

**The World Ahead: Top 10 trends for 2024 –
Breakfast briefing with Tom Standage,
Deputy Editor, The Economist**

Tuesday 30 January 2024 - 8:00 am to 10:00 am



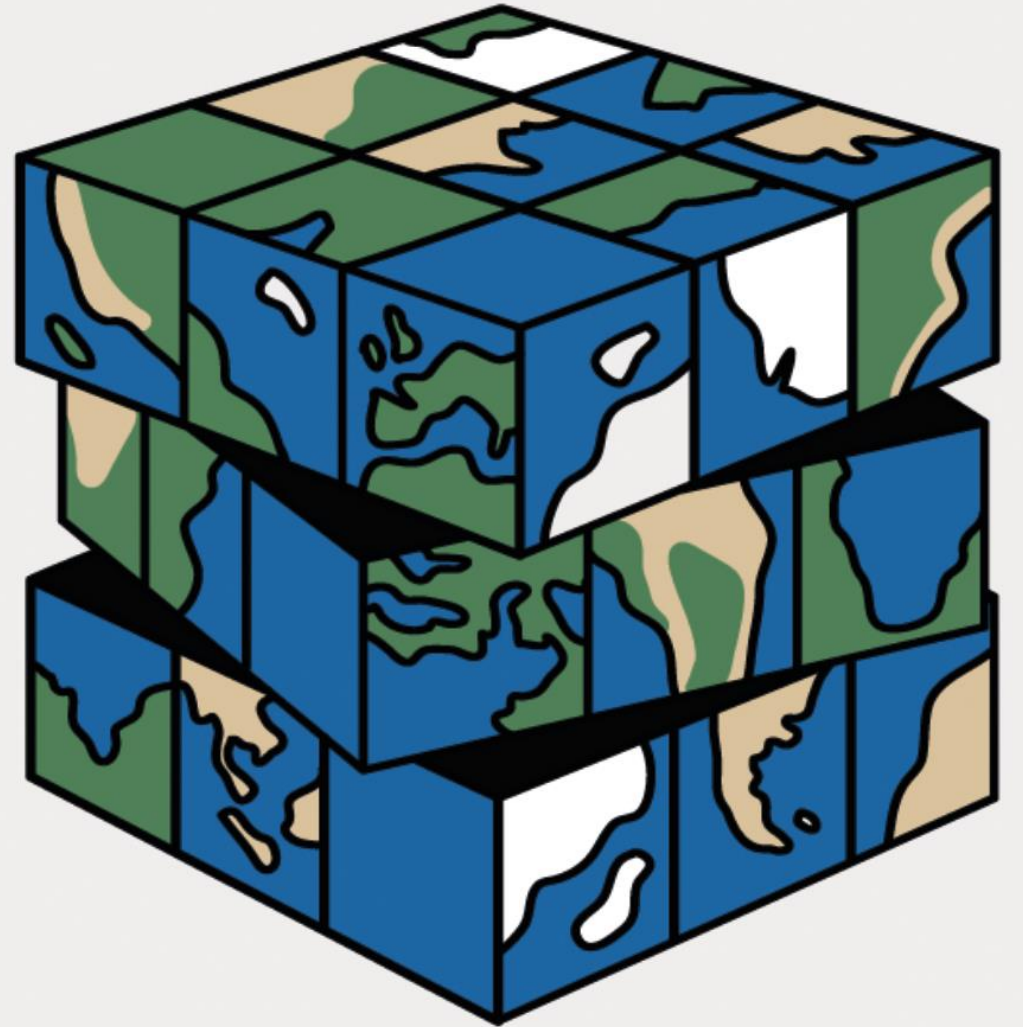
WELCOME

We will start shortly ...

The Economist

Tom's top 10 for 2024

Tom Standage
Deputy editor, *The Economist*
Editor, *The World Ahead 2024*



The World Ahead 2024

From the editor

LIFE COMES at you fast. Whether it's the upsurge in armed conflict, the redrawing of the global energy-resources map or rapid progress in artificial intelligence (AI), the world is changing at mind-boggling speed. From the situation in the Middle East to the adoption of electric vehicles to the treatment of obesity, things look very different from the way they did just a year or two ago. Our aim is to help you keep your worldview up to date—and tell you what might be coming next. To kick things off, here are ten themes to watch in the coming year.

