

Beyond Ballots 2018

4 January 2018

A LA UNE

Ethiopia's prime minister has announced he will close down the notorious Maekewali prison, and [pardon and free all political prisoners](#) – a surprising move to “widen the democratic space for all”, which contrasts the violent crackdown on recent protests demanding just that.

Demonstrators in Kiev are outraged at the [murder of Ukrainian activist](#) attorney Iryna Nozdrovska on Monday, days after she defied the culture of corruption by securing jail-time for the man responsible for her sister's death, who was related to a high-profile judge.

A year after the Saint Sylvestre Accord in which President Kabila promised to step down and hold new elections before 2018, [people across the DR Congo are protesting](#), once again facing violent security forces and a social media shutdown.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Contributing to the debate on political finance regulations and corruption, a new V-Dem study based on data from 154 countries finds [political finance subsidies do reduce corruption](#) and embezzlement in particular, even when implementation is uneven.

In an opinion piece in the Washington Post, Christian Caryl analyses the socio-economic and political [context of the current protests in Iran](#), arguing this is a new generation of protestors who are far more confrontational and desperate for change.

In a [two-fold article](#) on Open Democracy, two political scientists propose the term “[left-transformation](#)” rather than “left-populism” for movements like *podemos*, arguing the foundation on hope and justice politics distinguishes these movements from populism.

COMING UP

On 24 January 2018, the London School of Economics will host democracy scholars Dr Klaas and Dr Hopkin to talk about the way President Trump challenges democratic norms with his tactics and tweets. Dr Klaas will present his book on the subject, entitled “The Despot's Apprentice”. More information is available [here](#).

11 January 2018

A LA UNE

[Tunisians all over the country are protesting](#) in large numbers against the government's new austerity measures, including a tax rise on fuel, internet and food, with opposition parties and labour unions outraged at the already dire economic situation.

The date for [Egypt's Presidential election](#) has finally been set for March 2018, but there are obvious concerns about its fairness, as the strongest contender Ahmed Shafik just withdrew his candidacy – allegedly under force – while another candidate was imprisoned.

Thousands of [Hondurans took to the streets](#) last Sunday in a protest led by opposition leader Salvador Nasralla, demanding new elections after the highly controversial Presidential elections last November.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

A new [study on fake news consumption](#) during the 2016 US Presidential campaign shows that, although one in four Americans visited a fake news website in the period of study, exposure was shallow and marginal relative to the consumption of regular news.

In an article in The Washington Post, Richard Cockett explains why even [Myanmar's democracy activists](#) do not stand up for the Rohingya, with an analysis of the historical roots of anti-Muslim prejudice and the shallow support for democratic values.

Richard Youngs from Carnegie Europe criticises Europe's failure to respond to the [vacuum in democracy and human rights support](#) left by President Trump and calls on the EU to practice what it preaches and step up its efforts in democracy support.

COMING UP

On 15 and 16 February, the European Federation of Journalists organises the Free European Media Conference 2018 in Gdansk. This 2-day conference will focus on the dynamics between media pluralism and democracy in Europe, as the current climate of shrinking democratic space, fake news and declining media pluralism necessitates such a discussion. More detailed information is available [here](#).

18 January 2018

A LA UNE

Bahraini human rights activist [Nabeel Rajab has been sentenced](#) to 2 years in prison on charges of spreading false information about the government, in a trial that was condemned by human rights groups as politically motivated and unfair.

In the Philippines, the [independent news outlet Rappler](#) has been shut down after a legal body under President Duterte declared the company violated constitutional rules of media ownership, which Rappler argues is just a pretext to restrict media freedom.

Two weeks after the unexpected promise to release all political prisoners, the Ethiopian government has now [released over 500 political prisoners](#), including opposition leader Merera Gudina, who stated he is open to dialogue with the government.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Beyond Ballots 2018

Will President Macron's [fake news law protect](#) or [threaten democracy](#)? This Politico debate pits Aurore Belfrage, in favour of the legislation, against Alberto Alemanno, who argues the only effective solution will come from social media companies themselves.

In the latest issue of Government and Opposition, Professor Kelemen sheds light on the [EU's role in addressing democratic backsliding](#) in member states by comparing the EU to democratic countries with subnational challenges of authoritarianism.

International IDEA has published a guide for developing user-friendly online [transparency registers on party and campaign finance](#), based on the experience of 16 oversight agencies that have already introduced such online systems.

COMING UP

From 8 to 10 March 2018, the "Innovations in Participatory Democracy Conference" will take place in the city of Phoenix, Arizona, US. The conference brings together community leaders, government staff, democracy practitioners and researchers to discover and debate innovative new strategies and tools to empower active citizenship and direct participation in government. More information is available [here](#).

25 January 2018

A LA UNE

Another six people have been killed as a result of [President Kabila's clinging to power](#), after the DR Congo's security forces forcefully cracked down on peaceful church-led protests in Kinshasa last Sunday, infuriating the Congolese church.

[Egypt's upcoming elections](#) are losing their credibility by the day, as this week one Presidential hopeful was arrested by the security forces and another [withdrew his candidacy](#) citing unsurmountable constraints to running against President el-Sisi.

