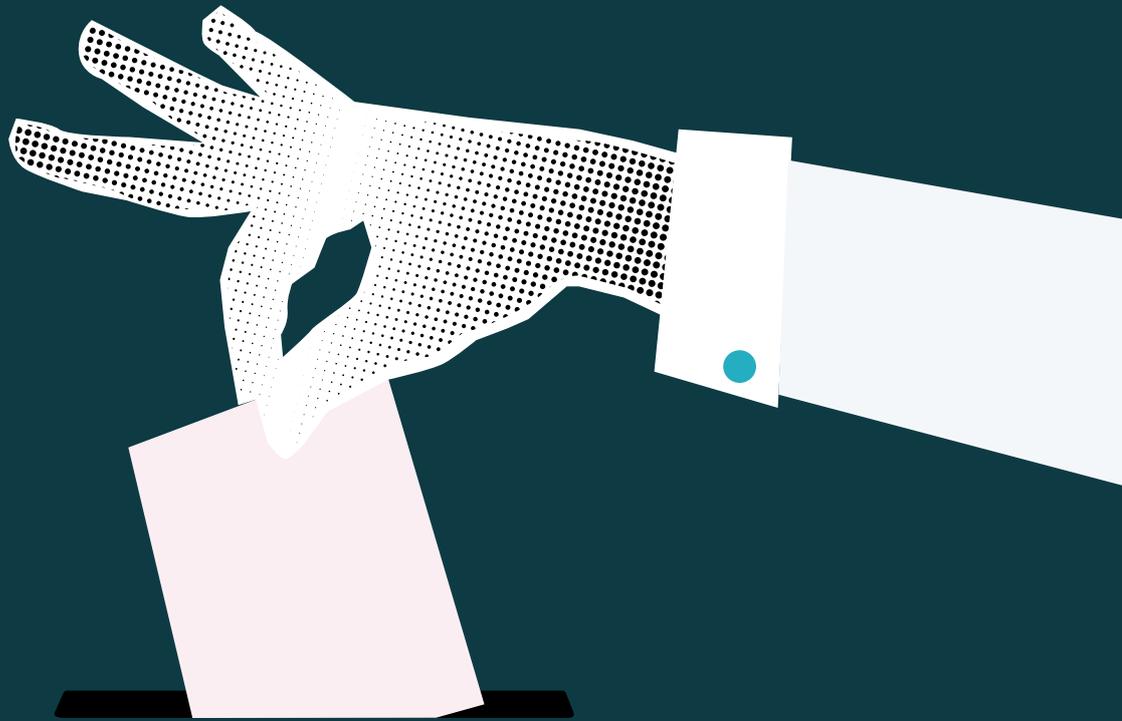


Election Insights 2026

Global election risks, context and projected outcomes across 5 regions.





Responsible:
Marco Túlio Lara
Analyst at Riskline

2026 is a year filled with elections set to bring about highly significant domestic, regional and global consequences. Across the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia-Pacific, people will go to the polls in order to select officials for a variety of positions, including heads of government and lawmakers. Many of these elections are happening on the heels of or amid turmoil, with serious security implications in some of them and uncertainty regarding the smooth execution of the election process. With so much at stake, reliable information is paramount for navigating these complex scenarios.

The Riskline 2026 Election Informer compiles elections happening in Colombia, Brazil, the United States, Bulgaria, Hungary, Sweden, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, South Sudan, Libya, Somalia, Israel, Thailand, Bangladesh and Nepal, with all the must-know information regarding the votes, ranging from political context to social atmosphere, security issues and expected travel limitations. Our analysts draw on their regional expertise to combine a simple breakdown of the facts with sharp analyses of the electoral processes and their possible domestic, regional and global outcomes.

This Informer aims to be a reliable source of information on multiple elections wrapped into one concise, easy-to-navigate product. As we are flooded with information these days, we often struggle to find trustworthy and comprehensive sources to be up to date with the latest political developments across the world. By delving into each of the 15 countries' election landscapes and highlighting the backdrop and projected outcomes, Riskline hopes to help travellers navigate these environments and anticipate risks, avoiding or mitigating them when necessary.

Key Elections in 2026 by Region

AMER

May

 **Colombia**

Elections on 31 May

October

 **Brazil**

Elections on 4 October

November

 **USA**

Mid-term on 3 November

APAC

February

 **Thailand**

General elections on 8 February

February

 **Bangladesh**

General elections on 12 February

March

 **Nepal**

General elections on 5 March

EURO

April

 **Bulgaria**

Parliamentary elections on 19 April

April

 **Hungary**

Parliamentary elections on 12 April

September

 **Sweden**

General parliamentary elections on 13 September

MENA

April

 **Libya**

Presidential and parliamentary elections expected in mid-April

May

 **Somalia**

Presidential elections expected in May

October

 **Israel**

Parliamentary elections on 27 October

SSA

June

 **Ethiopia**

General elections on 1 June

December

 **Guinea-Bissau**

Presidential elections on 6 December

December

 **South Sudan**

General elections on 22 December

How elections are tracked at Riskline

Elections are one of the key aspects of a constitutional democracy as they allow people to express their preferences at the ballot box. However, they are not always held peacefully or in an orderly manner. At Riskline, all elections are closely tracked through a series of steps to provide clients with the most up-to-date information.

Preparing for the vote

National and local polls with potential for disruptive behaviour are regularly monitored by Riskline analysts. The first step is putting out a notice about upcoming elections as soon as dates are announced. These notices are usually composed of the type of election, the vote date and the main confirmed or prospective candidates.

An appropriate risk level based on internationally recognised travel risk management practices is then assigned to that notice. It takes into consideration factors such as the likelihood of unrest, political violence, respect for the results and an orderly transition of power. Finally, an advice line informs readers on best practices ahead of the vote.

Following up

After that, analysts will closely monitor the period in the lead-up to, during and immediately after election day. Significant events meeting our coverage guidelines are promptly covered, such as:

- election-related protests;
- unrest;
- episodes of political violence;
- border closures;
- transport and telecommunication restrictions.

Alerts with preliminary or final election results are issued as soon as officials confirm them.

Watching the aftermath

After analysts issue an alert with the results announced, they continue to keep track of the developments following the vote. Some examples include:

- The selection process of a head of government in a parliamentary system;
- A run-off in a presidential election;
- Peaceful protests or unrest condemning the results.

The final step is usually when analysts cover the swearing-in ceremony of an elected head of government, which is generally accompanied by heightened security and road closures.

The importance of a well-covered election process

From the announcement of a set election date all the way to the swearing-in ceremony and everything that may happen in between these two developments, Riskline analysts make sure to stay on top of events, especially in politically volatile countries where a wide range of disruptions are certain or highly likely to occur in the lead-up to, during and in the aftermath of elections.

