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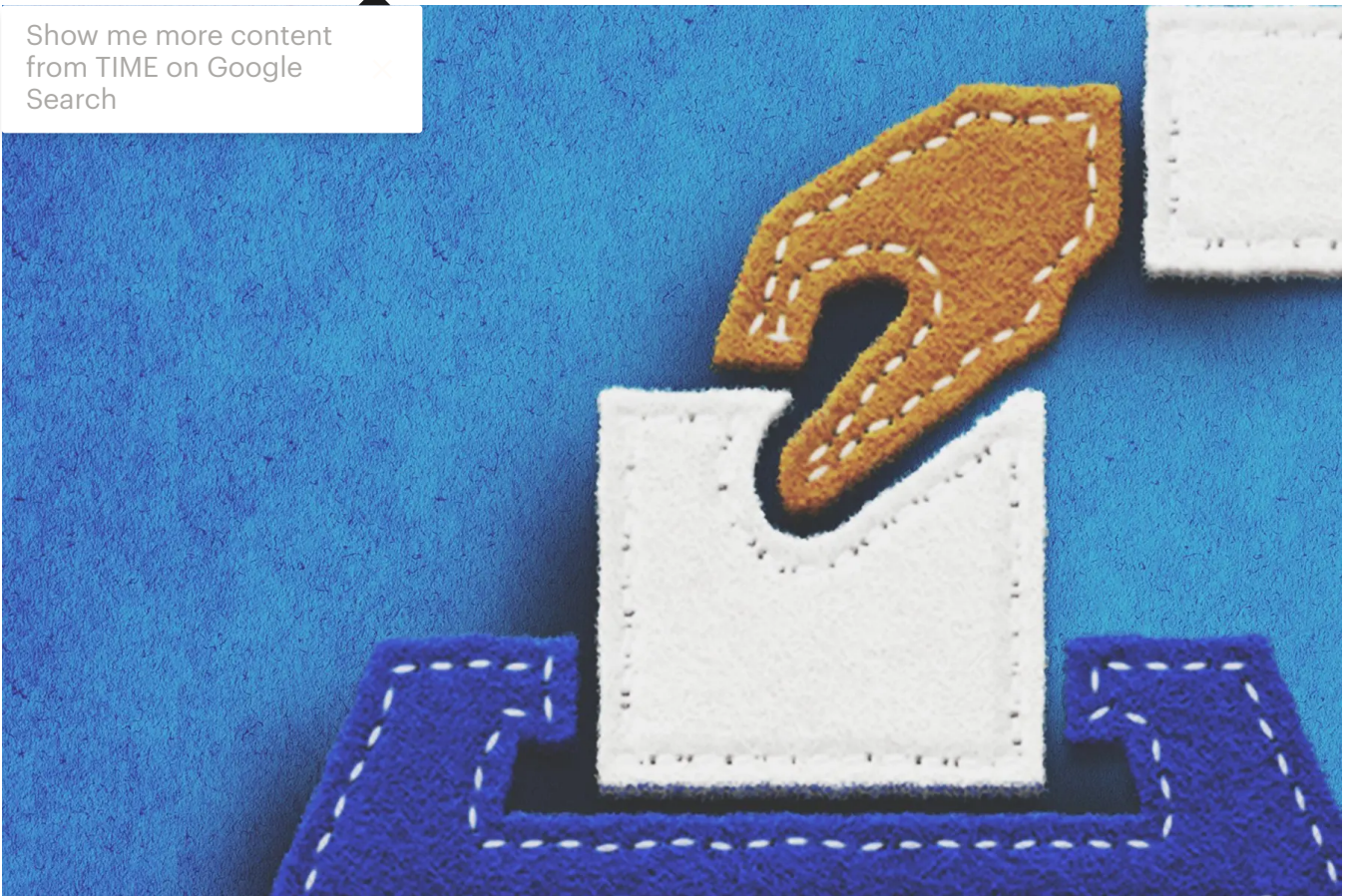
WORLD

