



## Lesson 128

### Historic Elections of 2024

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This year will be historic because, worldwide, it is the biggest election year on record. Half of the countries in the world are still not democratic, and of the ones that are, around 60 are having elections this year. These elections can have global consequences - like the United States presidential election, and some are less free than others - like the Venezuelan election. Some of these elections are between the liberals and the conservatives, but for all of them, the outcome will be crucial to the countries' future - from possible military involvement to continued persecution of minorities.

## 2024 Elections

### Africa

Elections will be held in multiple countries across Africa in 2024. "South Africa's upcoming election is set to be the tightest race since the end of apartheid in 1994. The governing African National Congress's voter base is eroding and the party is in danger of losing an overall majority. Though a date has not been announced, the election must take place within 90 days of the end of Parliament's term in mid-May," *Foreign Policy*. South Africa faces many problems such as corruption, inequality, poverty, and high crime rates. These are all issues that will be at stake during the election. South Africa isn't the only country that is having elections this year, so is Ghana in December, Rwanda in July, Mozambique in October, etc. The president of Ghana has reached the two term limit, which means there will be a new president. The new president will be handling many challenges that the country is still facing from the pandemic. The president of Rwanda, on the other hand, amended the Constitution so that he could run for office until 2034. Besides this obviously being anti-democratic, he has also been suspected of having his opponents killed. Other countries in Africa are facing other problems that their new presidents will have to tackle.

### India

Between April and May of this year (2024) general elections are going to be held in India, and the prime minister, Narendra Modi, will be campaigning for re-election. Modi became prime minister in 2014, and began his second term in 2019. He is a right-wing politician who leads India's Hindu nationalist party: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). However, Modi has not been a good leader, some even say he is becoming a dictator. Modi has been consolidating an increasing amount of power in India. The media has come under his control, as all of the dissenting voices have been silenced. He also uses his power to remove his political opponents so he can stay in office. A primary example of this was the conviction of Rahul Gandhi, India's most popular opposition leader. On March 23, 2023 Rahul Gandhi was charged with defamation and sentenced to jail for two years. His jail time was deliberately made two years, since that is the minimum amount of time a lawmaker can spend in jail in order for them to be disqualified from being able to serve in parliament. Gandhi has not been the only politician to be silenced, many other political opponents have been arrested and sidelined under Modi's rule. An example of Modi's control of the media is when a documentary that spoke unfavorably about him was banned. In 2023 the BBC had produced a documentary titled "India: The Modi Question". The documentary mentioned Modi's involvement in the Gujarat riots in 2002 (Modi wasn't prime minister yet but he was chief minister of Gujarat), which were a fight between Hindus and Muslims that led to the death of nearly 1,000 people, primarily Muslims. The Indian Ministry of Information banned this documentary, using the same law that has been used in the past to suppress information that opposes Modi. Aside from political opponents and the media, Modi has also been taking control of the judicial system in

India, rewarding those who support him and punishing those who don't. So now in 2024, Modi is running for re-election, hoping to get a third term in office. In reality, he doesn't have to hope though, since most analysts agree that he will likely win the election. If Modi does win, which is almost guaranteed, he will continue to tighten his grip on the country. Some fear that under Modi, India's democracy will erode, along with the rights of the Muslims in the country. The director of the Center for Contemporary South Asia, Ashutosh Varshney, states, "If Modi comes back to power we can imagine a scenario of a Jim Crow-style Hindu nationalist order in BJP-ruled states ...It will establish Hindu supremacy, deprive Muslims of equality and create a secondary citizenship for Muslims, which will likely eventually remove their right to vote."