Keeping travellers informed of the latest facts and the overall election environment helps them avoid or mitigate risks. By acting proactively and diligently and transforming intelligence into actionable information, we help you stay safe even in the most challenging environments.

Riskline's 2026 Election Informer

As the year begins, Riskline has put together a 2026 Election Informer delving into the context surrounding votes happening across the world and the risks associated with them, what is at stake and projected outcomes. A total of 15 countries spanning five regions were covered by our regional analysts.

Understand the methodology behind Riskline's coverage of elections and get up to date with the political environments heading into the most relevant votes happening in 2026. Our Election Informer will be available from 2 March and will help you navigate complex scenarios and stay safe ahead of potentially uncertain situations.





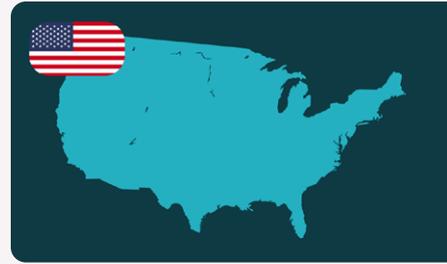
AMER

Key elections across the Americas will take place in Colombia, the United States and Brazil in 2026. In all three, the opposition will try to take advantage of the declining popular support for the respective presidents and the outcomes are wide open. While each has its own storyline, these elections are likely to have large national and regional consequences regardless of who comes out on top.

In Colombia, security will be a central concern. Violence and the inability to fully control guerrilla groups leave the continuation of left-wing rule uncertain. In the US, the question is whether President Trump's declining popularity and controversial policies will boost Democratic gains in the midterm elections. Meanwhile, in Brazil, another Lula–Bolsonaro clash appears likely. This time, it involves Jair Bolsonaro's son. Each proposes sharply different domestic and foreign policies.

There is a considerable risk of political violence hanging over the Colombian election, while all three votes may see defeated candidates questioning the legitimacy of the results, with the US and Brazil having experienced such tensions in recent election cycles.

US midterm elections on 3 November amid rising protests and federal-state sovereignty disputes



Elections will be held on 3 November for all 435 seats in the House of Representatives and 33 seats (out of 100) in the Senate, as well as numerous state and local contests. Democrats hope to turn President Donald Trump's growing unpopularity into major gains. The charged partisan environment presents risks of confrontation between the states and the Trump administration over vote security.

Backdrop

In the November 2024 elections, the Republican Party secured a trifecta to regain control of the White House and both chambers of Congress. In doing so, the party assembled an unprecedented multiracial coalition across class lines, drawing away many traditionally Democratic voters. President Trump won on a message of combating price inflation, mass deportations and pushing back against perceived left-wing cultural excesses.

Despite successfully passing draconian immigration restrictions and tax cuts early on, Republican leaders have since struggled to advance their agenda. While Trump's border policies overall remain popular, resulting in the lowest rate of illegal border crossings in 50 years, approval for mass deportations has fallen sharply since the programme was implemented. Migrant arrests have caught up thousands of legal residents and citizens, causing significant economic dislocation in cities and widespread protests.

A December 2025 Supreme Court ruling restricted domestic deployments of the National Guard. Deadly unrest in Minneapolis since January has forced the administration to change tactics, at least temporarily.

Beyond immigration, Republican strategists have publicly and privately expressed dismay over other issues facing the administration, such as cuts to federal staffing, tariffs, healthcare and the now-global Epstein Files scandal. Even a February Supreme Court ruling against the tariffs is unlikely to undo the economic damage done to date. Nor is Trump willing to give them up, despite their unpopularity surpassing even the immigration issue's negativity.

Projected outcome and implications

Polling, as well as off-year and special election results, show that the gains Trump made among voters in 2024 are fast fading. The negative polarisation that defined his first term and led to the Democrats' midterm successes in 2018 has returned.

If Democrats retake the House of Representatives, and possibly the Senate, Trump's legislative priorities may stall completely. Bills will only pass with significant concessions to Democrats, while any stalemates will result in unpopular government shutdowns. Democrats have promised to ramp up oversight, compelling White House and Cabinet officials to appear in public to answer for their most controversial actions. The free hand the Trump administration has enjoyed abroad in pursuing military intervention and demanding trade and territorial concessions may also be reined in.

Democratic leaders' main concern ahead of the elections is that the administration and its state-level allies may try to invalidate their potential losses. They attempted a similar effort in 2020-2021 with the "Stop the Steal" movement. Although the decentralised nature of US elections limits the federal role, Trump's vague but growing threats to "intervene" and "take over" voting raise the prospect of a turbocharged "Stop the Steal" effort. This could include attempts to seize ballots and overturn court rulings.

This risk grows with the uncertain deployment of federal forces during protests. Their actions may converge with election-related disputes. This alarming prospect will continue to hang over the entire election cycle. It raises the stakes and tensions dramatically for both parties.



Elections in Colombia on 31 May amid a worsening nationwide security situation



Colombia will hold presidential elections on 31 May, with a second round scheduled for 21 June if no candidate wins an absolute majority. The country underwent radical change during the 2022 elections in which left-wing leader Gustavo Petro came to power backed by the Historic Pact coalition. Four years later, President Petro is constitutionally barred from seeking a second consecutive term, with his legacy resting on the shoulders of left-wing candidate Iván Cepeda against right-wing candidate Abelardo De La Espriella and centrist candidate Sergio Fajardo.

Backdrop

The presidential elections will mark either the end or continuation of the so-called 'Petrismo' project, based on economic redistribution, environmentalism and energy transition. The country experienced major political instability and a polarised society following the 2022 presidential elections. Critics have pointed to embezzlement scandals and a prolonged reorganisation of the presidential cabinet, as well as the government's lack of a majority in Congress. They have also highlighted the failure to implement the 'Total Peace' plan, with little to no progress in negotiations with the National Liberation Army (ELN), dissidents from the former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) or the Gulf Clan.

Colombia has continued efforts to tackle its security crises and the rise of political violence, including the assassination of senator and presidential candidate Miguel Uribe Turbay in June 2025. The elections have raised concerns among experts about the potential for violence in areas deemed strongholds for armed groups, including 170 municipalities across Arauca, Antioquía, Bolívar, Cauca and other departments. Government officials have claimed that the elections will take place peacefully, with 200,000 officers deployed nationwide to bolster surveillance and enforcement efforts. However, structural violence driven largely by financial gain, combined with a highly polarised society affected by misinformation, will likely complicate the elections further. There is a high risk of violence and electoral fraud.

