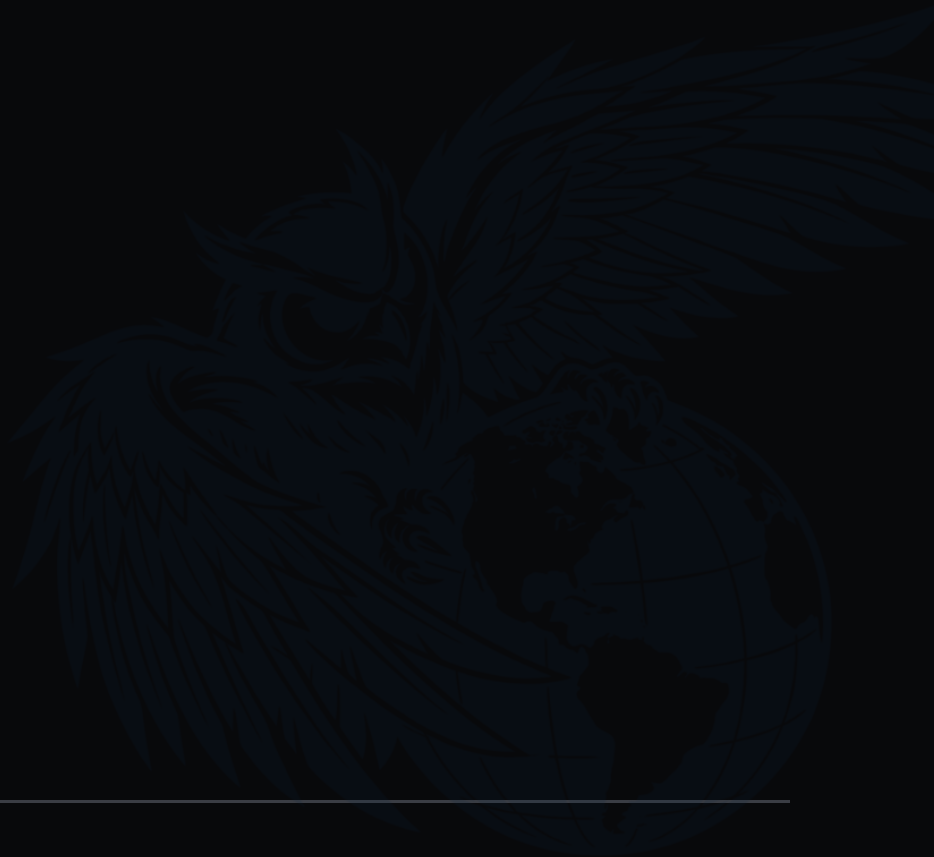

PUBLISHED MARKET RESEARCH

The Election Tail: New Zealand, The Gambia, Bahrain and South Sudan

Three votes remain on the 2026 calendar, and the decisive moment differs in each

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Three votes remain on the 2026 calendar, and the decisive moment differs in each

The year's last stretch of national votes is shorter than the calendar suggests: Bahrain has extended its parliament and will not vote this year, New Zealand's governing bloc is more likely than not to fall short of a majority as a minor party it has ruled out holds the balance, The Gambia's incumbent faces an opposition split three ways, and South Sudan's first election is more likely to be postponed before polling day than held in full as planned.

The election tail now holds three votes, not four, because a royal order has pushed Bahrain's parliamentary poll into the following year and the extended session has already opened. In New Zealand the governing right is now less likely than not to win a majority on its own, because the Opportunity Party polls above the party-vote threshold in every recent Verian poll and the right sits short of a majority whenever it does. In The Gambia the incumbent is the favourite because a plurality wins in one round and the opposition has split into three rival alliances. In South Sudan the decisive event is more likely a postponement announced before polling day than the vote itself, after the president fired the electoral commission chairman three months out. For anyone exposed to these governments, the uncertainty runs past polling day in New Zealand and The Gambia, and opens before it in South Sudan.

