



A year of key elections, the quest for a haven and a celebrated auteur's return

This is a momentous year for elections. Around 2 billion people have the opportunity to cast their ballots in polls that span the globe from the United States to Taiwan, and India to Mexico. The outcomes, as our analysts and correspondents explain, have implications for us all.

It is an almost foregone conclusion that Narendra Modi will be back for a third term as Indian prime minister, certain that Vladimir Putin will continue as president in Russia and highly likely that November's US election will be a rerun of 2020's Biden v Trump contest. Other elections have broad geopolitical implications and could reveal how vulnerable democracies now are to misinformation and cyber interference from malign actors.

Away from the ballot boxes, our reporters reveal which other big stories to watch for in 2024.

The big story *Page 10* →

Our main feature read takes us back to a childhood in Northern Ireland at the height of the Troubles.

Author Darran Anderson reflects on the cost of growing up in Derry, in British-controlled Northern Ireland, and recalls finding relative freedom over the border in the Republic of Ireland.

His beautifully written essay discusses how he came first to crave sanctuary and, as an adult, sought it out practically and emotionally in a new life in London.

In search of sanctuary *Page 34* →

In Culture, Mark Kermode interviews Yorgos Lanthimos

ahead of the release of his highly anticipated new film *Poor Things*. It is the latest collaboration between the Greek director and actor Emma Stone, an adaptation of late Scottish novelist Alasdair Gray's science fiction, Victorian romantic pastiche.

We also meet artists who only got into their stride in later life and find out what's behind the big band revival in jazz music.

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On the cover Of all the global elections this year, the defining moment may come in the US. "The protective shield that all democracies and social orders rely on - legitimacy of the governing body, some level of elite responsibility, the willingness of citizens to view their neighbours in a civic way - is in an advanced stage of decline or collapse," remarks Larry Jacobs, of the University of Minnesota.

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