Projected outcome and implications

Due to Cepeda's exclusion from the 8 March inter-party consultation, there is no guarantee that his campaign will enter the 31 May presidential elections with the same organisational strength or momentum as those of Abelardo De La Espriella or Sergio Fajardo. This raises the prospect of a fragmented and weakened left-wing, potentially leaving Cepeda excluded from a possible run-off.

A final contest between either Cepeda and one of the two right-wing candidates or just between De La Espriella and Fajardo could see another radical turn in Colombian politics, one towards much more conservative policies.



With the Bolsonaro name still in play, Lula will attempt a historic fourth term in the October presidential election



General elections will be held in Brazil on 4 October to choose the president and vice president, as well as governors, senators and state and federal deputies. A second run-off will take place on 25 October if required. The presidential election in particular will be marked by the absence of imprisoned former president Jair Bolsonaro. This clears the way for a new right-wing candidate to face incumbent President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Backdrop

Four years after the remarkably tight 2022 election, Brazil remains a deeply divided society. Since Lula won a third term that year, a coup plot by Bolsonaro and his entourage was uncovered, nationwide roadblocks were held, and government buildings in Brasília were stormed by supporters of the defeated president to denounce the results.

Bolsonaro himself was banned from running for office until 2030 and later convicted and imprisoned for the coup plot, which involved plans to assassinate Lula, Vice President Geraldo Alckmin and Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes. Following the January 2023 riots, Lula has been able to serve his term without further political violence from the opposition.

Political violence, which peaked in the run-up to the 2022 vote, fell sharply. It is unlikely that the country will see a repeat of the violent incidents recorded in that election cycle between left- and right-wing supporters.

Projected outcome

Former president Bolsonaro has anointed his son, Senator Flávio Bolsonaro of the Liberal Party, as his successor. The Bolsonaro name is still strong, but it is not what it once was and it carries significant backlash after the 2023 unrest. São Paulo Governor Tarcísio de Freitas, of the Republicans, is another possible contender, although his candidacy would put him at odds with Flávio. Even if Lula wins again, the conservative bloc in Congress will likely retain a significant number of seats. This will maintain the legislative counterbalance that has limited Lula's agenda so far.

Allegations of fraud and doubts about the electronic voting system could still arise, as they did in the 2022 vote. Seven months out, the country looks set for a calmer vote.

A possible fourth term for Lula

Lula will attempt to secure a historic fourth term in office. If victorious, he is likely to maintain his focus on environmental protection, social programmes and international non-alignment. The leftist leader has faced dwindling approval ratings. However, he is still seen as a slight favourite due to the lack of a powerful opposition leader.

Lula would continue a neutral foreign policy based on the rule of law, refraining from automatic alignment with any single country. A Bolsonaro or other right-wing presidency would likely weaken ties with China, Brazil's largest trading partner. It would also deepen alignment with regional leaders who share similar ideologies. With sharply different proposals on each side, the outcome of the vote seems wide open.





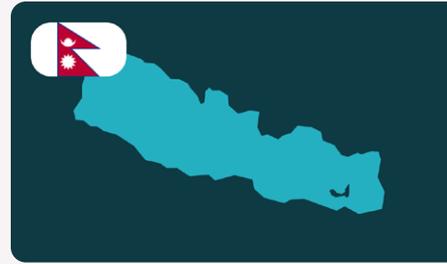
APAC

Key elections were scheduled across the Asia Pacific, most notably in Thailand, Bangladesh and Nepal, in the first quarter of 2026. Thailand and Bangladesh went to the polls during the first two weeks of February. In Nepal, the vote is scheduled for early March. While each context differs, they share the backdrop of disgruntled youths seeking to upend the established political leadership.

The election results in Thailand and Bangladesh indicate the return of establishment politics, albeit in different forms. In Thailand, the victory of the pro-monarchy Bhumjaithai Party halted the steady advancements made by the People's Party. In Bangladesh, the long-standing Bangladesh Nationalist Party returned to power after youth-led protests ousted its rival, the Awami League.

Nepal's election comes after anti-government protests by youths against the political establishment. Political alliances and support among the older generations for establishment parties could result in establishment forces retaining power. Mass protests could return in these countries if the grievances of the large youth populations are not adequately addressed by new governments.

Nepal: Establishment parties jostle for power amid Gen-Z anger



On 5 March, Nepalese citizens are set to vote in a general election to elect all 275 members of the House of Representatives, the lower house of the Federal Parliament. The leader of the party or coalition that forms the majority in the House of Representatives will become the next prime minister.

Backdrop

The 'Gen-Z' anti-government protests by youths against corruption and a social media ban led to deadly clashes and the resignation of former Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli in September 2025, necessitating new elections. Clashes have already occurred between rival party supporters, and more related unrest is possible as large-scale violent protests have become increasingly commonplace. Protests may occur over a wide range of social, political and economic issues, particularly in urban hotspots. They can quickly escalate to unrest, triggering significant disruptions to travel and communication services.

Heightened security and associated disruptions are likely near electoral infrastructure in the lead-up to and during the elections. Authorities have mobilised at least 79,727 army personnel across the country to guard polling stations. Also, the Nepal-India border will likely close, either fully or partially, during the voting and vote-counting period. Other heightened security measures and associated disruptions to travel and services are likely to continue for some time after election day while the results are counted. In 2022, it took around two weeks for the results to be finalised.

Projected outcome

Nepal's politics have traditionally been dominated by rivalries and power-sharing between major political parties and leaders. Major players in the upcoming elections include the Nepali Congress (NC), led by Gagan Kumar Thapa. The Communist Party of Nepal–Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) is led by former PM Oli. The Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist Centre (CPN-MC) is led by another former PM, Pushpa Kamal Dahal. The Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) is led by Rabi Lamichhane.

Most recently, CPN-UML's Oli, CPN-MC's Dahal, and former NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba took turns heading the government each year until Oli resigned. In this election, the success of any of these parties is uncertain. The 'Gen Z' protests were explicitly against the political establishment. However, alliances and support from older generations for establishment parties could allow either Oli or Dahal, still leading their parties, to return as PM. Renewed protests are likely if this happens.

There is a lot of uncertainty over the implications of the various possible election outcomes. Another electoral success of the establishment parties could trigger renewed unrest among the country's youth. Due to Nepal's mixed electoral system, it has been very difficult for any party to get an absolute majority. Regardless of whether a non-establishment party makes headway, regular formations and breakdowns of coalitions are likely to stay.



Re-emergence of the BNP in Bangladesh following youth unrest



Bangladesh held a general election on 12 February. The polls took place against the backdrop of a violent youth-led uprising and the subsequent downfall of the Awami League-led government. The centre-right Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-led alliance won a landslide majority with 212 out of 297 parliamentary seats. It was the main opposition under the previous administration.