China continues its campaign against free speech and democracy activism, with this week's victims being a [Hong Kong-based book publisher](#) who had been jailed for 2 years before, and a [human rights lawyer](#) who had been calling for political reform.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

In the International Politics and Society Journal, [Jan-Werner Mueller](#) tempers the hope that political movements like En Marche will make Europe more democratic, arguing their leadership style and movement dynamics might just do the opposite.

An article by [Brett Carter in the Journal of Democracy](#) examines the international dimension of the struggle for democracy in Central Africa's autocracies, looking at autocrats' financial power and diasporas' international advocacy efforts.

The [Freedom House report](#) on civil and political freedoms in 2017 argues democracy faced its most serious challenge in decades last year, amongst others due to declining freedoms in the US and the growing influence of China and Russia.

COMING UP

From 5 to 14 March 2018, EPD member People in Need organises One World, their international Human Rights documentary film festival in Prague. In addition to the screening of numerous documentaries about political and human rights activists, there will be discussions and debates with film directors and activists. The festival will be opened with the Homo Homini Award ceremony, where the Czech international human rights prize will be awarded. More information can be found [here](#).

1 February 2018

A LA UNE

While the Kenyan [opposition coalition inaugurated Raila Odinga](#) as “the people’s president”, the Kenyatta-led government shut down television stations broadcasting the ceremony and declared the group a criminal organisation.

The opposition parties in the Maldives have petitioned the Supreme Court [to remove President Yameen](#), accusing him of misrule, rights abuse and corruption, in what some call a desperate attempt to hold the government accountable before elections.

[Pro-democracy groups in Hong Kong](#) have taken to the streets last Sunday after democracy-activist Agnes Chow was disqualified from running in the hotly contested legislative elections in March.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Al Jazeera’s [Iran reporter Zein Basravi reflects on political developments](#) since the December protests, arguing that protesters successfully got the 2018 budget rejected, but the much-desired open dialogue and transparency remain elusive.

In an article on Power3.0, Professor Steven Feldstein analyses the [hybrid nature of repression in China](#) which combines online and offline activities, thereby making use of the underdeveloped human rights regulations regarding online repression.

A new [Afrobarometer report on Uganda](#) shows support for democracy is growing, even though there is a steady decline in support for democratic values, the perceived quality of elections and satisfaction with the way democracy works in Uganda.

COMING UP

From 9 to 11 March 2018, Democracy International and the Wuppertal university organise a symposium on political culture and active citizenship. The seminars will compare different

Beyond Ballots 2018

countries' use of direct democratic instruments, with the aim of understanding whether these instruments inspire more participation and active citizenship. More information is available [here](#).

8 February 2018

A LA UNE

In a national referendum last Sunday, Ecuadorians overwhelmingly voted for a [re-installment of presidential term limits](#), which President Moreno called a triumph for democracy in a region where similar referenda have often been ignored.

For the first time since the end of military rule, Guineans voted in [long-delayed local elections](#) on Sunday, but accusations of electoral fraud sparked riots and violence which left several dead, including 5 children.

Days after the [EU condemned](#) the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for human rights abuses and infringements on democratic freedoms, President Obiang Nguema has [dissolved the government](#) by decree, just two months ago after it was elected.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

In an article in African Arguments, Nanjala Nyabola challenges foreign governments' ["Stability Doctrine" in Africa](#), arguing it privileges short-term economic gain under an autocracy at the cost of long-term prosperity and human dignity.

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart have published the first chapter of their new book called "Cultural Backlash", in which they discuss the [rise of Authoritarian-Populism](#) in Europe and the US and the ways it threatens liberal democracy.

In a Wilson Quarterly article, Nina Jankowicz advances compelling arguments for investing in civic education and [media literacy to protect democracy](#) against disinformation and Russian influence, rather than implementing technical quick fixes.

COMING UP

From 2 to 8 July 2018, the annual Transparency International School on Integrity (TISI) will take place in Vilnius. This annual anti-corruption and accountability training teaches young future leaders about corruption detection and eradication methods and civic empowerment tools, through a combination of lectures, seminars, discussions, field trips, film screenings and practical trainings. TISI is now welcoming applications for this year's summer school. More information is available on the Transparency School [website](#).

15 February 2018

A LA UNE

South African President Jacob [Zuma has stepped down](#) after initially refusing his party's order to resign because of a corruption scandal, thereby making way for deputy president and party leader Cyril Ramaphosa.

The Ethiopian government has [freed opposition leader Bekele Gerba](#) and 7 others amidst a paralysing social boycott in the Oromia region, which was set to last 3 days but turned into a [celebration](#) and street-cleaning day after the release of these 8.

Thousands of Bangladeshi [opposition supporters took to the streets](#) last Monday to demand free and fair elections as well as the release of jailed opposition leader Khaleda Zia, who was imprisoned for corruption 5 years ago.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

In an opinion piece in The Globe and Mail, Darrell Bricker and John Ibbitson show the [drivers of populism](#) are not economic grievances but cultural insecurities, and provide clear pointers for conversations with populist party supporters.

