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# AP<sup>®</sup> Comparative Government & Politics:

**Recent Elections from  
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2008  
**Curriculum Module**

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Page 16: Table 2: House of Commons Library (UK). General Election 2005, Research paper 05/33. 10 March 2006. (<http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2005/rp05-033.pdf>)

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# AP<sup>®</sup> Comparative Government and Politics Curriculum Module: Recent Elections from Around the World

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# Recent Elections from Around the World

## Editor's Introduction

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This curriculum module for AP® Comparative Government and Politics contains four pieces that take as their point of departure recent or upcoming elections in mid-2007. Conceptual understanding of electoral processes and the ability to teach about recent elections are critical elements of a successful AP Comparative Government and Politics course.

The articles on the United Kingdom, Nigeria, and Russia examine the important political institutions, electoral processes, political actors, and significant events surrounding elections. The authors were asked to briefly describe the election process and its rationale for each country, identify the major contenders for the leadership election (i.e., prime minister, president, other), describe the party system of this country, describe any existing or recent obstacles (arising from institutional arrangements, current events, or other circumstances) facing elections in this country, and provide a prognosis for the outcome and the ramifications for the country. The fourth article, an elections lesson plan, touches on all of the AP Comparative Government and Politics countries in broad terms and with specific details to help students see the impact that the electoral process has on each country's political dynamics.

This work, along with the others, should reinforce the multi-dimensional nature of elections, regardless of the country. These pieces were written with AP students and their teachers as the intended audience. You may choose to assign them directly to your students or use them as background material to supplement your lessons. Please note that although Mexico and Iran have had recent elections as well, they were not included in this unit because separate articles for another AP Comparative Politics and Government special focus project discuss these elections.

Since this curriculum module provides you with the most current information on the state of affairs in AP countries that have experienced or will soon experience elections and discusses many of the themes found within the AP Comparative Government and Politics course, I hope these articles will be a valuable supplement to your textbook and the other instructional materials you already use.

# The 2007 National Elections in Nigeria

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## Introduction

Nigeria is a highly fragmented society that has proved volatile since its 1960 independence. It was formed as a political unit by the British colonial power between 1900 and 1914.<sup>1</sup> This fateful decision forced a unity on a diverse population, which was administered in a division that corresponded to three major ethno-regional groups—Hausa-Fulani in the North, Ibo in the Southeast, and Yoruba in the Southwest. Obafemi Awolowo, longtime Yoruba leader, captured the difficulty: “Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression . . . The word ‘Nigerian’ is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not.”<sup>2</sup>

Complementary to the ethno-regional conflict associated with its creation, Nigeria has faced continuing political turmoil, economic crises, and regular military authoritarian rule. The military has dominated the political arena for 30 of the 47 years of independence. Civilian governments have been mere interludes—the First Republic (1960–1966); the Second Republic (1979–1983), an aborted Third Republic (a few months in 1993); and the Fourth Republic (1999 forward), the longest period of stable civilian rule in the country’s political history. Each civilian period before was ended by a military coup, a product, in part, of military predation and civilian political instability.

## The Election Process for National Leadership

Nigeria’s First Republic featured a Westminster-type, federal system. However, every republic since has used a United States-style federal presidential system. The current multi-party democratic system has a strong executive branch, a bicameral legislature (Senate and House of Representatives), and an independent judiciary. There are 36 states, plus the capital territory (Abuja).

The Nigerian electoral system is first-past-the-post (FPTP), with winners determined by a plurality of votes cast. Districts are single member with votes cast for candidates rather than parties. National elections are held to select the president and the legislature. In order to win the presidency one must also fulfill a “regional” requirement by attaining 25 percent of the votes in two-thirds of the regions. If no candidate meets

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<sup>1</sup> Oladimeji Aborisade and Robert Mundt. 2001. *Politics in Nigeria*. New York: Longman, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Darren Kew and Peter Lewis. 2007. In William Joseph, et al. *Introduction to Politics of the Developing World*. 4th ed. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

this regional requirement in the initial poll, then a “runoff” is required between the top two vote-getters in another election round. Presidential candidates must be Nigerian-born citizens, no younger than 40 years old. The president is elected by popular vote and can serve a maximum of two terms of four years each.

Members of both houses of the legislature are also elected by popular vote for a four-year term. The House of Representatives, the lower house, has 360 seats determined by population. The Senate has 109 seats (three from each of 36 states plus one from the capital district). The country has instituted special rules to try and obviate the tendencies to ethnic division. It has gone from three ethno-regional divisions to its current 36 states. Presidents must acquire one-fourth of their votes in two-thirds of each state and the capital district; and parties must reflect membership in two-thirds of the states. This system has been in place since the return of civilian rule in 1999.

### **The Nigerian Party System and Party Activity**

Since the first general elections in 1960, multiple parties have vied for political power. This multi-party system has featured three to four parties in this heterogeneous and fragmented society of over 250 ethnic groups. Major parties have been regionally concentrated, some reflecting a religious divide between Islam and Christianity (more salient since a number of northern Muslim states adopted Shari’a law in 2000 and 2001).

Until the Second Republic, when the state first began to try and engineer partisan stability at the national level, parties formed according to the old colonial administrative divisions. The oversized North had its parties (Northern Peoples’ Congress—NPC, and Northern Elements’ Progressive Union—NEPU). The Southeast had its National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) and the Southwest had its Action Group (AG). These parties were led respectively by prominent regional figures.

Since 1979, efforts have been made to produce parties for national competition with broad membership across the country. In addition to the two-thirds rule, parties are now required to register the names of their officials; to open membership irrespective of sex, religion, or ethnic grouping; and to bar the use of sectarian names and logos. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), an independent state agency established by the 1999 Constitution to organize, conduct, and supervise all elections and matters regarding all electoral offices, was given a strong role in organizing party affairs.

The environment continues to produce many parties, but very few are able to effectively compete nationally because of their regional, ethno-religious support bases. In 2003, 31 parties participated in the national parliamentary elections and 19 fielded candidates for the presidential race. In April 2007, 51 parties were registered with the INEC; 25 of those parties nominated candidates for the presidential race.<sup>3</sup> In the last two national contests, three parties (some the product of mergers) have been prominent: the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP), the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), and the Action Congress (AC).

The PDP was formed as a centrist party with the purpose of bringing together many of Nigeria’s ethno-religious and geopolitical interests. While it has a neoliberal stance on economic policies (favoring free-market processes), it favors conservative policies, especially on social issues such as homosexual relations. In all three national

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<sup>3</sup> Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of Nigeria. “Political Parties.”

elections of the Fourth Republic, the PDP won landslide victories in parliamentary and presidential elections and continues to dominate the political arena.<sup>4</sup> Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba from the Southwest, was the presidential choice in 1999 and 2003; and Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, a Northerner, was selected as the 2007 presidential candidate.

The ANPP is a conservative, Islamic-based party, popular especially among Muslims of the North. However, it does have some alliances in the Middle-Belt states and in the Southeast.<sup>5</sup> Muhammadu Buhari, a former military government leader from the North, was the presidential candidate in both 2003 and 2007.