1. Vote-a-rama!

Elections all over the world, for more voters than ever before, will put a spotlight on the global state of democracy. There will be more than 70 elections in 2024 in countries that are home to around 4.2bn people—for the first time, more than half of the global population. But while there is more voting than ever, there is not necessarily more democracy: many elections will be neither free nor fair.

2. America's global choice.

Voters, and the courts, will give their verdicts on Donald Trump, who has a one-in-three chance of regaining the presidency. The result may come down to a few tens of thousands of voters in a handful of swing states. But the consequences will be global, affecting everything from climate policy to military support for Ukraine. Indeed, election-rigging in Russia may mean Vladimir Putin's fate depends more on American voters than Russian ones.

3. Step up, Europe.

Accordingly, Europe must step up and provide Ukraine with the military and economic backing needed for a long fight, while laying out a path



towards eventual EU membership. This is the right thing to do, as well as insuring against the risk that Mr Trump regains power and withdraws support.

4. Middle East turmoil.

Hamas's attack on Israel, and Israel's retaliation against Gaza, have upended the region and scotched the idea that the world could continue to ignore the Palestinians' plight. Will it become a wider regional conflict—or offer a new chance for peace? For America, the overstretched superpower, this is also a test of whether it can adapt to a more complex and threatening world.

5. Multipolar disorder.

America's plan to pivot to Asia, and focus more on its rivalry with a rising China, has been

Vladimir Putin's fate will depend more on American voters than Russian ones

derailed by war in Ukraine and now Gaza. Russia, too, is distracted and losing influence. Frozen conflicts are thawing and local cold wars are heating up around the world. Instability in the Sahel is rising. The world is preparing for more conflict now that America's "unipolar moment" has ended.

6. A second cold war.

As China's growth has slowed, tensions rise over Taiwan, and America continues to limit Chinese access to advanced technologies, the "new cold war" rhetoric has hardened. But Western companies trying to reduce their supply chains' dependency on China will find it much easier said than done. Meanwhile both camps will woo the "middle powers" of the global south, not least for their green resources.

7. New energy geography.

The clean-energy transition is minting new green superpowers and redrawing the

energy-resources map. Lithium, copper and nickel matter much more, while oil and gas, and the regions that dominate their supply, matter less. Competition for green resources is reshaping geopolitics and trade, and creating some unexpected winners and losers. Meanwhile, a "greenlash" is under way among voters who regard climate-friendly policies as an elite conspiracy against ordinary people.

8. Economic uncertainty.

Western economies did better than expected in 2023 but are not out of the woods yet, and interest rates staying "higher, for longer" will be painful for companies and consumers alike, even if recessions are avoided. (Keep an eye on the banks, and their exposure to commercial property, where things could go bad.) China may fall into deflation.

9. AI gets real.

Businesses are adopting it, regulators are regulating it and techies continue to improve it. Debate will intensify over the best regulatory approach—and whether arguments over "existential risk" are a decoy that benefits incumbents. Unexpected uses and abuses will keep popping up. Worries about about AI's effect on jobs and potential for election meddling. Its biggest actual impact? Faster coding.