The Jamaat-e-Islami party emerged as the main opposition with 77 seats, while the youth-led National Citizen Party (NCP), which emerged from the anti-government protests, secured six seats. Turnout was close to 60 percent and the elections were conducted relatively peacefully, barring sporadic incidents of poll violence. Additionally, voters cast their ballots in favour of the July National Charter, which outlines a roadmap for a complete overhaul of the country's governance system.

Backdrop

The latest election was of great significance as the internal political situation in Bangladesh recently experienced a paradigm shift. In July 2024, violent and disruptive protests erupted nationwide as university students took to the streets against the reinstatement of the quota system in government jobs. The demonstrations soon escalated into clashes between protesters and police, as well as between anti- and pro-quota activists. Leading media channels went off the air and internet services were suspended. Curfews and other prohibitory orders were imposed. Around 1,400 people were killed in the unrest, which resulted in then-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigning and fleeing the country after losing the military's support. An interim government led by Mohammad Yunus oversaw the gradual return to normalcy and the subsequent election this year.

Heavy security measures and related disruptions were reported in urban areas near sensitive locations. This was especially the case around political party offices, government buildings, public squares and electoral infrastructure, well ahead of the election. Soldiers remained deployed after the results were announced. They were particularly visible during key events, such as the swearing-in ceremony at the National Parliament in Dhaka.

Projected outcome

The BNP alliance won a clear majority in Bangladesh's election. Tarique Rahman was sworn in as the new prime minister. He is the son of the late former PM Khaleda Zia and current party chairperson. The win shows that voters chose a familiar political force, returning to institutional politics instead of embracing the NCP's ideological shift. The NCP also struggled with internal turmoil after its controversial decision to ally with Jamaat. The real question is whether the BNP can bring cohesion and stability in a divided society. Protests by groups like garment workers and students over employment and other demands continue.

Considering the strong public mandate it has received, the BNP will be expected to deliver on promises of economic expansion, anti-corruption measures and reform, among other issues. However, the size of its majority might allow the administration to function without facing serious opposition challenges. In addition, the BNP's manifesto does not fully align with the July National Charter. Hence, it remains to be seen whether the desired reforms will be implemented by the new government.



Thailand elections: Return of the old guards



On 8 February, the pro-monarchy Bhumjaithai Party, led by Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, won the snap general election by securing 190 out of 500 seats in the National Assembly and is in the process of forming a coalition government. The People's Party (PPL) has gone into opposition after winning 118 seats. Formed as a successor to the banned Move Forward Party, the PPL positioned itself as a progressive group focused on political reform.

Backdrop

After the progressive Move Forward Party failed to gain Senate approval to form a government following its May 2023 election win and faced suspension over its campaign to amend the *lèse-majesté* law, the opposition Pheu Thai Party (PTP) elected Srettha Thavisin as Prime Minister in August 2023. Less than a year later, the Constitutional Court suspended Thavisin. The court alleged he had violated ethical standards by appointing a cabinet minister with a prior conviction. He was replaced by the PTP's Paetongtarn Shinawatra, who was also suspended in August 2025. This followed a leaked call with former Cambodian leader Hun Sen about the Thailand-Cambodia border clashes. Charnvirakul was then elected interim prime minister in September 2025.

In the latest elections, Charnvirakul got the backing of influential local elites, military figures and political families in both urban and rural areas of large provinces like Chonburi, Buriram and Sisaket. The Bhumjaithai Party also capitalised on nationalist sentiments, positioning itself as a strong supporter of military action against Cambodia. The People's Party failed to garner sufficient support in areas outside of urban centres like Bangkok and Chiang Mai. It was popular among young voters for its ambitions to reduce the military's influence in politics.

Projected outcome

With Charnvirakul's win, Thailand has seen a return of political stability and the pro-monarchy, pro-military order. This government will be hard to unseat unless the pro-democracy movement gains strong support outside its urban base. The National Anti-Corruption Commission, seen as controlled by the Senate and military, has petitioned the Supreme Court to ban the People's Party and its leaders. The move aims to further weaken the opposition, mirroring what happened with its predecessor.

The NACC has accused the People's Party of attempting to breach ethical standards over a failed bid to amend the country's *lèse-majesté* law. This petition is likely to revive the pro-democracy movement and related protests in major cities like Bangkok. Charnvirakul's government is also likely to back harsh crackdowns on protesters. Mass detentions and sweeping arrests of pro-democracy activists could be used to keep the opposition weak.





EURO

In 2026, Bulgaria, Hungary and Sweden will hold pivotal parliamentary elections, each with significant national and regional implications. Bulgaria's snap vote on 19 April follows the collapse of the governing coalition and mass protests over corruption, economic mismanagement and the proposed budget. Former President Rumen Radev has entered the race, polarising opinion and introducing a new anti-elite and eurosceptic force amid deep parliamentary fragmentation.

Hungary's 12 April election marks its most competitive contest in over a decade. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the Fidesz–KDNP face their strongest opposition from the centre-right Tisza party, which advocates anti-corruption reforms and a more pro-EU stance, though it retains some nationalist and eurosceptic policies. The outcome could reshape Hungary's foreign and domestic policy and affect EU coordination on Russia and Ukraine.

Sweden votes on 13 September, with the centre-left Social Democrats holding a polling lead against a fragile centre-right coalition supported by the Sweden Democrats. Key issues include the economy, migration, law and order and party leadership stability.

All three elections reflect broader political fragmentation and the challenge of forming stable governments.

Sweden nears a crucial election as rival blocs compete to form a stable government



Sweden will hold general parliamentary elections on 13 September, with all 349 Riksdag seats contested. Regional and municipal elections will take place on the same day. The campaign is expected to intensify over the summer, influenced by Sweden's proportional representation system and the four per cent parliamentary threshold. Electoral procedures are robust and voting is expected to be peaceful and efficient.

Backdrop

The 2026 election will likely focus on which political bloc can credibly form a stable government. The current centre-right coalition, consisting of the Moderates (M), Christian Democrats (KD) and Liberals (L) supported by the Sweden Democrats (SD) under the Tidö Agreement, remains structurally fragile. The SD has significant influence on migration and integration policy. The Liberals face challenges maintaining unity and polling above the parliamentary threshold. Their electoral survival is critical for the right.

The opposition bloc, led by the Social Democrats (SAP), enters the campaign with a stable polling lead of five to six percentage points. However, internal divisions remain. The Left Party (V) insists on joining a future coalition, while the Centre Party (C) opposes governing with them. These differences weaken the opposition's negotiating position and complicate its ability to present a unified alternative.