Facing an absolute dominance of the ruling PDP in the 2003 elections, the Action Congress (AC) was created in September 2006, as the result of the merger of the Alliance for Democracy (AD), the Justice Party, the Advanced Congress of Democrats, and several other minor parties. In addition to the Northern leadership and supporters, the AC has attracted support from the Southwest-dominant AD to achieve some multiethnic range. It is known as a progressive party open to different political thoughts on social and economic issues and represents itself as an alternative to conservative parties in Nigeria. Born as a product of a major disagreement in the ruling party, it selected Atiku Abubakar as its presidential candidate after he split from the ruling PDP while serving as the country's vice president.

There is a bewildering array of minor and region-based parties that come and go in the current republic. They range across the political spectrum from liberal (e.g., Fresh Democratic Party) to communist parties (e.g., Communist Party of Nigeria). The most notable of these are the parties that replicate in some ways the old three-way ethno-regional-religious divisions. As noted, the AD in some ways reflects a Yoruba base; the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) is more or less in the Ibo (Southeast), while in the North there are several regional organizations.<sup>6</sup> In the main elections, these parties are unable to influence little at the national level when operating independently, but can have an impact on state and local elections. Although the AD has strong support among the Ibos, it has not had a strong influence at the federal level or in controlling state governments.

### **Road to the April 2007 National Elections**

Since the return of civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria has successfully gone through three election cycles for the first time ever within a single republic. Obasanjo, a retired general and former military ruler,<sup>7</sup> won the presidency twice (1999 and 2003), occasioning the current election contest on April 21, 2007.

These elections were deemed crucial for Nigeria's democracy for several reasons. They were the third consecutive, uninterrupted national elections in a single republic in the country's history. More importantly, these elections were a test of normal succession since Obasanjo had reached his term limit. This was also an opportunity to get beyond the

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<sup>4</sup> International Crisis Group. (March 2007). "Nigeria's Elections: Avoiding a Political Crisis." *Crisis Group Africa Report* No. 123, 2–4.

<sup>5</sup> Kew and Lewis, 292.

<sup>6</sup> Dino Mahtani. "Nigerian Elections: Political Parties" *Financial Times*. April 2, 2007; Kew and Lewis, 292.

<sup>7</sup> As military leader Obasanjo (1976–1979) replaced coup maker and junta leader Murtala Muhammad (1975–1976), who was assassinated. The former voluntarily returned power to civilians.

widely reported flaws of virtually all previous elections with the exception of those held in 1999 and 2003 which were interrupted by the military. Moreover, beyond Nigeria's internal political dynamics, the execution of free and fair elections would represent a good example for neighboring democratizing countries.<sup>8</sup>

There were, however, a few major issues that threatened free and fair elections. The most serious obstacle was the effort to engineer the continuation of incumbent President Obasanjo. Though he denied it, the president was widely believed to be behind the efforts to amend the constitution to permit a third term. From early 2005, Obasanjo's supporters campaigned to change the constitution to allow him to secure another term. These machinations generated harsh criticism from the opposition groups, the military establishment, the media, and the public. It also caused a rupture within the PDP, involving several influential party members, most notably, Vice President Atiku Abubakar.<sup>9</sup> Among other things, it was alleged that Obasanjo was attempting to avoid the unwritten understanding that the next president should be from the North, allowing the rotation of executive power among ethno-religious groups. In any case, the effort failed. On May 18, 2006, the Senate voted to block the proposed constitutional change.<sup>10</sup>

Subsequently, in an effort to maintain strict control over the PDP nominations, Obasanjo went after his vice president, with whom he was now in major conflict. The relations between Obasanjo and Abubakar had turned into a feud with Abubakar's stance against the constitutional change and his public expression of interest in running for the presidency. In 2006, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), a government agency established by Obasanjo to battle corruption, published a report accusing Abubakar of misusing office and state funds designated for petroleum technology. Using the report as evidence, Obasanjo sought to impeach the vice president and bar him from running for the presidency. Although the Senate rejected the impeachment, support for Abubakar waned in the party. He moved to the AC, securing its presidential nomination in 2006.<sup>11</sup>

Another major controversy regarded the credibility of the INEC because of concerns over the influence the president had over it since the federal government controlled its funds. For instance, the president was believed to have influenced the commission's decision to disqualify Abubakar's candidacy on the basis of the EFCC report. The Supreme Court later unanimously overruled this.<sup>12</sup> The INEC's ability to deliver a credible poll was also questionable due to its failure to fully complete voter registration before the January 2007 deadline. Moreover, during the election itself, other issues arose for the INEC, especially amidst the controversies about what the ballot would look like. There were questions about the sufficiency of logistical support, ballots, equipment, and voter support services, inter alia, to cause concern that all those who were eligible could actually vote.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> International Crisis Group, 1–2.

<sup>9</sup> International Crisis Group, 2.

<sup>10</sup> "Nigerian Senate Blocs Bid for 3rd Presidential Term," *Washington Post*, May 16, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> International Crisis Group, 5–7.

<sup>12</sup> "Nigeria Court Rules in Favour of VP Abubakar." *Reuters*, April 16, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> International Crisis Group, 13–15.

## Major Presidential Candidates for the 2007 Elections

Amid the controversies and concerns about the success of the third national elections of the Fourth Republic, 25 candidates' names appeared on the ballot for the presidential race. Yet, only three of these candidates—Atiku Abubakar, Muhammadu Buhari, and Umaru Musa Yar'Adua—emerged as strong contenders. Yar'Adua, the PDP candidate, was a governor of the northern state of Katsina since May 1999, and the younger brother of Obasanjo's former deputy during his military rule. Yar'Adua's success in winning the PDP's nomination was largely attributed to President Obasanjo's support. Following the selection, opposition groups portrayed Yar'Adua as the "puppet" of Obasanjo. Yar'Adua's supporters, on the other hand, touted him as a perfect candidate, being one of the few governors without major political scandals or corruption charges.<sup>14</sup>

In the end, Obasanjo was seen as the chief benefactor for Yar'Adua's ascendancy. However, there were other considerations. He was a northerner, conscious of the unwritten agreement regarding presidential rotation among the regions, who could presumably continue that region's support for the party. Even so, another controversy about his health forced Yar'Adua on the defensive. His chronic kidney problem caused questions about his fitness, forcing his public announcement of recovery and readiness for campaigning.<sup>15</sup>

The ANPP offered the same candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, who stood in 2003. He was a former military government leader with significant contacts and resources to continue his efforts at the presidency. Buhari is also a Northerner, like Yar'Adua. After his short-lived political leadership following a 1983 coup, Buhari moved on to serve as a petroleum administrator.<sup>16</sup> Before the elections, many believed him to be in competition against Yar'Adua.

Abubakar was the final strong presidential candidate, following his breakaway from the ruling party. He had a number of factors in his favor; perhaps the most important was the visibility and notoriety he had attained as vice president. He had been a founder of the PNP with Obasanjo and was seen by many as the heir apparent, until he ran afoul of the president. So, he had appeal, contacts, and some resources for mounting a campaign. In addition, he was able to pull together important forces in creating the AC and had standing in the important northern region.

## The 2007 Presidential Election Results

The 2007 presidential election results announced by the INEC are reported in Table 1. Three candidates received a large majority of the votes. According to the results released by the INEC on April 23, 2007, Yar'Adua of the ruling PDP was the winner, receiving approximately 69 percent (24.8 million) of the votes. Buhari (ANPP) was second with approximately 19 percent (6.6 million) of the votes. Vice President Abubakar (AC) was in third place receiving approximately 7 percent (2.6 million) of the votes. The election results were meant to be another landslide victory for the ruling PDP and their candidate. As shown in Table 1, all but one of the other candidates (Kalu) from the smaller parties received less than 1 percent of the votes.