Hubert Hermans has published a book on [democracy as a source of self and identity](#), rather than an organising principle of society, arguing that a democratic society can only flourish if its citizens have a democratically organised self.

A new International IDEA publication considers the impact of the rise in [conflict, democratic backsliding and new technology](#) on corruption and organised crime networks through a scenario building exercise.

COMING UP

From 23 to 31 March, The Hague holds the [Movies that Matter Festival](#). The festival screens documentaries on people who fight for democracy, freedom of speech, environmental protection, migration and gender equality. In between screenings, directors and activists enter discussions on the topics of their life's work. More information is available [here](#).

22 February

A LA UNE

Although the thorny issue of Presidential term limits is yet to be discussed, the political dialogue between the Togolese opposition and the government is already bearing fruit, as [the opposition halted the protests](#) that started in August 2017.

Nepal swore in a [new, democratically elected Prime Minister](#), which signifies the formal ending of the autocratic monarchy and the beginning of a democratic era.

Unrest continues in the Maldives, as citizens and the opposition party protest the extension of the [state of emergency](#) imposed last month when a Supreme Court overturned criminal convictions against opponents of President Yameen.

Beyond Ballots 2018

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

A new book edited by Professor Nic Cheeseman studies the way institutions shape the [practice of politics in Africa](#), arguing electoral commissions, economic regulation and systems of land tenure are vital to our understanding of democracy in Africa.

In a Washington Post article, Vikram J. Singh and Danielle Pletka propose 3 steps necessary to counter the “[democratic depression](#)”: restoring the privileges of democracy, imposing sanctions for democratic backsliding and reinvigorating a sense of democratic pride.

Afrobarometer asked North Africans how they feel about the [relationship between Islam and democracy](#), concluding a majority sees both as compatible and support a separation between religion and politics, with the exceptions of Algerian and Sudan.

COMING UP

On 26 and 27 April 2018, The Research Centre for the Study of Parties and Democracy (REPRESENT) will hold a conference on Political Parties in the Age of Populism. The conference will take place in the University of Birmingham and will focus on populism, political parties and democracy support. More information is available [here](#).

1 March

A LA UNE

George Orwell books, “Xi Zedong” and other disapproving terms and phrases were censored in China this week so as to silence growing dissent against the Communist Party’s plan to [extend Xi Jinping’s presidency](#) by scrapping presidential term limits.

[Slovakian investigative journalist Jan Kuciak](#) and his partner were murdered in relation to Kuciak’s investigations into tax fraud this week, in what Slovakian Prime Minister called “an unprecedented attack on freedom of the press and democracy in Slovakia.”

While President Rodrigo Duterte skipped the commemoration of the Philippines’ democratic revolution of 1986, thousands of people used the occasion to [protest Duterte’s authoritarian tendencies](#) and war on drugs last Sunday.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Pablo Yanguas has published a new book, [Why We Lie About Aid](#), which describes the current dysfunctional aid system and proposes a different approach that considers aid to be about struggle and politics, rather than spending levels and quick fixes.

[Do women represent women?](#) They do, argues Rainbow Murray in the International Politics and Society Journal, but we need to be reasonable about our expectations of female politicians and elect more women to overcome structural constraints.

Transparency International has published their Corruption Perceptions Index for 2017 and conclude the majority of countries make [little or no progress in ending corruption](#), despite significant progress in Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and the United Kingdom.

COMING UP

On 13 March 2018, International IDEA, the United Nations Office in Geneva and the Community of Democracies organise an inter-regional workshop on SDG 16 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The workshop will bring together a variety of actors to discuss the challenges, achievements and opportunities for reaching peaceful, just and inclusive societies with accountable institutions. More information is available [here](#).

8 March 2018

A LA UNE

On Tuesday the [Sri Lankan government imposed a state of emergency](#) following the outbreak of a wave of ethnic violence between members of its Muslim and Buddhist communities.

[Vote counting is underway in Sierra Leone](#) as the country bids to elect its first new government in over a decade. The National Grand Coalition, a new political party headed by a former UN executive, Kandeh Yumkella, is set to perform well.

The breakaway [Republic of Somaliland has formally charged poet, Naema Qorane](#) with disseminating propaganda calling for a united Somalia. If convicted, Qorane could face up to eight years in prison.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

The *Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance* (IDEA) has published an article entitled, [“Gender-Targeted Public Funding for Political Parties: A Comparative Analysis,”](#) which includes case studies from Albania, Croatia, France, Haiti and Portugal.

Democracy Reporting International has published a study entitled [“From Legislation to Action: Next Steps for Implementing Electoral Reforms in Pakistan,”](#) which puts forth proposals on the operationalisation of the 2017 legislative electoral reforms.

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt's [“How Democracies Die,”](#) provides a comprehensive overview of the factors which weaken democratic institutions across a wide range of case studies.

