

Election Monitoring is a world observatory of electoral ballots. A guide that, time after time, will make public the electoral results and strategies of countries to which the western media don't give a voice. Everything will be accompanied by a summarized report on the socio-economic as well as political conditions of the countries under scrutiny

ELECTION MONITORING

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POLAND

■ The country on the eve of elections

The new Polish democracy's prospects did not seem bright in 1990: high levels of inflation and unemployment, a huge agricultural sector, big, undercapitalized State-owned industries and no sources of investment. However, the opening up of the market, privatization and a monetary policy aimed at getting inflation under control and implemented using shock therapy by the head of the national bank Leszek Balcerowicz gave good results, making Poland the first Iron Curtain country to return to 1989 economic levels. Unemployment remains the main problem and accounts for the strong migratory flows towards other European Union countries. Poland joined Nato in 1999 and the European Union in 2004. The country is preparing for its future adoption of the euro, which could happen by the end of this decade or the start of the next. As regards domestic politics, centre-right and centre-left governments have alternated, with the Social Democrats leading the country from 1993 to 1997 and from 2001 to 2005. However, the 2005 elections were nothing short of an earthquake for the Polish political system with the Democratic Left Alliance (Sld) slipping sharply from over 40% to 11.3%

_The Civic Platform party headed by Donald Tusk (photo) won the Polish elections. Tusk became the country's new prime minister on 24 November 2007

of the vote. Law and Justice (Pis), a nationalist, conservative party, emerged as the big winner at the election. The party was formed by the Kaczynski twins: Lech, who became president of the republic, and Jaroslaw, appointed prime minister. However, the new government, formed on the basis of a coalition with far-right parties, did serious damage to Poland's image by introducing a series of domestic political measures markedly restricting civil and political liberties and undertaking controversial steps at the international level to the point of straining relations between Russia and the European Union. On the eve of the elections, the centre-right, Christian Democratic Civic Platform party (Po) led by Donald Tusk issued a direct challenge to the power of the Kaczynski twins, who were forced to call early elections because of the collapse of the governing coalition.

■ Voting: How and for whom

On 21 October 2007, Polish citizens over 18 years of age renewed both houses of the National Assembly,

POLAND IN FIGURES

Area	312,679 sq. km
Capital	Warsaw (1,702,100 inhab.)
Population (2007)	38,518,241
Ethnic groups	Pole 96.7%, Others 3.3%
Religions	Catholic 89.8%, Others and Atheist 10.2%
Language	Polish
Currency	1 zloty = 0.299 euros (13/01/2008)
International dialling code	+48
Web domain	.pl

fonte: Cia, Wb, Ecb

FREEDOMS IN POLAND

Death penalty	Abolitionist
Index of political rights ¹	1
Index of civil liberties ¹	1
Status	Free country
Assessment of the elections by international observers*	In line with international standards

1. points go from 1 (total freedom) to 7 (lack of freedom)

Sources: Amnesty International, Freedom House * ODHR/OSCE

ECONOMY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

GDP (PPP), 2006	374.86 mln euros
GDP growth, 2006	+6.1%
GDP per capita (PPP) – 232 countries, 2006	9,732 euros (72)
Competitiveness index (125 countries), 2006	51
Corruption index (179 countries), 2007	61
Human development index (177 countries), 2006	37
Index of women's representation in power, (75 countries), 2006	39
Year women received active and passive right to vote	1918
Life expectancy, 2006	75.2
Combined primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment	87.2%

Sources: Ti, Undp, Wb, Wef

the Diet (Sejm) and the Senate (Senat). The Sejm's 460 members are elected in 41 multi-member constituencies using the proportional method on the basis of the D'Hondt system with a 5% vote threshold for individual parties and 8% for coalitions; these limits do not apply to linguistic minority lists. The 100 senators are elected in 40 multi-member constituencies using the majority multi-member method: each voter assigns a number of votes equal to

the number of seats available in the constituency in order of preference; the candidates with the highest totals are elected. MPs and senators serve a four-year term. Although the two houses share legislative power, the Sejm can override opposition by the Senate with an absolute majority vote. The Sejm has exclusive power to accord or revoke confidence in the prime minister.

■ The elections

Donald Tusk's Civic Platform party won the elections and he became the new prime minister on 24 November 2007. The moderate coalition headed by the Po can count on a comfortable majority in both houses. Despite their defeat, Law and Justice have maintained a strong presence in Parliament and actually increased their seats in the Diet. The new government immediately distanced itself from the policies of the previous cabinet, starting dialogue with Russia and stalling the previous government's most controversial decision, i.e. the installation of a U.S. anti-missile shield in Poland, which Moscow views as a strategic threat.

