

Tuesday, July 10, 2007

[The Economist Intelligence Unit's 2007 Index of Democracy](#)

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) released its 2007 Democracy Index ranking 165 countries and two territories on their degrees of democracy based on a number of indices, scales, and scoring. An index of "democracy," a broad term sometimes ill defined, can be a tricky task without a universal definition. Indeed, the United States uses "democracy promotion" as a primary component of its foreign policy objectives, but there, too, are internal disagreements about what it actually means.

The Economist Intelligence Unit's measure is a snapshot index of the present state of democracy worldwide. The index offers a range of possible scores: (i) electoral process and pluralism, (ii) the functioning of government, (iii) political participation, (iv) political culture, and (v) civil liberties. There are admittedly simplifications with these rough categorizations, and the EIU acknowledged problems with several of their scoring scales because of the difficulties in devising analogous criteria and guidelines, which can result in what they called "arbitrary, spurious and non-comparable scorings." The scoring can also be potentially unreliable as different experts may rank the same indicators variably. The EIU integrates public opinion surveys into their index, a unique attribute that is lacking in [Freedom House's](#) index.

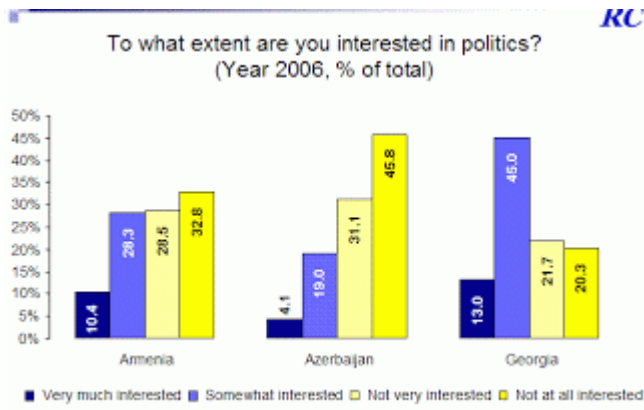
Not surprisingly, hybrid and authoritarian regimes dominate in the countries of the Former Soviet Union. In the South Caucasus, Georgia and Armenia are classified as hybrid regimes, ranked at positions 104 and 110, respectively, out of the total 167 entities surveyed. Azerbaijan is categorized as an authoritarian regime and placed at 129, just after Belarus. Russia actually does better than any country in the Caucasus, being at 102.

To get a better look, let's disaggregate: with "functioning of government", Azerbaijan does very badly at 0.79, Georgia is also poor with 1.79 (implying that territorial integrity factors here), Russia and Armenia are doing much better at 3.21.

Georgia by far had the highest ranking in regards to a fair and free electoral processes at 7.92, as compared to Armenia's 4.33 and Azerbaijan's 3.08. (Armenia was on the negative watch list prior to the parliamentary elections this May for fear of flawed elections and likely there will be disagreements on how to evaluate the recent elections.)

Georgia scores 6.74 on civil liberties, Armenia has 6.18, Russia and Azerbaijan rate at 5.59.

Somewhat implausibly, political participation is rated at similar levels: Azerbaijan and Georgia with 3.33, Armenia at 3.89 (Russia is at 5.56). Surely, that is not plausible. According to our 2007 data, interest in politics (which surely is a reasonable proxy) certainly is not that homogenous across the three countries.



Even on an anecdotal level there are fundamental differences with political participation. So we would be curious how exactly the EIU comes up with this data. Maybe some adjustments are necessary.