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<sup>14</sup> "Nigeria party picks its candidate." *BBC News*, December 17, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> "Candidate wants to squash health rumors." *Reuters*. January 5, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Official Web site of Muhammadu Buhari: <http://www.buhari.org/>.

The election and its results created a firestorm in Nigeria and around the world. The opposition parties, civil society groups, and foreign observers commonly agreed that the April 2007 election was seriously flawed and perhaps fraudulent, representing one of the worst elections in Nigeria's history. The major losing contenders, Buhari and Abubakar, publicly rejected the results and claimed that the election was rigged in favor of the ruling PDP. The local and international groups monitoring the conduct of the elections also claimed that the elections were flawed and poorly managed by the INEC.<sup>17</sup> The United States, the European Union, and other countries immediately expressed their disappointment with the elections. For instance, in a U.S. State Department press release, the election process was openly described as "seriously flawed."<sup>18</sup> Even incumbent President Obasanjo, in a nationwide public address, admitted that the elections "had not been perfect," although the INEC chairman said the polls had been "free and fair."<sup>19</sup>

Several irregularities were reported during the election, such as the claim by monitors that voting was delayed or did not occur at all in many areas. Other charges included inadequate security against violence and intimidation at the polling units, ballot stuffing, fraud, and logistical failures at the polls. Based on the election results, the first civilian-to-civilian transfer of power was scheduled to occur on May 29, 2007. While there are several legal challenges being mounted by candidates, a heavy burden is being placed on the fragile judicial institutions of a country where military interventions have always entered crises of this magnitude. It remains to be seen how the country will weather this serious challenge to its young democracy.

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<sup>17</sup> "Monitors, opposition reject Nigeria poll," *Reuters*, April 23, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> The U.S. State Department, "Nigeria's election," Press Statement, April 27, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> "Huge win for Nigeria's Yar'Adua," *BBC News*, April 23, 2007

## Online Resources:

Official Web site of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

<http://www.nigeria.gov.ng/>

Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria

<http://www.inecnigeria.org/>

Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999:

<http://www.nigeria-law.org/ConstitutionOfTheFederalRepublicOfNigeria.htm>

African Elections Database—Nigeria

<http://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html>

Reuters—Africa

<http://africa.reuters.com/top/news/>

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) World Factbook—Nigeria

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/ni.html>

BBC News—Africa

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/default.stm>

The New York Times—Africa

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/world/africa/index.html>

Stanford University, Africa South of the Sahara (access to all major daily newspapers in Lagos):

<http://www-sul.stanford.edu/africa/nigeria/nigerianews.html>

Nigeria.com (current information on art, entertainment, and news)

<http://www.nigeria.com/>

## Introductory Textbook Readings on Politics in Nigeria

Kew, Darren, and Peter Lewis. 2007. "Nigeria." In *Introduction to Comparative Politics (4th edition)*, edited by William A. Joseph, Mark Kasselman, and Joel Krieger. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company. 519–575.

Kohli, Atul, and Amrita Basu. 2007. "India." In *Introduction to Politics of the Developing Countries (4th edition)*, edited by William A. Joseph, Mark Kasselman, and Joel Krieger. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company. 247–305.

Mund, Robert J., and Oladimeji Aborisade. 2006. "Politics in Nigeria." In *Comparative Politics Today (8th edition)*, edited by Garbriel Almond, Russell J. Dalton, G. Bingham Powell Jr., and Kaare Strom. New York: Pearson Longman. 686–738.

**Table 1. Presidential Election Results, April 21, 2007**

Candidate*	Party	Number of Votes	% of Votes
Aminu Garbarti Abubakar	NUP	4,355	00.0
Atiku Abubakar	AC	2,567,798	07.3
Lawrence Famakinde Adedoyin	APS	22,459	00.1
Mojisola Adekunle-Obasanjo	MMN	4,309	00.0
Olapade Agoro	NAC	5,692	00.0
Christopher Pere Ajuwa	AD	89,511	00.3
Attahiru Dalhatu Bafarawa	DPP	289,324	00.8
Muhammadu Buhari	ANPP	6,607,419	18.6
Alhaji Aliyu Habu Fari	NDP	21,974	00.1
Orji Uzor Kalu	PPA	608,833	01.7
Galtima Baboyi Liman	NNPP	21,665	00.1
Iheanyinchukwu Godswill Nnaji	BNPP	11,705	00.0
Arthur Nwankwo	PMP	24,164	00.1
Osagie Obayuwana	NCP	8,229	0.00
Isa Odidi	ND	5,408	0.00
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu	APGA	155,947	00.4
Emmanuel Osita Okereke		22,592	00.1
Sunny Joseph Okogwu	RPN	13,566	00.0
Chris Okotie	FDP	74,049	00.2
Maxi Okwu	CPP	14,027	00.0
Brimmy Asekharuagbom Olaghere	NPC	33,771	00.1
Ambrose Owuru		24,164	00.1
Akpone Solomon	NMDP	5,666	00.0
Umaru Musa Yar'Adua	PDP	24,784,227	69.9
Total		35,420,854	

**Party Names:**

- \* AC - Action Congress
- \* ANPP - All Nigeria Peoples Party
- \* APS - African Political System
- \* CPP - Citizens Popular Party
- \* FDP - Fresh Democratic Party
- \* NCP - National Conscience Party
- \* NDP - National Democratic Party
- \* MMN - Masses Movement of Nigeria
- \* NPC - Nigeria Peoples Congress
- \* PDP - Peoples Democratic Party
- \* PPP - Peoples Progressive Party
- \* AD - Alliance for Democracy
- \* APGA - All Progressives Grand Alliance
- \* BNPP - Better Nigeria Progressive Party
- \* DPP - Democratic Peoples Party
- \* NAC - National Action Council
- \* ND - New Democrats
- \* NMDP - National Majority Democratic Party
- \* NNPP - New Nigeria Peoples Party
- \* NUP - National Unity Party
- \* PMP - People's Mandate Party
- \* RPN - Republican Party of Nigeria

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission, Nigeria (<http://www.inecnigeria.org/>)

\* Candidates' names are listed in alphabetical order.

# The British Electoral System and the 2005 British Elections

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## Overview

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is a nation-state with a unique position in the study of comparative politics. Typically, most textbooks that employ a case study approach invariably begin with Great Britain because the evolutionary nature of its institutions provides a fascinating portrait of the challenges associated with governance.

British challenges include:

- Great Britain is a unitary state that has undergone significant devolution to its sub-national units of Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.
- Great Britain's Westminster Model, which employs a fusion of powers, is undergoing change as the new Prime Minister (PM), Gordon Brown, proposes historic adjustments to the role of Parliament in policymaking by recommending the surrender of 12 executive powers to the legislature. (See Brown's speech to the House of Commons on July 3, 2007.)
- Great Britain's membership in the European Union provides an unprecedented challenge to the sovereignty of the state.

