

THE
STATESMAN'S
YEARBOOK
2016

'Democracy is a device that ensures we shall be governed no better than we deserve.'

George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950)

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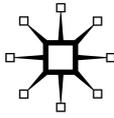
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THE STATESMAN'S YEARBOOK

THE POLITICS, CULTURES AND
ECONOMIES OF THE WORLD

2016

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PREFACE

Welcome to the 152nd edition of *The Statesman's Yearbook*—a concise reference work containing nearly 1,600 pages of data on the political, economic and social landscape of the 194 countries of the world plus territories. The world has changed considerably since 1864 when the first edition was published, but there are still many similarities as you will find. For instance, back then we said in the entry on Greece: 'At the time of King Otho's departure from Greece [1862], the exchequer was not only empty, but exhibited a deficit of 6,000,000 drachmas'.

The 2016 edition revisits one of the most significant incidents of 60 years ago: the Suez Crisis—an episode that still manages to have an impact on present-day international relationships. You'll also find an incisive essay in our preliminary pages on the crisis and a comprehensive timeline of the key events.

In addition to information on nation states, we have an extensive section on major international organizations and leading think tanks. This year we've added for the first time a

one-page summary of the key events that dominated world affairs during the last calendar year. See '2014 in 1,000 words' on page xix.

We also have an accompanying website at www.statesmansyearbook.com, for which a site license is required to access most of the content. This is updated regularly throughout the year and contains additional material that isn't included in the book. It also showcases our archive of all the previous 151 editions. In 2014 we added to our website a series of infographics, special features on prominent world leaders and 'snapshots', where Palgrave Macmillan authors have the opportunity to write a concise summary of their politics-related books—all of which is free for everyone to read.

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

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

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Cook Islands	903	SOMALIA	1094
Niue	905	SOUTH AFRICA	1098
NICARAGUA	907	<i>Provinces</i>	1108
NIGER	911	Eastern Cape	1108
NIGERIA	915	Free State	1108
NORWAY	922	Gauteng	1109
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Svalbard	930	Limpopo	1109
Jan Mayen	930	Mpumalanga	1109
Bouvet Island	930	Northern Cape	1110
Peter I Island	930	North-West	1110
Queen Maud Land	930	Western Cape	1110
OMAN	931	SOUTH SUDAN	1111
PAKISTAN	935	SPAIN	1114
PALAU	943	SRI LANKA	1124
PANAMA	946	SUDAN	1130
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	951	SURINAME	1137
Bougainville	955	SWAZILAND	1141
PARAGUAY	956	SWEDEN	1145
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UKRAINE	1224	Minnesota	1382
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UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	1231	Missouri	1385
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Guernsey	1289	North Dakota	1402
Alderney	1290	Ohio	1403
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British Antarctic Territory	1294	South Carolina	1413
British Indian Ocean Territory	1294	South Dakota	1415
British Virgin Islands	1295	Tennessee	1416
Cayman Islands	1296	Texas	1418
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FALLING OUT OVER SUEZ

60 years on from the Suez Crisis, Barry Turner reflects on an episode that tested Anglo-American relations



The Suez Canal at its 1851 opening

The special relationship between the United States and Britain has had an uneven history. Its high point was in the early months of the Second World War when President Roosevelt responded to Prime Minister Churchill's appeal for aid by mobilizing the American economy as a life support for the British war effort. Less than 20 years on came the lowest point.

In 1956 Britain, France and Israel invaded Egypt. The ostensible justification was to protect the international status of the Suez Canal, a waterway of world significance not least for connecting Middle East oil to its European markets. Oil accounted for half the Canal's traffic and met two-thirds of Europe's demand.

In reality, the crisis was more about the threat to Anglo-French interests and to the very existence of Israel posed by President Nasser of Egypt, the prime exponent of Arab nationalism. A populist of formidable talent, Nasser was intent on eradicating what he called 'colonial' influence in his country. In July 1956 he declared the Suez Canal, for generations under Anglo-French management, to be nationalized. In one swift, dramatic move he had proved himself a leader who could defy two big powers.

They resolved to strike back. With good reason to fear Nasser's ascendancy, Israel joined an alliance that gave the excuse for a pre-emptive strike against a declared enemy.

In Washington, President Dwight Eisenhower watched the unfolding events with a growing sense of dismay and anger. To his advisers, Eisenhower spoke of his 'double-crossing allies' while in a sharp telephone conversation with Prime Minister Eden in London he skipped the usual preliminaries to get straight to the point. 'I can only assume that you are out of your mind' was his opening gambit. He spoke closer to the truth than he realized.

How did it get to this? At the heart of the crisis was the failure of European politicians to grasp that the days of Western imperialism were drawing rapidly to a close (Soviet imperialism was another matter) and that Europe itself had been marginalized in a Cold War that recognized only two world rivals—the USA and the USSR. With their history of empire building, the truth was particularly galling for France and Britain, both sensitive to whatever touched on their self-importance.

For almost a century, Britain had played a dominant role in Egyptian affairs. While the French had built the Suez Canal, it was the British who gave a much needed boost to Egyptian finances with the purchase of a 44 per cent holding in the enterprise. That was in 1875. By then, the Canal had gained significance as

the gateway to India, the jewel in Britain's imperial crown. After putting down nationalist rebels, British forces stayed on in Egypt to create a protectorate—in effect a British colony by another name.

French interest, however, remained strong. It was not simply that the Suez Canal Company was managed from Paris or even that Egypt was imbued with French language and culture. What really concerned the Quai d'Orsay was the possibility of unrest in Egypt spreading to French-controlled Algeria and Tunisia.

After the Great War, the American ideal of self-government for subject peoples came adrift in the Middle East where Arab princes took power under the mandatory guidance of France and Britain. The setting of new boundaries, however neat and tidy on paper, was a recipe for tribal and ideological conflict. The biggest muddle of all was reserved for Palestine, selected by Britain as the setting for a Jewish homeland. From the first days of a British mandate, Palestine was marred by violence. Today we might ask: what has changed?

Egypt gained independence of a sort in 1923. While constitutional government was created, Britain held on to control of defence and security, rights that became all the more important in the build up to the Second World War when it was clear that Italy had designs on Egypt. Efforts to secure Egyptian loyalty led to the 1935 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. The moving force was the young Anthony Eden, recently promoted to foreign secretary. Credited with a diplomatic triumph, he could not have guessed that the document he signed contained more than a hint of the finale to his political career. The period of entitlement of the British military to remain in the Canal Zone was to end in 1956.

As a loyal supporter of Winston Churchill in his opposition to the Hitler regime, Eden was highly regarded as foreign minister and as Churchill's closest colleague. Assumed by all to be the heir apparent, he followed Churchill as premier in 1955. But by then, though only in his fifties, he was a spent force. In poor health and given to violent mood changes, his political thinking was rooted in the past. Britain without her empire was beyond his imagination.

'The Empire', as he put it, 'is our life; without it we should be no more than an insignificant island off the coast of Europe.' His conviction was echoed in the Quai d'Orsay. France 'n'est rien sans les colonies.' Nasser played on these fears. Having come to power after a military overthrow of the Egyptian monarchy, he all but persuaded Washington that his political ambitions were in line with the best traditions of American democracy.

Britain and France were having none of that. The view from their side of the Atlantic was that Nasser was a Hitler in the making, a nationalist fanatic who planned a takeover of the entire Middle East while annihilating the recently created independent state of Israel.

Neither side had it right. Nasser was no democrat but his power to damage the Western alliance or to inflict pain on Israel was limited by territorial and political rivalries that were endemic to the Middle East. His mistake was to overplay his hand with Washington. Eisenhower favoured rational discussion over confrontation but he was no soft touch. When Nasser tried to hurry along an arms deal by threatening to transfer his allegiance to the Soviet Union, the warning sirens in Washington were loud and clear.

Relations between Egypt and the USA deteriorated further over the financing of the Aswan Dam. A worthy project to bring into cultivation two million acres of arid land came up against doubts that Egypt could guarantee a massive loan. When the USA pulled out of the deal, Nasser appealed to the Russians who were far more accommodating.



The route of the Canal today

The fear of the Cold War spreading to the Middle East seemed to justify the stance of Britain and France. But US disillusionment with Nasser fell a long way short of securing Washington's willingness to bring armed pressure to bear. In the naive belief that Eisenhower would be compelled to follow their lead, the two European powers pushed ahead with their scheme to bring down Nasser.

The nationalization of the Suez Canal was the spark in the tinderbox. With France as Israel's closest ally, a triple alliance took shape. The arch plotters were Eden and his opposite numbers in France and Israel—Guy Mollet and David Ben-Gurion.

To say that the plan was fantastical is to put it mildly. After a half-hearted attempt at conciliation, Israel was to attack Egypt; Britain and France would then intervene with an expeditionary force to separate the combatants and save the Canal. No account was taken of world opinion which, in the event, turned out to be almost uniformly hostile. Little account was taken of the United Nations; a fact even more remarkable given that Eden was one of its principal architects.

At 3.00 p.m. on 29 October 1956, the Israeli Air Force struck against Egyptian positions in Sinai. The next day, an ultimatum from France and Britain was addressed to the governments of Israel and Egypt. It called on them to stop hostilities, to withdraw their forces to a distance of ten miles from the Canal and to allow Anglo-French forces to occupy key positions.

The ultimatum, rejected by Egypt, set off a veritable hurricane of protest. It was led by the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, who with a 'heavy heart' spoke before the UN General Assembly to discuss two of America's oldest and closest allies. To add to his discomfort, the Soviet Union joined him in condemning the 'aggressors', a gesture of staggering hypocrisy in view of Moscow's decision to send troops to Hungary to bring into line the liberal reformers who had taken over the government.

The USSR continued to bluster with contrived outrage. Nikita Khrushchev, the new strong man in Moscow, threatened rocket attacks to 'curb aggression' against Egypt. However much Eisenhower was opposed to the Suez adventure, Soviet involvement was not to be tolerated. 'If those fellows start

something', he told his advisers, 'we may have to hit 'em—if necessary, with everything in the bucket.'