ELECTIONS

The Results of the Biggest-Ever Election Year Show Much of the World Voted for Change

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by Koh Ewe and Chad de Guzman

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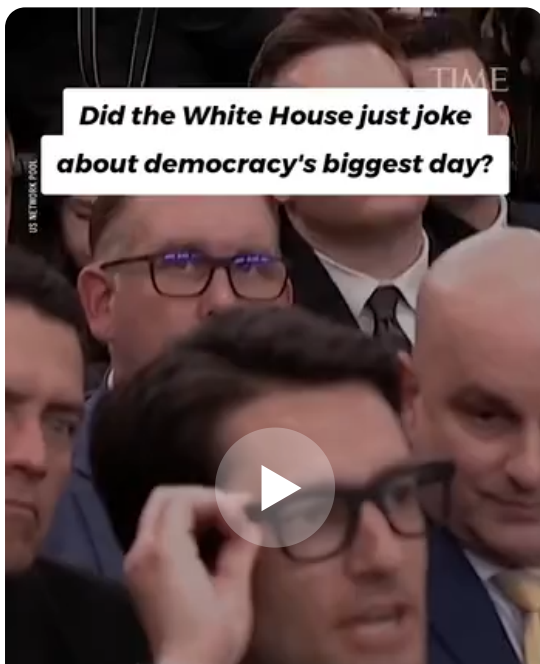
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lmost two billion people around the world voted in 2024—the ultimate election year, which has seen polls for national office held in more than 60 countries (as well as the European Union), collectively home to about half the people on earth.

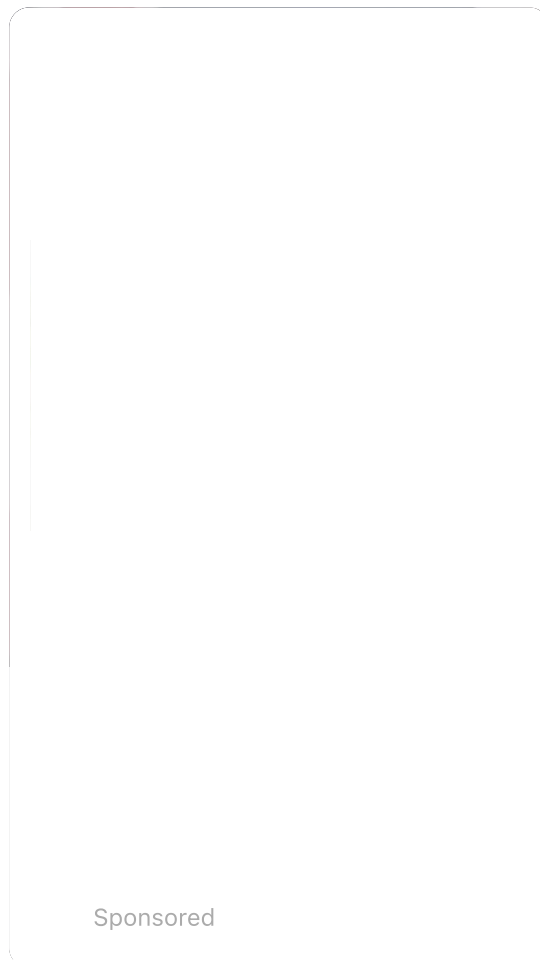
What resulted was a tsunami of change that swept ballot boxes worldwide.

[[Click here](#) for a previous version of this story that outlined 2024 elections by population and included a “freedom and fairness score” for each country.]

