

## Polity IV Country Report 2007: Dominican Republic

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2006</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2007</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Polity:</b></td> <td>8</td> <td>8</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Democ:</b></td> <td>8</td> <td>8</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Autoc:</b></td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Durable:</b></td> <td></td> <td>11</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Tentative:</b></td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2006	2007	Change	<b>Polity:</b>	8	8	0	<b>Democ:</b>	8	8	0	<b>Autoc:</b>	0	0	0	<b>Durable:</b>		11		<b>Tentative:</b>		No		
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SCODE	<b>DOM</b>	CCODE	<b>042</b>	Date of Report	<b>1 November 2008</b>																				
<b>Polity IV Component Variables</b>																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
3	3	4	6	2	4																				
<b>Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)</b>																									
End Date	16 August 1996		Begin Date	17 August 1996																					
<b>Polity Fragmentation: No</b>																									
<b>Constitution</b>	1966																								
<b>Executive(s)</b>	President Leonel Fernández Reyna (PLD); initially directly elected in 2004; reelected, 16 May 2008, 53.8%																								
<b>Legislature</b>	Bicameral: Chamber of Deputies (178 seats; proportionally elected; most recent elections, 16 May 2006) Progressive Bloc [Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) and allies]: 96 Grand National Alliance [Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD), Social Christian Reformist Party (PRSC), and allies]: 82 Senate (32 seats; directly elected; most recent elections, 16 May 2006) Progressive Bloc: 22 Grand National Alliance: 10																								
<b>Judiciary</b>	Supreme Court of Justice																								

### Narrative Description:<sup>1</sup>

#### **Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)**

The Dominican Republic has a long history of authoritarian rule by personalist leaders. However, after the 31-year dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo ended with his assassination in 1961, three political parties – the Social Christian Reform Party (PRSC), the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) and the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) -- have slowly transformed this country into a fragile multiparty democracy. After widespread electoral irregularities and violence in 1994, the PRD and the PRSC signed a “Pact for

<sup>1</sup> The research described in this report was sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF). The PITF is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The views expressed herein are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.

Democracy” that reduced President Balaguer’s term in office from 4 years to 18 months and established a date for new elections (in which Balaguer would not be allowed to compete). While Balaguer’s term was extended to a full 2 years by an act of Congress, nevertheless, competitive multiparty elections were finally held in May-June 1996.

Despite serious campaign violence, domestic and international observers described the 1996 balloting as largely transparent and fair. However, the electoral process leading up to the election was subject to executive branch interference by President Balaguer, who sought to use state resources to weaken the prospects of a PRD victory and, hence, limit the prospects for future corruption investigations against himself and members of his party. While the 1996 presidential election, which was won by PLD candidate Leonel Fernandez Reyna, fell short of being fully democratic in conduct, the 2000 electoral process, won by Hipolito Mejia of the PRD, was widely recognized by both domestic and international observers as “free and fair.” In May 2004, Mejia lost his reelection bid to Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) rival Leonel Fernandez Reyna. Fernandez Reyna was re-elected to office for a third time in May 2008. The balloting was marred by isolated incidents of violence and the widespread political distribution of state largesse by the Fernandez government.

**Executive Constraints: Near Parity (6)**

Democracy in the Dominican Republic remains weak due to the high degree of power concentrated in the hands of the president and because the constitution provides only limited constraints on the actions of the Government. Among the most important presidential powers are those that grant him the authority over virtually all appointments and removals of public officials and those that allow him to suspend basic rights in times of emergency and to rule by decree. Traditionally, the president has dominated the legislative branch by making important policy decisions by decree. Despite the continued dominance of the president in policy formation and implementation, nevertheless, there has been a marked reduction in the reliance on rule by decree in recent years. While largely autonomous, nevertheless, the judiciary remains ineffective and continues to be riddled with corruption.

**Political Participation: Political Liberalization: Limited and/or Decreasing Overt Coercion (9)**

The Dominican Republic is one of the poorest countries in the Caribbean. There is a huge gap between rich and poor in this country, with the wealthiest citizens being the white descendents of Spanish settlers, who own most of the land, and the poorest comprising people of African descent. The mixed race majority controls much of the commerce and represents the bulk of the middle class. Given the racial and economic inequities within the Dominican Republic, its political system has long been defined by factional struggles. Although the era of personalist politics, led by Beleguer (PRSC), Bosch (PLD) and Gomez (PRD), has reached an end, nevertheless, political competition in the Dominican Republic remains highly charged and often violent. The dominant parties are weakly organized and lack ideological or programmatic goals. More often than not, the major parties continue to function as patronage-based machines. In the 2006 legislative elections, the dominant political parties created two competing coalitions. The final results of the polling gave the PLD-backed Progressive Bloc 96 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 22 in the Senate. The opposition Great National Alliance garnered 82 and 10 seats respectively. Despite recent efforts to establish transparent electoral procedures and tackle the pervasive problem of government corruption, persistent human rights problems continue to undermine the consolidation of democracy in this country. Over 10% of the population of this country are citizens of Haiti and have been subjected to social discrimination and mass deportation.