The *Centre for Contemporary Politics and Cooperation* has published an analysis of the state of democracy in four EU candidate countries. Take a look here: [“Democracy in Progress: Shadow Report on Political Copenhagen Criteria in Western Balkans EU Candidate States.”](#)

Beyond Ballots 2018

COMING-UP

Monday 23rd April, 18.30 – 20.00 (London School of Economics)

Aisling Swaine examines the contexts of Liberia, Northern Ireland and Timor-Leste to identify a spectrum of forms of gender violence in a lecture entitled; [“From Transitional To Transformative: justice for conflict-related violence against women.”](#)

15 March

A LA UNE

On Sunday, [FARC captured only 0.33% of the vote in parliamentary elections](#), which returned a majority for conservative parties critical of the long-awaited peace deal of 2016.

[Turkish parliament has ratified a bill](#) that significantly changes electoral regulation. Opposition to the reform have expressed concerns that it could jeopardise the fairness of 2019 elections.

President Rodrigo [Duterte will withdraw the Philippines from the ICC](#) after it began examining the country’s drugs war.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Are [negative views of democracy](#) more widespread in countries with a low political affiliation? Pew Research Center has released a study which demonstrates as much.

IDEA has published an article which highlights the success of its [Electoral Risk Management Tool](#) in the case of electoral monitoring in Nepal. The Tool can be used to accumulate and store large amounts of qualitative and quantitative data which may form the basis for electoral reform.

In the lead-up to the 19 March Russian Presidential election, Deutsche Welle (DW) have published the comprehensive article; [“Putin’s Certain Victory: What You Need to Know About the Russian Presidential Election.”](#)

COMING-UP

On 19 – 20 April, the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), the University of Cambridge’s Centre of Latin American Studies, and the Latin America Bureau host a 2-day conference bringing together researchers interested in [new spaces of resistance in Latin America](#) which have emerged in relation to the so-called ‘Pink Tide.’

22 March

A LA UNE

Htin Kyaw, the [President of Myanmar has resigned](#) for personal reasons. Reports suggest that Aung San Suu Kyi will appoint another loyalist to the position.

Several cases of ballot stuffing were caught on camera and over [1,500 cases of fraud](#) were registered by the election monitoring organization, Golos during last Sunday's Russian Presidential election.

The US Federal Trade Commission this week launched an [investigation into Facebook](#) after allegations that the private data of 50 million users was misused by political consultancy, Cambridge Analytica to influence election results.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

What can policy-makers do to solve the problem of endemic corruption within Ghanaian politics? The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) has published a report, "[The Cost of Politics in Ghana](#)," which propose solutions.

Civicus has published the "[State of Civil Society Report 2018](#)," which lays out the top ten trends in civil society developments from around the world based on ten indicators to monitor serious systematic problems in civic space.

The Danish Institute for Human Rights has published a study which maps the roles played by public actors within the [Tunisian Human Rights System](#), and analyses the normative framework and institutional processes which underpin it.

COMING-UP

The London School of Economics will host a public lecture on 5 June which asks what we can we learn from the current challenge to the idea of a diverse and democratic India. Yogendra Yadav, National President of the newly-formed Swaraj India Party, and a renowned Indian psephologist will speak. More information is available [here](#).

29 March

A LA UNE

Malaysian opposition and pro-democracy groups are protesting the parliament's approval of the [redrawn constituency boundaries](#) and the [fake news law](#) tabled this week, arguing both enable the government to rig the upcoming elections.

[Over 70 Belarusian opposition supporters](#) as well as a prominent opposition leader were arrested in Minsk last Sunday, during a protest march commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Belarusian People's Republic.

After President Kuczynski's resignation over his involvement in the Odebrecht corruption scandal last week, the unknown regional governor [Martín Vizcarra has been sworn in](#) as the new President of Peru with the promise of tackling corruption head-on.

Beyond Ballots 2018

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

CONCORD's new [policy paper on civic space](#) analyses the role of civil society in democracy, and makes a number of recommendations for promoting civic space in EU external action, including a new strategy and predictable funding.

In an article for Project Syndicate, [Professor Jan-Werner Mueller](#) criticises those who blame voters for the rise of populists in the West and shifts the blame to structural problems in media and party systems as well as declining civic education.

A Crisis Group report analyses [Venezuela's political crisis](#) and resulting socio-economic collapse, and calls upon international actors for humanitarian aid and pro-active support for political dialogue on electoral reforms and transitional measures.

COMING-UP

[Democracy – Is It in Danger?](#) The Finnish Federation of Settlement and Neighborhood Houses has organised a conference in Helsinki, Finland June 6 – 8 where speakers from civil society and government will discuss the challenges which threaten democratic institutions around the globe, and consider best practices from within the development community as to how to promote democratic values.

5 April

A LA UNE

Carlos Alvarado [Quesada was elected Costa Rican President](#) on Sunday as representative of the ruling party, rejecting a conservative evangelical candidate who campaigned against same-sex marriage.

A [new law in Poland](#) which threatens the independence of the Supreme Court took effect on Tuesday. The law could force 40% of the court to retire which has prompted the European Commission to launch an investigation.