An effective way to gain insight into these structural power dynamics of the British government is to study its electoral process. The difficulty of this focus lies in the complexity of all of the different types of elections held in Great Britain. Although not even approaching the sheer number of elections held in the United States, there are elections held in Great Britain for local, regional, national, and European offices. In 2007 alone, there were local elections in England and Scotland, as well as elections for the National Assembly in Wales, the Scottish Parliament, and the Northern Ireland Assembly. Although all of these elections have significant effects on the British citizenry, it is clear that the crucial election in Great Britain is for control of the House of Commons. This is the case because the House of Commons exercises parliamentary supremacy according to the Westminster Model. The most recent General Election held was on May 5, 2005. (See Table 1)

**Table 1: Results of the 2005 General Election: Seats in the House of Commons**

Party	% of Votes	# of Seats	% of Seats	+/- Seats
Labour	35.2	355	55	-47
Conservative	32.4	198	30	+33
Liberal Democrat	22.0	62	10	+11
Democratic Unionist	0.9	9	1	+ 4
Scottish National	1.5	6	<1	+2
Sinn Fein	0.6	5	<1	+1
Plaid Cymru	0.6	3	<1	-1
Others	6.8	8	1	-3

Voter Turnout: 61.4% (+2.0%)

(Source: British Electoral Commission)

1. *Describe the electoral process and the rationale for using this process.*

The election process used in the House of Commons elections is the single-member district plurality system (SMDP) commonly referred to in Great Britain as “first-past-the-post” (FPTP). The Boundary Commission separates the entire United Kingdom into 646 parliamentary constituencies with each selecting a single Member of Parliament. The average constituency contains 68,500 residents. A candidate for office must be at least 21 years old and a citizen of Great Britain, the Commonwealth, or the Republic of Ireland. The candidate must be authorized by a political party nominating committee or be listed as an independent.

On election day, the voters are presented with a ballot listing the name of the candidate and his/her party affiliation, as applicable. The winner of the parliamentary seat is the candidate who receives the most votes; he/she does not need to win a majority. One of the rationales for using this process is that it is simple and easy to understand. Although the party label is the determining factor, the voter in effect is choosing an individual to represent the constituency. In this way the voter has a specific contact individual at Westminster to listen to local concerns, subsequently sustaining voter efficacy.

Another rationale is that the FPTP system typically results in a clear majority party win, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the government in pursuing its legislative agenda. For example, in 2005, the Labour Party won 35.2 percent of the popular vote, the lowest share of the vote ever by a winning party. However, the 355 seats won gave them a majority and the right to have their leader become the Prime Minister. (See Table 1) Consequently, the parties who compete successfully in this system have a vested interest in keeping FPTP and not initiating change, for that would diminish their representation in the House of Commons.

2. *Describe recent changes to the election process.*

The election process described above has not changed significantly in recent years. However, there have been calls for system reform for several reasons. One of the major weaknesses in the FPTP system are wasted votes—in particular, those for third-party candidates such as the Liberal Democrats. For example, in 2005 the Liberal Democrats won 22 percent of the votes but only 10 percent of the seats in the House of Commons. (See Table 1) In an era with declining voter turnout, this disconnection between what the voters wanted and what they got is one reason for the call for reform by parties like the Liberal Democrats and interest groups such as Charter 88.

Another weakness of the system is how it inflates the support of the majority party. In 1992, the Conservative Party won a majority of 336 seats with only 42 percent of the popular vote. Consequently, as part of their 1997 Manifesto, the Labour Party promised that if elected they would appoint a commission on electoral reform with a subsequent referendum. The Jenkins Report, issued in 1998, called for the adoption of a proportional system of elections for the House of Commons. However, no action was taken on this report because the Labour Party, in charge for the first time since 1979, did not want to upset the status quo. In contrast, the Labour government, under the leadership of Tony Blair, did set up proportional representation systems for elections to the European Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

3. *Describe the major importance of this election.*

The power to decide what to change or not change in the British political system determines the importance of the House of Commons election. The reason for this is that the party that wins the majority of the seats (324) is then able to select its leader to be the Prime Minister (PM) of Great Britain. The PM has the power to choose a cabinet selected from party Members of Parliament to form a government which then controls the legislative agenda. This fusion of executive and legislative power is extremely effective. The PM has the power to declare war, call for referenda, propose legislation, and decide when to call for elections. This latter power is based on the fact that the House of Commons does not sit for a fixed term; therefore, the PM is responsible for deciding when during a five-year period to dissolve the legislature and seek and win a new term.

The PM knows that his or her party will support these initiatives in order to maintain party discipline and the power associated with being the majority party. Correspondingly, in order to wield these powers, the PM must retain the confidence of his or her party as well. Although it is rare for the PM to step down during a legislative term, Margaret Thatcher did so in 1990 and Tony Blair in 2007. If a PM vacancy occurs during a term, the parliamentary party uses an internal selection process to choose their leader from among the Members of Parliament currently serving in the legislature.

4. *Identify the major contenders for leadership.*

To exercise the power of a British PM, one must first lead his or her party to victory in the General Election while winning their own constituency seat as well. The party is careful to have their leader represent a party-safe seat which the party has historically won by a large margin. The major contenders in the 2005 election were Tony Blair (Labour), Michael Howard (Conservative), and Charles Kennedy (Liberal Democrat).

- Tony Blair was the incumbent PM—an energetic, visionary leader who had reworked his party's image in 1994 to be that of New Labour, a party that was not merely the extension of the Trades Union Congress, but a party that could represent all of Great Britain. His historic victory in 1997 over John Major was followed by extensive changes to the political system including: devolution to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, abolishing the hereditary peers in the House of Lords, and creation of an independent Bank of England. After calling for elections in 2001, Tony Blair easily beat the Conservatives, under the leadership of William Hague, and continued his reform agenda. However, Blair's decision to support President Bush on the war in Iraq proved to be unpopular. Blair suffered in popularity ratings and the discontent of the citizenry was reflected in the General Election of 2005. The Labour Party's popular vote of 35 percent was lower than those of previous years and not high compared to the Conservative Party's showing of 32 percent and the Liberal Democrats' 22 percent. Labour won 356 seats—a loss of 47 seats. (See Table 1) Consequently, despite winning a historic third term for his party, Tony Blair was pressured to announce his retirement in 2007 in favor of his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown.
- Michael Howard, an MP since 1983, had served in numerous cabinet positions including Home Secretary and Shadow Chancellor before being chosen as the Conservative Parliamentary Leader. Howard was credited with effective leadership against Blair, especially by focusing the debate about the election on the issues of war leadership and immigration. Although his Conservative Party had done well against Blair, Michael Howard resigned as party leader after the 2005 election.
- Charles Kennedy was also a longtime MP before taking control of the Liberal Democrats from Paddy Ashdown in 1999. An outspoken critic of the war, Kennedy led his party to a total of 62 seats, the highest number that the Liberal Democrats had ever received. With this political success, Kennedy chose to remain leader of his party after the election, but he was finally forced out of his position in 2006 because of his well-publicized problems with alcohol.

5. *Describe the party system.*

This leadership competition shows that the British party system is a two-plus party system. Throughout most of modern British history, there have been two dominant parties that have succeeded in forming governmental majorities. Since 1945, these two parties have been the Labour and Conservative parties with the Labour Party currently forming the Government and the Conservative Party in opposition. There are, however, more than two parties represented in the House of Commons, which is why the term, two-plus system, is used. Other parties that are able to win seats in this FPTP system include ideological parties, such as the Liberal Democrats, and regional parties, such as the Scottish National Party and the Welsh Plaid Cymru.