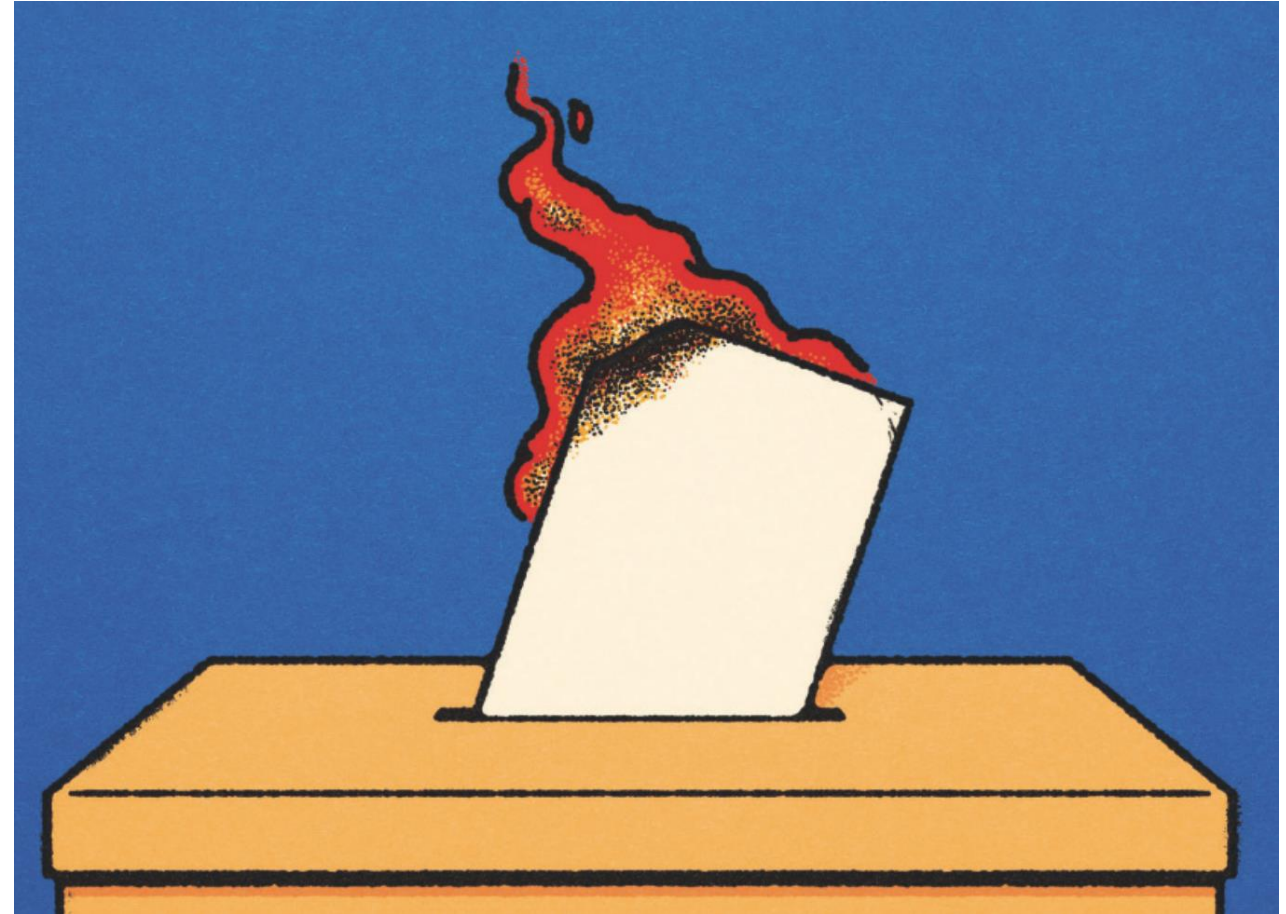
10. Uniting the world?

Perhaps ideological differences will be put aside as the world enjoys the Paris Olympics, astronauts (maybe) looping around the Moon, and the men's T20 cricket World Cup. But it is just as likely that those hoping for some global unity will be stumped.

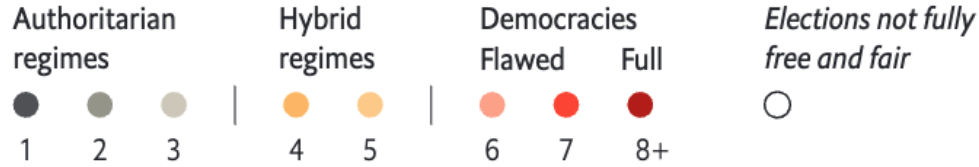
Read on for more detail on all these trends—and check out "Trendlines", a data-heavy selection of noteworthy metrics to keep an eye on in 2024, from superhero movies to space-launch costs. We hope you will find *The World Ahead 2024* a helpful guide to navigating the coming year. ●

1. Vote-a-rama!

Elections all over the world, in countries that are home to 4.2bn people (more than half of humanity), will put a spotlight on the global state of democracy.