[Egyptian police have arrested](#) the director of an online media organization after it re-published a New York Times article alleging irregularities during last week's Presidential election.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Based on extensive interviews with civil society, *Forbidden Feeds: [Government Controls on Social Media in China](#)* authored by PEN America, lays bare the destructive impact of the Chinese government's vision for cyber sovereignty on internet freedom under what has been termed the Great Firewall.

In an interview in the International Politics and Society Journal, Drude Dahlerup, author of *Has Democracy Failed Women*, explains the challenges that remain in the search

for [equal representation](#) world-wide at a time when Europe celebrates 100 years of women's suffrage.

[Gender-targeted Public Funding for Political Parties](#), published by International IDEA, illuminates the link between public funding and gender-related activities within the political systems of Albania, Croatia, France, Haiti and Portugal, respectively.

COMING-UP

The V-Dem Institute, GLD-Gothenburg, UCPD and ViEWS invite you to their 2018 Policy Dialogue Day on the topic; "New Research – Better Policies: Insights on Democracy, Governance and Armed Conflict," this 30 May 2018 in Gothenburg, Sweden. This policy dialogue bridges the gap between analysis and practice, and aims to shed light on questions relating to democracy support and governance. The keynote speech will be delivered by Ms. Ana María Menéndez, Senior Advisor to the Secretary-General of the UN on Policy. For more information and registration please see [here](#).

12 April

A LA UNE

A controversial [amendment to a law on foreign donations](#) took effect last week allowing Indian political parties to receive funding from Indians living abroad as well as foreign companies with subsidiaries in India.

The High Court of Uganda will hear a case which seeks to annul a constitutional amendment which removed [presidential term limits](#) last year. The current President, Yoweri Museveni, has held office for more than 30 years.

Former South African President [Jacob Zuma appeared in Court](#) last Friday, faced with 16 charges of fraud, corruption and money laundering for allegedly accepting bribes from French arms manufacturer Thales, for which an advisor was jailed in 2005.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

CONCORD suggests that the European Commission's proposal to merge the twelve existing external financial instruments into one would allow EU-allied foreign interests to [displace development cooperation objectives](#) and weaken budgetary oversight.

The National Democratic Institute has published a study, [No Party to Violence](#) which exposes the physical and psychological violence against women in political parties in Honduras, Tanzania, Tunisia and Ivory Coast based on public surveys, interviews and official statistics.

Are police agencies less likely to use [torture in democracies](#) than in non-democracies? Using Ill-Treatment and Torture (ITT) Data, researchers funded by the Carnegie Corporation

Beyond Ballots 2018

evaluate the nature of police violence world-wide against political dissidents, criminals, and marginalised communities, respectively.

COMING-UP

To celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights at Utrecht University will hold a seminar entitled *Leadership in Human Rights, Diversity, and Inclusion* which will take place on 2 May 2018 in Utrecht, The Netherlands. The event will draw specific attention to the notion of leadership in human rights advocacy and includes a masterclass for PhD candidates. It also includes a keynote address focusing on the life and work of Eleanor Roosevelt. For more information about the event please see [here](#).

19 April

A LA UNE

Tens of thousands of Armenians, among them opposition leader Nikol Pashinian, this week marched in [protest against the election](#) of ex-President Serzh Sargsyan as Prime Minister.

The Zimbabwean government has [fired over 10,000 nurses](#) who went on strike on Monday, in a hardline attempt to put an end to growing labour unrest in the country ahead of upcoming elections.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip [Erdogan, has called snap elections](#) to be held on 24 June, brought forward from November 2019. Opposition groups have voiced concerns that the move will influence the outcome of elections in favour of the incumbent.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

The Centre for European Policy Studies has published a comparative [assessment of the governance frameworks of EUTFs](#) and in particular, the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRT). The study recommends reducing the complexity of these frameworks in order to increase accountability and measurability.

CONCORD has published a report outlining its concerns with regard to the [European Commission proposal to merge External Financial Instruments](#) (EFIS) into one. The report highlights the tension between current EU external action and trade policies.

Transparency International has published a report which aims to inform civil society organisations (CSOs) considering [collective action initiatives](#) as to how to combat corruption. The report uses evidence from case studies in Hungary, Honduras, Egypt and Mozambique.

COMING-UP

The Royal College of Art in association with the Centre for Investigative Journalism is hosting an event this 19 May in London, *Alt-Age: Designing Belief*. Master's students in curation will construct an immersive installation of a hacker's workspace which allows visitors to observe and understand trolling activity. Other installations aim to demonstrate how online platforms serve as an outgrowth for echo chambers.

This project is [crowd-funded](#). For more information please see [here](#).

26 April

A LA UNE

On Monday, newly appointed Armenian Prime Minister Serzh [Sargsyan resigned](#) following over a week of protests against his election in which members of the military joined demonstrators in Yerevan accusing the PM of corruption and authoritarian rule.

On Sunday, an Islamic State [attack on a voter registration centre](#) in Kabul killed 57 people in what was the fourth attack on voter centres within a week which targeted Afghanistan's Shia minority ahead of legislative elections in October 2018.