That the Suez War was a gigantic mistake destined to end in disaster became apparent to the British political elite at an early stage of the campaign. At least six members of Eden's cabinet had severe doubts while the minister of defence, no less, came out openly against the use of force. He also recognized, along with others, that Eden—with his fragile temper and refusal to acknowledge reasoned argument that told against him—was close to a breakdown. Yet, there was only one resignation and that of a junior minister.

When eventually Anglo-French forces landed in Egypt, the conflict was short and sharp. An overwhelming majority in the UN in favour of an immediate ceasefire, together with an oil embargo against Britain and France, concentrated minds on finding an exit. But it was financial pressure from the USA that clinched the argument. Harold Macmillan, as finance minister in the Eden government, warned of fast disappearing gold reserves and threats from Washington to expose sterling to turmoil in the currency markets. A run on the pound was the last thing the precarious British economy needed.

Macmillan exaggerated. Britain's financial plight was nowhere near as serious as he made out. Moreover, the US was not about to disrupt the world economy to score a point against Britain. As the Tory leader who took over when Eden was forced to resign, the suspicion is that Macmillan engineered his own succession. A more probable explanation is that he was convinced the government was in an impossible position. It was largely on his urging that Eden accepted a ceasefire.

What else was learned from the Suez debacle or, perhaps, what was not learned? It was many years before Britain and France recognized that imperialism was a lost cause. Independence for British colonies came slowly and often painfully while France bucked the trend with fruitless efforts to bind her overseas possessions ever closer to the motherland. It was only after a savage and demoralizing war that Algeria was surrendered to nationalists. It needed the exceptional prestige and presence of Charles de Gaulle to effect the change.

De Gaulle was less easily persuaded that on the world stage the USA was the undisputed leader of the Western democracies. France withdrew from NATO as the first move towards creating an independent nuclear deterrent. By contrast, Macmillan, who had succeeded Eden as prime minister at the start of 1957, moved quickly to repair and strengthen Anglo-American relations. When he met with Eisenhower in March 1957, the President reported 'by far the most successful international meeting I have attended since the close of World War Two'. The special relationship was back on track.

In bowing to the White House, Britain accepted, though implicitly, that worldwide responsibilities could no longer be sustained on such a small economic base. A start was made on reducing the size of the military while making it fitter for a more limited purpose.

The biggest loser of the Suez War, though he was the last to realise it, was Abdul Nasser. After the ceasefire he proclaimed a great victory over the invaders. It was true that Egyptian control of the Canal was affirmed but that was a long way from concluding that the Egyptian armed forces had emerged from battle with much distinction. In reality they failed at almost every stage of the campaign, their few successes being more the result of luck than strategic judgment. The myth fostered by Nasser was that with advanced military technology, his forces were invincible. The bitter truth became apparent a decade later with the Egyptian defeat in the Six Day War. Soviet arms were to no avail. Israeli raids destroyed 286 of 340 Egyptian warplanes on the ground. The story went around of Marshal Zokharov, chief of the Soviet general staff, telephoning Nasser to let him know that his latest batch of aircraft was ready for delivery. 'Or would it save time if we just blew them up now?'

As the true story of the Suez War began to emerge from the archives, Anthony Eden was cast as the undisputed villain of the piece. The real indictment against Eden was not so much that he was devious or dishonest but rather he did not understand the country he was governing. Over twenty years of world travel in the grand style, cavorting with diplomats and politicians who themselves had outmoded, or at best second-hand, impressions of what Britain represented, had left him with an exaggerated view of his country's readiness or ability to fight for the values he held most dear. Eden had no feel for the better-educated and better-informed generation that was coming of age.

The rebellious spirit that was beginning to find its strength in the late fifties had its origins in America, where rising living standards and cash to spare had released teenagers from their parents' purse string and freed them from traditional authority. The new radicalism soon spread to Europe, where young people were besotted with American culture popularized by sound and screen. The gap between old and new was widening at the time of Suez. Eden and his friends, mostly of pre-war vintage, failed to connect with the young; few even bothered to try. To many of military age in 1956, the Suez episode was a throwback—evidence that their elders had lost their grip.

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A TIMELINE OF THE SUEZ CRISIS

- 1859** Construction begins on the Suez Canal.
- 1869** The canal opens, managed by the Suez Canal Company.
- 1882** Britain seizes control of both Egypt and the Canal.
- 1922** Egypt secures partial independence.
- 1936** The Suez Canal Zone is established, granting Britain ongoing control of the area.
- 1951** Egypt demands Britain surrender the Canal Zone and announces its intention to seize control of Sudan, which has hitherto been jointly administered by Egypt and the UK.
- 1953** Egypt becomes a republic.
- 1954** General Nasser becomes Egyptian head of state. Britain agrees to a phased withdrawal from the Canal Zone.
- 1956**
- 13 June The Canal returns to Egyptian control.
- 26 July Following withdrawal of US and UK financial backing for construction of the Aswan Dam over Egypt's links with China and the USSR, Nasser declares his intention to nationalize the Suez Canal.
- 30 July British Prime Minister Anthony Eden formerly opposes the move.
- 1 Aug. The UK, the USA and France meet to discuss the crisis.
- 16 Aug. Nasser refuses to attend an international conference in London where representatives from 22 nations meet to discuss the Canal's future.
- 5 Sept. Israel condemns Egypt's conduct.
- 9 Sept. Nasser rejects plans for an international body to manage the Canal.
- 12 Sept. Despite Nasser's rejection, the UK, France and the USA announce plans for a Suez Canal Users' Association, which is formally established on 1 Oct.
- 13 Oct. At a meeting of the United Nations, the USSR vetoes support for the Suez Canal Users' Association.
- 14 Oct. Prime Minister Eden meets with French officials to discuss a new plan of action.
- 24 Oct. The UK, France and Israel sign the Protocol of Sèvres, a secret agreement to invade Egypt and topple Nasser.
- 26 Oct. Warsaw Pact troops invade Hungary to put down anti-Soviet uprising. The Suez Crisis is subsequently widely blamed for distracting attention away from events in Budapest.
- 29 Oct. Israel invades Sinai, as agreed with the UK and France.
- 30 Oct. France and the UK demand withdrawal of both sides from the Canal Zone, threatening to install peace-keeping troops of their own if not.
- 31 Oct. British and French air forces begin bombing Egyptian targets.
- 4 Nov. The United Nations agrees to dispatch an emergency force to secure a ceasefire.
- 5 Nov. Anglo-French ground assault on Suez begins amid widespread condemnation from the international community.
- 7 Nov. The UN General Assembly overwhelmingly votes for withdrawal of invading powers from Egyptian territory. The UK and France declare a ceasefire.
- 15 Nov. UN peacekeeping troops arrive in the region.
- 23 Nov. Under intense US pressure, the UK agrees to end military intervention.
- 23 Dec. The last British and French troops leave Egypt.
- 1957**
- 9 Jan. Anthony Eden resigns as British Prime Minister, citing ill health.

2014 IN 1,000 WORDS

Islamist militancy was perhaps the most enduring legacy of 2014. Although not a new phenomenon, its increasing violence left a trail of misery across large parts of the world. Both Iraq (having suffered instability and sectarian strife since the fall of Saddam Hussein) and Syria—where civil war has raged since early 2011 when President Assad rejected the democratic aspirations of the Arab Spring—were unwilling hosts to the rise of Islamic State (IS), a jihadist extremist movement seeking to establish a new Sunni Muslim caliphate across national borders. The rapid rise and ferocity of IS prompted military action in the form of air strikes from September onwards by some Western nations and friendly Arab states in an effort to contain the movement's advance and to stop its atrocities against civilians.

Elsewhere, an Islamist insurgency in northeast Nigeria escalated through the year as Boko Haram extremists took over swathes of territory, massacring or abducting civilians. Meanwhile, the Taliban in Afghanistan were emboldened by the impending withdrawal of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force and the Pakistani Taliban capped an already violent year with an assault on a school in Peshawar, killing around 150 people—most of them children. The al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabab group sought to destabilize Kenya from its base in Somalia, while Houthi Islamist rebels threatened an already fragile government in Yemen. International rejection of such extremism was perhaps best reflected in the award of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize to 17-year-old Malala Yousafzai, the victim of an attempted assassination by the Pakistani Taliban, for championing the rights of girls to an education. She shared the prize with Indian children's rights advocate Kailash Satyarthi.

Meanwhile, there were security concerns in Europe that recalled the Cold War after Ukraine's pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich was ousted in February by popular opposition and a new pro-Western government was installed. Hostile to the further advance of European Union and NATO political and military influence towards its own borders, Russia reacted by taking control of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and backing pro-Russian separatists in the east of the country against the Kyiv government. Russia's actions were widely condemned by Western leaders, who imposed sanctions against Moscow. A ceasefire brokered in September proved ineffective and casualties mounted through the rest of the year against the backdrop of the deteriorating international diplomatic atmosphere.

Further afield, ethnic conflict in South Sudan that had erupted in December 2013 continued through 2014 despite intermittent but ineffective peace talks, while in Libya ideological rivalries and factional violence in the post-Gaddafi era degenerated into civil war. Meanwhile, Israeli–Palestinian confrontation was reignited in mid-year as the Israeli military launched assaults on the Gaza Strip in response to rocket attacks by the militant Hamas movement. Several weeks of sustained conflict resulted in over 2,000 civilian deaths in Gaza before an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire in August. Elsewhere, there were coups in Thailand and Burkina Faso, ousting prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra and longstanding president Blaise Compaoré respectively.