6. *Explain the underlying foundation of the party system.*

The foundation of the British party system is primarily pragmatic. Early political parties formed as parliamentary organizations and developed into mass organizations as suffrage opportunities were extended. For example, the Labour Party was formed specifically to represent trade union members. In fact, the party system as a whole reflects class identification, which is the major social identifier in Great Britain. However, ideological concerns are important as well, specifically noted by Margaret Thatcher's concentration on "conviction politics" for the Conservative Party in 1979. Additionally, regional issues factor into the development of parties, such as the Scottish National Party that favors an independent Scotland.

7. *Identify the major parties contesting the election.*

The major parties competing in the House of Commons elections are the Labour Party, the Conservative Party, and the Liberal Democrats. Significant regional parties are the Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru (Wales), the Democratic Unionists (Northern Ireland), and Sinn Féin (Northern Ireland). Obviously, not all the parties compete for each of the 646 seats. In fact, a historical battle between Labour/Conservative or Conservative/Liberal Democrat exists in many constituencies.

**Table 2: Results of the 2005 General Election: Partisan Percentage of the Popular Vote and Seats Won in the House of Commons**

(Based on Actual Voter Turnout)

	Labour	Conservative	Lib-Dem	Others	Turnout
<b>Region:</b>					
United Kingdom	35.2% 355 seats	32.4% 198 seats	22.0% 62 seats	10.4% 31 seats	61.2%
England	35.5% 286 seats	35.7% 194 seats	22.9% 47 seats	5.9% 2 seats	61.3%
Scotland	38.9% 40 seats	15.8% 1 seat	22.6% 11 seats	22.7% 7 seats	60.8%
Wales	42.7% 29 seats	21.4% 3 seats	18.4% 4 seats	17.6 % 4 seats	62.6%
Northern Ireland				100% 18 seats	62.9%

Source: Parliament Research Paper 05/3

<http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2005/rp05-033.pdf>

**Table 3: Results of the 2005 General Election: Partisan Identification by Demographic Groups (Percentage of the Demographic Group That Voted for a Particular Party)**

(Based on MORI estimates)

	Labour	Conservative	Lib-Dem	Others	Turnout
<b>Gender:</b>					
Men	34%	34%	22%	*	62%
Women	38%	32%	23%	*	61%
<b>Age:</b>					
18-24	38%	28%	26%	*	37%
25-34	38%	25%	27%	*	49%
35-44	41%	27%	23%	*	61%
45-54	35%	31%	25%	*	65%
55-64	31%	39%	22%	*	71%
65+	35%	41%	18%	*	75%
<b>Social Class:</b>					
AB (Managerial and Professional)	28%	37%	29%	*	71%
C1 (Supervisory and Clerical)	32%	37%	23%	*	62%
C2 (Skilled Manual)	40%	33%	19%	*	58%
DE (Unskilled Manual and Unemployed)	48%	25%	18%	*	54%

Source: Parliament Research Paper

<http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2005/rp05-033.pdf>

8. *Characterize these major parties' platforms and ideologies.*

- The Labour Party has been the majority party in the House of Commons since 1997. After being locked out of power from 1979 to 1997, the party made significant changes to its manifesto in 1997 to be more appealing to voters. Tony Blair offered voters a “Third Way,” one that was seen as a middle way between socialism and free-market capitalism. The party reduced the voting bloc power of the labor unions and promised not to reverse the privatization reforms begun under Margaret Thatcher. The party has been successful in its efforts to build on its new consensus. The 2005 Manifesto promises ([www.labour.org.uk](http://www.labour.org.uk)) included providing more choice in National Health Service (NHS) services, devolving more power to Scotland and Wales, providing universal affordable child care, being the “heart” of a reformed Europe, improving education, and reducing asylum backlogs. The “Third Way” or center-left position has been effective in gaining support for the Labour Party from the Celtic Fringe (northern industrial areas), the poor, women, students, and traditional union workers. (See Table 2 and Table 3)
- The Conservative Party has long struggled between the conviction politics of Margaret Thatcher with its strong support for free market policies and the old consensus ideology of “one nation” conservatism. This schism was not helped with a progression of party leaders who seemed dull next to the telegenic Mr. Blair. The 2005 Manifesto ([www.conservatives.com](http://www.conservatives.com)) promised a center-right position with tough immigration standards, improved law and order, and new leadership to guide the British people. These promises appealed to traditional Conservative voters: wealthy, noble, rural dwellers, elderly, and white-collar workers. (See Table 3) In addition, 98 percent of all Conservative seats are in England. (See Table 2)
- The Liberal Democrats were formed as a centrist party in 1988 through a merger between the Liberal Party and the Social Democrats. Their 2005 Manifesto ([www.libdems.org.uk](http://www.libdems.org.uk)) emphasizes support for social programs, an integrated Europe, and specifically, a statement against the war in Iraq. The Liberal Democrats have consistently attracted between 17 and 23 percent of the vote primarily from middle class, post-materialistic voters across the UK. (See Table 2 and Table 3)

9. *Summarize the ideologies of significant minor parties.*

In contrast to the Liberal Democrats, there are parties that appeal to specific national voters. The Scottish National Party (SNP; [www.snp.org.uk](http://www.snp.org.uk)) would like to see an independent Scotland. Significantly, the SNP has control of the Scottish Executive for the first time because of their win in the 2007 elections for the Scottish Parliament. The Plaid Cymru in Wales ([www.plaidcymru.org](http://www.plaidcymru.org)), formed in 1925, wants to preserve the Welsh language and culture and promote Welsh self-determination. Northern Ireland parties are regional and religious in their orientation. Sinn Fein ([www.sinnfein.org](http://www.sinnfein.org)), for example, is linked with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and, therefore, is Catholic and nationalistic in its orientation. Its leader is Gerry Adams, and although the party wins seats in the General Election, MPs abstain from taking their seats in the Commons. The Democratic Unionist Party ([www.dup.org.uk](http://www.dup.org.uk)) is Protestant and supports retaining its union with Great Britain. It was formed in 1971 by Ian Paisley and is the fourth

largest party in the House of Commons. It is noteworthy that the major three parties do not compete in Northern Ireland whereas the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties are very successful in Wales and Scotland. (See Table 2)

10. *Describe any current obstacles facing elections in this country.*

The existence of significant minor parties does have implications for the future of elections in Great Britain. One consequence of this change is the lack of voter identification with the two major parties. In 2005, Labour and Conservative parties won only 67.6 percent of the popular vote, with third parties winning more seats in the House of Commons than these parties had won before. (See Table 1) Lower voter turnout could also be associated with voter dealignment raising the possibility of no party passing the post in the next election to form a parliamentary majority. Devolution to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland has created elected legislative bodies in those nations that could ultimately decrease the effect of Westminster policymaking, and thereby the importance of the House of Commons election. As European Union consolidation continues, the importance of European elections could someday also be more important to voters than they are now. Finally, after voicing support for an elected House of Lords, the House of Commons could be creating a whole new set of important elections to capture voters' interest.

11. *Provide a prognosis for British elections.*

In conclusion, the prognosis for the British election system is intriguing. As a strong democracy, elections in Great Britain are fair, frequent, and competitive. Those characteristics will not change. What bears watching are the dynamics between competing legislatures and changing party alignments. Historically, the House of Commons' elections are the most important because the winning majority party after a general election chooses its leader to be Prime Minister—the most powerful office in the country.

