, as he claimed to have committed a variety of cybercrimes to affect the outcomes of elections.

Since 2010, Burundian president Pierre Nkurunziza has been accused of progressively serious acts of authoritarianism. [Ventures Africa explores](#) all the fundamental stages that led to the "tragic death of Burundi's democracy".

## COMING UP

# Beyond Ballots 2016

From 25 to 28 April 2016, Friends of Europe will host an online brainstorming entitled “2016 Security Jam – Beyond conventional security challenges”. It will unite thousands of experts on security, human rights and development from governments, international organisations, NGOs and academia. The Jam will feed into the EU’s thinking on a new Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy.

More information is available on the [website](#).

## 31st March 2016

### A LA UNE

Since the turn of the year, Pakistani PM Nawaz Sharif has vowed to implement an increasingly progressive agenda and the Lahore bombing can be seen as [an attempt to hamper this](#).

A Brazilian Richard Nixon? Yes, [says the New Yorker](#). Dilma Rousseff is in trouble: widespread protests, a key party leaving the governing coalition and now a real chance of impeachment.

The Congolese opposition began the ‘ville morte’ national strikes this week, [shutting part of Brazzaville to protest Sassou-Nguesso’s re-election](#). After a constitutional change removing the two-mandate limit, on 20 March the incumbent president was re-elected for his third mandate.

### DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

How can Europe respond to the migration challenge? According to Club de Madrid’s President Vaira Vike-Freiberga, [democratic governance is the only answer](#).

A [new paper](#) by Marc Plattner of the Center for Democracy and Civil Society looks at the debate over whether democracy is actually in decline around the world.

Judy Dempsey from Carnegie [summarises](#) the contributions of analysts from the MENA region on EU Neighbourhood policy. It does not make for happy reading for the EU.

### COMING UP

People in Need is organising the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the [One World Film Festival](#), which will take place in Brussels from 18 to 27 April 2016. It will offer 14 documentary films followed by panel discussions with film directors, politicians, human rights activists, international NGO leaders and the laureates of the Sakharov Prize.

## 24th March 2016

### A LA UNE

Following the attacks in Brussels this week, [the Guardian looks at the impact of terrorist acts](#) on domestic politics in Europe and its implications for liberty.

On 22 March 2016, Ukrainian pilot Nadyia Savchenko was sentenced to 22 years in jail after being [found guilty in Russia of charges relating to the death of two journalists](#). Several Western leaders and NGOs, including [Human Rights Watch](#), have condemned the trial as unfair.

Businessman Patrice Talon defeated Benin's incumbent Prime Minister Lionel Zinsou in last Sunday's presidential elections. [Will this transition be a step forward for African democratic consolidation?](#)

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

What is the track record of the European Neighbourhood Policy ten years after its launch? [According to the Jacques Delors Institute, it has suffered from a conception-performance gap.](#)

Myanmar has a new government, but [many observers are surprised by its eccentric composition](#). First of all, because Aung San Suu Kyi will hold 4 out of 21 positions in the cabinet.

Going against the flow of the rest of the continent, Senegal has decided via referendum to shorten the presidential mandate. [The European Parliamentary Research Service explored the implications of this reform.](#)

## COMING UP

S&D Group organises the African Week in Brussels, from 5 to 11 April 2016. Conferences, seminars and cultural events will focus on African local governance, election observation, conflict resolution, development and more. The full programme and more information can be found [here](#).

## 17th March 2016

### A LA UNE

The EU Foreign Affairs Council decided to [suspend all financial aid to the Burundian administration](#), as the government's efforts to tackle the current crisis were not considered sufficient. Very tough months ahead for [the world's least happy country](#).

The return to direct presidential elections in Moldova could revive the country's stagnating politics. [The effects of this constitutional reform are currently unpredictable](#), as Moldavian political scene looks more complicated than ever.

The Malaysian government is imposing increasing restrictions on the press, as influential political personalities have been accused of involvement in large money-laundering

# Beyond Ballots 2016

affairs. [This strategy seems to be working](#), as several independent newspapers and news sites have shut down.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Has the EU reacted well to the changes and the potentially dangerous intra-state cleavages in the Mediterranean region since the Arab Spring? The Institute for Mediterranean Studies investigates in a [newly published paper](#).

Does Russia interfere in the internal affairs of European countries? [The European Endowment for Democracy analyses](#) the Kremlin's 'memetic warfare' and promotion of Russian narratives in the European information space.