Major elections returned new leaders in Egypt, where the powerful military re-established its political prominence under

Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, in India where Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party wrested power from the Indian National Congress and in Indonesia where Joko Widodo of the Indonesian Democratic Party—Struggle won a narrow victory. In mid-term congressional elections in the USA the Republican Party regained control of the Senate and increased its majority in the House of Representatives, while in Iraq Haider al-Abadi replaced the unpopular Nouri al-Maliki as prime minister. In Afghanistan, ahead of the withdrawal of NATO-led security forces at the end of the year, Ashraf Ghani became president following disputed elections. King Juan Carlos abdicated in favour of his son in Spain, where growing Catalan separatist sentiment was reflected in the results of an unofficial regional referendum in November. Nationalist trends were also evident in Scotland, although voters in a constitutional referendum in September rejected independence from the UK by 55% to 45%.

Other significant international developments included a rapprochement between the USA and Cuba after decades of hostility and sustained pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong against Chinese central government prescription. Relations between the USA and North Korea sunk to new lows amid mutual accusations of cyber-attacks and internet outages.

Within the European Union, Jean-Claude Juncker of Luxembourg became president of the European Commission and Poland's Donald Tusk took over the presidency of the European Council. There was, however, increasing popular dissatisfaction with the EU, reflected in the results of the May elections to the European Parliament that saw sweeping gains for radical and Eurosceptic parties, including the far-right National Front in France and the anti-EU and anti-immigration United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). UKIP also made a dramatic impact on the British domestic stage through the year, returning its first two members of Parliament to Westminster following by-elections.

The world economy continued its sluggish recovery from the 2008–09 financial crisis, with the notable exceptions of the eurozone—where stagnation loomed under the weight of sovereign debt and austerity—and Argentina, which entered into its second international debt default in 13 years in July. Elsewhere, in the USA the Federal Reserve Board announced in October that it was ending its quantitative easing programme launched six years previously to rejuvenate the economy. There was also a dramatic decline in the oil price on international markets. Russia, as a major oil exporter and already burdened by Western sanctions over its actions in Ukraine, suffered a currency crisis towards the end of the year.

2014 also witnessed a number of disasters—particularly the unexplained disappearance of Malaysian airliner MH370, the shooting down in flight of another Malaysian passenger plane over Ukraine, the sinking of a ferry in South Korea that killed around 300 mainly teenage schoolchildren and Turkey's worst-ever mining accident in which 301 people died. In addition, there was a dramatic resurgence of the deadly ebola virus, mainly concentrated in the West African states of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, which had claimed nearly 8,000 lives by the end of the year.

WORLD POPULATION DEVELOPMENTS

	1950	
1. China	543,776,000	
2. India	376,325,000	
3. USSR	180,980,000	
4. USA	157,813,000	
5. Japan	82,199,000	
6. Indonesia	72,592,000	
7. Brazil	53,975,000	
8. UK	50,616,000	
9. West Germany	49,986,000	
10. Italy	46,367,000	

	2015	
1. China	1,401,587,000	
2. India	1,282,390,000	
3. USA	325,128,000	
4. Indonesia	255,709,000	
5. Brazil	203,657,000	
6. Pakistan	188,144,000	
7. Nigeria	183,523,000	
8. Bangladesh	160,411,000	
9. Russia	142,098,000	
10. Japan	126,818,000	

	2050	
1. India	1,620,051,000	
2. China	1,384,977,000	
3. Nigeria	440,355,000	
4. USA	400,853,000	
5. Indonesia	321,377,000	
6. Pakistan	271,082,000	
7. Brazil	231,120,000	
8. Bangladesh	201,948,000	
9. Ethiopia	187,573,000	
10. Philippines	157,118,000	

Source: United Nations World Population Prospects (2012 Revision)

LARGEST URBAN AGGLOMERATIONS

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

¹Plus major neighbouring cities, including Kobe and Kyoto.

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

¹Plus major neighbouring cities, including Kobe and Kyoto.

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

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

KEY WORLD FACTS

• World population in 2015	7,325 million (3,693 million males and 3,632 million females)
• World population under 30 in 2015	3,707 million
• World population over 60 in 2015	895 million
• World population over 100 in 2015	499,000
• World median age (both sexes)	29.6
• Number of births worldwide every day	381,000
• Number of deaths worldwide every day	162,000
• Number of women married before the age of 18	700 million
• Number of women married before the age of 15	250 million
• World economic growth rate in 2014	3.3% (3.3% in 2013)
• Number of illiterate adults	781 million
• Number of unemployed people	201 million
• Average world life expectancy	72.9 years for females; 68.4 years for males
• Annual world population increase	81.0 million people
• Number of people living outside country of birth	232 million, or more than 3% of the world's population
• Fertility rate	2.5 births per woman
• Urban population	53.6% of total population
• World trade in 2013	US\$37,706 billion
• Annual world defence expenditure	US\$1,747 billion
• Number of cigarettes smoked	5,800 billion a year
• Number of internet users	3.0 billion
• Number of emails sent per day	191.4 billion
• Number of Facebook users	1.4 billion
• Number of mobile phone users	6.9 billion
• Percentage of women in national parliaments	22.1%
• Percentage of senior management positions held by women	24%
• Number of people living in extreme poverty	1.0 billion
• Number of people living in slums	863 million
• Number of undernourished people	805 million
• Number of overweight adults	1.9 billion
• Number of obese adults	600 million
• Number of people lacking clean drinking water	748 million
• Number of people lacking basic sanitation	2.5 billion
• Number of people living with HIV/AIDS	35 million
• Number of people suffering from depression worldwide	350 million
• Annual carbon dioxide emissions	32.3 billion tonnes

RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

Each country's entry in *The Statesman's Yearbook* includes a section on Further Reading, containing recommended books that go into more detail on the country in question. Among the titles published in 2014 that have been added for the 2016 edition are:

- The 13th Labour of Hercules: Inside the Greek Crisis* by Yannis Palaiologos. Portobello Books, London.
- Age of Ambition: Chasing Fortune, Truth and Faith in the New China* by Evan Osnos. Bodley Head, London.
- Argentina Since the 2001 Crisis: Recovering the Past, Reclaiming the Future* by Cara Levey, Daniel Ozarow and Christopher Wyld (eds.). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific* by Robert D. Kaplan. Random House, London.
- Battles of the New Republic: A Contemporary History of Nepal* by Prashant Jha. Aleph Book Company, New Delhi.
- Brazil: The Troubled Rise of a Global Power* by Michael Reid. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut.
- Britain After Empire* by P. W. Preston. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- China's Second Continent: How a Million Migrants are Building a New Empire in Africa* by Howard W. French. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.
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CHRONOLOGY

April 2014–March 2015

Week beginning 6 April 2014

In Costa Rica, Luis Guillermo Solís of the Citizens' Action Party won the presidential election against National Liberation Party candidate Johnny Araya. Since neither Solís nor Araya achieved the 40% vote share required for an outright victory in the first round, a run-off between the two candidates was scheduled to take place. However, Araya announced on 5 March 2014 that he would not contest the presidency after opinion polls suggested that Solís would win by a huge margin. Nonetheless, as Costa Rican law prohibits candidates from withdrawing their name from the ballot, a run-off was held on 6 April, with Solís winning 77.8% of the vote and Araya 22.2%.

Viktor Orbán was re-elected to a third term as prime minister of Hungary, after parliamentary elections saw the alliance of the Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Alliance and the Christian Democratic People's Party win 133 of 199 National Assembly seats.

The Libyan parliament confirmed Abdullah al-Thaney as prime minister. However, he resigned less than a week later after he and his family were attacked by gunmen. Ahmed Maiteeq was sworn in as his replacement in May.

Mamour Alieu Jagne was sworn in as foreign minister of the Gambia following a cabinet reshuffle. Other key portfolios remained unchanged.

Elections to the House of People's Representatives were held in Indonesia. The Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle won 109 of 560 seats, the Party of Functional Groups (Golkar) 91, the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra) 73, the Democratic Party 61, the National Mandate Party 49, the National Awakening Party 47, the Prosperous Justice Party 40, the United Development Party 39, the Nasdem Party 35 and the People's Conscience Party 16.

Week beginning 13 April 2014

General elections took place in Guinea-Bissau. In the presidential elections, José Mário Vaz of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC) took 40.9% of the vote ahead of Nuno Gomes Nabiam (ind.) with 24.8%, Paulo Gomes (ind.) 10.4% and Abel Incanda of the Party for Social Renewal (PRS) 7.0%. Nine other candidates also took part. A run-off between Vaz and Nabiam was scheduled to take place on 18 May. In parliamentary elections held on the same day, the PAIGC won 57 of 100 National Assembly seats and the PRS 41. Four seats went to smaller parties.

In Madagascar, Roger Kolo was sworn in as prime minister by president Hery Rajaonarimampianina. Kolo's government was confirmed two days later, and included Gen. Jean Olivier Dominique Rakotozafy as minister of defence, Arisoa Lala Razafitrimo as minister of foreign affairs and Olivier Mahafaly Solonanrasana as minister of the interior.

Samoan finance minister Faumuina Tiatia Liuga resigned amidst an investigation by the auditor general and a parliamentary select committee into alleged corruption at the Samoa Land Corporation. The finance portfolio was subsequently taken on by prime minister Tuila'epa Sailele Malielegaoi.

Abdelaziz Bouteflika was re-elected to a fourth term as president of Algeria in elections held on 18 April. He won 81.5% of votes cast, beating former prime minister Ali Benflis with 12.2%, Abdelaziz Belaid with 3.4% and three other candidates.

Turnout was 51.7%. Abdelmalek Sellal, who had stepped down as prime minister to run Bouteflika's campaign, was subsequently reinstated as premier following the elections.

Week beginning 20 April 2014

In Chad, Abderahim Bireme Hamid became minister of the interior and public security, taking over from Mahamat Yaya Oki Dagache.

A cabinet reshuffle in Angola saw João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço appointed minister of defence. Other key portfolios remained unchanged.

