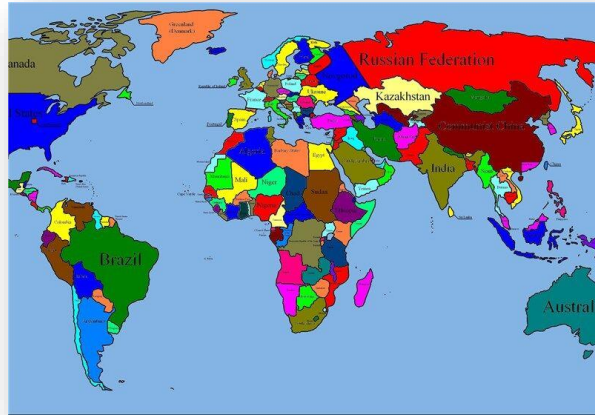


WEEKLY ANALYSIS

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE MAJOR EVENTS OF 2024



Weekly Analysis is one of the CSRS publications analyzing significant weekly political, social, economic, and security events in Afghanistan and the region. The prime motive behind this is to provide strategic insights and policy solutions to decision-making institutions and individuals in order to help them design better policies. Weekly Analysis is published in Pashto, Dari, English and Arabic languages.



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Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS)



AN OVERVIEW OF THE MAJOR EVENTS OF 2024

Introduction

The year 2024 has ended, marking a period filled with significant events. This year can be considered one of the most impactful in recent history, with numerous political, security, and military developments shaping global dynamics. These events have not only influenced the course of 2024 but will also play a critical role in shaping trends and policies in 2025 and beyond.

This article aims to provide an analytical review of the major global events in 2024 in the first section. The second section will focus on the most notable developments in Afghanistan during the same year.

SECTION ONE: THE WORLD IN 2024

1. Global Political Events

From a political perspective, 2024 was a year marked by significant global changes. Elections were held in more than seventy countries, with over four billion people—representing half of the world’s population—casting their votes. Among the most notable elections were those in Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom, India, and the United States.

In Pakistan, elections took place in early 2024 following considerable political tensions. The controversial outcome resulted in Shehbaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) forming a coalition government and assuming power. This election occurred under extraordinary circumstances, as former Prime Minister Imran Khan remained in custody, and his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), was barred from participating.

In India, the world’s largest democracy, nationwide elections were held in 2024, with the ruling party led by Narendra Modi retaining power.

As anticipated, Russia’s presidential election resulted in Vladimir Putin securing 87% of the votes, extending his presidency for another six years and marking his fifth term in office. Russian presidential elections are generally uneventful, with predictable outcomes. However, the significant implication of Putin’s re-election is the continuation of Russia’s anti-Western policies for another six years, a development likely to have far-reaching impacts on global dynamics.



These political events collectively shaped the trajectory of international relations and will undoubtedly influence the global political landscape in the years to come.

Another key country that held elections in 2024 was the United Kingdom. After several years, the UK held its general elections, in which the Labour Party secured a majority by winning 410 out of 650 seats in the House of Commons. As a result, Keir Starmer of the Labour Party replaced Rishi Sunak of the Conservative Party as the Prime Minister. While the UK is one of the world's influential powers, a shift in the composition of the House of Commons or a change in the ruling party has not historically had a significant impact on global dynamics. Regardless of which party comes to power, the UK's foreign policy largely follows the lead of the United States.

The U.S. elections, however, told a very different story. The 2024 elections in the United States brought unexpected twists. During the campaign season, incumbent President Joe Biden withdrew from the race and endorsed his Vice President, Kamala Harris, as the Democratic candidate to challenge Donald Trump. This decision came as a shock and reshaped the electoral landscape, with most analysts predicting Harris's victory. However, contrary to these expectations, Donald Trump defeated Harris decisively in both the popular vote and the Electoral College, securing his return to the White House. Trump's re-election as President of the United States for another four years is set to profoundly alter existing global trends.

Although Trump is a Republican and is expected to align with the party's broader domestic and international policies, his unpredictable nature and reputation for unconventional actions make his leadership highly uncertain. His foreign policy promises, particularly regarding the Russia-Ukraine war, the Middle East and Iran crises, and relations with China, are poised to significantly shift current global dynamics and could steer events in a dramatically different direction.