## Indonesia

On February 14<sup>th</sup> there will be elections in Indonesia where around 200 million people will vote for thousands of positions in their government, including a new president and vice president. There are three people running for president - in order of the percentage of public support: Prabowo Subianto, Ganjar Pranowo, and Anies Baswedan - although it is likely that none of them will get enough votes to prevent a runoff later this year. This election is important because Indonesia is the world's third largest democracy and with this election it can start to slip back into dictatorship and dynasties. Subianto has run for president and vice president for a total of three times before this. He is the current defense minister and a former general; under his father-in-law's dictatorship he was accused of human rights abuses, but he is becoming more popular with younger people who don't remember his past. The current, and extremely popular, president (Joko Widodo) doesn't want to give up power though; after failing to find a way to give himself a third term, he has publicly said that he would meddle in the elections to make sure the outcome suits him. One of the ways he did this (although he denies involvement) is getting his brother-in-law, the former chief justice of the Constitutional Court, to change a rule. In October, the court said that people who had been elected to office previously, can run for president/vice president even if they are under 40 years old (the minimum age). This allowed Subianto to add Widodo's oldest son: Gibran Rakabuming Raka (who is 36 years old) as his vice president. Gibran has only been in politics for three years, as a mayor, but since he is the son of the current president, his father's popularity is helping his ticket which will most likely win. The other two candidates are Baswedan: who was nominated by an influential party in Widodo's government and who is trying to act less religiously conservative for this election than he has before, and Pranowo: who was nominated by the same party that nominated Widodo and (because he went rogue) they are being very strict now which has lessened his popularity even though he is still in second place. This year isn't only a presidential election though, but people don't really pay attention to the other offices leading to very few opposition representatives in the Indonesian parliament. Even without taking the parliament into consideration, this is a very important election for Indonesia.

## **Mexico**

In early June is when Mexico will be holding its elections. The results of the elections will impact the relationship Mexico has with the United States, especially with issues such as border security. The current president has made it difficult for US presidents, however his term limits have come to an end despite wanting to continue to hold onto power. One of the candidates that are running support similar views as the current president: that relations with the United States are not very important while the other front running candidate disagrees and points to the many issues the country faced when they began to loosen relations with its neighboring country. What's interesting about the front runners in the election is that they're both women. That means that the next president of Mexico is more than likely going to be a woman, which is historic. Like the United States, Mexico has never had a woman president. Claudia Sheinbaum is the candidate who supports similar beliefs as the current president. Xóchitl Gálvez is the opposition that she is facing.

## **Russia**

On December 8, 2023, Vladimir Putin announced he would be running for president of Russia again in the 2024 elections. Another term as president would keep him in power for the next six years, until 2030. The elections will be held in March, and they will also take place in the parts of Ukraine that Russian forces control - Russia claims they are now part of the country. Putin will have virtually no competition in the election, essentially assuring him the victory. As we know Putin is a dictator and has complete control of Russia, so the election doesn't present an actual threat to his power.

## **Taiwan**

In Xi Jinping's New Year's speech he said that China and Taiwan should reunite - it would be inevitable. With Taiwanese elections this year that situation could come closer to a reality. China has wanted Taiwan to be back under its control since it separated in 1949, and although it acts essentially independent now, only a few countries actually recognize it as such. On the other hand, Taiwanese people do not want to unify with China and over 65% of them do not consider themselves Chinese at all. The presidential election will take place on January 13<sup>th</sup>. The major difference between the opposing sides is how closely they want to work with China. On one side you have current Vice President Lai Ching-te (running with Taiwanese envoy to the United States and close friend to the current president of Taiwan, Hsiao Bi-khim) and on the other side you have mayor Hou You-ih; there is also Ko Wen-je running in the middle. Lai is part of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) like the current president, and they want to have closer relationships with other countries like the United States. While none of the political parties say that Taiwan is independent, Lai said that they don't need to say that because it basically already is. Lai has been leading in the polls, but not by a lot. The opposition is led by Hou from the Kuomintang party (KMT). Ironically KMT is the party that ruled Taiwan when the split from China in the 1940s, but now they are the party that wants to work more closely with the mainland. The third opponent, Ko, is part of the Taiwan People's Party (TPP) that is trying to find a compromise. China, of course, does not want Lai and his running mate, Hsiao, to win and has even tried to place them and their families under sanctions. China has also increased the show of military might around the island, and Taiwan has been the victim of millions of cyberattacks that they say are from China. This election is a very important election because it will have a big impact on the politics of Asia and the world: Xi has all but said that this election provides the choice between war and peace.