Week beginning 27 April 2014

In Macedonia, incumbent president Gjorgje Ivanov of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) was re-elected to a second term after winning elections against Stevo Pendarovski of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM). In the run-off held on 27 April, Ivanov won with 55.3% against Pendarovski's 41.1%. Turnout was 54.4%. In May the SDSM announced that it would boycott parliament after accusing Ivanov of electoral fraud.

A new government led by Aleksandar Vučić was appointed in Serbia following parliamentary elections in March. It included former prime minister Ivica Dačić as foreign minister, Nebojša Stefanović as interior minister and Bratislav Gašić as defence minister, whilst Lazar Krstić remained at the ministry of finance.

In South Korea, prime minister Chung Hong-won offered his resignation, taking responsibility for the Sewol ferry disaster that left 304 people dead or missing. It was accepted in principle by president Park Geun-hye. However, he was expected to continue as premier until local elections scheduled to take place in June.

Week beginning 4 May 2014

Ahmed Maiteeq was sworn in as prime minister of Libya and asked by parliament to form a government. His cabinet, which included Milud Ahmed Khalifa Hamid as finance minister and al-Arif Saleh al-Khoja as interior minister, was appointed three weeks later. However, outgoing interim premier Abdullah al-Thaney refused to hand over power, questioning the legitimacy of Maiteeq's election.

Elections took place in Panama. Juan Carlos Varela of the Panameñista Party was elected president with 39.1% of the vote against José Domingo Arias (Democratic Change) with 31.4% and Juan Carlos Navarro (Revolutionary Democratic Party) with 28.1%.

A new government was appointed in Algeria, with Abdelmalek Sellal returning as prime minister after standing down in March to run president Ahmed Bouteflika's successful campaign to win re-election.

In Slovenia, prime minister Alenka Bratušek announced her resignation after losing the leadership of her Positive Slovenia party. She was expected to continue as premier until the appointment of a replacement.

A cabinet reshuffle took place in Croatia following the dismissal of the finance minister, Slavko Linić, by prime minister Zoran Milanović. It was alleged that Linić had illegally written off tax

debts from a firm facing bankruptcy. Boris Lalovac took over as finance minister, while other key portfolios remained unchanged.

Sir Frank Kabui was re-elected to a second term as governor-general of the Solomon Islands. He defeated two other candidates in the fourth round of voting in which he achieved the required majority of 23 parliamentary votes.

Parliamentary elections took place in South Africa. The African National Congress won 249 of 400 seats and retained their majority in parliament (despite losing 16 seats). South Africans living abroad were able to vote for the first time in the nation's history.

Yingluck Shinawatra was dismissed as prime minister of Thailand after the country's constitutional court convicted her of abuse of power and was replaced as premier by Niwattumrong Boonsongpaisan in a caretaker capacity. The charge related to the illegal transfer of the chief of national security to another post in 2011. Gen. Prayuth Chan-ocha was subsequently endorsed by King Bhumibol Adulyadej as acting prime minister, after the army chief led a military coup against the caretaker government.

In Ireland, prime minister Enda Kenny took over the defence portfolio from Alan Shatter, who had also been in charge of the justice ministry. In a cabinet reshuffle, Frances Fitzgerald was sworn in as minister of justice and equality, with Charles Flanagan replacing her as the minister of children and youth affairs. Other key portfolios remained unchanged.

Luis Guillermo Solís was sworn in as president of Costa Rica after winning elections held the previous month. Helio Fallas became vice president and minister of finance, alongside new foreign affairs minister Manuel González Sanz and justice minister Cristina Ramírez Chavarría.

Week beginning 11 May 2014

Parliamentary elections ended in India. Held in nine phases over five weeks since early April, the elections were described as the biggest-ever exercise in democracy with over 550m. valid votes counted. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to the largest parliamentary majority gained since the elections of 1984, winning 336 of 543 seats (of which the BJP took 282). The ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA) won only 58 seats, with the Indian National Congress—the main party in the UPA—taking 44. Later in the month BJP leader Narendra Modi was sworn in as prime minister alongside his cabinet.

In Vanuatu, the government of prime minister Moana Carcasses Kalosil lost a confidence vote in parliament by 35 votes to 11. Joe Natuman replaced Carcasses as premier, while Charlot Salwai became minister of internal affairs and Sato Kilman minister of foreign affairs.

In Laos, deputy prime minister and minister of defence Douangchai Phichit was killed in a plane crash.

Week beginning 18 May 2014

In the first elections in Guinea-Bissau since the military coup of April 2012, José Mário Vaz won 61.9% of the vote in the presidential run-off against Nuno Gomes Nabiam with 38.1%. Turnout was 78.2%.

Presidential elections took place in Malaŵi. Democratic Progressive Party candidate Peter Mutharika won with 36.4% of the vote, ahead of Lazarus Chakwera of the Malaŵi Congress Party with 27.8%.

Week beginning 25 May 2014

In Belgium's parliamentary elections, the New Flemish Alliance won 33 seats; the Socialist Party, 23; the Reformist Movement, 20; Christian Democratic and Flemish, 18; Open Flemish Liberals and

Democrats, 14. Other parties took 42 seats. Turnout was 89.4%. For the first time, the Senate was not directly elected following reforms that came into force from 2014.

Elections to the European Parliament took place across EU member states. They were the eighth parliamentary elections since 1979, when candidates were first directly returned by universal suffrage. Eurosceptic parties made considerable gains throughout Europe, with the United Kingdom Independence Party, France's Front National and the Danish People's Party in Denmark all topping their respective country's polls. Parties that are members of the European People's Party parliamentary group won 221 of the 751 seats and of the Alliance of Socialists and Democrats 191. Turnout across the continent was an estimated 43.1%.

Presidential elections that were originally scheduled to take place in March 2015 were held in Ukraine. Moved forward following the Ukrainian revolution and subsequent ousting of Viktor Yanukovich from the presidency three months earlier, voting in a number of constituencies in the east of the country could not take place owing to pro-Russian civil unrest. Independent candidate Petro Poroshenko won 54.7% of the vote against 12.8% for former prime minister Yuliya Tymoshenko, 8.3% for Oleh Lyashko, 5.5% for Anatoliy Hrytsenko and 5.2% for Serhiy Tihipko. There were 16 other candidates. Turnout was 60.2%.

Incumbent president Dalia Grybauskaitė won the Lithuanian presidential run-off election with 57.9% of the vote against Zigmantas Balčytis with 40.1%.

In Lebanon, outgoing president Michel Suleiman's six-year term came to an end. Since the Lebanese constitution prohibits successive presidential terms, prime minister Tammam Salam and his cabinet assumed the powers of the presidency on an interim basis until parliament could elect a successor.

In Egypt, former defence minister Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who prompted the military overthrow of Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, won presidential elections with 97% of the vote, although the turnout was low at only 46%.

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas asked prime minister Rami Hamdallah to form a unity government composed of both Hamas and Fatah. It was the first unified government in Palestine since the territories became a UN non-member observer state in 2012, and was the result of a reconciliation deal signed by both Hamas and Fatah the previous month. Israel refused to recognize the newly sworn-in government since it categorizes Hamas as a terrorist organization.

Week beginning 1 June 2014

Salvador Sánchez Cerén took office as president of El Salvador.

Telangana became the 29th state of India after the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act was passed by parliament earlier in the year. Hyderabad was designated as the joint capital for Telangana and Andhra Pradesh for a period of ten years.

The first multi-candidate presidential elections to be held for over 40 years took place in Syria. Incumbent president Bashar al-Assad of the Ba'ath Party won 88.7% of the vote against Hassan al-Nouri (National Initiative for Administration and Change in Syria) with 4.3% and Maher Hajjar (ind.) with 3.2%. Turnout was 73.4%. The elections were condemned as a 'disgrace' and 'illegitimate' by the United States, United Kingdom and the Syrian rebel opposition engaged in armed struggle against the Ba'athist government.

In Finland, Antti Rinne became deputy prime minister and minister of finance, taking over both portfolios from Jutta Urpilainen.

A new cabinet was appointed in Hungary, following the victory of the alliance of Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Alliance and the Christian

Democratic People's Party in the parliamentary elections two months earlier.

Petro Poroshenko was sworn in as president of Ukraine, taking over from Oleksandr Turchynov who had been acting head of state since the ousting of Viktor Yanukovych earlier in the year.

Week beginning 8 June 2014

Independent candidate Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was sworn in as president of Egypt. Al-Sisi, who had previously served as deputy prime minister and minister of defence, retained acting prime minister Ibrahim Mahlab, confirming him in the post.

In the USA, Sylvia Mathews Burwell was sworn in as secretary of health and human services following her confirmation by the senate. She replaced Kathleen Sebelius, who had held the post since 2009.

In Libya, the Supreme Court declared the earlier election of Ahmed Maiteeq as prime minister as unconstitutional. It ruled that Abdullah al-Thany should therefore remain prime minister.

Indirect presidential elections took place in Israel. Likud candidate Reuven Rivlin won 63 parliamentary nominations in a run-off against Meir Sheerit of Hatnuah with 53.

The Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party won the country's parliamentary elections with 56.4% of the vote, gaining 14 of 17 seats. The United Progressive Party took the remaining three seats with 41.6%. Turnout was 90.3%. Gaston Browne was sworn in as prime minister a day later.

The second round of presidential elections, intended to represent the first democratic transfer of power in the country's history, were held in Afghanistan. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai (ind.) initially claimed victory with 56.4% of the vote ahead of Abdullah Abdullah (National Coalition) with 43.6%. However, there were widespread allegations of fraud and Abdullah refused to concede defeat. Six other candidates participated in the first round of voting, which took place in April. A massive security operation was launched by the government after the Taliban had pledged to disrupt the elections. Sporadic violence and a shortage of ballot papers were reported across the country after over 8.1m people turned out to vote.

Week beginning 15 June 2014

A presidential run-off election between incumbent Juan Manuel Santos of the Social Unity Party and Óscar Iván Zuluaga of the Democratic Center took place in Colombia. Santos was returned for a second term with 51.0% against Zuluaga with 45.0%.