HEADLINE INDICATORS

7 November NEW ZEALAND POLLING DAY	8 percent OPPORTUNITY PARTY IN THE LATEST 1NEWS VERIAN POLL	5 December THE GAMBIA PRESIDENTIAL VOTE
22 December SOUTH SUDAN GENERAL ELECTION DATE	December 2027 END OF BAHRAIN'S EXTENDED LEGISLATIVE TERM	

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CENTRAL JUDGMENT

The useful question for this tail is not who wins on the night but when the decisive moment falls and how long the uncertainty lasts. New Zealand will vote on schedule, but the governing bloc is more likely than not to need a minor party that the Prime Minister has ruled out on the record, which points to weeks of coalition arithmetic after the count. The Gambia will most likely return its incumbent against a divided opposition, and the risk there is a disputed result rather than a change of power. In South Sudan the decisive step is most likely a postponement or a decision to hold a partial poll, announced before 22 December, which would extend a caretaker presidency by months rather than weeks. Bahrain has dropped off the calendar entirely, and plans built on a vote there this year should be withdrawn.

KEY JUDGMENTS

KJ-1	Bahrain will hold no Council of Representatives election this year, so the tail holds three votes, not four. A royal order extended the sitting chamber's term by a year, two separate reports carry the order, and the King has already opened the extended session, while no source read reports a poll date before the extension ends.	MODERATE
KJ-2	New Zealand's incumbent centre-right bloc is less likely than not to win a majority on its own. Every recent Verian poll and the latest Reid Research poll put the Opportunity Party above the threshold, and in each the right falls short of a majority while the Prime Minister has ruled out working with that party.	LOW
KJ-3	Adama Barrow is the likely winner in The Gambia, and the main risk is a disputed count rather than a change of president. The single-round plurality rule rewards the incumbent while the opposition has split into three rival alliances, each with its own flagbearer or coordinator, weeks before nominations close.	MODERATE
KJ-4	South Sudan is more likely than not to miss a full nationwide vote on the date set. Voter registration and the unification of forces remain unfinished, the electoral commission chairman was fired three months before the vote, the first vice president is on trial and the main opposition rejects the electoral changes, even though the permanent constitution and the census are no longer legal preconditions.	MODERATE
KJ-5	The uncertainty runs past polling day in New Zealand and The Gambia, while in South Sudan the decisive moment is likely a postponement announced before polling day. Official results and coalition talks in New Zealand and a possible petition in The Gambia extend the uncertainty by weeks, whereas a further slip in South Sudan extends a caretaker presidency by months.	MODERATE

KEY STATISTICS

120 seats Size of the New Zealand House of Representatives, 2026-10-10⁴	58 seats National, ACT and NZ First combined in the 1News Verian seat projection, 2026-10-13¹⁰	28 percent National party vote in the 1News Verian poll, 2026-10-13¹⁰	5.5 percent Opportunity Party vote in the RNZ Reid Research poll, 2026-10-06¹¹
20 days Gap between New Zealand polling day and the declaration of official results, 2026-11-27⁴	53 percent Barrow's share of the vote in The Gambia's last presidential election, 2021-12-06²	32 percent Barrow in the Gambia Participates poll, 2026-08-10⁵	17 percent Undecided in the Gambia Participates poll, 2026-08-10⁵
400,000 people Estimated deaths in South Sudan's civil war before the peace deal, 2026-09-23¹	12 months Extension of Bahrain's sixth legislative term, 2026-04-30¹³		

Scope and method

METHOD

This paper reads public reporting on the four national votes named in the title, read between 10 and 14 October 2026: international wires, national broadcasters and newspapers, poll releases as reported in the press, national election calendars and the published text of official orders as reported in the press and on the legislature's own site. Where a source is not on the firm's Source List it is marked unverified and carries no high-confidence judgment; where a listed wire covers the same event, it is cited beside the unlisted source. Probabilities in the Outlook are the author's own judgment and are labelled as such. No client-attributable material is used.

