

# A power shift in Australia

Labor candidate Kevin Rudd defeated incumbent John Howard to become Australia's next prime minister.

## BASIC

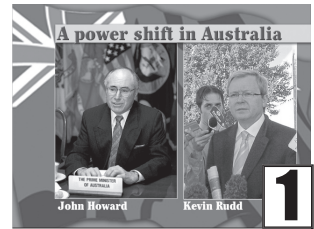
These two men were candidates to become the next leader, or prime minister, of a country very far away. **Who can name it? (Australia.) Where is Australia?** (*The South Pacific Ocean.*) The challenger, Kevin Rudd, defeated John Howard, who has been Australia's prime minister for more than 10 years. In some ways, Australia's elections are very different from American elections. For one thing, the campaign only lasted six weeks, compared to American presidential campaigns that can last more than a year. **Which way do you think is better? Why?**

## GENERAL

On November 24, Australia held its national elections. **Where in the world is Australia?** (*In the South Pacific Ocean.*) Challenger Kevin Rudd defeated Prime Minister John Howard, who has held that title since 1996. Australia's two main political parties are the Labor Party and the Liberal Party. The outgoing Prime Minister John Howard is a member of the Liberal Party, and Kevin Rudd is a member of the Labor Party. On many issues, Australia's Liberal Party is in line with President Bush and his political party in the United States. **Which political party does President Bush belong to?** (*Republican.*) Now that Kevin Rudd and the Labor Party are in charge, Australia is expected to part ways with President Bush on some issues. **How do you think this will affect relations**

## ADVANCED

On November 24, Australia held its federal elections, including an election for the nation's prime minister. **Does anyone know who won the election?** (*Challenger Kevin Rudd defeated incumbent John Howard.*) Howard had held the office of prime minister since 1996. He was a member of the Liberal Party. In Australian politics, the Liberal Party favors the ideals of economic liberalism, such as a free market economy, lower taxes, and less regulation. Socially, however, the Liberal Party is conservative. The Labor Party in Australia describes itself as a social democratic party. Ideologically, Labor favors regulation and government programs to rectify perceived injustices caused by the free market system. Australia under Howard and the Liberal Party was a strong supporter of President Bush's foreign policy. With



Another difference is that in Australia, voting is compulsory. This means that every Australian citizen over 18 years old must vote. Anyone who doesn't vote is penalized and must pay a small fine of about \$20. **Do you think the United States should have a rule like this? Why or why not?** Let's take a look at what some of the biggest issues were in Australia's national election. NEXT

## between Australia and the U.S.?

There are a few big differences between Australian elections and American elections. One key difference is that Australian campaigns are much shorter than American campaigns. For example, the recent campaign for prime minister in Australia lasted only six weeks. In recent years, U.S. presidential campaigns have been getting longer and longer. **When is the next presidential election?** (*November 2008.*) **Do you think American presidential campaigns are too long? Why or why not?** Another difference between Australia's system and the American system is that voting in Australia is compulsory. This means that every Australian over 18 years old must vote, or pay a fine of about \$20. **Do you think this is a good system? Why or why not?** NEXT

the Labor Party coming to power, Australia is expected to distance itself from the U.S. on several key issues. **Which issues do you think these might be? How do you think this will affect international relations between the U.S. and Australia?**

There are a few marked differences between Australia's electoral system and the American system. For example, the campaign for Australia's recent federal elections lasted only six weeks, as compared to the U.S. current presidential race, which will last for well over a year. **Do you think a six-week campaign would work in the U.S.? Why or why not?** Another key difference is that in Australia, voting in federal elections is compulsory. Any eligible adult who doesn't vote faces a small fine. **What do you think are the pros and cons of compulsory voting?** NEXT

# A power shift in Australia (cont'd)

Kevin Rudd says that he will sign the Kyoto Protocol.

## BASIC

One of the biggest issues in Australia's political campaign was the environment. Here you see quotes from both candidates on this topic. Mr. Rudd says that as prime minister, he will "ratify" an agreement called "Kyoto," named after a Japanese city. "Ratify" means to sign something. The Kyoto agreement has to do with limiting pollution that causes global climate change. As prime minister, Mr. Howard refused to sign it because it would not limit so-called "developing" countries such as China and India. These countries produce

a lot of pollution now, but they only began producing it recently, and their economies have just started to create jobs and wealth for their people. The decision not to sign the Kyoto agreement was very unpopular with the Australian people. **Why do you think this is so?** President Bush also refused to sign the agreement. **Should the U.S. sign the Kyoto agreement? Why or why not?** NEXT



## GENERAL

One of the biggest issues in Australia's political campaign was the environment. Here you see quotes from both candidates about something called the Kyoto agreement. This agreement is named after the Japanese city where it was presented to the United Nations. The agreement would limit the production of greenhouse gas pollution that is causing global warming. As prime minister, John Howard refused to sign the agreement. One reason was that he believed it would restrict Australia's economy. Another reason was that the agreement would not put limits on so-called "developing" countries like China and India. These countries produce a lot of greenhouse gas pollution, but they only

began producing it recently. The Kyoto agreement aims to allow these countries to develop jobs and economic security without restrictions. **Do you think this is fair? Why or why not?**