Andrej Kiska was sworn in as president of Slovakia following his victory in elections held in March. Kiska replaced Ivan Gašparovič, who had held office for ten years—the longest presidential term in Slovakia's history.

In Spain, Felipe VI ascended to the throne following the abdication of his father, Juan Carlos.

In presidential elections held in Mauritania, incumbent Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz was returned for a second term with 81.9% of the vote. Turnout was 56.5%. The National Forum for Democracy and Unity (a coalition of opposition parties) boycotted the elections citing biased and unfair electoral conditions.

Week beginning 22 June 2014

In Malawi, the composition of recently-installed president Peter Mutharika's government was finalized. Mutharika took on the defence portfolio, whilst new additions to the cabinet included George Chaponda as minister of foreign affairs for a second time and Goodall Gondwe as minister of finance, economic planning and development.

José Mário Vaz of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC) was sworn in as president of Guinea-Bissau. He subsequently appointed Domingos Simões Pereira, also of the PAIGC, as prime minister.

Alexander Stubb of the National Coalition Party was appointed prime minister of Finland following the resignation of Jyrki Katainen, gaining 96 parliamentary votes with 76 against.

Jean-Claude Juncker, former prime minister of Luxembourg and candidate of the European People's Party grouping in the European Parliament, was nominated as president of the European Commission. For the first time in the Commission's history, European political parties were able to submit candidates for the position, with MEPs subsequently electing Juncker to the presidency in mid-July with 422 votes in favour and 250 against.

Week beginning 29 June 2014

Juan Carlos Varela was sworn in as president of Panama alongside his new cabinet.

In Ukraine, Col.-Gen. Valeriy Heletey was sworn in as defence minister.

In Senegal, Aminata Touré was dismissed as prime minister by president Macky Sall and replaced two days later by Mohamed Dionne.

Week beginning 6 July 2014

Eduard Shevardnadze, president of the former Soviet Republic of Georgia from 1995–2003, died aged 86.

In Indonesia, Joko Widodo of the Indonesian Democratic Party–Struggle won presidential elections with 53.2% of the vote against Great Indonesia Movement Party candidate Prabowo Subianto with 46.8%.

Hussein al-Sharhristani was sworn in as acting foreign minister of Iraq following the resignation of Hoshiyar Zebari. Zebari, an ethnic Kurd, was one of a number of Kurdish members of the government who disassociated themselves from the Nouri al-Maliki-led administration subsequent to disagreements on dealing with the ongoing sectarian crisis.

In a cabinet reshuffle in Ireland, Charlie Flanagan replaced Eamon Gilmore as minister of foreign affairs. Minister for agriculture, food and the marine Simon Coveney also took over the defence portfolio from prime minister Enda Kenny, who had headed the ministry on a temporary basis following the resignation of Alan Shatter in March. Other key portfolios remained unchanged.

Dušan Vujović was appointed acting finance minister of Serbia replacing Lazar Krstić Vujović, who subsequently took on the role on a permanent basis, with parliament confirming his appointment three weeks later.

Week beginning 13 July 2014

Parliamentary elections took place in Slovenia. The Party of Miro Cerar won 36 seats, the Slovenian Democratic Party 21, the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia 10 and the United Left and Social Democrats six each. Two other parties took the remaining nine seats. Turnout was 51.7%.

In the United Kingdom, the biggest cabinet reshuffle of prime minister David Cameron's term took place. Secretary of state for defence Phillip Hammond moved to foreign and commonwealth affairs replacing William Hague, whilst Michael Fallon took over defence. Nicky Morgan was sworn in as secretary of state for education, replacing Michael Gove who became parliamentary secretary to the treasury and government chief whip. Other key portfolios remained unchanged.

A cabinet reshuffle took place in Ghana. Defence minister Mark Woyongo was reassigned to the interior ministry, with ex-minister of the interior Benjamin Bewa-Nyog Kunbuor replacing him. Other key positions were unaffected.

Week beginning 20 July 2014

In Peru, prime minister René Cornejo resigned after one of his advisers was implicated in a defamation scandal. Ana Jara was subsequently sworn in as premier.

The Bulgarian coalition government led by Plamen Oresharski resigned following widespread national opposition to its economic reforms and its failure in dealing with deadly floods that hit the country in June. An interim cabinet took office two weeks later, with Georgi Bliznashki taking over from Oresharski as premier.

Anastase Murekezi was sworn in as prime minister of Rwanda, replacing Pierre Habumuremyi.

In Iraq, Fuad Masum of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan was elected president through indirect voting, becoming only the second ethnic Kurd to hold the post.

Reuven Rivlin was sworn in as president of Israel taking over from 91-year-old Shimon Peres, who at the conclusion of his term was the oldest head of state in the world.

In Ukraine, Arseniy Yatsenyuk submitted his resignation as prime minister, citing the dissolution of the parliamentary coalition and its failure to adopt important legislation amidst the ongoing conflict with pro-Russian rebels. Deputy prime minister Volodymyr Groisman was subsequently selected by the government as his replacement. However, Yatsenyuk's resignation was rejected by parliament a week later.

Week beginning 27 July 2014

Julián Castro was sworn in as secretary of housing and urban development in the USA. He replaced Shaun Donovan, who became director of the office of management and budget. Two days later Robert McDonald was sworn in as secretary of veterans' affairs.

Week beginning 3 August 2014

In Libya, Aguila Salah Issa was sworn in as president of the House of Representatives, which had convened in Tobruk rather than Tripoli, the capital, owing to rival militia violence. He became the country's new *de facto* head of state, taking over from Abu Bakr Baira who had served on a temporary basis for a single day following the establishment of a new parliament. Issa was elected indirectly to the position, defeating Baira in two rounds of parliamentary voting.

In a cabinet reshuffle in Serbia, minister of economy Dušan Vujović additionally took on the finance portfolio. Željko Sertić was appointed economy minister later that month.

André Nzapayéké announced his resignation as prime minister of the Central African Republic along with his cabinet. His resignation came as part of a peace treaty between the government and the Séléka rebel alliance, who had demanded the appointment of a Muslim prime minister chosen from among its membership. Mahamat Kamoun was subsequently sworn in as the country's first Muslim premier, but Séléka boycotted the government and threatened to withdraw from peace talks as Kamoun had no political affiliation.

United States president Barack Obama authorized military air strikes against the Sunni Islamist group known as 'Islamic State' (also referred to as IS), which had gradually occupied large areas of territory in Iraq and Syria from April 2013. The self-proclaimed caliphate led by Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai—commonly known by his *nom de guerre* Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi—responded to the strikes by publishing videos depicting the beheading of a number of western journalists,

starting with US reporter James Foley. Military aid was subsequently provided to the Iraqi government and Kurdish resistance forces by other countries including the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Canada and Australia.

Week beginning 10 August 2014

Turkey's first direct presidential elections took place. Legislation passed in 2012 meant that the head of state would be elected by the public, rather than members of parliament. Incumbent prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan won in a single round of voting with 51.8% of votes, against Ekmeleddin Mehmet İhsanoğlu with 38.4% and Selahattin Demirtaş with 9.8%. Over 41m. people voted and turnout was 74.1%.

Week beginning 17 August 2014

In Mauritania, Yahya Ould Hademine was sworn in as prime minister. Diallo Mamadou Bathia joined the new government as defence minister, with other key portfolios remaining unchanged.

Albert Reynolds, former prime minister of Ireland from 1992–94, died.

Week beginning 24 August 2014

In Libya, the General National Congress (which had acted as the country's legislative authority from July 2012, but was dissolved in June 2014 following elections) reconvened to elect Omar al-Hasi as its new leader. Its successor assembly, in place from the June elections and led by Abdullah al-Thaney, had previously relocated from the capital to Tobruk amid escalating violence between rival militias—armed groups with which both governments were loosely affiliated.

Michael Spindelegger resigned as vice chancellor and finance minister of Austria. Reinhold Mitterlehner was sworn in as vice chancellor and Hans Jörg Schelling as finance minister.

A ceasefire was declared between the Israeli government and Palestinian militants ending a seven-week conflict in Gaza. Violence between the two sides had gradually escalated since the swearing in of a Hamas–Fatah unity government at the beginning of June. Israel, which designates Hamas as a terrorist organization, refused to acknowledge the new administration or proceed with peace talks that had been restarted by US secretary of state John Kerry a year earlier. According to the United Nations, over 2,100 Palestinians (more than two-thirds of whom were civilians) were killed during the Israeli ground and air campaign while 66 Israeli soldiers and six civilians died as the result of Palestinian gunfire and rocket attacks.

Ahmet Davutoğlu became prime minister of Turkey, replacing Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who had been sworn in as president a day earlier. Davutoğlu's government subsequently won a vote of confidence by 306 parliamentary votes to 133.

Week beginning 31 August 2014

Thailand's new government headed by Gen. Prayuth Chan-ocha was endorsed and sworn in by king Bhumibol Adulyadej. Chan-ocha had previously led an interim government comprised of senior military officials who had seized power from the cabinet of Yingluck Shinawatra. Active and retired military officers made up over a third of the new government.

The first cabinet reshuffle of Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe's second term in office took place. Sanae Takaichi was sworn in as minister of internal affairs and communications, Midori Matsushima as justice minister and Akinori Eto as defence minister.

Week beginning 7 September 2014

Haider al-Abadi was sworn in as Iraq's new prime minister alongside his cabinet, which included Shia, Sunni, Kurdish and

Christian ministers. Al-Abadi's nominations for the defence and interior portfolios were, however, rejected by parliament. Both positions remained vacant for over a month amid the escalating conflict with the Sunni extremist group Islamic State.

Former first minister of Northern Ireland Ian Paisley died at the age of 88.