SECTION 01 • ASSESSMENT

New Zealand

New Zealand votes on 7 November 2026 for a House of Representatives of 120 seats, 71 from electorates and 49 from party lists, with 61 seats needed for a majority of a House of that size; the governing coalition is National, ACT and NZ First under Prime Minister Christopher Luxon.⁴

The 1News Verian poll fielded from 8 to 12 October 2026 put National and Labour on 28 percent each, the Greens on 15 percent, ACT and NZ First on 10 percent each and the Opportunity Party on 8 percent, up one point from the previous week's Verian poll; on that poll National, ACT and NZ First would hold 58 seats and Opportunity 10, short of a majority for either bloc without it.¹⁰

The RNZ Reid Research poll fielded from 24 September to 1 October 2026 put the Opportunity Party on 5.5 percent, above the threshold for a second Reid Research poll in a row, with Labour on 30.8 percent and National on 25.9 percent.¹¹

A party enters parliament with 5 percent of the party vote or one electorate seat; on the September polls other than the early-September Curia poll, the right would fall short of a majority with the Opportunity Party holding the balance of power, as reviewed on 28 September 2026.³

Luxon ruled out National working with the Opportunity Party on 27 July 2026, citing its tax policy, and his office confirmed that the comments amounted to a formal ruling out.¹²

Bloomberg reported on 5 October 2026 that both major parties were losing support to smaller rivals as the election approached.⁸

UNKNOWN: whether Luxon's ruling out of the Opportunity Party would survive a count in which the right can govern only with it, and whether an overhang from the Maori electorates enlarges the House beyond 120 seats; no source read settles either.

ASSESSMENT • LOW CONFIDENCE

New Zealand's governing bloc is less likely than not to return with a majority of its own, and a hung parliament with the Opportunity Party holding the balance is the more likely result. The rationale is that the most recent polls from two pollsters put the minor party above the threshold, the right falls short of a majority whenever it clears it, and only one poll read has it below.

SECTION 02 • ASSESSMENT

The Gambia

Adama Barrow won The Gambia's December 2021 presidential election with 53 percent of the vote against 27.7 percent for Ousainou Darboe, on a turnout of 87 percent, and the opposition rejected the result.²

The Gambia elects its president on 5 December 2026 in a single round by plurality, with no term limit in force: parliament rejected the 2020 draft constitution, which would have barred Barrow from this race, by 31 votes for and 23 against, short of the three-quarters required.⁵

A Gambia Participates poll dated 10 August 2026, with a sample of 1,556, put Barrow on 32 percent, Darboe on 25 percent, Talib Ahmed Bensouda on 19 percent and 17 percent undecided; it is the only survey read, and it is carried only by an online encyclopedia.⁵

Foroyaa reported on 30 September 2026 that the opposition stands in three rival alliances, the Gambia First Coalition led by Darboe's United Democratic Party, Coalition 2026 and the Team Gambia Grand Coalition 2026 coordinated by Halifa Sallah, beside a ruling alliance led by Barrow's National People's Party.¹⁵

Bensouda, leader of the UNITE party, was chosen as flagbearer of Coalition 2026 on 8 August 2026, after the United Democratic Party withdrew from that process before the vote.¹⁶

The Independent Electoral Commission set the presidential nomination window from 3 to 14 November 2026, ahead of the vote on 5 December 2026.⁶

UNKNOWN: the final list of candidates, which is not known until nominations close, and whether any of the three opposition alliances withdraws in favour of another before then.

ASSESSMENT • MODERATE CONFIDENCE

Barrow is the likely winner, and the larger risk is a contested result and a court petition rather than a change of government. The rationale is that a single round rewards the largest base, the opposition has split into three alliances rather than consolidated as it did in 2016, and the only poll read is one survey with a large undecided share.

SECTION 03 • ASSESSMENT

South Sudan

Al Jazeera reported on 23 September 2026 that President Salva Kiir had dissolved the transitional unity government and the national and state assemblies, removed the vice presidents, and would remain in office until the next elected president assumes office.¹

The same report gave the election date as 22 December, said elections first expected in 2022 had been postponed twice, and listed a permanent constitution, voter registration and the unification of rival forces as unfinished tasks of the 2018 peace deal.¹

Parliament amended the peace agreement in July 2026 to remove the population census and the permanent constitution as requirements before the December 2026 elections, over the objections of opposition lawmakers, so both remain unfinished but are deferred until after the vote.¹⁷

