

# Re-Election Casts Gloom Over World

By Tom Hundley  
Tribune foreign correspondent

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LONDON -- It was their election too. Even though the rest of the world didn't have a say in the outcome of the U.S. presidential election, it surely had a stake in it.

Newspapers from around the world dispatched their reporters to the battleground states of Ohio, Florida and Pennsylvania. On Tuesday night and well into Wednesday broadcasters in Britain, France and Japan covered the election as if it were their own.

"A Day That Will Decide the Fate of the World" declared the banner headline in the Independent, a British Daily.

But as the day came and went with George W. Bush seemingly elected but the outcome in Ohio still in doubt, news of the American election again became a lesson in the arcana of foreign civics, with announcers trying to explain not just the electoral college but also Ohio's provisional ballots.

The Japanese found the concept particularly obscure because they don't have voter registration. Everyone automatically receives a voter card at age 20 in the form of a national identification card, or koseki.

"In America," one television announcer explained with wry surprise, "they don't have the koseki system."

While American voters made their choice based on any number of issues ranging from the state of the economy and the war on terror to gay marriage and abortion rights, for the rest of the world there was only one real issue: George W. Bush.

**In Europe especially, but also in the Middle East, Africa and much of Asia, President Bush is the most disliked and discounted American leader since the U.S. emerged as a dominant world power early in the 20th Century. His victory produced a sense of gloom and foreboding.**

**"For those who are great admirers of America, it's a sad day; it's like a death in the family," said Mairtin O'Muilleoir, a newspaper publisher**

**in Belfast, Northern Ireland, who strongly disapproves of the war in Iraq. "I think America is weaker after this election.** And an America divided against itself [is] not going to play any kind of beneficial role in the world," he said.

In France, perhaps the epicenter of European hostility to Bush, the feeling of despair was almost palpable.

"This is not going to make relationship on the two sides of the Atlantic any easier," said Guillaume Parmentier, director of the French Center on the United States.

"After the 2000 election, there was a feeling in Europe that, OK, he is a minority president, elected by one vote on the Supreme Court. Now that he is re-elected by a majority, Europeans will think, well, the Americans really want this guy," he said. "Four years ago, people could believe that Bush was a compassionate conservative, that he wanted a humble foreign policy. It's hard to believe that now."

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Bush's closest ally in the Europe, told Parliament on Wednesday that he would push the American president to make a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict a top priority in his second term.

But in Middle East, there was little optimism.

Yassin al Dhari, an American studies professor at Baghdad University, said Bush's re-election ensures that "terrorism will remain in Iraq, and that terrorists will continue to be backed by neighboring countries opposed to U.S. occupation of Iraq."

In South Africa, where the cable television network aired Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11" on the eve of the election and most people support Sen. John Kerry, many said they were worried about the direction about the direction in which the U.S. was moving with Bush.

"We are better off with a U.S. president who looks at the world in a way that accepts the reality that we are all part of the world, that the U.S. is not the only player," said Khabele Matlosa, a senior analyst with the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa. "I don't think Mr. Bush, with all due respect, stands the continent in good stead."

But Greg Mills, director of the South African Institute of International Affairs, said the Bush victory was probably better news for Africa than a changeover in administrations.

In terms of concrete assistance, Bush has "offered a surprising amount of aid and trade concessions to Africa as well as assistance with HIV/AIDS," said Mills.

Compared to the Democrats, who seized on protectionist rhetoric during the campaign, "the Republicans offer more in terms of trade, and in Africa trade equals growth and growth is what it's all about on this continent," he said.

In China, Bush's victory created little stir, with most people interested mainly in U.S. policy toward China's rival, Taiwan.

"I don't care who is president as long as he helps return Taiwan to us," said Sun Ping, a 58-year old construction worker who followed the news on the radio.

But there were fireworks earlier in the week when the China Daily, the English-language government mouthpiece, published a scathing critique of the Bush administration by a former foreign minister, who lambasted what he characterized as the White House attempt to rule the world by force.

Although the attack was disavowed by the government, it set off a debate on the extent to which it characterized Beijing's real views and whether its timing would damage relations with Washington.

**In India, the world's largest democracy, Bush's victory was seen as good for business.**

**Raja Mohan, a professor of South Asian studies at Jawaharal Nehru University in New Delhi, noted that India has done more business with the U.S. in the last four years than in the previous 40.**

**"We believe the relationship is poised for a significant expansion," Mohan said, "and the return of Bush raises that prospect."**

*Tribune foreign correspondents Michael A. Lev in Beijing, Laurie Goering in Johannesburg, Kim Barker in New Delhi and Alex Rodriguez in Baghdad contributed to this report. Dhiya Rasan in Baghdad also contributed.*

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