Countries with an election in 2024, by democracy score

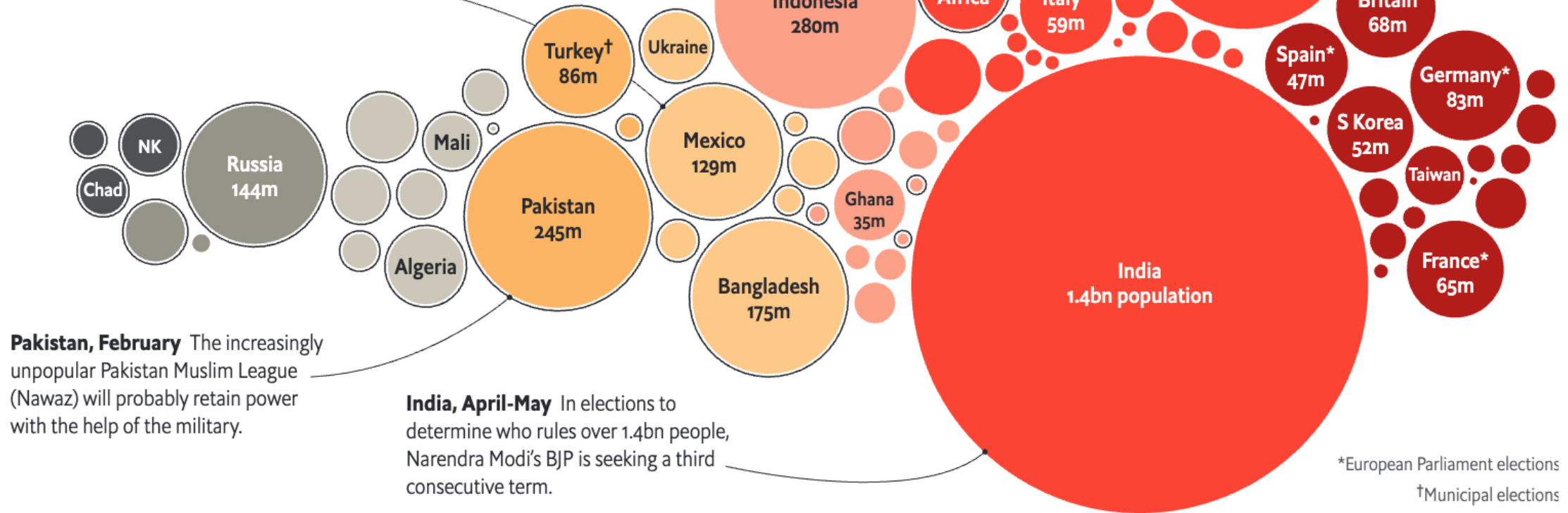


Mexico, July Morena's re-election as ruling party is almost assured, and Mexico will have a woman president for the first time.

South Africa The ANC may fall short of a majority, which would be a political earthquake weakening president Cyril Ramaphosa.

US, November 5th Domestic politics are likely to remain painfully polarised, but who wins matters greatly for foreign policy.

Britain A win for Labour could see the Conservatives unravel, but will also expose Labour's schisms.



Pakistan, February The increasingly unpopular Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) will probably retain power with the help of the military.