Nicaraguan President, [Daniel Ortega has scrapped the changes to social security](#) which gave way to violent protests across the country as of last Wednesday, in which 10 people were killed.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

In a Journal of Democracy article, scholar and former development advisor to the Kenyan government, Michael Chege, argues that democratic progress in Kenya has been undermined by an [overemphasis on the institution of elections](#).

This International IDEA report assesses the ways in which a [semi-presidential form of government](#) can promote stable, democratic and inclusive governance in Ukraine, where autocratic tendencies and a weak party system have undermined the consolidation of democracy.

The European Union Institute for Security Studies has published a brief which argues that the EU-sponsored [Brussels Dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo](#) overstates the importance of the normalisation of relations between the two countries at the expense of efforts to improve the rule of law in the Balkans.

COMING-UP

This 12 June in Berlin, Volkswagen Stiftung will hold a conference where participants from civil society and NGOs will explore the concept of transparency within the context of broad social change and in particular, the digital revolution. The event hopes to promote a deeper understanding of the balance between security and public interest on the one hand, and freedom within the private sphere on the other. For more information and to register for this event please see [here](#).

Beyond Ballots 2018

3 May

A LA UNE

[Gabon's Constitutional Court has ordered the PM to resign](#) and dissolved parliament because it failed to meet an election deadline. Former PM, Emmanuel Issoze-Ngondet, accepted the ruling without protest.

On Tuesday, the government of Burundi announced that it will hold a referendum this 17 May to [scrap Presidential term limits](#) that could allow President Pierre Nkurunziza to stay in office until 2034.

At least twelve people were killed yesterday after an [attack on Libya's electoral commission](#) headquarters where voters were registering ahead of this year's elections.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

The European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) has published a report which highlights the challenges with regard to the EU's 2017 [European External Investment Plan](#) in three areas; the European Fund for Sustainable Development, Technical Assistance, and how to create a conducive investment climate.

[How Does Populism Challenge Liberal Democracy?](#) In the Journal of Democracy, William A. Galston, argues that populist political movements threaten societal pluralism by redefining the notions of popular sovereignty and democracy as the exercise of majoritarian power.

Drawing on individual perspectives of [Somali and South Sudanese refugees in Kenya](#), International IDEA uses a case study to explore the political participation of refugees and asylum seekers, and the ways in which they are able to participate in peacebuilding and democracy-building in their countries of origin.

COMING-UP

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) in partnership with the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies will hold its first [Academic Seminar on Post-Legislative Scrutiny](#) this 10 July in London. The seminar will explore all aspects of the role parliaments in this process, as well as the recommended methods and procedures for doing so. It will result in the publication of a Special Issue of the European Journal on Law Reform.

10 May

A LA UNE

Hezbollah and its political allies are the biggest winners in [Lebanon's first general election in nine years](#) following a reform to the country's electoral laws.

The Congress of [Nicaragua has set up a truth commission](#) to investigate the deaths of 45 people during anti-government protests over pension reforms last month.

[Cambodia's last independent English-language daily](#) has been sold to a Malaysian businessman who has fired numerous journalists, sparking fresh concerns about press freedom in the country.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

David Runciman's, [How Democracy Ends](#), rejects the notion of a Europe on the brink of a return to the dark days of democracy during the 1930. He argues that if democracy is going to fail in the twenty-first century, it will be in ways that are new and surprising.

Transparency International has published a report which analyses the [barriers to Afghanistan's sustainable development](#). The report scrutinises official progress reports related to SDG targets that focus directly on corruption across a range of policy areas.

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights has published a report which highlights [anti-Gypsyism as a barrier to Roma inclusion](#). The report analyses the results of the EU-MIDIS II survey conducted in 2016, and shows that despite several years of inclusion efforts, one out of three Roma have experienced harassment.

COMING-UP

The European Movement International will host a two-day festival this 24 -25 May in the Hague. Divided into 5 streams on the themes of 'Citizens Debate, Citizens Challenge, Citizens Imagine, Citizens Build, and Citizens Connect', this event highlights [how civic initiatives and movements play a vital role in major transitions in Europe](#).

17 May

A LA UNE

This week, Zimbabwe's public sector workers marched in rejection of [President Emmerson Mnangagwa's offer to increase wages by 15%](#). They are demanding a two-fold increase in wages for the lowest paid employees.

The [Sri Lankan government has created the Office of Missing Persons \(OMP\)](#) to investigate the disappearances of thousands of people during and after the country's bloody civil war. Protestors have long called for an investigation into these deaths.

On Sunday, thousands of protesters belonging to the [Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement \(PTM\) marched in Karachi against minority rights abuses](#) by Pakistan's military at the latest in a series of rallies organised by the group.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Beyond Ballots 2018

[What role for human rights and accountability in the 2030 and 2063 Agendas for Sustainable Development in Africa?](#) The Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) and the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) have published a brief which answers this question.

International IDEA has published a summary report of the Regional Dialogue held in Cotonou, Benin, from 10 to 12 November 2017 under the title, [Three decades of democratic transition in Africa: What are the dividends for citizens?](#)

What does the future hold for Egyptian governance after the re-election of President Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi? The Centre for European Policy Studies provides an overview of [prospects for democratic reform in Egypt](#) within this context.