[The New Yorker explores](#) how communications technologies affect political parties in an article about the relationship between populism and new media.

## COMING UP

The National Endowment for Democracy will hold a conference entitled "[High Stakes in the Sahel: A Transatlantic Dialogue](#)" on 23 March 2016. CSOs from several sub-Saharan countries, policy-makers and experts will discuss priorities and explore the role that civil society can play in strengthening democracy, guaranteeing security and building peace. The event will be [livestreamed](#).

10th March 2016

## A LA UNE

Myanmar's National League for Democracy [has nominated one of Aung San Suu Kyi's closest aides for the presidency](#). 'The Lady' is barred from becoming President because of her sons' dual nationality, but is likely to push for a constitutional change.

"Free press cannot be silenced", chanted protesters as Turkish police shut down one of Turkey's last opposition newspapers. [The New York Times explores Erdogan's increasingly authoritarian moves](#).

Prime Minister Lionel Zinsou and businessman Patrice Talon are going head-to-head in [the second round of the presidential elections in Benin](#). ECOWAS observers praised the election as "free and transparent", confirming Benin's status as a free country.

To mark International Women's Day, [The Economist investigates Saudi women's situation](#) since the coronation of King Salman. Things are not looking good.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Is Africa ruled by strongmen opposed to democracy? The answer is more complicated than we might assume, [as The Guardian explains](#).

In Ukraine, most citizens would not associate women with political life, but want a more equal distribution of gender roles. These are the findings of the [National Democratic Institute's latest study](#) on women's political participation in Ukraine.

## COMING UP

[The Annual V-Dem Policy Dialogue Conference 2016](#) will be held at Handelshögskolan, University of Gothenburg, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May. The conference will present the findings of V-Dem research over the past year.

3rd March 2016

## A LA UNE

On the 27<sup>th</sup> February last year, the prominent opposition figure Boris Nemtsov was shot dead in Moscow. The lack of political will to fully investigate the killing is exemplary of [Russia's lost year](#).

Brazil's biggest ever corruption case [has reached former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva](#). Lula's connection to the Petrobras scandal further weakens current President Dilma Rousseff's hold on power amidst massive opposition pressure.

Despite Ban Ki-moon's visit to Burundi last week, President Pierre Nkurunziza remains adamant that he will not negotiate with the opposition. [Security analysts are pessimistic](#) as to whether there is a way out of the current crisis.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

NIMD's director Hans Bruning has written [an article on Dutch democracy assistance](#), which is firmly embedded in the Dutch tradition of democracy stretching back to its Golden Age.

Is the fight against corruption automatically a democratic process? Alexander Clarkson [challenges](#) the assumption that anti-corruption campaigns are a sign of democratization

The Bertelsmann Foundation has released its [Transitions Index 2016](#), finding that repression is on the rise worldwide; polarisation and conflict intensity are also increasing; and the gap between economic and social development continues to widen. (All in all, not a good year then. At least DiCaprio won an Oscar).

## COMING UP

# Beyond Ballots 2016

NDI is launching a *Global Call to Action to Stop Violence Against Women in Politics* at their [#NotTheCost](#) conference on the 17<sup>th</sup> March. Madeleine Albright will be the keynote speaker.

25th February 2016

## A LA UNE

The country often refers to itself as “the world’s most populous democracy”, yet India’s [government is cracking down on free speech](#). Leaders of a student protest have been [arrested on charges of sedition](#) after they organised a demonstration against the 2013 execution of a Kashmiri man.

In Bolivia, [voters narrowly rejected President Evo Morales’ proposal](#) to change the referendum to extend his term. It is another defeat for the Latin American Left, with the region swinging towards the centre-right.

Amnesty International published its annual Human Rights in the World report. Here, the Independent [showcases the ten worst violations of human rights](#) from the past year.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

ALDA have published [the first in a series of articles on local democracy](#). This edition focuses on decentralised cooperation in the Eastern Partnership countries and provides an overview of the challenges and opportunities linked to decentralisation in those countries.

Are coups good for democracy? That is the subject of a [new piece of research](#), which looks at the regime types that have emerged after coups since the Cold War. A summarised version is available [here](#).

Voters across Africa have harnessed new technologies “to help monitor elected officials, bolster democracies and liberate election information”, [writes Stephen Abbott Pugh in The Guardian](#). But will governments take any notice?

## COMING UP

Participants of the Policy Forum on Development will meet on the 14<sup>th</sup> March for [a two-day conference](#) to discuss the EU’s development policy, the revised Cotonou Agreement, and cooperation between civil society organisations and local authorities.

