

The World Democracy Audit of the Year 2008

World audit in their 17th Democracy Audit of the Millennium announce that: out of 150 countries audited, (all those with a million or more population); The opportunity to cast a vote can be quite meaningless unless there are transparently honest elections, with genuine voter choice of parties and people. We are confident that all of those countries listed in our First and Second Divisions conduct themselves in exactly that way. In the Third Division we could not generalise thus, and of the seventy four nations listed in our Fourth and last Division - that's half the nations in the world - we would suggest that no more than a handful of these even attempt to conduct their electoral process on such criteria. As Stalin is said to have observed "it's not important who stands for elections - what matters is who counts the votes." and recently his disciples in Zimbabwe, most of the FSU republics, and numerous other sovereign states have learned that lesson well! This is misuse of democracy as a 'cosmetic convenience.' It has come to mean for objective commentators, that for nations outside established democratic practice and the rule of law, the validity of any election depends on how many genuine, impartial observers, witness the events in all its key stages, and what is their judgement. In 2008, several of the FSU countries led by Russia are now concentrating on systematically diminishing the role of the respected and experienced electoral observers from the OSCE, by substantially reducing their numbers that they will permit to attend. In Russia's presidential election this year the 400 OSCE observers who were at their last major elections, were to have been reduced down to the ludicrous number of 70. In this, the largest nation on earth, that is less than one each for the 89 federated republics and territories, some of them the size of France or Germany! Unsurprisingly the OSCE decided not to send any observers at all, to give any assessment, and opted out of the whole shady business. The imprimatur of the OSCE cannot and should not be given if their reasonable judgement of what it would take to monitor any national election is treated, as in this case, with scorn. However, mighty Russia now ranks as 125th for democracy in the world, co-equal with Burundi, and that says it all. But America too in its imperial mode, has used democracy as a cosmetic convenience, in a way they would never dare to, or dream of doing in their own country. This is what Ayad Allawi, Iraq's Prime minister (2004-2005) has recently said about the elections forced on his country by the 'international community', despite leaders from all Iraq's major parties asking for a delay of these elections. He says: "it was entirely predictable that as a result there would be the present paralysis that has affected the government in Baghdad and that the failure to move towards reconciliation and the continuing sectarian disputes, were the product of the senseless rush to hold national elections in January 2005". The format chosen was, he says, a "misguided closed party list system. Rather than choosing a candidate, voters across the country chose from among rival lists backed and organised by the American nominated political parties. The system was entirely unsuitable given the security situation, the lack of accurate census figures, heavy intimidation from ethnic and religious militias, gross interventions by Iran, dismantled state institutions, and the use of religious symbols by parties to influence voters. Accordingly the vast majority of the electorate based their choices on sectarian and ethnic affiliations, not on genuine political platforms". In these circumstances it is clear that the Iraqi election was basically no more than a nationwide adult population census, as between 'parties' of Sunni, Shia and Kurds, whose 'policies' were whatever their leaders said they were! They could be seen in practice to be about acquiring as big a slice of the national cake as possible for their religious / ethnic constituencies, with any Iraqi national interest far back down the line. Credulity is anyway strained to believe in these fully formed 'political parties,' that sprang up like dragons teeth so quickly - and already with 'leaders,' from the unpromising base of more than 40 years of ruthless, single party political monopoly by the Baath party that squelched all glimmerings of opposition! The one unquestioned leader was the Shiite Ayatollah Sistani, who would not engage with the American invaders at all. The urgency of rushing the election in 2005 related not so much to the Iraqi interest as to the 2004 US mid-term elections and the need for the White House to be able to brag about 'creating a democracy'. The way this election was framed, regrettably guaranteed that secular parties would come nowhere, so as has happened, quarrelsome religious sects and political power have become contiguous. That is to be the way of the future for this benighted country. The top seven democracies in the world are: Finland (1), Denmark (2), Sweden (3), New Zealand (4), Switzerland (5), Netherlands (6), Norway (7). For the past eleven years these same nations have stayed in the top seven, if in a different order. The British Commonwealth scores well in Division One, with New Zealand (4), Canada (8), Australia and UK jointly on (9). North America reads: Canada (8), USA (15), Mexico (63) The Top Africans are: Mauritius (32), Ghana (35), South Africa (40), Namibia(43) Leading East Asia are Japan (30), South Korea (32), Taiwan (38). South & South East Asia has India up front (47), Singapore (74), Malaysia (82), Philippines (85) Latin America sees Chile (21) in the lead and Uruguay hot on their heels, at (22). Costa Rica (25) and Panama (37). Europe accounts for 22 of the 29, in Division One; & 2 out of 8, in Division Two. First and Second Divisions alone are classified as 'Unquestionably Free'. Division Four includes 74 nations, half of the world's nations of one million or more population. They have in common that they are not democratic, nor getting close - Division Three lists 38 countries - those that are! Division Four includes most of the Former Soviet States (Russia itself is at (125), most of the Arab League, most African states. The least democratic states are : North Korea, and in reverse order Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Libya, Somalia, Belarus, Zimbabwe, Eritrea, Sudan, Laos, Republic of the Congo. 'Mini-tables' are included: Democracy listings of member nations of EU, NATO, OECD, G8, ASEAN, APEC, African Union, Arab League, Latin America. For full report visit <http://www.worldaudit.org/publisher.htm> For all the above and many more country reports go to <http://www.newnations.com> We recommend that readers check out our methodology (button on left hand sidewalk of 'Democracy League Tables') to make the most sense of these results and the commentary: <http://www.worldaudit.org/democracy.htm> Worldaudit country reports - <http://www.worldaudit.org/countries.htm> Abbreviated versions also available for reader comment are at our blog: <http://www.geopolemics.com>

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