UKRAINE**■ The country on the eve of elections**

On obtaining independence, which was approved by a referendum on 1 December 1991, Ukraine was one of the wealthiest Soviet republics with a solid agricultural, mineral and industrial base, particularly strong in the production of cereals, coal, steel, high-tech military equipment and freight aircraft. However, there was a deep divide in the country between those who considered the Great Famine (*Holodomor*) caused by Stalin's policies in 1932-33 the worst national disaster and those who thought that the Nazi occupation had been the worst crisis. This intrinsic weakness in Ukrainian society reflected on every aspect of life in the country, making it very difficult for the central power to exercise control as strong as that of heads of other former Soviet republics. In the 1990s, as the country plunged into the depths of poverty and corruption, with

POLAND: POLITICAL ELECTIONS

party	Sejm seats 2007	Sejm seats 2005	Senat seats 2007	Senat seats 2005
Civic Platform (Po)	209	133	60	34
Law and Justice (Pis)	166	155	39	49
Left and Democrats (LiD)	53	55	/	/
Polish Peasant Party	31	25	/	/
German Minority	1	2	/	/
Others	/	90	1	15
Total (women)	460 (94)	460 (94)	100 (8)	100 (13)

Source: Ipu

a few clans of oligarchs dominating things, there was a 60% drop in Gdp and inflation occasionally reached five-digit figures. The first, pro-Western president was forced to call, and lose, early elections in 1994. That year marked the start of a ten-year stint in power for Leonid Kuchma, who was behind a huge electoral fraud at the expense of the Communist candidate in 1999 and secretly masterminded the dramatic 2004 elections. That year, following tumult that nearly caused a civil war, baptised the Orange revolution, the pro-Western lobby returned to power, although bitter personal rivalry broke out between the two main leaders of the coalition, the newly elected president Viktor Yushchenko and the new prime minister Julia Tymoshenko. The orange coalition collapsed after several troubled months and early general elections in 2006 gave Viktor Yanukovich, the loser at the 2004 presidential elections, his revenge. However, Yushchenko dissolved the new parliament by decree on 2 April 2007. Early elections were called for 30 September after a sharp tug-of-war to break the institutional deadlock. Yushchenko, however, would have drawn the greatest benefit from the situation of ungovernability, putting himself forward as the guarantor of stability in the upcoming 2008 elections.

■ Voting: How and for whom

On 30 September, Ukrainian citizens over 18 years of age elected the 450 members of the Supreme Council (Verhovna Rada). Seats are assigned on the basis of a proportional electoral law with a single round of voting, national lists and a 3% threshold and the Hamilton majority remainder system. Elections are held to be valid if at least 50% of those eligible vote. MPs are elected for a four-year term. The Rada holds legislative power and accord and revokes confidence in the prime minister.

■ The elections

As usual, the election results sparked explosive controversy, with accusations of vote rigging and violations of every kind. The orange coalition won an extremely narrow majority of merely three seats in this

UKRAINE: POLITICAL ELECTIONS		
party	seats 2007	seats 2006
Party of Regions	175	186
Julija Tymoshenko Bloc	156	129
Our Ukraine	72	81
Communist Party	27	21
Lytvin Bloc	20	/
Socialist Party	/	33
Total (women)	450 (38)	450 (39)

UKRAINE IN FIGURES

Area	603,628 sq. km
Capital	Kyiv (2,700,000 inhab.)
Population (2007)	46,299,862
Ethnic groups	Ukrain 77.8%, Russian 17.3%, Others 4.9%
Religions	Orthodox 44%, Greek-Catholic 6%, Others 12%, Atheists 38%
Languages	Ukrain (official), Russian
Currency	1 grivnia = 0.134 euros (13/01/2008)
International dialling code	+380
Web domain	.ua

Fonte: Cia, Wb, Ecb

FREEDOMS IN UKRAINE

Death penalty	Abolitionist
Index of political rights ¹	3
Index of civil liberties ¹	2
Status	Free country
Assessment of the elections by international observers*	In line with international standards

1. points go from 1 (total freedom) to 7 (lack of freedom)

Sources: Amnesty International, Freedom House * Odihr/Osce

ECONOMY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

GDP (PPP), 2006	246.28 bln euros
GDP growth, 2006	+7.1%
GDP per capita (PPP) – 232 countries, 2006	5,319 euros (108)
Competitiveness index (125 countries), 2006	73
Corruption index (179 countries), 2007	118
Human development index (177 countries), 2006	76
Index of women's representation in power, (75 countries), 2006	75
Year women received active and passive right to vote	1919
Life expectancy, 2006	67.7
Combined primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment	86.5%

fonti: Ti, Undp, Wb, Wef

round of elections. The decisive element in the victory of the pro-Western front was an excellent performance by the Julia Tymoshenko bloc, which largely compensated for the disappointing results obtained by the President Yushchenko's own party. The outgoing government would however have won if the Socialist Party had not failed to cross the vote threshold by a mere 0.14 percent. Julia Tymoshenko was re-appointed prime minister on 18 December 2007, but President Yushchenko was the real winner: although his party won far fewer votes, he still managed to undermine the country's governability, a useful condition if he is to hope for re-election, however uncertain it may seem.