The next general election is expected to be in 2009/2010, but could be as early as spring 2008. The new Prime Minister, Gordon Brown of the Labour Party, will decide the date. Brown was selected as Labour Party leader in an uncontested party selection process after the official resignation of PM Tony Blair in June 2007. Expected competitors in the next general election will be David Cameron, the new vibrant, articulate leader of the Conservatives, and Sir Menzies Campbell, the dapper, persuasive leader of the Liberal Democrats. Early indications from the 2007 local and national elections are that the Labour Party will have a difficult time winning an unprecedented fourth term, as the party lost seats in both the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly. On the other hand, there are three new major party leaders and by the end of 2007, there will be new constituency boundaries, as the Boundary Commission will redraw them for a general election for the first time since 1997. In addition, Gordon Brown has made historic suggestions to improve voter turnout by lowering the voting age to 16 and moving elections to the weekend. Perhaps voters will reward him with another term.

## Resources

### These are excellent web sites on British elections:

Site includes summary results for all elections including general, local, national, and European elections.

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/elections/generalelection2005.cfm>

Focus on voter turnout: Election 2005: Engaging the Public in Great Britain.

[http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/files/dms/Engaging\\_19456-14157\\_\\_E\\_\\_S\\_\\_W\\_\\_.pdf](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/files/dms/Engaging_19456-14157__E__S__W__.pdf)

Democracy Cookbook: Resources for teachers/students on voting.

<http://www.dopolitics.org.uk/Toolbox/toolbox-9.cfm> /

Site with facts about elections and election results.

[www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)

Gordon Brown's constitutional reforms in pamphlet form:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/governanceofbritain.htm>

Parliament Research Paper 05/33: 153 page summary of 2005 election results.

<http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2005/rp05-033.pdf>

Jenkins report on proportional voting

<http://www.dca.gov.uk/rights/dca/voting/jenkins.pdf>

Vote 2005. Site includes election results; summaries of party manifestos; commentary.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/vote\\_2005/constituencies/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/vote_2005/constituencies/default.stm)

“Who Deserted Labor?” Analysis by David Cowlings, Editor, BBC Political Research, May 7, 2005.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/vote\\_2005/issues/4520847.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/vote_2005/issues/4520847.stm)

Gordon Brown's constitutional reforms set out in summary article on July 3, 2007.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/6258794.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6258794.stm)

Site includes election results, summaries of party manifestos, commentary.

<http://politics.guardian.co.uk/election2005/>

“Women's Support Gave Blair Edge,” by Sir Robert Worcester, Founder and Chairman of the Mori polling firm.

<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/politics/story/0,,1479237,00.html>

# The Upcoming Russian Elections: Is Democracy Dead?

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## Overview

Russia's democratic institutions have always been frail, and the upcoming elections may be a test of whether they can survive. Though free and fair elections are not the only necessary ingredient for a successful democracy, the current circumstances leading to the legislative and presidential elections may further dash any hope that Russia will develop democratic roots. In recent years, Russia has been characterized as an illiberal or procedural democracy (a system with competitive elections, but lacking civil rights and liberties), and international observers fear Russia is backsliding toward an authoritarian state, or, at best, a managed democracy (a system in which the ruling party takes steps to ensure control of the electoral process).

For example, President Vladimir Putin has made electoral changes that have solidified Russia's position. Democracy "Russian-style" has meant less electoral competition and fewer civil liberties, and, in particular, less freedom of the press. Duma elections are scheduled for December 2007, and the presidential election is scheduled for March 2, 2008. Although Putin has announced he will not seek the constitutional changes that would permit him to run for a third consecutive term, Western observers and Russian intellectuals express much concern that the upcoming elections will serve as another step away from democracy and toward the consolidation of power in Russia.

## The Russian Constitution

In 1993, the first post-Soviet-era Russian constitution created some hope for democratization. Although the Yeltsin presidency was not very democratic (he dissolved the Supreme Soviet by bombing its building to gain stronger presidential powers), some structures were put in place that might have led to more democratization. The constitution, approved by referendum, created a federal system of government, with democratic procedures for electing officials every four years at nearly all levels. Regional governors were elected directly.

The Russian legislature is bicameral. The upper house, the Federation Council, has two members from each republic or region. It is elected indirectly; governors and provincial legislatures choose its members. Employing a simplified version of Germany's personalized proportional representation system, the 450 seats in the State Duma are selected using a mixed proportional and single-member district system. Half of the Duma are elected proportionally from party lists, with seats going only to those parties who win at least 5 percent of the vote nationwide. The other 225 seats are filled using a single-member district system. The candidate with a plurality (the most, although not necessarily a majority) of votes in a district wins the seat. These single member district seats are subject to less party control, and before 2003 from 60 to 110 independents were elected.

Russia has a dual executive, with a popularly elected president and a prime minister who is appointed by the president. The French model is used to elect the Russian president. This is a two-ballot system. In the first round, any number of candidates may run. Voters even have the option of selecting “against all.” The second round is a runoff election two weeks later between the top two vote-getters and “against all.” The winner must secure a majority. Unlike the pattern that has developed in France where runoff elections are the norm, in Russia only the 1996 election required a runoff. In 2000 and 2004, Putin won in the first round, with more than 50 percent of the total vote. This means Russian presidential elections have become less competitive.

### **Steps Toward Consolidating One-Party Power**

Although Russia’s initial electoral structure fostered procedural democracy, over the past few years the government has made several changes which have the effect of consolidating power in the hands of President Putin and the political party that supports him, United Russia.

Perhaps the most damaging policy has been government control of the mass media and the repression of dissent. The three major television stations (First Channel, RTR, and NTV) are controlled by the government or by Gazprom, a gas company in which the government has a substantial stake, and from which the government receives substantial funding. These state-controlled stations give relentless and glowing coverage of the success of the government’s policies while emphasizing failure and corruption in regions run by rival parties. Journalists critical of the government have been exiled, jailed, and forced to resign. For example, following the Beslan school siege, the editor-in-chief of *Izvestiya*, one of Russia’s most reputable newspapers, was forced out because of his negative coverage of the government’s handling of the terrorist attack.

In addition, Putin’s political rivals have faced harassment and arrest. Before the 2003 Duma elections, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a Yukos Oil executive, was arrested, supposedly because of shady business deals, but many believe the arrest was actually because of his opposition to Putin, support for rival political parties, and plan to run against Putin. Other individuals and prominent human rights groups have been subject to tax inspections, lawsuits, and regulatory restrictions on efforts to hold meetings or rent office space.

Most shocking were the purported assassinations of Putin’s critics, including the shooting death of respected journalist Anna Politkovskaya. In a country where most killings of journalists remain unsolved—one of the most dangerous places for journalists outside of Iraq—there is widespread suspicion, but no proof, that she was killed because of her anti-Kremlin writings. The polonium poisoning of ex-KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko—also famous for his criticism of the Putin administration—has led many to suspect that someone in the government ordered his assassination.

Along with the repression of civil liberties, several structural changes to the electoral system have damaged democracy. On September 13, 2004, Putin announced steps to end the direct election of local leaders, including regional governors and the presidents of national republics. These officials will now be appointed by the president, subject to approval by regional legislatures. In addition, beginning with the 2007 elections, all 450 seats in the Duma will be elected using proportional representation. The percentage needed for a party to be awarded seats has been raised from five to seven.