John Howard's decision not to sign the Kyoto agreement was very unpopular with the Australian people. **Why do you think this is so?** Many Australians are very concerned about the effects of pollution on the climate. Mr. Rudd has vowed to sign the Kyoto agreement and cut greenhouse gas pollution. The only other major country that hasn't signed the Kyoto agreement is the United States. **Why do you think the U.S. hasn't signed it? Should the U.S. sign this agreement? Why or why not?** NEXT

## ADVANCED

One of the biggest issues on Australian voters' minds during this election was the environment — particularly global climate change. Australia is in the middle of its worst drought on record, and this has made the Prime Minister's refusal to ratify the Kyoto agreement very unpopular among his fellow Australians. Mr. Rudd, in comparison, vows to ratify the agreement once he takes office. **What do you know about the Kyoto agreement?** *(It would restrict greenhouse gas emissions among countries that sign it. Developing nations like China and India would be exempt from the restrictions.)* China and India's exemption is the basis for Howard's opposition. While India and China are in the top 10 polluters, they are much lower on the list when ranked per capita. Although

China and India produce much of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, they only began doing so in recent years. **Do you think these factors are important to this debate? Why or why not?** The U.N. climate panel's rationale is that these countries should be allowed to develop economically for the security of their people. **Do you think India and China need this protection? Why or why not?**

Currently, Australia is the only other major country besides the United States not to ratify the Kyoto agreement. When it was put forth in 1998, President Clinton did not put the agreement up to the Senate for ratification, based on the likelihood that it would not pass. President Bush opposes the agreement. **Do you think the U.S. should ratify it? Why or why not?** NEXT

# A power shift in Australia (cont'd)

Rudd plans to discuss withdrawal of Australia's combat troops from Iraq.

## BASIC

Another important issue to Australian voters was their country's involvement in the Iraq war. Under Prime Minister Howard, Australia supported the United States in fighting the war in Iraq. This has not been popular with the Australian people. Some experts say his support of the war hurt his campaign badly. **Which of these two quotes do you think more Australians support? Why?** Mr. Rudd says that he would like to remove Australia's 550 fighting troops from Iraq. But he plans to keep about 1,000 military people in the

area, and to keep troops in Afghanistan to fight the al

Qaeda terrorist group. **Do you think Australia should withdraw troops from Iraq? Why or why not? If Australia does withdraw troops from Iraq, how do you think it will affect Australia's relations with the United States? Do you think Mr. Rudd will be a popular leader in Australia? Why or why not?** END OF STORY



## GENERAL

Besides the environment, another big issue for Australian voters in this election was their country's involvement in the Iraq war. Although Australia doesn't have many troops in Iraq, Australia's public support of the war has been important to President Bush. But this position also made Prime Minister Howard unpopular with many Australians who did not support the war. **Which of the Iraq-related quotes shown here do you suppose sounded better to most Australians? Why?** Prime Minister Howard has strongly supported President Bush in the Iraq war. Mr. Rudd, on the other hand, has been very critical of the war. He announced that he will visit

President Bush early next year to discuss withdrawing Australia's 550 combat troops from Iraq. But Mr. Rudd says that he will keep about 1,000 military people in the area for security. He also says he will keep or increase the number of troops in Afghanistan, to fight against the al Qaeda terrorist organization there. **How do you think most Australians feel about these statements? How do you think the withdrawal of Australia's troops in Iraq would affect relations with the United States? Do you think Australia should withdraw its troops from Iraq? Why or why not? Do you think Mr. Rudd will be an effective leader for Australia? Why or why not?** END OF STORY

## ADVANCED

Many observers see John Howard's defeat as a paradox, because he led his country during a period of booming economic prosperity. Despite Howard's warnings that Rudd would hurt the economy, Rudd was able to successfully tout his credentials as an economic conservative with close ties to China, a crucial trading partner. Possibly the two factors that hurt Howard the most in his bid for re-election were his positions on the Kyoto agreement and the Iraq war. Since the start of the war, Howard threw Australia's support staunchly behind President Bush. Although Australia has relatively few troops in Iraq, the support of Australia as part of the coalition has been symbolically important to President Bush. **Why do you think this is so?** The quotes you see here

represent each candidate's message on Iraq. **Why do you think Mr. Rudd's message resonated more with Australian voters?** After the election, Rudd announced plans to visit Washington early next year, to discuss the withdrawal of Australia's 550 combat troops from Iraq. The new prime minister says he will keep another 1,000 military personnel and Navy warships in the Persian Gulf. Rudd also says he will maintain or increase Australia's troop levels in Afghanistan. **How do you think the majority of Australians feel about these announcements? Do you think the withdrawal of Australian troops from Iraq will significantly damage U.S.-Australian relations? Why or why not?** END OF STORY