COMING-UP

The Group of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament will organise its 4th *School of Democracy*, from 6 – 8 June 2018, in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Over the course of three days, 100 young people from both inside and outside the EU will discuss the major issues facing Europe and the world with a focus on the role of education in fighting inequality. Participants will have the chance to debate with experts from politics, economics and academia. For more information please see [here](#).

24 May

A LA UNE

[Saudi Arabia has arrested three more women's rights activists](#) in a crackdown launched just weeks before the ban on driving for women will be lifted.

Wael Abbas, [prominent Egyptian activist has been arrested](#) by Egyptian police as the government embarks upon a new wave of detentions since elections in March.

On Tuesday, [police in southern India shot dead 12 protestors](#) who belonged to a group of many thousands marching in favour of the closure of a British-owned copper plant due to worries over pollution.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

[What do Tunisians think about the state of their democracy?](#) The National Democratic Institute asked 117 Tunisian citizens whether they were satisfied with the changes which have taken place at state-level since the revolution of 2011.

[What role do regional organisations play in constitution building and upholding the rule of law?](#) International IDEA have published a report which highlights the importance of regional institutions in bridging the gap between the electorate and central government.

[Is there such thing as undemocratic liberalism?](#) Yascha Mounk explores what role it has played in precipitating the rise of populist government today in the Journal of Democracy.

DEMOCRACY WATCH

[Carnegie Council: Democracy Promotion in the Age of Trump](#)

Adrian Basora and Maia Otarashvili, co-editors of *Does Democracy Matter*, make a strong case for democracy promotion as a beacon of American values.

EVENTS UPDATE

[European Development Policy Forum: 5 June, 19.30](#)

This event highlights the growing role of the private sector in International development and invites speakers to reflect on the multiple challenges facing the development community.

31 May

A LA UNE

A sting operation organised by news platform Cobrapost claims to have revealed a [significant bias towards the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party \(BJP\)](#) within many of India's leading media groups, as well as a willingness among some of the country's most senior journalists to take money in return for pushing a political agenda.

On Sunday, [thousands of protesters marched in Managua](#) and many other cities demanding the resignation of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice-President Rosario Murillo, in the wake of failed talks with civil society.

[Viktor Orbán's government has submitted controversial legislation](#) that critics say threatens human rights defenders with jail sentences and would further undermine the independence of the country's judiciary. The so-called "Stop Soros" legal package would create new penalties for helping migrants.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

[How well has Lebanese Election Law 44 performed following its enactment in 2017?](#) Democracy Reporting International has published an Assessment of the law, arguing that its complexity has raised barriers to genuine proportional representation in the National Assembly.

The Kofi Annan Foundation has published a report, [Democracy in Southeast Asia: Achievements, Challenges and Prospects](#), which identifies the issues identified at a conference on the topic which took place in Kuala Lumpur in September last year. The report focuses on consolidating electoral processes and highlights the key role that civil society must play in this regard.

Beyond Ballots 2018

The National Democratic Institute, in partnership with the Consortium for Election and Political Process Strengthening, presents a series of recommendations with the end of improving the [credibility of electoral processes in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#) in this Assessment.

DEMOCRACY WATCH

[National Constitutional Center: Facebook and the Future of Democracy](#)

This podcast features two leading scholars in the field of election and technology law, as they discuss the transformative effect that Facebook has had on the quality of democracy in the US and abroad.

EVENTS UPDATE

[British Chamber of Commerce: Social Media and Grassroots Democracy, 5 June, 19.30](#)

At this EU Committee briefing Dan Sobovitz, Speechwriter & Digital Communication Strategist of Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, will talk us through connecting with EU citizens through social media.

7 June

A LA UNE

On Tuesday, thousands of [Zimbabwean opposition supporters came to the streets](#) of Harare demanding electoral reforms, including enhanced transparency, an audit of the voter register, equal media coverage and measures against Mnangagwa's alleged use of soldiers for his campaign.

[Jordan's prime minister has stepped down](#) after days of massive country-wide protests against the IMF-backed austerity measures including a new income tax and price hikes.

The Ugandan parliament has passed a [law taxing social media](#) usage, which activists have criticized as a bid to stifle free speech and prevent political organisation online.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

Barbara Tóth looks ahead to [Austria's upcoming EU presidency](#), considering fears of creeping "Alpine Orbunism" and Kurz' focus on migration and border control, in International Politics and Society Journal.

To halt the rise of illiberal democracies, we need to [counter undemocratic liberalism](#) and Tina (there is no alternative) politics by re-politicising policy issues and deepening deliberation, Professor Cas Mudde argues in The Guardian.

In a New York Times opinion piece, Chin-Huat Wong analyses the phenomenon of politicians [defecting to the winning side](#) after losing an election and describes how this is endangering Malaysia's democracy in particular.

DEMOCRACY WATCH

[University of Oxford Seminar: Women and the Struggle for Democracy in Iran](#)

This online seminar is given by Mariam Memarsadeghi, founder of the E-Learning Institute for Iranian Civil Society, as part of the Middle East Centre seminar series.