Week beginning 14 September 2014

Parliamentary elections took place in Sweden. The opposition Social Democratic Labour Party won 113 of 349 seats with 31.0% of votes, beating the ruling Moderate Party with 84 and 23.3%, the far-right Sweden Democrats with 49 and 12.9% and the Green Party with 25 and 6.9%. Two weeks later the Swedish parliament approved new prime minister Stefan Löfven's centre-left coalition government.

In the Dominican Republic, Andrés Navarro was sworn in as foreign minister, taking over from Carlos Morales Troncoso who had held the post for over ten years.

French prime minister Manuel Valls won a vote of confidence in parliament by 269 votes to 244.

In the Fiji Islands, the first parliamentary elections to take place under the new constitution of 2013 saw the FijiFirst party win with 59.2% of the vote, gaining 32 of 50 seats. The Social Democratic Party won 15 seats with 28.2% and the National Federation Party three with 5.5%. Turnout was 83.3%. Incumbent prime minister Frank Bainimarama of the FijiFirst party remained in office, and new cabinet members including Timoci Lesi Natuva as defence minister were sworn in later in the month.

Carlos Raúl Morales was sworn in as foreign minister of Guatemala following the resignation of Fernando Carrera, who became the country's permanent United Nations representative.

Miro Cerar, whose party had won the parliamentary election held in July, took office as prime minister of Slovenia after the National Assembly voted in favour of his appointment by 57 votes to 11.

Incumbent health minister Ruhakana Rugunda was appointed prime minister of Uganda. He replaced Amama Mbabazi, who had been dismissed by president Yoweri Museveni.

In Scotland, over 3.6m. people took part in a referendum on whether the country should become independent of the United Kingdom. Those against independence won with 55.3% of the vote in a turnout of 84.6%. Alex Salmond, who had spearheaded calls for secession from the United Kingdom, subsequently announced that he would resign as first minister and leader of the Scottish National Party.

In parliamentary elections in New Zealand, the ruling National Party—led by prime minister John Key—won 60 of the 121 seats with 47.0% of votes cast; the Labour Party took 32 with 25.1%; the Green Party 14 with 10.0%; New Zealand First 11 with 8.7%; the Maori Party 2 with 1.3%; ACT New Zealand 1 with 0.7%; and UnitedFuture 1 with 0.2%. Turnout was 77.0%. The National Party subsequently formed a minority government with the support of the Maori Party, ACT New Zealand and UnitedFuture.

Week beginning 21 September 2014

In Yemen, prime minister Mohammed Basindawa resigned in the wake of protests against alleged government corruption and the marginalization of the country's Shia community, which had started a month earlier. A deal to form a new government was subsequently signed between the protest movement and other political parties.

Ewa Kopacz of the Civic Platform party took over from Donald Tusk as prime minister of Poland. Tusk had resigned a week earlier in order to assume the presidency of the European Council in December. Kopacz's new cabinet included Tomasz Siemoniak

as deputy prime minister and minister of defence and Grzegorz Schetyna as foreign affairs minister.

Baldwin Lonsdale was sworn in as president of Vanuatu following eight rounds of voting by the electoral college to choose a new head of state. Lonsdale took over from parliamentary speaker Philip Boedoro, who had been acting president since Lolua Abil's mandated term came to an end three weeks earlier.

Péter Szijjártó replaced Tibor Navracsics as foreign minister of Hungary.

Week beginning 28 September 2014

In Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai was sworn in as president. An ethnic Pashtun, he was joined by his electoral rival Abdullah Abdullah (of Tajik and Pashtun descent) as chief executive, and Abdul Rashid Dostum (an Uzbek) and Sarwar Danish (a Hazara) as vice presidents.

Former prime minister of Norway Jens Stoltenberg took office as the 13th secretary general of NATO, replacing the outgoing Anders Fogh Rasmussen who had held the position for over five years.

Gian Franco Terenzi and Guerrino Zanotti were appointed Captains Regent of San Marino.

Former president of Haiti Jean-Claude 'Baby Doc' Duvalier died aged 63.

In parliamentary elections in Latvia, the Social Democratic Party 'Harmony' won 24 of the 100 seats with 23.0% of the votes cast, Unity won 23 with 21.9%, and the Union of Greens and Farmers (comprising Latvian Farmers' Union and Latvian Green Party) took 21 with 19.5%. Three smaller parties also obtained seats. Turnout was 58.9%.

Week beginning 5 October 2014

Incumbent Dilma Rousseff won the first round of Brazil's presidential elections with 41.6% of votes cast against 33.5% for Aécio Neves and 21.3% for Marina Silva. In parliamentary elections, the 'With the Strength of the People' coalition of nine parties (including the Workers' Party of which Dilma Rousseff is a member) took 304 of 513 seats against 128 for the 'Change Brazil' alliance and 53 for the 'United for Brazil' alliance. In the presidential election run-off three weeks later, Rousseff was re-elected to a second term with 51.6% of the vote against 48.4% for Neves.

Parliamentary elections took place in Bulgaria. Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) won 84 of 240 seats with 32.7% of the vote, beating the Bulgarian Socialist Party-led BSP-Left Bulgaria with 39 and 15.4% and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms with 38 and 14.8%. Boko Borisov of GERB, who had been prime minister from 2009–13, subsequently returned to the premiership and was sworn in a month later.

In a cabinet reshuffle in New Zealand, leader of the house Gerry Brownlee became defence minister, succeeding Jonathan Coleman, who took over as health and sport and recreation minister. In addition to remaining minister for broadcasting and communications, Amy Adams took on the justice and courts portfolio. Other key positions remained unchanged.

A new coalition government with Charles Michel of the French-speaking Reformist Movement as prime minister was formed in Belgium following months of negotiations between the four main centre-right parties. Each of the parties were represented in the new cabinet, with Kris Peeters (Christian Democratic and Flemish), Jan Jambon (New Flemish Alliance), Alexander De Croo (Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats) and Didier Reynders (Reformist Movement) appointed deputy prime ministers.

Greek prime minister Antonis Samaras won a vote of confidence in parliament by 155 votes to 131.

Week beginning 12 October 2014

Incumbent president of Bolivia Evo Morales of the Movement Towards Socialism was re-elected to a third term following general elections in which the composition of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate was also decided. Morales won with 61.0% of votes cast against 24.5% for Samuel Doria Medina (Democratic Unity) and three other candidates.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bakir Izetbegović (Muslim; Party of Democratic Action—SDA), Dragan Čović (Croat; Croatian Democratic Union—HDZ BiH) and Mladen Ivanić (Serb; Alliance for Change—PDP SDS) were elected to the Presidency. In parliamentary elections the SDA won 10 seats, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats 6, the Serbian Democratic Party 5 and the Democratic Front 5.

In São Tomé e Príncipe, the Independent Democratic Action party won parliamentary elections taking 33 of 55 seats.

Stepan Poltorak was sworn in as defence minister of Ukraine following the resignation of Valeriy Heletey.

Mozambique's former defence minister Filipe Nyusi of the FRELIMO party won the presidential election with 57.0% of the vote, with Afonso Dhlakama (RENAMO) second on 36.6%. FRELIMO retained its parliamentary majority following elections to the Assembly held the same day.

In Iraq, Haider al-Abadi's government was finally completed with the appointment of Khaled al-Obeidi as defence minister and Mohammed Salem al-Ghabban as interior minister. The two positions had been vacant for over a month while parliament failed to agree on nominees for the posts.

Week beginning 19 October 2014

Joko Widodo took office as president of Indonesia. His cabinet, sworn in a week later, included Ryamizard Ryacudu as defence minister and Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi as minister of foreign affairs.

Former prime minister of Australia Gough Whitlam died aged 98.

In Kazakhstan, Imangali Tasmagambetov took over from former prime minister Serik Akhmetov as minister of defence. Akhmetov had resigned amid allegations that he had influenced an anti-corruption case involving a government official.

Elections to the National Assembly were conducted in Botswana. The ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) gained 37 seats with 46.5% of the vote, the Umbrella for Democratic Change 17 with 30.0% and the Botswana Congress Party 3 with 20.4%. Ian Khama was sworn in to a second term as president later in the month.

Week beginning 26 October 2014

The first parliamentary elections since the adoption of a new constitution—which had created the unicameral Assembly of the Representatives of the People—took place in Tunisia. Call of Tunisia (Nidaa Tounes) won 85 seats, Ennahda 69, Free Patriotic Union 16, Popular Front 15 and Tunisian Aspiration 8.

Parliamentary elections in Ukraine saw the Petro Poroshenko Bloc win 132 of the 423 contested seats, the People's Front 82, Self Reliance Party 33, Opposition Bloc 29, Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko 22, All-Ukrainian Union 'Fatherland' 19 and the Svoboda (Freedom) Party 6. Despite overall voter turnout standing at 52.4%, participation in districts affected by the ongoing conflict with Russia (namely Donetsk and Luhansk) was significantly lower.

The president of Zambia, Michael Sata, died aged 77 in the United Kingdom whilst receiving treatment for an undisclosed condition at a hospital in London. Vice-president Guy Scott took over the presidency on an interim basis the following day.

Blaise Compaoré resigned as president of Burkina Faso as violent public opposition erupted following the announcement that he would attempt to extend his 27-year rule. The military then staged a coup, installing Lieut.-Col. Isaac Zida as the leader of a transitional government.

The new European Commission led by the former prime minister of Luxembourg Jean-Claude Juncker was sworn in. The incoming executive included four former European prime ministers and two former deputy prime ministers, with its mandate extending to 2019.

Week beginning 2 November 2014

A cabinet reshuffle took place in Greece. Nikos Dendias became defence minister and Konstantinos Skrekas minister of development and competitiveness. Other key portfolios remained unchanged.

The Republican Party won its biggest majority in the House of Representatives in over 60 years and also regained control of the Senate at the United States mid-term elections. With only 36.4% of eligible voters participating, turnout was the lowest since 1942.