Policy debates will likely reflect long-standing divides. The opposition will focus on the weak economy, cost of living and unemployment. Government parties will seek to shift attention to migration, integration and law and order, which they consider electoral strengths. Crime policy may become a key issue: the government highlights reductions in gun violence, while the opposition points to continued recruitment of minors into criminal networks and ongoing bomb attacks, linking these to cuts in preventive social services.

Foreign and security policy, despite heightened global tensions, United States (US) tariff pressure on Europe and Russia's continued belligerence, is unlikely to dominate the campaign, given the broad political consensus. An exception may arise from the domestic resonance of the Israel–Palestine conflict, which could emerge in public debate.

Leadership stability across the major parties is expected until election day, though significant turnover is likely afterwards. Party leaders in the losing bloc may face resignation pressure. Several long-standing figures, including the Sweden Democrats' Jimmie Åkesson and Christian Democrats' Ebba Busch, may choose to step aside after extended tenures or internal fatigue.

Projected outcome and continental implications

A change of government is possible. The centre-left holds a consistent polling lead but Sweden often sees late-cycle electoral tightening. For the right, the Liberals' performance is crucial. If they narrowly miss the four per cent threshold, a centre-right majority may become mathematically impossible.

Regardless of the outcome, Sweden is expected to maintain continuity in European Union cooperation, Nordic security integration and support for Ukraine. However, the internal balance of power, especially the influence of the Sweden Democrats if the right remains in office, could affect Sweden's position in EU debates. Key topics include migration, rule of law, integration and long-term budget planning.



Hungary faces a pivotal election as Orbán's rule is challenged



Hungary will hold parliamentary elections on 12 April, with all 199 National Assembly seats contested. The new legislature will elect the prime minister and form a government for the 2026–2030 term. The campaign began in late February and will last about seven weeks. Despite rising political tensions, the election process is expected to remain stable, with no significant procedural disruptions anticipated.

Backdrop

The 2026 election is Hungary's most competitive in over a decade. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the Fidesz–KDNP alliance, in power since 2010, now face their strongest coordinated opposition. Orbán's leadership has centralised authority, strained relations with the European Union and drawn criticism for democratic backsliding, media control and corruption. Hungary is also experiencing slower economic growth and high living costs, prompting the government to introduce pre-election relief measures such as heating subsidies.

The main challenger is the centre-right Tisza party, led by Péter Magyar, advocating anti-corruption reforms, EU engagement and a shift away from Orbán's Russia-friendly policies. Tisza nonetheless maintains nationalist positions on issues such as migration and Visegrád (V4) cooperation. This suggests a eurosceptic continuity with the Fidesz–KDNP in some policy areas. The far-right Our Homeland party is also expected to enter parliament. In 2022, multiple parties participated, but government influence over public media, opaque campaign finance and blurred boundaries between Fidesz and the state limited genuine competition. No reforms have addressed these concerns and government resources continue to favour the ruling party. Large-scale protests in Budapest have responded to government actions against civil society, the LGBTQ+ community, private media and journalists. If Fidesz retains power and the result is contested, significant unrest or isolated political violence is possible. Misinformation and media bias continue to shape the electoral environment.

Projected outcome and European implications

The election may result in a significant political shift. If Tisza wins a majority or forms a coalition, Hungary could adopt a more pro-EU stance, recalibrate its foreign policy and review domestic governance norms. The transition of power is expected to be orderly, though the political climate will remain tense.

The outcome also carries substantial implications for Europe. Under Orbán, Hungary has repeatedly blocked EU efforts to support Ukraine against Russia, leveraging its veto power and maintaining close ties with Moscow. A defeat for Orbán would facilitate Brussels' coordination amid pressure from external actors, including the US and Russia. The potential US reaction to an Orbán defeat could prove a wild card in US-EU relations.

Tisza has stated it would end Orbán's "special relationship" with Moscow and may revoke Hungary's one-year exemption from EU sanctions on Russian gas imports. A Tisza government could also facilitate access to EU funds, potentially providing short- and medium-term economic support. This would leave Slovakia's President Fico as the only major pro-Russia leader in Central Europe, strengthening the EU's ability to manage frozen Russian assets and support Ukraine. This is particularly important given reduced transatlantic engagement since the start of the second Trump administration. Conversely, an Orbán victory would allow Fidesz–KDNP to continue obstructing EU policies on Russia and Ukraine. This could complicate continental coordination and prolong Hungary's disruptive role in European strategy.



Bulgaria braces for snap parliamentary vote amid political fragmentation



Bulgaria will hold snap parliamentary elections on 19 April after the governing coalition collapsed in December 2025 and major parties failed to form a new cabinet. This will be the country's eighth parliamentary vote in five years, highlighting ongoing institutional instability. All 240 National Assembly seats are at stake. The elections follow weeks of mass protests over corruption, economic mismanagement and the proposed 2026 budget. President Iliana Iotova is overseeing the transition, with Andrey Gyurov leading the caretaker government and reaffirming Bulgaria's EU and democratic commitment, in contrast to former President Radev's euroscepticism.

Backdrop

Bulgarian politics remain unstable. Prime Minister Rosen Zhelyazkov resigned in early December 2025 amid mass protests against the 2026 draft budget and allegations of corruption, economic mismanagement and oligarchic influence. The adoption of the euro on 1 January, making Bulgaria the 21st eurozone member, has not eased tensions.

Efforts to form a new government failed as GERB–UDF, the largest bloc, and other major factions declined the mandate, highlighting deep fragmentation in the 51st National Assembly. With no viable majority, the country moved toward new elections. In a historic move, President Rumen Radev resigned on 19 January. He was the first Bulgarian head of state to do so in the post-communist era. Vice President Iliana Iotova assumed presidential duties.

Radev has announced his candidacy in the upcoming parliamentary elections. He is formally entering party politics after years of speculation. He frames his decision as responding to public demands to end entrenched corruption, drawing support from anti-graft protests that toppled the government in December 2025. Radev is a US-trained former air force general and long-standing critic of oligarchic networks. He has higher approval ratings than most political leaders and is well-positioned to attract Bulgaria's growing anti-elite electorate.

His candidacy is polarising. Supporters see him as a strong anti-corruption figure. Critics accuse him of promoting pro-Russian narratives, opposing military aid to Ukraine, EU sanctions on Moscow and the EU's climate and trade agendas. Recent polls indicate up to 40 percent of voters prefer leadership by a new party and a Radev-led movement could attract about half of this group, potentially reshaping the political landscape.

Public frustration remains high. Demonstrations demanding electronic voting and transparent elections reflect mistrust of political institutions. Although inflation is easing, it continues to strain households. Iotova has emphasised the need for urgent measures to protect vulnerable citizens.