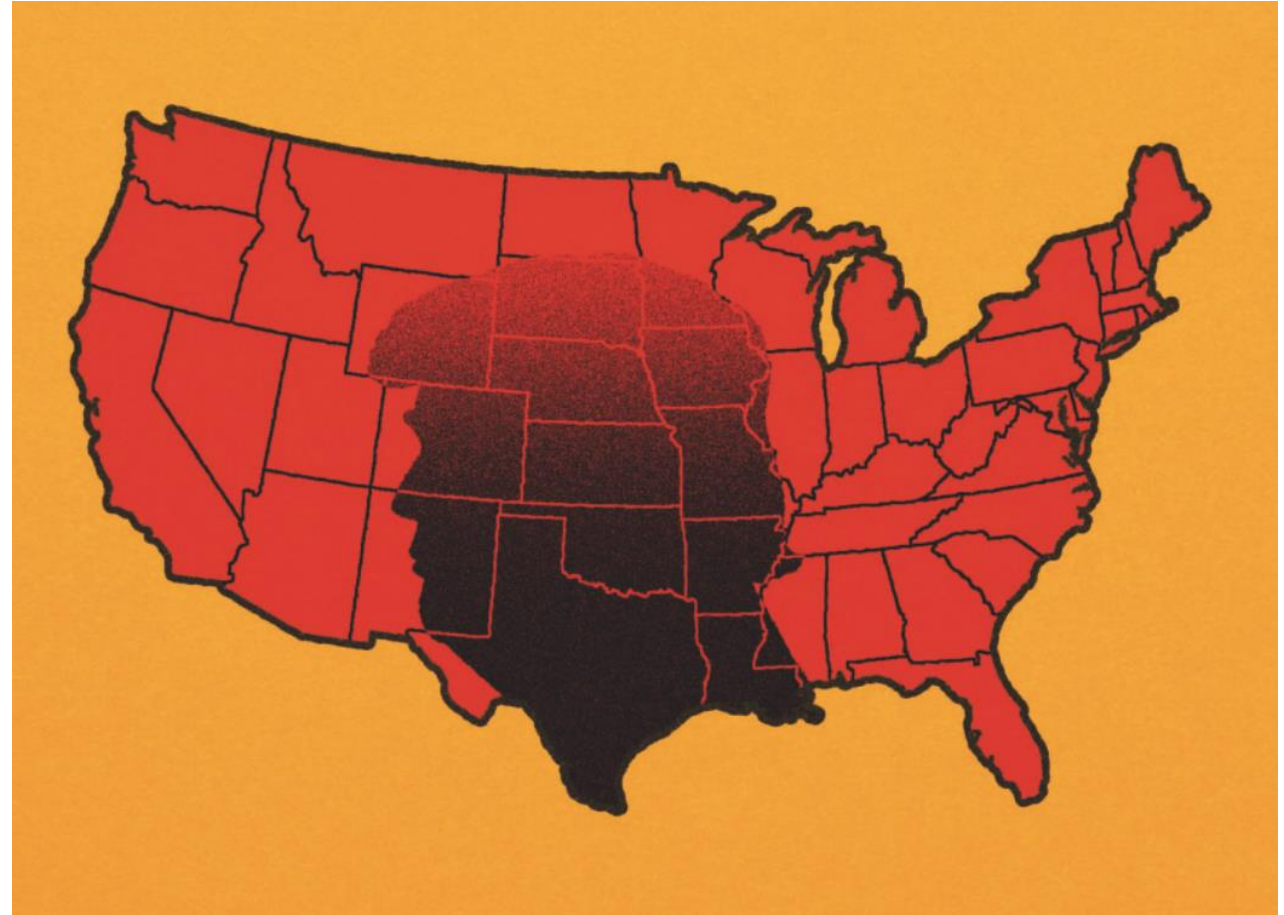
India, April-May In elections to determine who rules over 1.4bn people, Narendra Modi's BJP is seeking a third consecutive term.