Latvian prime minister Laimdota Straujuma's new government was approved by parliament and subsequently sworn in.

Mongolian prime minister Norov Altankhuyag was ousted after losing a parliamentary vote of no confidence by 36 votes to 30. His government had faced pressure from opposition groups over a mounting economic crisis exacerbated by collapsing commodity prices. Chimed Saikhanbileg subsequently became prime minister.

Vladimir Amaryn was sworn in as finance minister of Belarus, taking over from Andrei Kharkovets who had resigned in July.

Archbishop Paul Gallagher of the United Kingdom became secretary for relations with states of the Vatican City.

Week beginning 9 November 2014

A new government was appointed in Yemen. It was led by Khaled Bahah, the country's former permanent representative to the United Nations. The government was composed of a diverse group of parties and independent technocrats.

Tamar Beruchashvili was sworn in as foreign minister of Georgia following the earlier resignation of Maya Panjikidze.

In Lithuania, Saulius Skvernelis became interior minister, taking over from Dailis Alfonsas Barakauskas who resigned amid allegations of corruption.

Week beginning 16 November 2014

Klaus Iohannis of the National Liberal Party won the Romanian presidential election run-off with 54.4% of the vote against 45.6% for incumbent prime minister Victor Ponta. Ponta had won the first round held two weeks earlier with 40.4% of votes cast to 30.4% for Iohannis and 5.4% for former prime minister Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu, but lost momentum to Iohannis in the second round.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mladen Ivanić took over the eight-month rotating presidency chairmanship.

In a cabinet reshuffle in Estonia, Keit Pentus-Rosimannus became foreign minister following the departure of Urmas Paet who became a member of the European Parliament.

Michel Kafando was sworn in as Burkina Faso's transitional president following the military-led coup staged nearly three weeks earlier. Lieut.-Col. Isaac Zida, who had assumed the

country's leadership following the ousting of former president Blaise Compaoré, was appointed prime minister of a new government.

Anabela Rodrigues took office as interior minister of Portugal, succeeding Miguel Macedo who had resigned over alleged corruption.

Parliamentary elections took place in the Solomon Islands. The Democratic Alliance Party won 7 seats, United Democratic Party 5 and People's Alliance Party 3. Three other parties took one seat each, with independent candidates winning 32.

Week beginning 23 November 2014

Talks between Iran and the P5+1 countries comprising the USA, Russia, China, UK, France and Germany to limit Iran's disputed nuclear development programme failed to meet a deadline for a conclusive agreement. A new deadline of June 2015 was set.

Patrice Trovoadá, who had served as prime minister of São Tomé e Príncipe on two previous occasions since 2008, returned to the premiership following his Independent Democratic Action party's success at the National Assembly elections held six weeks earlier.

In polling in Tonga for 17 elected representatives in the Legislative Assembly, the Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands won nine seats and independent candidates eight.

Arseniy Yatsenyuk was re-elected prime minister of Ukraine by parliament, gaining 341 of 450 votes in favour of his appointment.

In Namibia, presidential and parliamentary elections were the first in Africa to utilize electronic or e-voting. Hage Geingob of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) was elected president with 86.7% of votes cast. In the parliamentary elections held the same day, SWAPO won 77 of 96 seats, with nine other parties taking the remaining 19 seats.

Week beginning 30 November 2014

Pro-European Union parties prevailed in parliamentary elections in Moldova. The Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (which was contesting its first-ever election) won 25 seats with 20.5% of the vote, the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova 23 with 20.2%, the Party of Communists 21 with 17.5%, the Democratic Party of Moldova 19 with 15.8% and the Liberal Party 13 with 9.7%.

In Uruguay, Tabaré Vázquez of the Broad Front (FA) won the presidential election run-off with 56.6% of the vote against Luis Alberto Lacalle Pou of the National Party (PN) with 43.4%. In the elections to the General Assembly that were run concurrently, the FA won 50 seats, the PN 32, the Colorado Party 13, the Independent Party 3 and the Popular Assembly 1.

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed finance minister Yair Lapid and justice minister Tzipi Livni in response to their purported opposition to government policies.

In Switzerland, federal council elections saw Simonetta Sommaruga become president and Johann Schneider-Ammann vice president.

In Somalia, prime minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed was ousted by parliament after losing a vote of confidence by 153 votes to 80.

Week beginning 7 December 2014

Dominica's ruling Dominica Labour Party won 15 of 21 seats at parliamentary elections, losing three seats to the United Workers Party who were now represented by six members in the House of Assembly. Prime minister Roosevelt Skerrit, in power since 2004, retained his position and a new government was subsequently sworn in.

Manasseh Sogavare, who had twice previously served as prime minister of the Solomon Islands, was elected to a third term by parliament.

In Mauritius, the Alliance of the People/Alliance Lepep (consisting of the Militant Socialist Movement, the Mauritian Social Democrat Party and the Muvman Liberater) defeated the ruling Labour Party (which had formed an alliance with Mauritian Militant Movement), winning 51 of 62 seats. The new government led by Sir Anerood Jugnauth was appointed a week later.

In Zimbabwe, president Robert Mugabe dismissed vice president Joyce Mujuru and seven other senior and vice ministers. Mujuru, who was widely considered Mugabe's likely successor, had been accused by state media and Mugabe's confidants of plotting against the ageing president. Emmerson Mnangagwa and Phelekezela Mphoko were subsequently sworn in as vice presidents.

Laurent Lamothe resigned as prime minister of Haiti following demonstrations over the postponement of elections.

Week beginning 14 December 2014

Early elections called by prime minister Shinzo Abe were held in Japan. Abe's Liberal Democratic Party in alliance with the Komeito party won 326 of 475 seats, the Democratic Party of Japan 73, the Japan Innovation Party 41 and the Communist Party of Japan 21. Three other parties and independents shared 14 seats. At 52.6%, turnout was the lowest since the Second World War.

Week beginning 21 December 2014

Australian prime minister Tony Abbott reshuffled his cabinet, with Kevin Andrews taking over from David Johnston as defence minister.

Klaus Iohannis was sworn in as president of Romania following his victory at the elections held the previous month.

Beji Caïd Essebsi won presidential elections in Tunisia. Held over two rounds, 88-year-old Essebsi beat incumbent interim president Moncef Marzouki in a run-off, gaining 55.7% of the vote to 44.3% for Marzouki.

Construction of a new 278-km interoceanic canal began in Nicaragua. Expected to be operational by 2020 and projected to cost US\$50bn. to construct, its development was financed by a Hong Kong-based group led by Chinese CEO Wang Jing.

Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke was sworn in as the new prime minister of Somalia following parliamentary approval. He replaced Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed.

Former prime minister of Belgium Leo Tindemans died aged 92. A key figure in the promotion of an integrated Europe, Tindemans also founded and served as president of the European People's Party from 1976–85.

Delcy Rodríguez Gómez took over from Rafael Ramírez as foreign minister of Venezuela, with Ramírez appointed Venezuela's permanent representative to the United Nations.

In Belarus, Andrei Kobayakov was sworn in as prime minister, replacing outgoing premier Mikhail Myasnikovich.

Week beginning 28 December 2014

The NATO-led mission to Afghanistan known as the International Security Assistance Force ended. Active since late 2001, the force had comprised 42 countries (including 14 non-NATO members) and had undertaken combat operations throughout Afghanistan. A small number of troops remained in the country in an advisory capacity to oversee training and to provide assistance to Afghan security forces.

Presidential elections entered their third and final round in Greece. Former European Commissioner Stavros Dimas of the New Democracy party, who was the sole candidate, failed to secure a required quorum of 180 parliamentary votes, triggering the dissolution of parliament and the scheduling of fresh elections for the following month in accordance with the constitution.

A new government led by 'Akilisi Pohiva was ratified by parliament in Tonga. In addition to his duties as prime minister, Pohiva took over the foreign affairs portfolio.

A new cabinet took office in Brazil following the elections two months earlier in which incumbent president Dilma Rousseff retained her mandate. Containing fewer Workers' Party members than Rousseff's previous administration, the new government included former ambassador to the USA Mauro Vieira as foreign minister, Joaquim Levy as finance minister and Jaques Wagner as defence minister.

In Switzerland, Simonetta Sommaruga was sworn in as president for 2015 and Johann Schneider-Ammann as vice president.

Week beginning 4 January 2015

Parliamentary elections concluded in Uzbekistan. Held over two rounds, the Liberal-Democratic Party won 52 of 150 seats, followed by the Uzbekistan National Revival Democratic Party with 36, the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan with 27 and the Justice Social Democratic Party with 20. A further 15 seats were reserved for the Ecological Movement. Opposition parties were banned from participating and all candidates were loyal to president Islam Karimov.

In the Gambia, a cabinet reshuffle took place following an alleged coup attempt against president Yahya Jammeh the previous month. Neneh Macdougall-Gaye took over as foreign affairs minister and Mama Fatima Singhateh as attorney general and justice minister. Other key portfolios remained unchanged.

Presidential elections in Sri Lanka were won by Maithripala Sirisena of the New Democratic Front, who took 51.3% of the vote, ahead of incumbent president Mahinda Rajapaksa of the United People's Freedom Alliance (made up of several parties including the Sri Lanka Freedom Party) with 47.6%. Sirisena was sworn in as president a day later alongside Ranil Wickremesinghe, who returned as prime minister having twice previously served in the post.

Modibo Keita was appointed to lead a new government in Mali following the resignation of prime minister Moussa Mara.

Week beginning 11 January 2015

Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović was elected Croatia's first female president. Grabar-Kitarović won the second round run-off with 50.7% of the vote against incumbent president Ivo Josipović. Turnout for the second round was 59.1%—an increase of 12% compared to the first round in which two other candidates also took part.

A new government that included Ravi Karunanayake as finance minister and Mangala Samaraweera as foreign minister was appointed in Sri Lanka.