18th February 2016

## A LA UNE

It has been a tumultuous few weeks for Ukraine. With Yulia Tymoshenko's party pulling out of the ruling coalition and PM Arseniy Yatsenyuk barely surviving a no-confidence vote, Politico's Adrian Karatnycky provides [a clear summary of the chaos](#).

The attacks in Ankara yesterday occurred in a time of increased authoritarianism in Turkey, according to Cihan Tugal. [In an extract from his latest book](#), he argues that "the AKP regime has moved from soft totalitarianism to hard totalitarianism".

There is growing suspicion that the torture and murder of PhD researcher Giulio Regeni in Egypt may be linked to the country's security forces. [The Economist investigates](#).

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

"The stability that relies on the heartbeat of one man is no real stability at all": the Telegraph on why [putting up with Arab dictators merely delays inevitable turmoil and upheaval](#).

Could the fall in oil prices force a move towards democratic development in countries like Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Russia? [This article](#) points to improvements in Nigeria, Indonesia and Brazil as a blueprint for political reforms in oil-producing countries.

Ted Piccone summarises his new book, "five rising democracies and the fate of the international liberal order" [in this article](#) on Brookings. You can also see the [slideshow of infographics](#) from the article, which covers Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa, Turkey and India.

## COMING UP

Dr. Bálint Magyar will [present his latest book](#), "Post-Communist Mafia State" at the National Endowment for Democracy. The book looks at what Magyar calls the "hollowing out" of Hungarian democracy by the ruling Fidesz party. The event will be [livestreamed](#).

11th February 2016

## A LA UNE

As the Foreign Affairs Council of the EU prepares to vote on sanctions against Belarus, [Brian Klaas writes](#) that the West should maintain pressure on Minsk and demand change instead of softening its stance.

Violent clashes between protestors and police broke out in Hong Kong over the Lunar New Year and [are widely considered to be linked](#) to pro-democracy protests that began in late 2014.

Covering up the potholes? Egyptian President Sisi and his entourage drove down [two miles of red carpet](#) (!) to visit new housing for Cairo's poorest residents. Yomi Kamzeem calls it [another example of the disconnect](#) between the military strongman and his citizens.



# Beyond Ballots 2016

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Latin America's smallest country by population is also its most democratic and least corrupt. In [the New York Times, Uki Goni praises](#) "tiny Uruguay" as "one of the most progressive nations on earth".

DRI has released a [report](#) summarising the parliamentary strengthening methods and programmes across the globe. The report finds similarities and differences in approaches of key players in the field.

[This article by Louise Shaxson](#) discusses why and when evidence is needed in the policy-making process. It proposes 5 "components of robustness" for consideration when presenting evidence.

## COMING UP

Sciences Po Rennes is holding an international summer school from the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> July. The course, "[Local Democracy, Decentralisation and Multilevel Governance](#)", aims to discuss themes such as participatory democracy, citizenship and theories of governance.

4th February 2016

## A LA UNE

Monday marked a historic day for Myanmar as the new NLD-led parliament [attended its first sitting](#). Despite this leap forward for democracy, [human rights have not improved with the same speed](#).

Ahead of Uganda's elections on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February, a [dissident military general has been arrested](#) for "illegal political activities" and [a privately-owned radio station has been forced off the air](#) a day after interviewing an opposition candidate. The incumbent, President Museveni, has ruled the country for three decades and is likely to win again despite increasing tensions.

Today, London is hosting the Support Syria Conference, a push to increase countries' donations to the humanitarian crisis. The conference takes place just one day after the failure of the Syrian peace talks in Geneva. The Guardian is providing [live updates on the conference](#), where Federica Mogherini has told "those who still believe there can be a military solution to this war" to "wake up".

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Botswana celebrates its fiftieth birthday this year, but Africa's oldest continuous democracy is witnessing a worrying stagnation in its political development. Afrobarometer investigates [what it will take to consolidate democracy](#) in the country.

As protests continue in Moldova, Nicolas Bouchet argues that [Moscow's conflation of colour revolutions with warfare](#) serves as justification for Russia's military intervention abroad.

The Economist Intelligence Unit has published its [Democracy Index 2015: Democracy in an age of anxiety](#), with disappointing scores for the US, South Korea, Japan, the Middle East and Central Europe. However, the report noted bright spots in Madagascar, Burkina Faso and Nigeria.