Although proportional representation is not inherently undemocratic, this will make the party system less competitive for two reasons. First, it will strengthen party control over candidates, since parties generate the lists from which proportional candidates are selected. Second, the move away from single-member districts will discourage a two-party system from forming. It is not in United Russia's interest to have a strong party against it, and the change to proportional representation will dilute the opposition. The change to proportional representation will have the biggest negative impact on the Communist Party of the Russian Federation—United Russia's closest competitor.

Finally, new and highly restrictive campaign laws have been put in place. Spending limits are set at very low levels, and this makes it difficult for parties to spend enough money to use the media to counteract the positive coverage of Putin given by state-sponsored television. Furthermore, parties may not officially campaign for office until a month prior to the election. There are now more than 60 official reasons the Kremlin may exclude candidates from running. The Federal Registration Service will not certify a party on the ballot until it has at least 50,000 members, and it must have several regional chapters. Plus, a new early voting procedure allows ballot boxes to be brought to voters in locations not monitored by election judges. This increases the potential for voting fraud. The procedure for selecting the fifteen-member election commission also has changed—with the Duma, the Federation Council, and the president each nominating five candidates. This will put the election commission firmly under the control of the ruling party.

### **Recent Results and the Near Future**

Recent regional elections demonstrate just how much United Russia has consolidated power. In the elections held on March 11, 2007, Yabloko, one of Russia's major reformist political parties, was disqualified from running in St. Petersburg. Fourteen regions held elections, with parties favorable to the Kremlin winning an overwhelming number of seats. The Communist Party captured 12.5 percent of the seats in regional assemblies, while A Fair (or Just) Russia (a new pro-Kremlin nationalist party) received 11.7 percent of the vote. Parties opposed to the Kremlin decried the voting as unfair, pointing to new rules that raised the minimum percentage for obtaining seats and lowering the minimum voter turnout for the election to be considered valid. Overall voter turnout was 39.1 percent. Many consider these elections to be a precursor for the upcoming national elections.

It is too soon to determine who the presidential candidates will be, because the official campaign does not begin until February of 2008. In addition, it is not clear which parties will run because Russian parties are unstable, and there is limited continuity as to which parties run from one election to the next. Furthermore, few Russian voters have a clear party identification.

United Russia is the party in power, and its platform has concentrated on fighting terrorism, quelling ethnic unrest (particularly in Chechnya), increasing law and order, and improving the economy. Several men have been mentioned as potential successors to Putin, including Dmitry Medvedev (First Deputy Prime Minister), Sergei Ivanov (Defense Minister), Yuri Luzhkov (Mayor of Moscow), Boris Gryzlov (State Duma speaker), and Sergei Shoigu (Minister of Emergency Situations). An official candidate will be announced at the United Russia conference this fall.

Reformist parties include Yabloko, The Union of Right Forces, and A Fair (or Just) Russia, which is a coalition of Rodina (Motherland), the Party of Life, and the Party of Pensioners. A leftist party, the Russian People's Democratic Union, has chosen former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov as its presidential candidate. This party incorporates the "Committee 2008: Free Choice" platform of former chess champion Garry Kasparov, of The Other (or Another) Russia Party, who wants to ensure that the upcoming election is free and fair. The Communist Party will probably nominate Gennady Zyuganov, the current head of the party. On the right, anti-Semitic and polarizing Vladimir Zhirinovskiy of the extremist nationalist Liberal Democratic Party is the likely nominee.

No matter which candidates are selected to run, the most obvious prediction is that United Russia will control both the Duma and the presidency. Barring some sort of national emergency (which could be used as a pretext for remaining as president), Putin will most likely leave office, having picked his own loyal successor and ensure at least an informal role for himself in government. (On September 12, 2007, at the request of the Prime Minister, Putin dissolved the government and appointed Viktor Zubkov as the new Prime Minister. Zubkov is not considered to be a candidate to replace Putin, and many observers believe that with elections coming up, Putin wanted to have more say in making decisions, including cabinet appointments.) As in the recent regional elections, United Russia will likely hold a large majority in the Duma. While there may not be widespread electoral fraud, candidates from other parties may be disqualified from running.

In addition, state-sponsored media will be used to benefit candidates representing United Russia and disparage candidates from other parties. The switch to an entirely proportional system of electing the Duma should result in the fragmentation of smaller parties and the weakening of the Communist Party. As in the past two presidential elections, it is unlikely that a runoff will be necessary. Structural changes aimed at weakening other parties should ensure United Russia the presidency.

### **The Long Run**

It is much more difficult to predict what will happen to democracy in Russia in the long run. While Russia has become less competitive, it is too soon to predict the complete demise of democracy. There are several possible scenarios for the future. The most likely, at least in the short run, is a continuation of managed democracy under the firm control of United Russia, with Putin perhaps operating behind the scenes. There is even the possibility that he will run for president again in 2012, because the Russian constitution only prohibits an individual from serving two consecutive terms. Perhaps Russia will evolve into a one-party state based on patronage and the cooptation of dissidents, similar to one-party rule in Mexico under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional or PRI). Another possibility is the establishment of a true authoritarian state, with all control lodged in a non-competitively "elected" president. While a history of authoritarian rule does not ensure this will occur, centralization is a feature of Russian political culture.

Other predictions for democracy in Russia in the long run are less dire. It is possible that the regime's political appointees will be unqualified, and as a result their policies may fail. If this is the case, the Russian citizenry will surely take notice and the government may lose legitimacy. Furthermore, the Russian government is overly

dependent on oil revenues, and this market is notoriously unstable. An economic downturn could also lead to a loss of legitimacy and desire for democratic change. Incentives offered by other states and international organizations, particularly the requirement that a country must be democratic to join the European Union, might push Russia toward democracy as well. Finally, Putin's leadership relies to a large degree on charisma. If a charismatic leader arises from a rival party, the Russian electorate may very well support him.

Although democracy is waning in Russia, it may not be dead, because polls indicate most Russians still support the idea of free and fair elections. The upcoming elections are just one indication of the state of democracy in Russia, and while democracy is clearly being diminished in the short run, the next ten years will be a better indicator of whether or not it can survive.

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## An Activity on Electoral and Representative Systems

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### Overview

Electoral and representative systems do not happen by accident. They are designed to address important cleavages in a society. The choices made about how to elect a country's executive and legislative members can either ameliorate or exacerbate tensions within a society. For example, the use of a single-member district plurality voting system for elections to the House of Commons in Great Britain leads to this legislative body being dominated by two parties. This voting system avoids the problem of hyperpluralism (i.e., too many interests/cleavages canceling each other out) that can occur when proportional representation is used, but since a plurality voting system gives a greater weight to larger parties, smaller parties and their corresponding constituencies can feel neglected and marginalized. Thus, any voting system is a double-edged sword, solving some problems and causing others.

In the AP Comparative Government and Politics course students need to understand how several different electoral and representative systems operate. However, more importantly, and perhaps more difficult for the average student, they need to understand why these systems evolved into their modern forms and how these systems work to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others in each of the countries studied in the AP course.