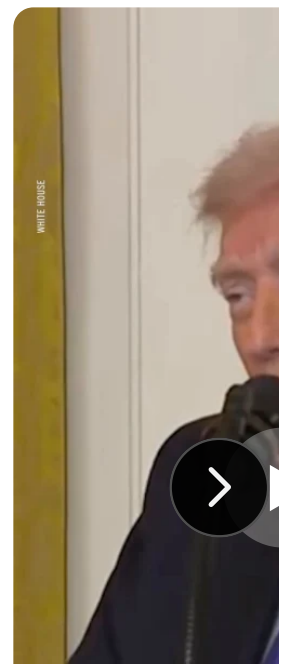
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But the tides have turned in different directions: elections across Europe have seen far-right parties make serious gains; meanwhile, South Korea's main liberal opposition to the ruling conservative government earned a landslide victory in parliamentary elections; the

British Labour Party decisively defeated the conservative Tories, who had held power in the U.K. for 14 years; and Senegal's presidential vote was hailed by observers as a win for democracy after it elevated a relative outsider and anti-corruption candidate, bringing a surprise end to the decades-long domination of the country's ruling coalition. In the U.S., former President Donald Trump is set to return to the White House after a decisive victory against Vice President Kamala Harris.

What's clear is many of the world's voters don't want things to stay the same. Even in places where incumbent governments have retained power, they've done so with significantly less public support than before. Venezuela's opposition turned out in force at the polls to try to oust strongman Nicolás Maduro, whose victory remains challenged by questions of legitimacy. In India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was forced to form a coalition after his ruling party failed to secure an outright majority in parliament for the first time in a decade. South Africa's African National Congress also formed a coalition after losing its parliamentary majority for the first time since the end of apartheid. And in countries where meaningful opposition has been curbed by ruling elites, such as Russia, many have opted to spoil their votes or boycott the polls as a form of protest. In Bangladesh, after long-ruling Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina secured another term in January after an election that observers called neither free nor fair, she was ousted in August amid a wave of student-led protests.

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For the first time ever, the *Financial Times* reported, every governing party facing election in a developed country this year lost vote share.

Researchers say this widespread yearning for something different—in the various forms it can take—largely stems from a sense of hopelessness, whether about dim economic prospects, climate change, disinformation, or even the state of democracy.

“Hopelessness is a very powerful feeling in electoral psychology, because it's the feeling that people have when they think that things are so bad, that it can't really get worse anyway,” Michael Bruter, the director of the Electoral Psychology Observatory at the London School of Economics and Political Science, tells TIME. “And when they think that, it's very disinhibiting because people then feel that, in a way, they might decide to vote for political parties which they do not believe [are] the solutions just because they feel that the situation is so desperate that they want change at any cost.”

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“Change becomes a value in its own right,” Bruter adds, saying that for many this sentiment isn’t partisan or ideological and might reflect a deeper dissatisfaction with political institutions and systems. “It’s about almost resenting the very way in which democracy works and gives some people the power to govern us.”

“Citizens have outgrown their democracies,” Bruter says. “A lot of commentators repeatedly express that citizens do not care about democracy any more, and that simply is not the case. Levels of support for democracy are consistently very high, but, put simply, democracies as they currently exist do not fulfil the functions citizens want them to.”

Bruter points to what he and his colleague Sarah Harrison regard as democracy’s “functional misalignment”—voters are becoming less concerned with electing the person who has the best ideas or best represents them and are instead increasingly using elections as referendums: to signal confidence or, more often, lack of confidence in the current administration, no matter the alternative.

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Kevin Casas-Zamora, secretary-general of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, adds that the world is experiencing a “political hangover” after the COVID-19 pandemic. Such hangovers, he says, arise post-crises, in which resultant turmoil, instability, and economic malaise reflects poorly on whoever is running the ship. In times like these, many people may turn to populists and authoritarians, he says, who “promise the restoration of order.”

Below is how each of the national elections around the world this year went, in chronological order.

(Not included in this list are indirect elections, such as Cambodia Senate, Democratic Republic of the Congo Senate, Nepal National Assembly, and Thailand Senate; places not recognized as countries by the U.N. other than Taiwan, such as Montserrat, Sint Maarten, Somaliland, and South Ossetia; and elections that have been postponed or canceled and are no longer expected in 2024, such as Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, North Korea, and Ukraine.)

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