Projected outcome and political implications

The snap election will occur amid significant political fragmentation, with no guarantee of a stable majority. Radev's entry introduces a major factor: his prospective party could attract nationalist, anti-corruption and eurosceptic voters, potentially reshaping alignments and complicating coalition formation.

Disputes over the presidency's reduced powers under the 2023 constitutional amendments will continue to affect the institutional environment. With no cohesive majority and a new political force emerging, protracted negotiations or another short-lived coalition are likely. Instability may delay key policy decisions on EU funding, governance reforms and Bulgaria's stance on Russia and Ukraine. Further protests may occur if the electoral process or its results are perceived as unfair or unrepresentative.





MENA

Several countries in the Middle East and North Africa are approaching key elections in 2026. In Libya, presidential and parliamentary elections are expected in mid-April. They aim to unify rival administrations and establish a single parliament. However, low public trust, economic instability, militia clashes and the assassination of Saif al-Islam Gaddafi create high risks. Security and legal challenges could disrupt the vote.

In Somalia, presidential elections are scheduled for May. A hybrid system will let citizens elect Members of Parliament, who will then choose the president. Political divisions, security threats from Al-Shabaab and financial constraints complicate the process. Delays are likely, and the legitimacy of results may be contested.

In Israel, parliamentary elections are officially set for 27 October. Snap elections could occur earlier due to coalition instability. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces corruption charges and deep political polarisation. Regional tensions and domestic protests may influence voting. The outcome is uncertain. Both pro-government and opposition blocs are close to a parliamentary majority, making coalition-building difficult.

These elections will shape governance, stability and regional dynamics in the coming year.

Israel approaches crossroad with possible snap elections



Israel's parliamentary elections are officially scheduled for 27 October. However, snap elections in May or September are likely due to internal coalition fractures. Incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has served for over 18 years, faces a deeply polarised political landscape. The upcoming vote is seen as a referendum on his legacy, split between a loyal pro-Netanyahu camp and a diverse "anyone but Bibi" bloc, both seeking a change in leadership.

Backdrop

Israel's parliamentary elections come at a crucial moment for the country against the backdrop of the post-October 7 landscape and the Gaza War, heightened regional conflict with Iran and deep societal fractures. Voters will choose parties to fill the 120 seats in the Knesset. While officially set for October, an earlier vote in May or September is likely. This would happen particularly if the 2026 state budget fails to be approved by 31 March, which would trigger the automatic dissolution of the Knesset. Coalition instability, the unresolved ultra-Orthodox military draft crisis and shifting opposition alliances have also emerged as significant internal challenges.

These dynamics are further complicated by the ongoing judicial proceedings against Netanyahu. He faces corruption charges that have deepened public divisions and triggered anti-government sentiments and protests. It is unlikely that Netanyahu's pursuit of a pardon, which must be granted by President Isaac Herzog, will succeed. The financial burden of prolonged military operations, increased defence spending, as well as cost-of-living concerns are the main issues that will intensify coalition tensions and shape campaigns.

Regional landscape

While domestic issues and the economy will dominate the political agenda, any regional escalation could instantly reshape the political landscape. Ongoing security concerns will impact the elections. There is huge volatility in Gaza, the West Bank, along the borders with Lebanon and Syria, and potential military escalation with Iran. Security will be increased across

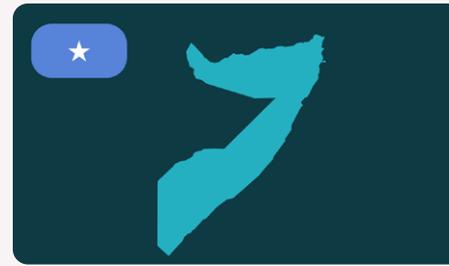
cities and at polling stations. Some disruptions are possible at border crossings, along with heightened checkpoints and restrictions in the West Bank. Elections have generally been held in an orderly manner. However, anti-government protests are likely ahead of, during and immediately after the vote, particularly in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Authorities are also on alert for possible misinformation, smear campaigns and foreign interference aimed at destabilising the democratic processes and deepening polarisation.

Projected outcome and political implications

The political arena remains split between two camps, a pro-Netanyahu coalition, anchored by right-wing and ultra-Orthodox allies, and an "anyone but Bibi" bloc that spans the ideological spectrum from the far-left to the far-right. Current polling suggests that Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud may remain the largest single party. It also suggests that both the pro-government and opposition blocs hover precariously near the 61-seat majority threshold. Former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has emerged as a potential challenger. He is seen as an alternative to Netanyahu's leadership. Meanwhile, renewed Israeli Arab party unity would increase mobilisation within Arab communities. Nevertheless, amid domestic tensions, the outcome remains uncertain. There are several possibilities: a victory for the ruling coalition, a diverse opposition bloc uniting to oust Netanyahu or repeat elections if neither side manages to secure a majority.



Somalia's fractured political landscape hinders electoral progress



Somalia's presidential election is slated for May, as President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's term comes to an end. Despite a push to transition from the traditional clan-based indirect electoral model to a direct universal suffrage, a compromise was reached for a hybrid model. Under this model, the public will vote for Members of Parliament (MPs), and the MPs will elect the President. The concession aimed to appease federal member states Puntland and Jubaland, who denounced a power grab by the central government. Nevertheless, despite the establishment of the National Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (NIEBC), the implementation remains hindered by deep political rifts, security challenges and severe financial constraints.

Backdrop

Somalia's political landscape is deeply unstable and fractured. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud seeks to extend his time in office beyond a second term. He has made efforts to change the provisional constitution, establish a new electoral system and redraw the federal map. These moves have raised concerns of a potential power grab and deepened mistrust between the Federal Government and key federal member states, especially Puntland and Jubaland. President Mohamud has pushed for universal suffrage to replace the traditional indirect model in which clan elders selected representatives. However, he encountered fierce opposition. Instead, a hybrid system was announced under which lawmakers will be directly elected but Parliament will still choose the president.

These internal frictions come at a perilous time, as the country remains mired in political violence. The transition from the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) to the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) left it vulnerable. Al-Shabaab made significant gains in 2025, including expanding its presence around Mogadishu. Thus, amid a militant resurgence, the logistics of organising safe nationwide voting are very challenging without significant military intervention.

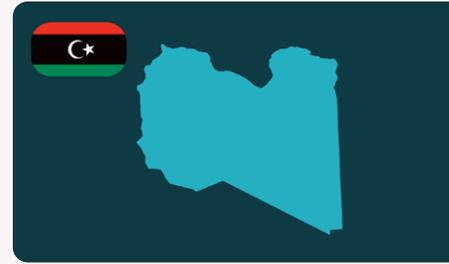
Militants pose a threat to candidates and voters, including in Mogadishu, Baidoa and Kismayo. The risk of unrest is also high, especially if a consensus is not reached on the voting model, with clashes similar to the 2021 electoral violence possible. Heightened security is expected nationwide to mitigate risks, with movement restrictions likely during the polling period. Additionally, misinformation campaigns aimed at swaying clan loyalties will proliferate. The financial stability of the government is also weak, jeopardising the hiring and retention of poll workers.