Filipe Nyusi of the FRELIMO party was sworn in as president of Mozambique following his victory at elections held three months earlier. Carlos Agostinho do Rosário (also of FRELIMO) became prime minister two days later, and led a new cabinet that included Jaime Basílio Monteiro as interior minister and Atanásio Salvador Ntumuke as defence minister.

In Haiti, Evans Paul was sworn in as prime minister following his nomination by president Michel Martelly.

Jean Ravelonarivo became prime minister of Madagascar, replacing Roger Kolo who had resigned alongside his cabinet over

criticism of the government's response to power outages earlier that week.

Week beginning 18 January 2015

Swedish prime minister Stefan Löfven survived a parliamentary vote of no confidence, which gained only 45 of the required 175 votes.

Early presidential elections that were held following the death of incumbent president Michael Sata 12 weeks earlier took place in Zambia. Edgar Lungu of the ruling Patriotic Front won 48.3% of the vote, narrowly beating Hakainde Hichilema of the United Party for National Development with 46.7%. Nine other candidates received less than 1% of the vote each. Held over two days, turnout was only 32.4%. Lungu was sworn in later that week.

In Yemen, president Abdo Rabu Mansour al-Hadi and prime minister Khaled Bahah offered their resignations after Houthi rebels took control of the capital. Despite parliament's rejection of their proposals, the government was subsequently sidelined by the rebels, with a transitional council led by Mohammed Ali al-Houthi installed two weeks later.

Evo Morales was sworn in to his third term as Bolivian president.

King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia died aged 90. He had suffered from poor health over the previous five years and had reportedly been diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. His half-brother Salman, the crown prince whom Abdullah had nominated as his successor, was confirmed as King the same day.

Week beginning 25 January 2015

Early parliamentary elections triggered by parliament's failure to elect a new president the previous month took place in Greece. The Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) won 149 of 300 seats with 36.3% of the vote, New Democracy (ND) 76 with 27.8% and Golden Dawn 17 with 6.3%. Four other parties took the remaining 58 seats. Turnout was 63.9%. Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras was sworn in as prime minister the next day, followed by his cabinet a day later.

In Afghanistan, nine members of the cabinet nominated by president Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai were approved by parliament. They included Eklil Hakimi as finance minister, Salahuddin Rabbani as foreign minister and Nur ul-Haq Ulumi as interior minister. Their appointment came more than three months after the elections that brought Ghani to power, with the remaining ministerial candidates expected to be in position following parliament's 45-day recess.

The president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, was elected chairman of the African Union for 2015. He took over from Mauritanian president Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz.

Sergio Mattarella was elected president of Italy following the resignation of the aged Giorgio Napolitano earlier in the month. Mattarella, who was not associated with a political party, won with 665 votes in the fourth round of voting by lawmakers and regional representatives. He took over from Pietro Grasso, who had been acting president since Napolitano's resignation.

Week beginning 1 February 2015

In a cabinet reshuffle that took place in the Seychelles, Charles Bastienne was appointed home affairs minister, Joel Morgan foreign affairs and transport minister, and Jean-Paul Adam finance minister.

A cabinet reshuffle took place in Trinidad and Tobago, with Carl Alphonso becoming national security minister.

A unity government led by new prime minister Habib Essid took office in Tunisia. The cabinet, which had undergone a number of

revisions following opposition from parliament, included Mohamed Najem Gharsalli as interior minister and Slim Chaker as finance minister.

Week beginning 8 February 2015

In Canada, defence minister Robert Nicholson took over the foreign affairs portfolio vacated by John Baird, who had unexpectedly announced his resignation. Jason Kenney was sworn in as defence minister alongside Nicholson.

A new cabinet under Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke was approved by parliament in Somalia.

Denis Zvizdić became prime minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina. A Party of Democratic Action member of Bosniak ethnicity, he had been designated premier by the recently-appointed presidency.

Greek prime minister Alexis Tsipras won a parliamentary vote of confidence by 162 votes to 137.

In Zambia, president Edgar Lungu finalized his government lineup, retaining many key members of the previous administration. Lungu, who had been minister of defence under president Michael Sata, continued in the position whilst Davies Mwila took over at the ministry of home affairs.

Week beginning 15 February 2015

Parliamentary elections took place in St Kitts and Nevis. The People's Action Movement gained 4 seats, Labour Party 3, the Concerned Citizens' Movement 2, the Nevis Reformation Party 1 and the People's Labour Party 1. Timothy Harris was sworn in as prime minister two days later.

Rui Maria de Araújo was sworn in as prime minister of Timor-Leste following Xanana Gusmão's resignation ten days earlier. Araújo was joined in the government by Longuinhos Monteiro as interior minister and Hernâni Coelho as foreign affairs and co-operation minister.

In South Korea, Lee Wan-woo of the Saenuri Party took over from Chung Hong-won as prime minister. Lee's appointment came almost ten months after Chung had submitted his resignation in the wake of the Sewol ferry disaster, which left 304 people dead.

José Luis Pérez Guadalupe became interior minister of Peru.

Ashton Carter was sworn in as the US secretary of defence, taking over from Chuck Hagel.

Prokopis Pavlopoulos was elected president by the Greek parliament. Pavlopoulos, who had been nominated by the ruling Syriza-Independent Greeks coalition government, received 233 votes in the fourth round of voting against Nikos Alivizatos with 30.

Moldova's president Nicolae Timofti appointed Chiril Gaburici prime minister.

In France, the government of prime minister Manuel Valls survived a parliamentary vote of no confidence, with the motion receiving only 234 of a required 289 votes. The vote was called by opposition conservatives denouncing Valls' decision to bypass parliament in pushing through a number of economic reforms.

In Yemen, Abdo Rabu Mansour al-Hadi, who had submitted his resignation as president almost a month earlier, fled to the southern city of Aden. He quickly retracted his resignation and reasserted his mandate as president, despite rebel control over the capital and imposition of a transitional government.

Week beginning 22 February 2015

Parliamentary elections concluded in Comoros. Held over two rounds, the Union for the Development of the Comoros won 8 of

the 24 popularly-elected seats and the Juwa Party 7. Four other parties and independents won a total of nine seats.

Kané Aïchatou Boulama was appointed foreign minister of Niger.

In parliamentary elections in Lesotho, Democratic Congress won 47 of 120 seats, All Basotho Convention 46 and Lesotho Congress for Democracy 12. The remaining 15 seats went to smaller parties and independents.

Week beginning 1 March 2015

Parliamentary elections took place in Andorra. The Democrats for Andorra (DA) won 15 seats with 37.0% of the vote and the Liberals of Andorra (PLA) won 8 with 27.7%. Two other alliances and parties took the remaining five seats. Turnout was 65.6%. Prime minister Antoni Martí of the DA retained his position when the new government was approved by parliament a month later.

The Nationalist Republican Alliance won parliamentary elections in El Salvador, gaining 32 of 84 seats. The Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front won 31 and the Grand National Alliance 11. The remaining seats went to smaller parties and candidates running jointly for two parties.

In parliamentary elections in Estonia, the Estonian Reform Party took 27.7% of the vote and won 30 seats, the Centre Party 24.8% and 27 and the Social Democratic Party 15.2% and 15. Three other parties won the remaining seats.

Matia Kasajja was sworn in as finance minister of Uganda.

In Uruguay, Tabaré Vázquez was sworn in as president alongside a new government following his victory at the election run-off held three months earlier. He took over from fellow Broad Front member José Mujica.

In a cabinet reshuffle that took place in Egypt, Magdy Abdel Ghafar took over as interior minister with over key portfolios remaining unchanged.

Sebahattin Öztürk was sworn in as interior minister of Turkey following the resignation of Ekan Ala two days earlier.

Week beginning 8 March 2015

In Venezuela, the former head of the country's intelligence service (SEBIN), Gustavo González, was appointed interior minister.

Roumyana Bachvarova took over from Veselin Vuchkov as interior minister of Bulgaria.

Prokopis Pavlopoulos began his mandate as president of Greece following his election to the position the previous month. Backed by the coalition government, Pavlopoulos succeeded Karolos Papoulias, who had held the position since 2005.

Week beginning 15 March 2015

Parliamentary elections took place in Israel. Despite pre-election polling suggesting a victory for the centre-left Zionist Union, the Likud party emerged victorious winning 30 of 120 seats with 23.4% of the vote. The Zionist Union obtained 24 seats with 18.7% of votes and the Joint Arab List 13 with 10.5%. Seven other parties contested the poll, in which turnout was 72.4%.

Pakalitha Mosisili was sworn in as prime minister of Lesotho.

Hage Geingob was sworn in as president of Namibia alongside his cabinet.

Week beginning 22 March 2015

Former prime minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew died.

In South Sudan, president Salva Kiir's mandate was extended for three years following a constitutional amendment that was approved by parliament.

Week beginning 29 March 2015

In Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress defeated incumbent Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party in presidential elections held over two days. Buhari won with 54.0% of the vote against 45.0% for Jonathan, with a turnout of 43.7%.

Islam Karimov was re-elected president of Uzbekistan with 90.4% of the vote following elections that attracted widespread condemnation from the international community owing to the lack of genuine opposition.

Eugen Teodorovici became Romanian finance minister following Darius Valcov's resignation earlier in the month.

Peruvian prime minister Ana Jara was removed from office following a failed congressional vote of confidence, in which she

received only 42 of 116 votes. Jara had been accused of failing to control Peru's intelligence agency, which had allegedly been illegally gathering information on opposition political figures, journalists and business leaders. She was succeeded as premier by Pedro Cateriano three days later.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, parliament approved a new government led by prime minister Denis Zvizdić. Included in the new cabinet were Marina Pendeš as defence minister and Igor Crnadak as foreign minister.

In Libya, the pro-Islamist General National Congress parliament based in Tripoli dismissed Omar al-Hasi as its prime minister. He was succeeded by Khalifa al-Ghawi.

Andrea Belluzi and Roberto Venturini were sworn in as Captains Regent of San Marino.

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