EVENTS UPDATE

[Politico Europe: Women Rule Summit, 21 June, Brussels](#)

This summit will highlight transformative women championing important issues on the political and policy agenda and driving business growth and societal change.

14 June

A LA UNE

Protest leaders call on Nicaragua's president to step down through a [24-hour nationwide strike](#) after months of protests which have already claimed 148 lives since April.

Three policemen and an employee of the Independent High Elections Commission were arrested after the storage site holding the [ballot boxes of Iraq's disputed elections was set alight](#).

The prime minister of DR Congo has stated that [President Kabila will not run for a third term](#), while a pro-democracy activist [Luc Nkulala died in a questionable fire](#) overnight.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

An article in *Democratization* Journal by Nic Cheeseman, Gabrielle Lynch and Justin Willis argues that the [fetishisation of technology paves the way for corruption](#) when used in elections without rigorous assessment.

CNN correspondent Frida Ghitis analyses the way identity politics is [threatening the fragile peace and democracy in Bosnia](#), calling on the EU, NATO and US to act ahead of elections scheduled in October this year.

The Kofi Annan Foundation argues that measures need to be put in place to maintain the [integrity of electoral processes](#) when using social media to share information.

DEMOCRACY WATCH

[How to topple a dictator: the rebel plot that freed the Gambia – podcast](#)

Philip Roin and Mikkel Danielsen recount the story of how a small yet bold resistance facilitated the restoration of Gambia's democracy after 22 years under the rule of dictator Yahya Jammeh.

EVENTS UPDATE

Beyond Ballots 2018

[Artificial Intelligence: Ethics, Governance and Policy Challenges, 18 June, 09:00 – 14:00](#)

CEPS is launching an artificial intelligence debate highlighting ethical, policy and governance challenges on technology advancement and the issues surrounding our dependency on it.

21 June

A LA UNE

[Photographing or filming Israeli soldiers could carry a jail sentence](#) of up to 10 years as ministers back a draft law that restricts press freedom, which will now face parliamentary debates.

A long-time critic of the Angolan government, journalist Rafael Marques, faces conviction by a former attorney general whom he [accuses of corruption](#) in a real estate deal.

Iván Duque, the conservative newcomer in Colombia has [won the presidential elections](#), promising tougher punishments and changes to the controversial peace deal with the rebels, and uniting the country after a divisive campaign.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

V-dem's new 2018 report "[Democracy for all? Democracy report 2018](#)" found that inclusion of women and minority groups remain stable, political exclusion widens the gap between the rich and poor and autocratisation is gaining momentum.

Does [democratisation mean education for more pupils](#)? Augustina S Paglayan argues that democratisation had little to no effect on education enrolment.

The Economist investigates the reasons behind why some countries are [backsliding on the democracy index](#), while others have triumphed.

DEMOCRACY WATCH

[Inside the fight against Russia's fake news.](#)

Olga Yurkova discusses the implications of fake news and how fact checking can prevent misinformation circulating online, helping rebuild trust between the people and journalists and institutions and leaders.

EVENTS UPDATE

[Use of Facebook users' data by Cambridge Analytica and impact on data protection](#)

The first part of the event delves into the effects of Facebook's data breach and the possible influence on electoral processes, cybersecurity and data protection. The second part will give parliamentarians the chance to question Facebook representatives.

28 June

A LA UNE

Zimbabwe's president Emmerson Mnangagwa survived a [blast at a ZANU-PF election rally](#) which has wounded dozens, sullyng hopes for a tension free election.

Turkey's long-established leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has secured [another five years in power](#) as he was elected Turkey's first executive president, gaining sweeping new powers.

The Mexican town, Ocampo, has [detained their entire police force](#) after another politician was shot dead ahead of next week's election, making him the third politician murdered in the western state of Michoacán in just over a week.

DEMOCRACY LIBRARY

IDEA International explores the [challenges to democracy and the conditions that make democracy resilient](#) by summarising the discussions at the participatory launch events of their Global State of Democracy report last year.

Yascha Mounk looks at how [growing dependency on bureaucratic agencies and the role of money](#) in politics prevents popular views from being reflected in public policy, leading to an increase in populism.

Nate Sibley talks about the importance of [using democracy to protect and enable investigative journalism](#) and fight against corruption in his recent thought piece for Power3.0.

DEMOCRACY WATCH

[Flying the Flag for Openness: why liberalism still matters – Podcast](#)

Former Deputy Prime Minister of the UK, Nick Clegg, talks about the importance of liberal democracy in the age of rising generational and social division and why it should be defended but also challenged in order to adapt to the current political climate.

EVENTS UPDATE

[Parliaments, Elections, and the Cost of Politics: Implications for Corruption and Exclusion, 4 July, 09.30 – 11.30](#)

Why are women and youth still a minority in parliaments around the world? And why does corruption persist in political systems despite decades of investment in transparency? This panel discussion explores the interconnected challenges of corruption and exclusion, by looking at the cost of getting into politics.