Reflecting on problems of credibility that U.S. democracy promoters face in light of democratic deficiencies back home, Thomas Carothers [encourages democracy assistance organisations to incorporate national projects into their agendas](#).

## COMING UP

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of February the Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED) is hosting an event in Washington DC to discuss the [regional political developments that followed the Arab Spring five years ago](#).

28th January 2016

## A LA UNE

What motivates the pro-Russian and pro-European factions in Moldova? David Stern [argues](#) that the reality of the Moldovan political crisis is far more complex than simple Cold War style geopolitics.

The corruption investigations into Malaysia's prime minister, who received \$681 million dollars from Saudi Arabia's royal family, were dropped. This incident sends a clear message about the [lack of democratic accountability](#) in Malaysia.

The presidential and parliamentary elections in Uganda are fast approaching; Helen Epstein [debates](#) how much the elections do (not) count in terms of democracy.

The Freedom in the World 2016 Index has been [published](#). A decline in freedom has been recorded in 72 countries, which is the largest decrease in 10 years.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

The 25<sup>th</sup> of January marked the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the revolution in Egypt. [The question](#) that remains is, how far is Egypt from 'restoring democracy'?

What are the key institutional changes that have to be implemented in order to control corruption and achieve good governance? Alina Mungiu Pippiddi, explains in "[Learning from Virtuous Circles](#)".

# Beyond Ballots 2016

The democratic transition in Myanmar will be one of the major developments to follow in the years to come. Suzzane Nossel [suggests](#) 10 useful tips for the newly elected Aung San Suu Kyi.

## COMING UP

The fourth in series of [global conferences](#) highlighting the issues of Money in Politics will take place in Tbilisi, Georgia, 18-19 February and will focus on the role money plays in Eastern and Central Europe.

21st January 2016

## A LA UNE

EU foreign ministers adopted [conclusions](#) on Libya at the EU Foreign Affairs Council on 18 January following the December agreement for a unity government. On 19 January, the new cabinet of this UN-backed Libyan unity government [was announced](#).

In the Global Thinker [podcast](#) published by Foreign Policy, Wai Wai Nu and Matthew Smith warn that Myanmar's democracy will be meaningless unless Muslims get a seat at the political table.

Where is Tunisian democracy five years after the Revolution? Marc Pierni [sums up](#) the remarkable accomplishments and new opportunities in Tunisia.

## DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

A [publication](#) by ODI sheds light on the need for adaptive donor programmes that recognise the political realities of development. Can development be done differently?

The start of 2016 has brought uncertainties on the Polish and Greek governments' commitments to the rule of law. Hugo Dixon [underlines](#) the importance of the EU keeping its countries on a democratic path.

The new Journal of Democracy [is out](#), with free access articles on Chinese and Singapore models, controlling corruption and the Ethiopian election of 2015.

Is [direct democracy](#) always a good solution? The Economist looks at the fairness of asking Dutch voters for an opinion on the 2,135-page agreement between the EU and Ukraine.

## COMING UP

From 29-31 Jan, Utrecht University will host a [New World Summit](#) on Stateless Democracy. Academics and professionals from the field will discuss look at topics such as failures of democracy, stateless democracy and the future of democracy.

14th January 2016

## **A LA UNE**

As the elections in Taiwan are approaching, massive campaigning and walkabouts will draw hundreds of thousands of supporters to the street. Here are [5 must know facts](#) about the 2016 elections.

Following his electoral victory over main rival Sandra Torres in October's presidential election in Guatemala, former TV comedian Jimmy Morales will be sworn in on 14<sup>th</sup> January. Although he campaigned on a promise to fight graft, this article [cautions](#) that we should not expect any progress towards real democratisation.

Al Monitor [wonders](#) if Israel's Democracy is in danger, following the adoption of a new transparency bill that tags Israeli associations that are mainly receiving their funding from foreign sources when they visit the Knesset or publish reports.

## **DEMOCRACY LIBRARY**

The study of data on the correlations between elections and net investment [shows](#) that holding free and fair elections can increase developing countries prosperity.

Are the laws published by the new Polish right-wing government a threat for democracy and the rule of law in the largest eastern EU member? Mark Nelson's [opinion](#) on recent developments in Poland.

Are democracies more likely to blossom with the support of vibrant middle class? Do strong unions mean more democracy? [Insights](#) from Richard Kahlenberg.

Does the integration of nondemocratic regimes into the liberal international order lead them to become more democratic? Authoritarianism as a challenge for democracy [explained](#) by Christopher Walker.