KIRIBATI

■ The country on the eve of elections

Kiribati is composed of a group of 33 islands in the Pacific Ocean straddling the Equator and bordering the International Date Line. The islands, then a British colony, were the site of a bloody battle between the Japanese and the Americans in 1943. From the early 1960s, the U.S. and Britain carried out nuclear tests

KIRIBATI IN FIGURES

Area	811 sq. km
Capital	South Tarawa (28,350 inhab.)
Population (2007)	107,817
Ethnic groups	Micronesians 98.8%, Others 1.2%
Religions	Catholic 52%, Protestant 40%, Others 8%
Languages	Gilbertese, English
Currency	1 Australian dollar = 0.6361 euros (15/10/2007)
International dialling code	+686
Web domain	.ki

Fonte: Cia, Wb, Ecb

FREEDOMS IN KIRIBATI

Death penalty	Abolitionist
Index of political rights ¹	1
Index of civil liberties ¹	1
Status	Free country
Assessment of the elections by international observers	/

1. points go from 1 (total freedom) to 7 (lack of freedom)

Sources: Amnesty International, Freedom House

ECONOMY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

GDP (PPP), 2006	169 mln euros
GDP growth, 2006	+0.3%
GDP per capita (PPP) – 232 countries, 2006	1,567 euros (164)
Competitiveness index (125 countries), 2006	n/a
Corruption index (179 countries), 2007	84
Human development index (177 countries), 2006	n/a
Index of women's representation in power, (75 countries), 2006	n/a
Year women received active and passive right to vote	1967
Life expectancy, 2006	62.45
Combined primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment	77%

Sources: Ti, Undp, Wb, Wef

on some of the remoter islands. The country won independence on 12 July 1979. By this time the significant phosphate deposits on the island of Banaba had already been exhausted, with the environment destroyed and the people forcibly resettled on the island of Rabi in the Fiji Islands. A trust fund set up on the orders of the British high court with part of the profits from phosphate extraction is a significant source of income for the government. Kiribati's economy is currently based on the production of copra, fishing and tourism, which now accounts for 20% of national income. Aid from the U.K., Australia, New Zealand and Japan makes up from a quarter to half of GDP from one year to the next. The country has managed to finance its trade deficit and maintain a

positive balance of payments thanks to financial aid and the sale of deep-sea fishing licences. In 1999, Japan signed a contract to set up a space base on Christmas Island; a similar agreement with Beijing sparked a violent controversy and led to a vote of no confidence for the then president, Teburoro Tito, in 2003. Like many other countries in the Pacific, Kiribati is at the centre of the dispute between China and Taiwan as regards diplomatic recognition. Following the removal of President Tito, Kiribati established official diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Global warming is one of the most pressing threats for the archipelago, as many atolls and islands run the risk of being submerged or being deprived of fresh water because of the rising sea level. The August elections witnessed a confrontation between the Pillars of Truth (BK) and Protect the Maneaba (MTM) parties, headed respectively by the brothers Anote Tong, the outgoing president, and Harry Tong, the head of the opposition. While the most hotly debated issues were education and the fight against unemployment, the most important element was to determine the structure of the chamber of deputies, which has the power to nominate the candidates for the presidential elections (last held on 17 October 2007).

■ Voting: How and for whom

On 22 and 30 August 2007, Kiribati citizens over 18 years of age and resident in their constituency chose the 44 elected members of the national assembly (*Maneaba Ni Maungatabu*), to which one nominated member representing the Banabas from the island of Rabi (Fiji) and one ex officio member, the public prosecutor, are added. A majority two-round system with 23 multi-member constituencies is used. Candidates obtaining an absolute majority are elected in the first round, with a second round organised for the three candidates having obtained the largest number of votes. MPs are elected for a four-year term. The House shares legislative power with the president and also chooses presidential candidates who subsequently stand for election from among its own members.

■ The elections

President Anote Tong won a convincing victory and was re-elected in the first round of voting. His party defeated the opposition by a large margin and took over control of Parliament with the support of independent MPs. The most important result was the exclusion of opposition candidates from the future presidential elections, at which Anote Tong aimed to be re-elected. The opposition asked the people to boycott the October elections as a sign of protest against the Parliamentary majority's decision.

KIRIBATI: POLITICAL ELECTIONS		
party	seats 2007	seats 2002
Pillars of Truth (BK)	18	16
Protect the Maneaba (MTM)	7	24
Others and independents	21	2
Total (women)	46 (2)	42 (2)

Source: Ipu