Syria witnessed a remarkable political shift in late 2024. Beyond the political changes brought about through regular electoral mechanisms, one of the year's most surprising developments occurred in Syria. This change, led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham under the leadership of Ahmad al-Sharaa, better known as Abu Muhammad al-Julani, ended the oppressive regime of Bashar al-Assad. Assad's government had symbolized over five decades of injustice and tyranny in Syria.

This regime change is arguably the most significant event of 2024. It not only marks the end of a decade of devastating war in Syria but also promises a brighter future for the country. Furthermore, this development has the potential to fundamentally alter the political dynamics and power structures of the Middle East.



2. Global Security and Military Events

The year 2024 was marked by significant and turbulent security and military events around the world. One of the most prominent conflicts was the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel in Gaza, which had begun in 2023. The conflict escalated further in 2024, becoming even more complex and intense. During the year, Israel carried out the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of Hamas, in Tehran. Following his death, Yahya Sinwar was chosen as the new leader of Hamas. However, Sinwar was also killed in a heroic battle alongside three of his companions. Despite these losses, the morale of Hamas fighters remained strong, and the resistance in Palestine continued against Israeli attacks.

Another major security event in 2024 was the tragic death of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in a helicopter crash. The helicopter, carrying Raisi and his delegation, crashed while returning from the inauguration of a dam in East Azerbaijan Province. All passengers onboard were killed. This incident led to an early presidential election in Iran, resulting in the election of Masoud Pezeshkian as president. Pezeshkian, a figure unaffiliated with either the reformist or conservative factions, was chosen to lead the country. However, his election did not ease tensions between Iran, Israel, and the United States.

In Russia, a significant terrorist attack occurred in 2024, shaking the country to its core. The attack, carried out by four ISIS operatives, targeted Crocus City Hall in Krasnogorsk, a suburb of Moscow. The attack resulted in 143 deaths and more than 140 injuries, making it the deadliest attack in Russia in two decades and highlighting the group's presence in the country.

The conflict between Hezbollah and Israel also intensified in 2024, linked closely to the ongoing Hamas-Israel war. In a bizarre incident, thousands of pagers used by Hezbollah members exploded simultaneously, killing dozens and injuring many more. It was later revealed that Israel had orchestrated the explosions by embedding explosives into the pagers in collaboration with manufacturing companies. Furthermore, Israel launched an airstrike in Beirut, killing Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, and invaded southern Lebanon, occupying parts of the region. However, the Israel-Lebanon conflict was temporarily halted in November 2024 under a 60-day ceasefire agreement.

The tensions between Iran and Israel also reached new heights in 2024. This was evident in two rounds of direct missile and airstrikes exchanged between the two countries. Iran launched a large-scale missile and drone attack against Israel in retaliation for Israel's earlier attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus, which had killed several Iranian



diplomats. Israel responded with airstrikes on Iranian territory. Additionally, Iran launched another missile attack on Israel to avenge the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, which was again met with Israeli airstrikes targeting military facilities in Iran.

Meanwhile, the Russia-Ukraine war continued with full intensity in 2024. The conflict entered a new phase as Ukrainian forces launched an offensive into Russian territory, capturing parts of the Kursk region. Toward the end of the year, U.S. President Joe Biden indirectly approved Ukraine's use of long-range missiles, further escalating the conflict. However, there is speculation that the war may soon come to an end, fueled by promises made by Donald Trump during his election campaign. Trump vowed to resolve the Ukraine crisis immediately after taking office, raising hopes for a potential conclusion to the prolonged conflict.

SECTION TWO: AFGHANISTAN IN 2024

1. Political Events

The year 2024 was politically stable for Afghanistan. The Islamic Emirate maintained its initial policies without any significant changes in the composition or structure of the government, which continued to operate in an acting capacity. One of the most notable legislative developments was the approval and enactment of the Law on Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil by the Amir al-Mu'minin. While the law was generally welcomed as a positive step toward establishing clear guidelines for this important Islamic principle, it also sparked debates and criticism over certain provisions and its overall content.

In terms of foreign relations, 2024 proved to be a year of notable progress for the Islamic Emirate. The country's international relations expanded significantly compared to the previous year. High-ranking officials from various countries visited Kabul, signaling an increased willingness to engage with the Islamic Emirate. Uzbekistan sent its Prime Minister to Kabul to strengthen ties, while Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan also dispatched delegations to further develop their relations with Afghanistan.

Russia demonstrated its interest in deepening relations with the Islamic Emirate by sending a high-level delegation led by the Secretary of its Security Council to Kabul. Similarly, China sent its special representative for Afghan affairs to Kabul to explore opportunities for enhanced cooperation.