## United States

There are many elections happening in the United States. First and foremost, there is the upcoming presidential election. The frontrunner for the Democratic Party is Joe Biden and the frontrunner for the Republican Party is Donald Trump despite all of the legal trouble that he is in. And just like the 2020 election, this election could be a race between Biden and Trump. If Biden were to win re-election, would the United States see more violent uprisings such as January 6<sup>th</sup>? If Trump were to win the election, what does that mean for his political opponents and democracy as a whole? The presidential election isn't the only election happening in the United States in 2024. Some of the Senate seats will be up for election. Currently, the Democratic Party has control of the Senate through a majority but nearly two dozen Democratic seats will be up for election, including some in red-leaning states. All of the seats in the House of Representatives will also be up for election. The Republican Party currently has control of the House, but their chances of remaining in power are slim because of district maps being redrawn to not be gerrymandered in their favor. The presidential election, the Senate election, and the House of Representatives election will be held on November 5, 2024.

## Venezuela

In 2024, Venezuela will be holding presidential elections. Its current president, Nicolás Maduro, is seeking re-election. Maduro is Venezuela's authoritarian leader who has been taking over the country since he was first elected in 2013. Like many other dictators, he has imprisoned his opponents, and squashed civilian protests with lethal force. On top of this, his accumulation of power hasn't benefited the Venezuelan citizens. The country is in a major economic crisis, and Maduro has essentially refused to fix it. But even though Maduro is becoming a dictator, some say Maduro doesn't have true control of the country. He has been using the military at an increasing rate as a source of power, which could mean that he doesn't have control of the whole government. Regardless, in 2024 Maduro will be seeking re-election. However, a major problem arises when it comes to elections. Maduro has a history of rigging elections in order to expand his influence. In the 2018 presidential election, Maduro's approval ratings were low, the economy was collapsing, and protests were all over the country - yet he still managed to obtain 68% of the vote. One reason this happened was because he banned two of his opponents from running for president. Five years later in 2023, many outside countries didn't expect the upcoming 2024 elections to be fair. So on October 17, 2023, the Venezuelan government made a deal with its opposition leaders, who were backed by the United States. The Venezuelan government said it would allow the European Union and United States to monitor the election to make sure it's fair. In return, the United States will remove sanctions on Venezuela's oil, which will help its economy.

## In Summary:

### **Africa**

Several countries in Africa will have elections this year. This will be the tightest race in South Africa since 2024. Ghana will have a new president, while the president of Rwanda enabled himself to serve a third time.

### **India**

India's conservative leader Modi will be running for a third term in office. He is a Hindu nationalist and has the characteristics of a dictator such as silencing his opponents and controlling the media.

### **Indonesia**

Three different candidates are running for president in Indonesia, the world's third largest democracy. The country has the possibility to return to dictatorship in this election.

### **Mexico**

The elections in Mexico will determine what relationship it has with the US, mainly when dealing with border security. It's likely Mexico will have its first woman president since both front runners are women.

### **Russia**

Although Russia will hold elections this year, it's likely that Putin will be reelected for another term in office since he essentially has complete control of the country.

### **Taiwan**

Taiwan's elections will decide how it's relationship with China will continue. One side wants to stay independent from China, and the other side wants a closer relationship with China. (A third side wants a compromise).

### **United States**

The presidential elections in the US will likely be another race between Trump and Biden. If Trump is able to win, democracy would be at risk. There are also elections being held for congress.

### **Venezuela**

In Venezuela, the country's dictator Maduro will be facing elections. He is known to tamper with elections in the past, so a deal was made with his opponents to allow outside countries like the US monitor the elections.

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Link to YPG Zoom meetings which are at 10:00am Pacific Time on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sundays of the month:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87170293849>