

# Hillary Clinton: Democracy in U.S. "Still Evolving"

Posted by Brian Montopoli



(AP)

At a town hall meeting in Nigeria Wednesday in which she said the country needs to fix its "flawed electoral system," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton suggested that American has troubles of its own, citing the disputed 2000 presidential election as an example.

"Our democracy is still evolving," Clinton said, as the [Wall Street Journal reports](#). "You know we've had all kinds of problems in some of our past elections, as you might remember. In 2000, our

presidential election came down to one state where the brother of the man running for president was the governor of the state, so we have our problems, too."

Clinton's reference, of course, was to then-presidential candidate George W. Bush and then-Florida governor Jeb Bush.

"The point she is making is that it's about a disputed result and then the willingness of the candidates to accept a flawed result rather than, say, resort to violence," Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs P.J. Crowley told reporters later.

Crowley went on to note that then-candidate Al Gore accepted the result despite questions about the legitimacy of the election.

"This has been a consistent message she has delivered to countries who are struggling in Africa, that they have to strengthen their electoral processes and form independent electoral commissions, but most importantly the candidates themselves have to accept the results rather than resort to violence," Crowley said.

In her remarks, Clinton compared the American and Nigerian experiences of democracy. [According to the Guardian](#), she said that in Nigeria a "lack of transparency and accountability has eroded the legitimacy of the government and contributed to the rise of groups that embrace violence and reject the authority of the state."

In America, by contrast, she said "the man that I was running against and spent a lot of time and effort to defeat, asked me to join his government. So there is a way to begin to make this transition that will lead to free and fair elections in [Nigeria in] 2011."

Critics assailed Clinton's comments, with the Cato Institute's Ilya Shapiro [telling ABC News](#), "when you criticize your own country as an official of that country it obviously undermines the authority of the government." A spokesman for Jeb Bush called the comments "ill advised."

The secretary of state generated headlines Monday when she [responded angrily](#) after being asked in Congo about the opinion of her husband, former President Bill Clinton, because of an inaccurate translation of a question from a Congolese student.

"My husband is not secretary of state. I am," she said. "You want me to tell you what my husband thinks? If you want my opinion, I will tell you my opinion. I am not going to be channeling my husband."