Perhaps the most surprising developments came from Tajikistan and India. Tajikistan, a country traditionally opposed to the Islamic Emirate, sent a senior security official—the Chairman of the State Committee for National Security—to Kabul to discuss security



issues and the possibility of initiating relations. India, which also lacked direct ties with the Islamic Emirate, took initial steps toward engagement by sending a delegation led by its special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Additionally, Saudi Arabia reopened its embassy in Kabul after having previously closed it. Another significant political development was the announcement by Russia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan that they would remove the Islamic Emirate from their lists of banned organizations. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan officially made this change, while Russia indicated that it was preparing to do so soon.

In late 2024, the third round of the Doha talks on Afghanistan took place. For the first time, a representative from the Islamic Emirate participated in the discussions. Unlike previous rounds, this session focused more on topics of interest to the Islamic Emirate, marking a shift in the nature of these talks.

2. Security and Military Events

Afghanistan experienced a relatively peaceful year in terms of security in 2024. The Islamic Emirate successfully maintained nationwide security and prevented any significant insurgencies. However, the Islamic State (ISIS) continued its activities as the biggest threat to Afghanistan, carrying out attacks, including bombings and targeted assassinations. The most notable incident was the assassination of Khalil-ur-Rahman Haqqani, the Minister for Refugees and Repatriation of the Islamic Emirate.

Another major security event was the border conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which occurred in late 2024. The clashes were triggered by Pakistani airstrikes on parts of Paktika province, justified as targeting bases of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). In response, the Islamic Emirate's forces launched rocket attacks on Pakistani territory, under the pretext of targeting criminal groups. The skirmishes resulted in casualties on both sides.

3. Afghanistan's Economy in 2024

Afghanistan's economy showed promising progress in 2024. The country recorded a 2.7% growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) compared to the previous year. The Afghan currency remained stable against foreign currencies, and inflation levels decreased, providing a more favorable economic environment.

International trade also improved significantly, with Afghanistan's exports surpassing \$2 billion. The country's total foreign trade reached over \$12 billion. In terms of investment,



2024 was a successful year. Afghanistan managed to attract approximately \$5 billion in investments. Many countries expressed interest in investing in Afghanistan, and numerous economic agreements were signed between Afghanistan and neighboring countries during high-level visits to Kabul.

Additionally, Afghanistan made notable progress in infrastructure development, especially in road reconstruction. One significant example was the rehabilitation of a section of the Salang Highway, a critical route for the country.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of global and Afghan developments in 2024 reveals a year filled with significant political, security, and economic events. Politically, the year witnessed substantial leadership transitions in many countries, with over seventy nations experiencing changes in government. Among these, the shift of power in the United States from Democrats to Republicans, particularly the return of the controversial figure Donald Trump, is likely to have a profound impact on global politics in the years ahead.

One remarkable observation about global political changes in 2024 is that except for Syria—where a forceful regime change occurred but was viewed as a positive development—all other transitions took place through democratic mechanisms. This highlights the continued presence of democratic norms in global governance.

However, in contrast to the political landscape, the year was marked by numerous and dramatic security and military events. The Middle East crisis reached new heights, with direct military confrontations between Iran and Israel. The war between Russia and Ukraine persisted without any clear resolution in sight. These ongoing global security crises reveal the inability of international institutions, particularly the United Nations, to resolve such conflicts peacefully. This situation paints a troubling picture of instability and unpredictability in the international system.

In Afghanistan, 2024 was a year of political stability but with notable security challenges. Despite the Islamic Emirate maintaining nationwide security, ISIS continued to pose a serious threat, carrying out attacks, including a suicide bombing that claimed the life of a cabinet minister.

In the realm of international relations, 2024 was a productive year for Afghanistan. The frequent visits of high-ranking officials from various countries to Kabul indicated growing regional acceptance of the Islamic Emirate as a legitimate government.



Economically, Afghanistan achieved significant progress. Foreign trade flourished, and the country attracted considerable investments. The Islamic Emirate also made notable efforts in infrastructure development, particularly in repairing and constructing major roads, such as the Salang Highway.

In summary, 2024 was a dynamic year. While the global political scene highlighted the resilience of democratic processes, persistent security crises underscored the challenges faced by international institutions in maintaining peace. For Afghanistan, the year brought political stability, increased international engagement, and notable economic advancements, despite ongoing security concerns.

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