

DECISIVE ELECTIONS IN 2024

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There are no elections in China, but 2024 begins with one that is of particular interest to the Asian power: Taiwan. It will take place on January 13, 2024. Former nationalist China has a population of 24 million. Although it represents less than 2% of the Chinese population, it is very relevant for Beijing, which has the priority objective of its foreign policy to have sovereignty over the former nationalist China, founded by anti-communist exiles in 1949, led by General Chiang Kai-Shek. The United States militarily supported the Chinese anti-communist regime until the early 1970s, when under the impetus of Henry Kissinger, the Nixon Administration established diplomatic relations with Mao Tse Tung's China and suspended them with Taiwan, although it maintained a "guarantee security" regarding it. At the end of the 20th century, China regained sovereignty over Hong Kong, which was a British colony between 1836 and 1997. Doing so over Taiwan - an island that had Spanish colonization in the 17th century, Dutch colonization in the 18th century, and Japanese occupation in the 20th century - means for Beijing to complete its territorial recovery policy. The country is governed by the Democratic Progressive Party. President Tsai Ing-wen, who was re-elected in 2020, cannot seek a third term. During her administration, Taiwan has moved towards declaring formal independence and strengthened political and military relations with the United States, generating growing tensions with Beijing. The opposition party today is the Kuomintang, the traditional force founded by Chiang Kai-Shek, which today shows a more flexible attitude towards the formal declaration of independence. According to the latest Democracy Index from The Economist, Taiwan occupies the 8th position and is among the "full democracies", the highest rating.

On Sunday, March 17, 2024, the presidential election will be held in Russia, which is at war with Ukraine. The probable scenario is that, by that date, the war conflict will continue and this situation will influence the electoral process, whose unlikely second round would take place on April 7. Putin was first elected in 2000, and was re-elected for another four years in 2004. In the period 2008-2012 he left office to Dimitri Medvedev, whom he replaced as prime minister. During this period the constitution was reformed, establishing six-year presidential terms with several successive re-elections. Today the Russian

president could be re-elected until 2036. The Russian population is 143 million. In the last presidential election in 2018, 109 million Russians voted. Putin then obtained 76.6% of the votes, within the framework of an authoritarian political regime and a liberal opposition that is a minority. Today it is foreseeable, with the context of the Ukrainian war that has revitalized nationalism, that Putin will obtain a victory in the first round. But the minority opposition, which six years ago was pro-Western, now seems to be brewing around extreme nationalism, which questions Putin for his lack of results on the military front. The late head of the Wagner Group mercenaries, Yevgeny Prigozhin, and the bloggers who defend the war are manifestations of this current. Putin would retain with his party, United Russia, the majority in the Congress, called the Duma. Voting will also take place in the occupied areas of Ukraine. According to the 2022 Democracy Index cited, Russia occupies 146th position and is located within the “authoritarian” regimes, the lowest category.

Two weeks later, on March 31, the presidential election would take place in Ukraine, which takes on global significance due to the war that this country is having with Russia. According to the Ukrainian constitution, elections must be held on the last Sunday of March of the fifth year of the current presidential term. However, the Russian invasion of the country has led to the introduction of martial law and the Ukrainian constitution prohibits the holding of elections while this law is in force. This means that if martial law is still in effect on that date, the election could be postponed and rescheduled. If the election were held, President Volodimir Zelensky would be elected in a landslide victory. Projecting the current situation, his opponents would criticize any sign of appeasement that involves giving up territory. In The Economist's democracy index, Ukraine occupies the 87th position, within the group that qualifies as “hybrid regimes”, the third rating in the ranking.