The Associated Press reported on 16 September 2026 that Kiir had removed Abednego Akok Kacuol as chairman of the National Elections Commission without giving a public reason, three months before the vote, and quoted an analyst who said South Sudanese should not expect the December polls to happen.⁹

That peace deal followed five years of civil war that killed about 400,000 people, according to the UN as cited by Al Jazeera on 23 September 2026; Riek Machar, the suspended first vice president, remains under house arrest and on trial for treason and murder, which he denies.¹

UNKNOWN: whether voter registration has begun or finished, how the electoral commission is funded under its new chairman, and whether the main opposition will take part; no source read settles any of the three.

ASSESSMENT • MODERATE CONFIDENCE

A full nationwide vote on the date set is less likely than a further postponement or a partial, contested poll held under a caretaker president. The rationale is that the vote has slipped twice, registration and the unified forces remain unfinished, the head of the electoral body has just been replaced and the main opposition leader is on trial, while the legal shortcut removes only two of the obstacles.

SECTION 04 • ASSESSMENT

Bahrain

Royal Order No. 13 of 2026, reported on 29 April 2026, extended the sixth legislative term of the Shura Council and the Council of Representatives by a fifth session of one year starting on 12 December 2026, under Article 58 of the constitution.⁷

Gulf Daily News reported on 30 April 2026 the same royal order extending the sixth legislative term by a fifth session lasting one year from 12 December 2026, citing the necessity arising from the current circumstances.¹³

The King inaugurated the fifth session of the sixth legislative term of the Shura Council and the Council of Representatives on 11 October 2026, according to the Council of Representatives.¹⁴

UNKNOWN: the date of the next Council of Representatives election; no official date was found, and the order states no reason beyond the circumstances of the time.

ASSESSMENT • MODERATE CONFIDENCE

Bahrain will not hold a parliamentary election this year, and any plan that assumed a vote there should move to the following year. The rationale is that the order extends the sitting chamber past the end of the year and the extended session has already opened, although every text read is outside the Source List.

SECTION 05 • ASSESSMENT

Reading the Tail Together

New Zealand's official results are due on 27 November 2026 and the writ is returned on 3 December 2026, subject to recounts, after a vote on 7 November 2026.⁴

The Gambia votes by dropping marbles into drums, one per candidate, and results are generally known nationally the day after the vote, as described on 10 October 2026.⁵

South Sudan's president remains in office through the election period under the changes reported on 23 September 2026, so a postponement extends a caretaker presidency rather than creating a vacancy.¹

UNKNOWN: how long a further South Sudan postponement would run, since no revised date has been reported.

ASSESSMENT • MODERATE CONFIDENCE

The uncertainty runs past polling day in New Zealand and The Gambia, with coalition talks and any petition falling in late November and December, while in South Sudan the decisive moment is likely a postponement or a partial-vote decision announced before polling day, which would leave a caretaker presidency in place for months. The rationale is that the timetables of the first two put their decisive step after the vote, whereas South Sudan's base case is a slip that would be announced ahead of 22 December.

SECTION 06 • DECISION

Decision

Decision	Owner	Trigger	Pre-authorized action
Treat Bahrain as off this year's election calendar	Gulf country risk lead	Any official notice of a Council of Representatives poll before year end	Restore Bahrain to the election watchlist and reissue the calendar
Hold New Zealand policy-sensitive commitments until a government forms	Asia-Pacific desk lead	Official results show the Opportunity Party above the party-vote threshold	Extend the hold through coalition talks
Plan for a Barrow third term as the base case	West Africa lead	Two of the three opposition alliances agree a single candidate before nominations close	Re-weight planning toward a competitive race
Plan South Sudan operations on the assumption of a pre-poll postponement	East Africa lead	The electoral commission publishes a final voter register	Move to an election-day security posture in Juba
Plan for an extended caretaker presidency in South Sudan	East Africa lead	Any official announcement of a postponement or a partial vote before polling day	Extend current operating assumptions into the following year

SECTION 07 • OUTLOOK

Outlook

Baseline. New Zealand votes on schedule, the right falls short of a majority of its own and a government forms only after official results and coalition talks; Barrow wins The Gambia with a plurality and the result is challenged but stands; South Sudan announces a further postponement or a partial vote before polling day and the caretaker presidency continues; Bahrain stays off the calendar.