*European Parliament elections

†Municipal elections

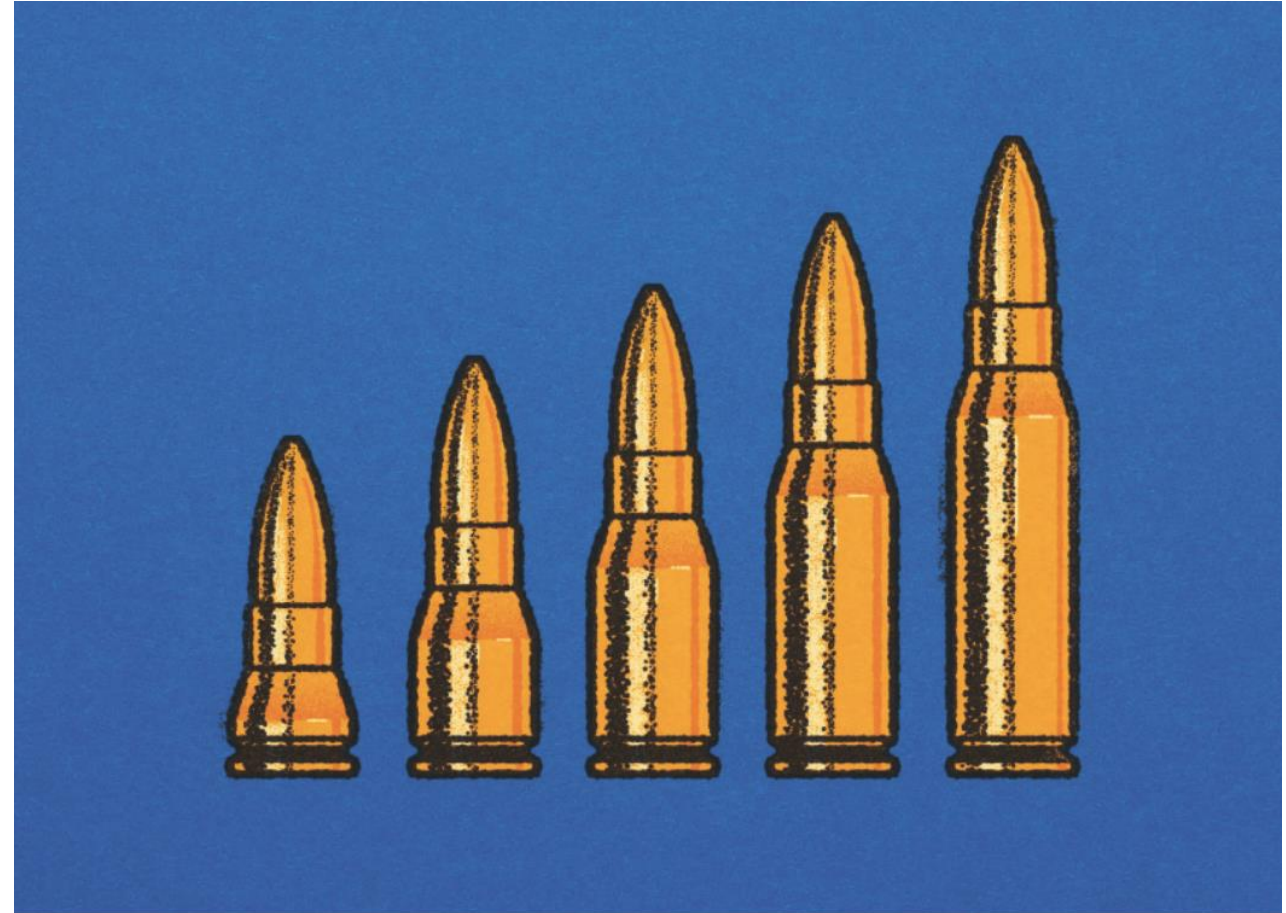
2. America's global choice.

Voters, and the courts, will give their verdicts on Donald Trump, who has a one-in-three chance of winning. But the consequences will be global.



3. Step up, Europe.

Europe will have to step up and give Ukraine the support it needs to fight a long war—the right thing to do, and an insurance policy against Trump 2.



4. Middle East turmoil.

Hamas's attack, and Israel's retaliation against Gaza, have upended the region and destroyed the idea that the Palestinians' plight could be ignored.



5. Multipolar disorder.

America's plan to pivot to Asia and focus on China has been derailed. Its "unipolar moment" is over, and America is now the overstretched superpower.