Projected outcome and political implications

The projected outcome is currently clouded by procedural uncertainty. As opposition groups have called for a negotiated agreement and even rejected the process, it remains unclear if further talks will produce a new political agreement. Alternatively, the elections could proceed under the current arrangements, potentially reshaping the country's governance and stability. Concerns are also raised that a new president will not be elected this year, amid eroding public credibility and persistent tensions. President Mohamud's re-election is contested by a new opposition alliance, the Somali Future Council. The alliance includes former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and former Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire. Given the current political and security challenges, the elections, following the hybrid model, will likely be delayed and turbulent. Their legitimacy will be heavily contested regardless of the outcome, possibly worsening political fragmentation.



Libya prepares for long-awaited unified elections



The High National Elections Commission has reaffirmed its willingness to hold long-anticipated presidential and parliamentary elections in mid-April. However, an exact date has not yet been announced and the fate of the vote remains uncertain. The timeline depends on municipal elections finishing by late March, along with funding, security guarantees and agreement on electoral laws between rival factions. The elections are intended to be nationwide. However, efforts to hold a unified vote to dissolve rival administrations and establish a single legitimate parliament face significant challenges. Low public trust, economic instability and the recent assassination of key political figures further complicate the situation.

Backdrop

The political landscape in Libya remains highly complex, with the country divided since the abortive 2021 elections. It is split between the internationally recognised Tripoli-based Government of National Unity (GNU), led by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, and the eastern-based Government of National Stability (GNS), headed by Osama Hammad, which is backed militarily by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA). The April elections are meant to end this parallel governance. A successful vote would determine the country's first legitimate head of state in over a decade. It would also reshape parliamentary representation and allow for long-delayed reforms.

The process is overseen by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). However, ongoing political and security crises continue to hinder the elections. The political impasse between the two rival governments persists, with a deadlock over proposed legislation, particularly over candidate eligibility and whether a unified interim government should be formed to organise the vote. Parallel courts continue to issue contradictory rulings, with any election results likely to be legally challenged by the losing side in their preferred court system, voiding the results.

Security challenges ahead of the vote

The security environment is equally fraught, with militias having repeatedly clashed, and the risk of election-related violence is high. The February assassination of Saif al-Islam Gaddafi has already triggered unrest and created a power vacuum in the south and centre of the country, heightening the risk of retaliatory violence. The recent devaluation of the dinar and persistent oil-revenue

disputes have also fuelled public discontent. Any further electoral delays risk triggering demonstrations and calls for self-governance in stable areas.

Given these conditions, the vote is unlikely to be carried peacefully. The cities most likely to be affected include Tripoli, Benghazi and Sabha, as well as western municipalities such as Zawiya and Misrata. Digital misinformation, candidate-level smear campaigns and foreign interference from regional powers represent credible concerns. Security is expected to be significantly tightened in the lead-up to voting, and travel disruptions, including border closures and restricted movement within urban centres, are highly likely.

Projected outcome and political implications

A final agreement on electoral laws is needed for credible elections, with talks expected to resume in March. No clear candidates have emerged, especially following the assassination of Saif al-Islam Gaddafi. The 6+6 Committee, the joint legislative drafting body, has failed to reach a consensus. Current PM Abdul Hamid Dbeibah and LNA commander Khalifa Haftar remain the dominant prospective candidates. However, both face significant opposition.

At this moment, a smooth transition of power is highly unlikely, with both sides likely to reject the results. Regionally, a successful election would have a significant impact, especially for stabilising the Sahel and Mediterranean migration routes. Conversely, a failed or contested vote will either continue the stalemate or re-ignite conflict. With April fast approaching, it remains to be seen if this will become another chapter in Libya's cycle of postponed transitions or a beacon of change.

By Roxana Dumitrescu





SSA

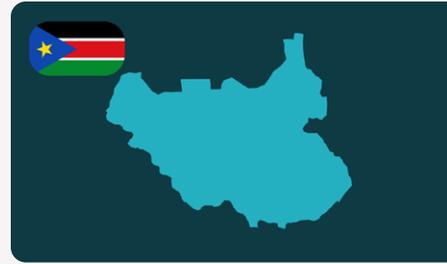
Sub-Saharan Africa will see pivotal elections in Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau and South Sudan in 2026. These are likely to have significant implications for a region already facing substantial security challenges.

In Ethiopia, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed will seek to maintain his party's solid grip on legislative power as election officials attempt to balance voting rights with widespread security concerns. Violent clashes continue between government forces and militias in Amhara. Meanwhile, growing tensions between Addis Ababa, Tigray and neighbouring Eritrea also present serious obstacles to electoral operations.

On 6 December, Guinea-Bissau is set to hold its first nationwide elections since a military junta seized power on 26 November 2025, shortly after the country held disputed polls. The elections will serve as a significant test of the country's extremely fragile political system, which is plagued by corruption and a long history of military takeovers. The outcome will also have serious implications for the wider region, as ECOWAS continues to weaken in the face of a growing number of military-led governments.

Finally, South Sudan plans to hold the country's first-ever general elections in December after persistent insecurity and political instability resulted in several postponements. Election officials face significant logistical challenges that will likely be exacerbated by growing tensions between the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the rival Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition.

South Sudan prepares for first-ever elections amid political turmoil



South Sudan is scheduled to hold its first-ever general elections in December. They will cover the presidency and all 550 seats of the National Legislative Assembly. The vote is meant to conclude the prolonged transitional period initiated after the 2018 peace agreement. Several previous dates (2015, 2018, 2021, 2023, 2024) were postponed due to conflict and political instability. President Salva Kiir Mayardit has publicly committed to maintaining the 2026 deadline. The National Elections Commission has begun preparing the process. However, major prerequisites remain incomplete: voter registration has yet to begin, constituency boundaries have not been finalised and the permanent constitution is still under negotiation. Funding disbursements remain insufficient, delaying procurement of election materials and deployment of personnel. These gaps raise concerns about whether polls can be conducted on time and nationwide.

Backdrop

What is at stake is the possibility of ending 13 years of transitional rule and establishing a more legitimate, elected government. However, the pre-electoral environment is increasingly fragile. Relations between the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the rival Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO) have deteriorated sharply since the March 2025 house arrest of Riek Machar. The first vice president of South Sudan was suspended, indicted and put on trial on treason charges.