Nigeria provides an example of the impact of electoral and representative systems. The First Republic used a proportional representation and parliamentary system of government. Due to the reluctance of the ethnically based parties to work together, it was nearly impossible to create a ruling coalition. In addition, the Prime Minister was seen as a representative of the ruling party, and not of the country as a whole. This instability led to the overthrow of the First Republic and the first period of military rule. Hopefully this lesson will help students understand that electoral systems are not created in a vacuum.

### Instructional Delivery

This lesson is a cooperative learning opportunity for the students. This lesson would probably be best used early in the course as an overview of electoral and representative systems before the students have become too familiar with the AP countries, their political histories, or current regimes. However, the students do need a little basic knowledge of concepts important to these systems. The important concepts for the students would include the following:

- presidential system
- parliamentary system
- semi-presidential/mixed system

## Curriculum Module: Recent Elections from Around the World

- unitary and federal governments
- bicameral and unicameral systems
- single-member, first-past-the-post (plurality) systems
- proportional representation

The students will use these concepts to design an electoral and representative system based on a set of historical and current criteria in a fictional country. These criteria are modeled after five of the AP countries, the United Kingdom, Russia, Nigeria, Mexico, and Iran.

### Teaching Procedure

Divide the class into five groups. Tell the students that they are going to design an electoral and representative system for a fictional country. Quickly review the concepts listed above with the students and tell them that their electoral and representative system must address the cleavages present in their country, according to the information they receive. It may help to use the U.S. electoral and representative system as a model of addressing cleavages when designing governmental institutions. Each group should select a reporter and a recorder. At the end of the time typically allotted to this lesson the reporter will give a report on the system their group created and the recorder will create a written copy of the electoral and representative system. If you would like, each group could make a poster or some other type of visual representation of the system that they created.

### Assessment

This lesson really lends itself to an informal type of assessment. A class discussion of each system created would allow the teacher to check for understanding of the impact of electoral systems. One area for discussion that will most likely present itself is the possibility that the student systems will not match the actual ones in use by the AP countries. This should allow the teacher an opportunity to delve deeper into each country's electoral system and/or political history to explain the discrepancies and even to point out where the students' solutions might have helped to avoid some problem that the country currently faces partly as a result of the system it chose.

If a more formal method of evaluation is desired the conceptual analysis questions (question number six on each exam) from both the 2007 and 2006 exams address issues regarding electoral and representative systems. Copies of these questions, their rubrics, and sample student responses are located at:

[http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/exam/exam\\_questions/2087.html](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/exam/exam_questions/2087.html)

### Student Handout: Your Electoral System

Electoral and representative systems do not happen by accident. They are designed to address important coinciding cleavages in a society. The choices made about how to elect a country's executive and legislative members can either help ease tensions within a society or they can increase tensions within that society.

Your task in this lesson is to create an electoral system that best fits the background information found on your information sheet. When creating your system

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consider how decisions about the following concepts would help alleviate tensions in your society or meet the criteria laid out in your information sheet. The concepts that you have to make decisions about include the following:

- presidential system
- parliamentary system
- semi-presidential/mixed system
- unitary system
- federal system
- bicameral legislature
- unicameral legislature
- single-member, first-past-the-post system
- proportional representation

Each group should elect a recorder to create a written record of the system you create. Also, each group needs to elect a reporter to share your electoral and representative system with the class at the end of the period and the rationale for creating the system. Be prepared to defend your system against questions and challenges from your classmates. You should have a rationale for each aspect of your electoral system.

### Country #1

This country is a well-developed, post-industrial country. In terms of geographic area, this country is very small. It has developed into a democracy over a long period of time with little strife during the process. Transitions were handled relatively smoothly and over a long period of time when compared to other countries in the world. This country officially was created as a union between four different nations, therefore, there are some ethnic differences, but they are not a significant source of tension, though ethnic identification is growing in importance. The only other source of cleavage, and it is becoming less a factor in politics, is class. Class differences manifest themselves mostly in a social and cultural way (e.g., dress, dialect, sports, etc.). Major political parties are ideologically based; however, there are several small, regionally based parties.

### Country #2

This country is also a post-industrial country, but has just recently recovered from a serious, decade long contraction of its economy. This contraction coincided with the end of hundreds of years of autocratic and totalitarian rule, first by a hereditary monarchy followed by more than 70 years of single-party totalitarianism. Therefore, this country's people have little experience with democracy, and a weak civil society exists within this country. In fact, the people seem to prefer rule by strong, charismatic figures. In addition, political parties are usually non-ideological, but rather based on popular and charismatic leaders. This creates a fluid, multiparty system. Currently the ruling party has been working to consolidate power, including exerting influence over the media, and important industries. They have been accused of assassinating political critics, but there is

no conclusive evidence to prove this. Corruption has been common, but appears to be on the decline.

This country is also a very large country with lots of ethnic diversity. A few of these ethnic groups have been very vocal about wanting greater autonomy. One has gone as far as to wage a guerilla war against the government.

### **Country #3**

This country is an underdeveloped country; it is among the poorest countries in the world today. Its economy is heavily dependent on commodity export as its main source of revenue. This country is a former European colony. It gained its independence less than fifty years ago. The transition from colony to independence has been rocky, at best. The main sources of cleavage in this country are ethnicity and religion. The country is home to dozens of ethnic groups who do not necessarily get along with one another. There is very little mixing of the ethnic groups in this country; they tend to remain in their historical homelands, further exacerbating the tensions between groups. This country also has a lot of regional differences in terms of economic production, climate, and population. In addition to ethnicity, significant tension is also caused by language, religion, class, and gender. Political parties are generally based on these cleavages, with ethnic-based parties being predominant. This country also has a growing population and a crumbling infrastructure.

### **Country #4**

Less than thirty years ago this country experienced a revolution in which an autocratic ruler was overthrown and replaced by a theocracy. This country has an economy based on commodity export (i.e., an economy based on the export of natural resources), and it is a “middle-income” country. The standard of living in this country has improved since the revolution, but there are troubling economic problems that persist to this day. Inflation and unemployment are still in the double digits and there is a pronounced split between the educated middle-class and the uneducated laboring class.

While this country has several different ethnic groups living within its borders, religion serves as a cross-cutting influence that diffuses any tension that may exist between ethnic groups. Religion is very important to most of the citizens of this country. There are two sources of cleavage in this country. The first is age. A majority of the citizens were born after the revolution and have, at best, a shaky allegiance to the theocratic regime. The second source of cleavage is gender. The theocratic regime treats women as second-class citizens.

### **Country #5**

This country is a former colony, but earned its independence in the early nineteenth century. The transition to independence was rocky, to say the least. Eventually a charismatic dictator was replaced by a one-party authoritarian state that maintained rule for more than 80 years through cooptation and electoral fraud. The ruling party always allowed other political parties to exist, but they did not win any important elections until recently. Now there are three parties vying for control of this country, one on the right of the political spectrum, the former ruling party, which is non-ideological, and one party on the left.

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There are a few sources of cleavages in this country. One is region. The northern part of the country is more wealthy and educated than the southern portion of the country. A second source of cleavage is ethnicity. There is a small population of indigenous people who feel left out of recent economic prosperity. In fact, there has been a low-level insurgency waged in the southern portion of the country over the previous decade. One aspect that ties the country together is religion. More than 90 percent of this country's population practices the same religion.

This country is heavily reliant on the export of petroleum and payments from its citizens living abroad. In addition to this, its economy is extremely dependent on trade with one nation, which has a history of meddling in this country's internal affairs.

## Contributors

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