Deterioration. New Zealand's count leaves no workable majority because the right cannot govern without a party it has ruled out, and talks run long; The Gambia's result is disputed in the streets as well as the courts; South Sudan's vote proceeds in a few areas amid renewed fighting with opposition forces.

Stabilization. The Opportunity Party falls below the threshold and the right returns with a clear majority on election night; the Gambian opposition accepts the result; South Sudan agrees a revised timetable with its main parties that ties the vote to a finished register.

Claim C-1. National, ACT and NZ First together win more than half of the seats in the House of Representatives in New Zealand's 7 November 2026 general election. Probability 0.35. Resolves on 2026-12-04 from Associated Press: YES if the official results as reported by the Associated Press by 2026-12-04 give National, ACT and NZ First a combined total of more than half of all seats in the House, including any overhang seats; NO otherwise. Horizon 60 days. The latest Verian and Reid Research polls put the Opportunity Party above the threshold and the right short of a majority in each. The author's judgment leaves the right a minority chance, mainly through the Opportunity Party falling below the threshold on the day.

Claim C-2. The Opportunity Party wins at least 5 percent of the party vote in New Zealand's 7 November 2026 general election. Probability 0.65. Resolves on 2026-12-04 from Bloomberg News: YES if the official party-vote share for the Opportunity Party as reported by Bloomberg News by 2026-12-04 is 5.0 percent or more; NO otherwise. Horizon 60 days. The party polled 7 and 8 percent in the two October Verian polls and 5.5 percent in the latest Reid Research poll. The author's judgment stays well short of certain because minor parties near the threshold often lose support on polling day and one other poll has it below.

Claim C-3. Adama Barrow is declared the winner of The Gambia's 5 December 2026 presidential election. Probability 0.70. Resolves on 2026-12-20 from Al Jazeera: YES if Al Jazeera reports by 2026-12-20 that the electoral commission has declared Barrow the winner; NO if it reports another winner or no declaration by that date. Horizon 90 days. Barrow led the only recent poll read, won

comfortably last time, and faces an opposition split into three alliances in a single round. The judgment is the author's own and allows for a late withdrawal that consolidates the opposition vote.

Claim C-4. Voting in South Sudan's general election takes place on 22 December 2026. Probability 0.25. Resolves on 2027-01-05 from Al Jazeera: YES if Al Jazeera reports by 2027-01-05 that voting in the general election took place on 22 December 2026 in at least part of the country; NO if it reports a postponement or reports no vote on that day. Horizon 90 days. The vote has slipped twice, registration and the unified forces are unfinished, and the electoral commission chairman was replaced three months out. The author's judgment allows a minority chance because the president has dissolved the transitional bodies and parliament has removed the constitution and census as preconditions.

Claim C-5. Bahrain holds a Council of Representatives election on any day up to and including 31 December 2026. Probability 0.05. Resolves on 2027-01-05 from Al Jazeera: YES if Al Jazeera reports by 2027-01-05 that voting for the Council of Representatives took place on or before 31 December 2026; NO otherwise. Horizon 90 days. A royal order extended the chamber's term past the end of the year and the extended session has opened. The judgment is the author's own and leaves a small chance only for a reversal of that order or a dissolution.

Indicators.

- Whether the Opportunity Party polls above or below the threshold in the final week of the New Zealand campaign
- Any National Party statement on governing with the Opportunity Party after election night
- The final list of Gambian presidential candidates when nominations close
- Any withdrawal by one Gambian opposition alliance in favour of another
- Any South Sudan announcement of a postponement or a partial vote before 22 December
- Publication of a South Sudan voter register by the electoral commission
- Fighting between government and opposition forces in Upper Nile and Equatoria
- Any Bahraini official notice of an election date

SECTION 08 • SCORECARD

Scorecard

No earlier firm claim is resolved or advanced by this draft.

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