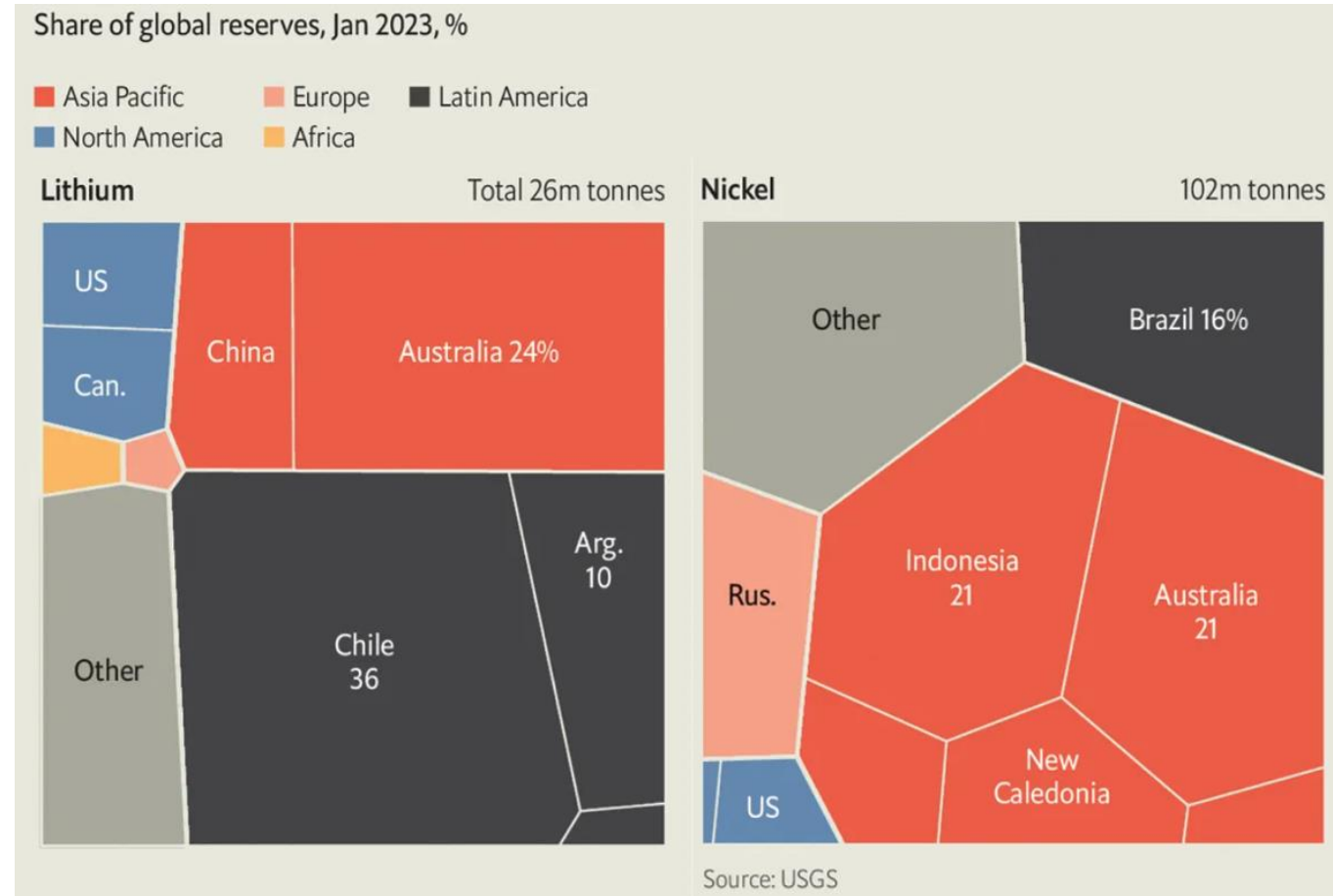
6. A second cold war.

China's growth has slowed, tensions are rising over Taiwan and America is limiting access to advanced tech. But "decoupling" is easier said than done.



7. New energy geography.

The clean-energy transition is minting new green superpowers and redrawing the energy-resources map, creating unexpected winners and losers.



