



By: The Editorial Board

Happy new elections 2024



Like some rare astronomical phenomenon, for example, the passage of a comet every hundred years, in 2024, Earthlings will have an election year never experienced since the establishment of democracy and parliamentarism.

In the next 12 months, half of the world's population will vote for their representatives in the most significant state institutions - presidents, parliamentarians, and local representatives.

The good news is that the model of parliamentary democracy is a generally accepted global way of constituting government. There is almost no other way.

The bad news is that most of these electoral processes are still just a facade behind which some other forces decide who would hold political power instead of the people.

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We will have both these situations at the beginning of the year. Presidential elections will be held on January 28 in Finland, one of the model European democracies. Just a week later, on February 7, there will be early presidential elections in Azerbaijan.

The current president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, will undoubtedly win a new 7-year mandate on the wings of victory in the long-term conflict with Armenia over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The last time, in 2018, he won as much as 86% of the votes of Azerbaijanis, so the next February vote will be just a formality of fulfilling democratic rules, because of which the Azerbaijani leader does not have to worry about convincingly remaining in power.

There will also be joke elections, such as the April 10 election for members of the Supreme

People's Assembly (parliament) in North Korea. Their significance only reaches the verification of the purges within the establishment, led by the undisputed leader Kim Jong Un.

Elections in crisis regions

Democracy, or more often, its twisted version, will be in action in 2024 in almost all global crisis hotspots. The outcomes of some of these elections deserve attention, as they might mark a turning point or at least a new direction in which crises can move towards a peaceful end.

In Venezuela, for example, parliamentary elections expected next December will be held amid high tensions fuelled by the autocratic regime of Nicolas Maduro.

After years of economic decline and the suppression of political opponents, Maduro **launched** an aggressive campaign against neighbouring Guyana at the end of the year after a tightly controlled referendum.

The principal motive for his intention to take over almost a third of the neighbouring country lies in mobilising voters through strengthening national sentiments, which would serve him as a vehicle for a new presidential mandate.

A president will be elected in 2 weeks (January 13) by about 24 million residents of Taiwan, and the **outcome** of the race will provide an answer to the question of whether the island will have a pro-Chinese leader or, as before, an advocate of state independence from China.

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No change is expected from the election for the president of Russia next March, which the autocratic machinery in the Kremlin tried to do in time, suppressing any possibility of free elections and political competition for

Vladimir Putin.

Regardless, Putin will run a strong and patriotic campaign, not because he will be fighting for votes, but because he sees the presidential election as an opportunity to boost the morale of a nation reeling under the weight of a protracted war and a broken economy. Perhaps this will be the last opportunity for such a thing.

The chances of holding parliamentary elections in Ukraine are still questionable because of martial law. Scheduled for March 31, even if delayed until peace, political differences will not weaken the nation's readiness to defend itself against Russian aggression. There is a consensus among political actors about this.

Elections above all other elections

The elections for the European Parliament from June 6 to 9 might show the extent of the European political mood shifting to the right, rather than whether it is happening. Several national parliamentary elections in the EU in the past 4 years have exhibited right-wing forces strengthening, including extreme ones.

The victory of Geert Wilders' ultra-right Party for Freedom in the Netherlands is the latest in that series, after Italy in 2022 and Greece this year, with the Alternative for Germany (AfD) steadily growing.

The growth of the ultra-right is forcing Europe's major centre-right mainstream parties to adapt to some of their policies. Tightening migration policies, making it difficult for migrants to enter and obtain asylum, is the terrain on which the parties of the centre claim for themselves those positions created on the extreme right political side. Apparently, they no longer want to risk significant electoral losses.



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The UK is one of 64 countries to vote in 2024. Still, more attention will be given to the results of these elections than to nearly all the others combined. Surveys **indicate** the departure of the Conservatives after a little more than 13 years, but let's leave it to them to assess the events in the next 11 months.

Just like in the case of the presidential election in the US next November, the elections of all elections are in the global framework. Pending their outcome, moves and decisions in many world capitals are on standby.

Putin, for example, is hoping for the return of his favourite, Donald Trump, to the White House, expecting that Trump would more easily implement his plans regarding Ukraine.

But will the courts and increasingly more powerful opponents allow Trump to be a candidate again in early November? And will Joe Biden stand by his decision to run again?

Democracies, hybrid systems and pure autocracies globally equally await answers to these questions.