Between April and May 2024, the national election will take place in India, a country that is acting as the second power in Asia. It has more than one thousand three hundred million inhabitants, having surpassed China in population. In the last Indian election more than seven hundred million people voted. It is the largest democracy in the world by the number of voters and more people vote in the country than in the United States and the European Union combined. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking his second re-election. He came to power for the first time in 2014, being re-elected in 2019. If he obtains

a third term, which is likely, his party, identified with Hindu nationalism, would remain in power for 15 years. This permanence is criticized in the West, where the Indian leader is identified with supposed authoritarian attitudes. But it should be noted that the Indian political regime is parliamentary, according to the British model, and the prime minister coexists with the head of the Executive, who has limited powers. That is, reelection can be indefinite. Modi represents the Hindu nationalist right. There is a social democratic opposition that governed most of the time from independence in 1947 until the beginning of the 21st century. There are also minorities, of which the most important is the Muslim religion, and others, such as the Sikh. In both, secessionist projects are promoted against Hindu predominance. It should be noted that 78.9% profess the Hindu religion, compared to 15.4% who profess Islam and 2.1% who define themselves as Sikh. According to *The Economist*, India has a “flawed democratic regime”, the second level of rating, where it occupies the 46th position.

The European Union holds the election of its Parliament between June 6 and 9, 2024. Its twenty-seven countries are represented by 705 members. It is the largest electorate after India and the first in number of voters for a transnational organization (it has a population of 446 million). The first bloc is that of the Popular Party, with 177 legislators. These are center-right forces, mostly of Christian Democrat origin. Being the first force, it has elected the president of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, from the German Christian Democrats. The second bloc is the Progressive, formed around social democracy, and has 142 members. The third is Renew Europe, a moderate center-right force, with 100, and the fourth is the Greens, with 72 seats. Then comes the Group of European Conservatives and Reformists, with 66, followed by Identity and Democracy, considered extreme right, with 62 members, and the Confederal Group of the European United Left, with 37. In addition, there are 47 independent deputies. The right clearly predominates in its various expressions, moderate or extreme. The central question is how much the Identity and Democracy bloc will grow, which questions the European Union with varying degrees of emphasis. This current brings together National Renewal in France, Georgia Meloni's coalition in Italy, and Affirmation for Germany. According to *The Economist's* ranking of democracies, approximately half of the EU members are full democracies, while the other half fall into the second category (flawed).

Finally, the American presidential election will take place on November 5, 2024. This country has a population of 328 million. In 2020, 231 million voters were registered for the presidential election. The primary process will be defined in June, when it will be known who the presidential candidates are. But both Joe Biden in the Democrats, and Donald Trump in the Republicans, do not seem to face significant rivals. For this reason, the primaries are held without questions for the presidential formula. Politically-ideologically, a moderate Democrat and a radicalized Republican face each other. Biden is seeking his re-election, keeping his vice president, Kamala Harris, as his running mate. In the case of his opponent, it is still uncertain who will make up his team. But there are many similarities in other fields. If he assumes the presidency, Biden would do so at 81 years old and Trump at the age of 78. There has never been a competition between so senior candidates in United States politics. It does not seem the best for a society strongly opposed and a vigorous unrest generated by various causes. The House of Representatives will also be completely renewed, as happens every two years, in which the Republicans today have a slight majority. So will a third of the Senate, in which Democrats have a narrow majority. On that same date, governors will also be elected in eleven states and two territories. Regarding The Economist's democracy index, the United States occupies 30th position, within the "flawed democracies."

In conclusion: in January 2024 the presidential election will be held in Taiwan. It is not relevant because its population is only 24 million, but strategically it is important because of the conflict between China and the US. On March 17, the presidential election is held in Russia; Putin will be re-elected, in a context generated by the war in Ukraine and a regime of strong authoritarianism. If the improbable Ukrainian election were to take place on March 31, Zelensky would be overwhelmingly re-elected, but his opponents will be attentive to any sign of appeasement to attack him. Between April and May the general election of India, the largest democracy in the world by its electorate, will take place, with Prime Minister Modi likely to obtain his third consecutive term. The elections of the European Parliament, which elects its executive authorities, will be held between June 6 and 9, and the nationalist right bloc is likely to grow. Finally, in the United States the November 5 election will surely be contended between Biden and Trump, who represent the same generation but clearly opposing political positions.