The SPLM-IO in turn declared the government illegitimate and suspended cooperation in election-related committees, casting doubt on broad political participation. Security conditions remain volatile. Clashes between the South Sudan People's Defense Forces and SPLM-IO elements continue in Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity states, while intercommunal violence persists in several regions. The disputed Abyei area has seen renewed confrontations involving local militias and cross-border actors. These dynamics contribute to a high baseline risk of violence during campaigning and after results are announced.

Political violence is common in South Sudan and the vote is unlikely to be peaceful. Past responses to dissent, including live ammunition against protesters and curfews in Juba, suggest that authorities may intensify nationwide security measures around the election period. Restrictions on movement, added checkpoints and potential border controls are possible. Misinformation and competing claims of legitimacy could amplify instability.

Projected outcome

A major political shift is unlikely. The SPLM maintains strong control over state institutions, security forces and administrative structures, making Kiir the leading candidate if elections proceed. SPLM-IO participation is uncertain due to internal divisions and Machar's detention, though smaller parties may contest some seats. Even if the vote proceeds, a smooth transition of power is far from guaranteed. Disputed results could lead to localised or widespread unrest, particularly in conflict-affected regions and areas dominated by opposition forces.

Organisations such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union and the United Nations (UN) are pushing for enhanced political dialogue to reduce the risk of a contested outcome. The conduct and credibility of the 2026 elections will heavily influence regional stability, humanitarian conditions and the trajectory of peace efforts in East Africa. A peaceful vote could strengthen state legitimacy; a disputed or violent process may deepen fragmentation and prolong the crisis.



Guinea-Bissau enters a high-stakes election cycle amid military oversight



General elections, both presidential and legislative, are scheduled for 6 December in Guinea-Bissau. This will be the first nationwide vote since the 26 November 2025 military coup, which followed disputed elections held earlier that month. Voters will choose the next president and all 102 members of the National People's Assembly. The assembly has been dissolved since 2023 and replaced by a transitional legislative council appointed by the junta. The High Military Command for the Restoration of Order, led by Horta Inta-A Na Man, seized power three days after the disputed November 2025 elections, alleging manipulation by President Umaro Sissoco Embaló. Operational concerns persist regarding voter registration, electoral logistics and the independence of electoral institutions. These factors may affect the feasibility of delivering a timely, credible vote.

Backdrop

The elections take place amid significant political fragility. The 2025 coup followed heightened political tensions. These included the exclusion of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), disputes over Embaló's constitutional mandate, and clashes between security forces and opposition supporters. Opposition figures were detained after the coup, and while most were later released, political freedoms remain constrained.

Unrest erupted in Bissau soon after the military takeover, leading transitional authorities to impose a nationwide protest ban that is still intermittently enforced. Guinea-Bissau remains one of West Africa's most coup-prone states. The armed forces' deep institutional influence increases the risk of instability during the elections. Internal divisions within the military, though not publicly visible, remain a structural concern. Security conditions are expected to tighten in the months leading up to the vote. The transitional government may impose curfews, border controls and movement restrictions, especially if protests resume. Disinformation campaigns, efforts to delegitimise the opposition and possible foreign interference could undermine the integrity of the electoral process.

Regionally, Guinea-Bissau's transition unfolds alongside military-led governments in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Together, they formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) after withdrawing from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Embaló's overthrow raised ECOWAS concerns that Guinea-Bissau could realign toward the AES, further weakening the bloc's regional cohesion.

Projected outcome

No clear frontrunner has emerged, and any major ideological shifts are unlikely. The transitional charter prohibits members of the military authorities, including General Inta-A, from contesting the presidency. Although opposition candidate Fernando Dias da Costa continues to claim he was the legitimate winner of the 2025 vote, his political status remains uncertain. The key question is whether the elections will end military oversight or further entrench the junta's influence. The risk of post-electoral unrest is significant, particularly if the opposition alleges manipulation or if security forces intervene heavily during the vote. A smooth political transition appears improbable without strong international engagement, particularly from ECOWAS and the European Union. The regional implications are substantial. A credible election could strengthen democratic norms in coastal West Africa, while a contested process may embolden military regimes in the Sahel and increase regional fragmentation.

By Ryan Rogers



Ethiopia faces mounting security challenges ahead of the June general elections



General elections are scheduled for 1 June to elect all 547 seats of the House of Peoples' Representatives as well as nearly 3,000 regional councillors. The elections are likely to see Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali's Prosperity Party maintain a commanding majority in the House. However, serious security concerns pose a major challenge to electoral operations.

Backdrop

Widespread conflict across Amhara and Oromia regions, as well as the deterioration of security in Tigray, create logistical challenges for the federal government that risk undermining the electoral process. Election officials plan to implement a three-tier security classification system nationwide. The plan includes red areas designated as unfit for voting due to insecurity. This mirrors previous elections where seats had been left vacant due to voting challenges. However, the suspension of voting in particular areas nonetheless threatens to exacerbate inter-regional tensions and erode the legitimacy of the results.

In Tigray, several political figures have also called for a postponement of the elections until certain regional issues are resolved. Some examples are the liberation of occupied territory from Amhara militias and Eritrean forces and the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Overshadowing this security context, relations continue to break down between the federal government and neighbouring Eritrea. Eritrea has accused the Ethiopian government of using tensions in Tigray and Amhara and historical colonial legacies as justification for aggressive actions. It says this could justify a potential invasion to gain access to the Red Sea.

Any challenges to the elections' legitimacy may also fuel further political tensions, resulting in demonstrations and unrest. The Ethiopian government has engaged in an increasing crackdown on the country's political and media landscapes through repressive measures such as the suspension of journalists and political parties. Although protests in Addis Ababa are relatively uncommon, security forces are likely to respond to demonstrations with violent suppression. Across conflict-prone areas, the imposition of states of emergency and martial law is common. These measures frequently restrict the freedom of assembly. They risk inflaming popular resentment and provoking unrest in the lead-up to and following the elections.

Projected outcome

The Prosperity Party is expected to retain its dominant position. However, participation gaps in conflict-affected regions could weaken the perceived legitimacy of the results. The country's myriad security challenges in the lead-up to the election have significant implications for the wider region. As a rapidly developing country with a population of over 130 million people, Ethiopia serves as a major hub in East Africa. Addis Ababa's Bole International Airport consistently ranks among the continent's busiest airports. Ethiopia's proximity to unstable states such as Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan increases the risk of regional instability. Potential unrest in the country could both exacerbate neighbouring conflicts and be influenced by them.



Editor: Paul Mutter, Global Coverage Manager at Riskline

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contact@riskline.com