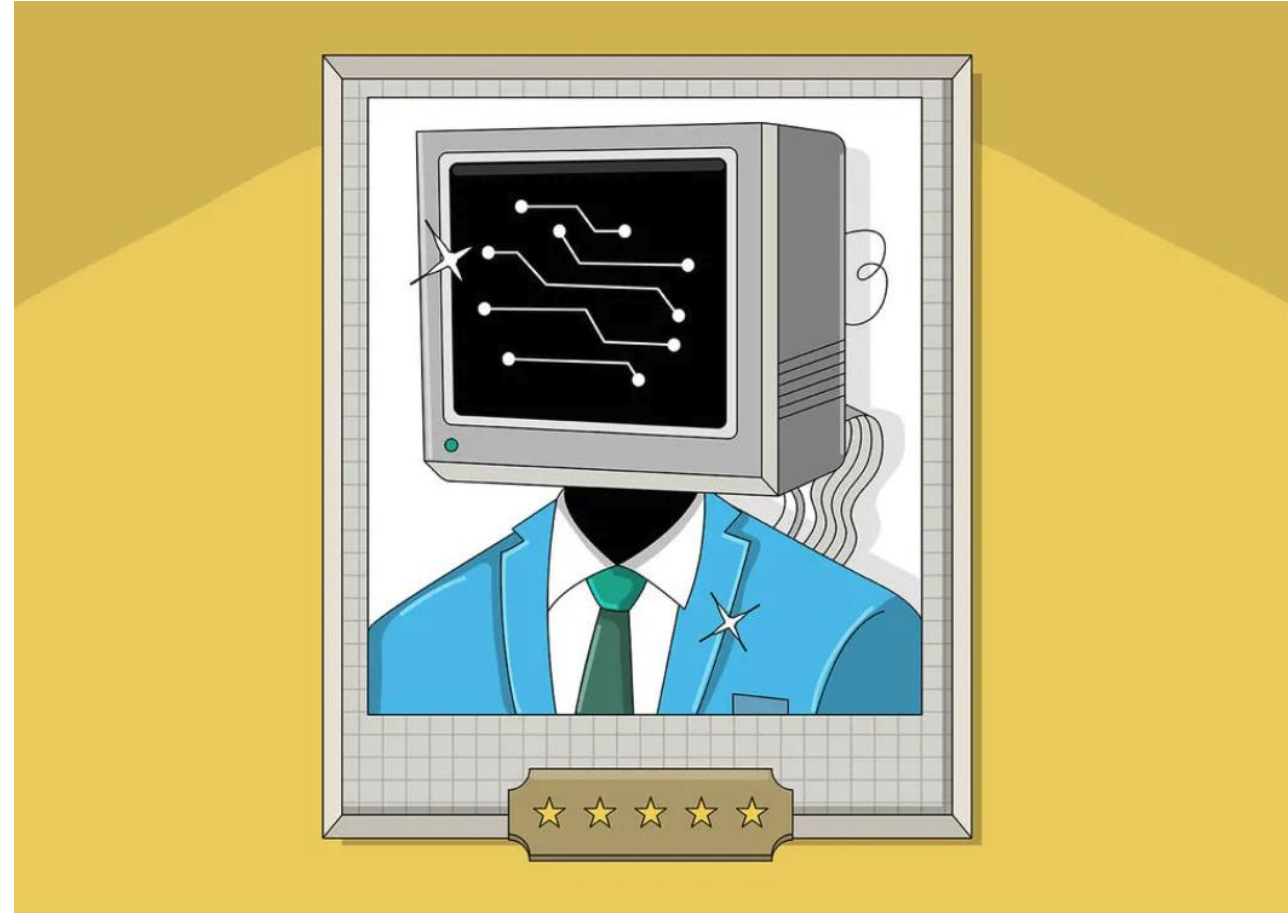
8. Economic uncertainty.

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9. AI gets real.

Firms are adopting it, regulators are regulating it and techies continue to improve it. Worries abound. AI's biggest actual impact? Faster coding.



10. Uniting the world?

The Paris Olympics, men's Twenty20 World Cup and astronauts returning to the Moon (sort of) may provide a moment or two of global unity...or maybe not?





Read about all this and more at
economist.com/worldahead2024

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