

Polity IV Country Report 2006: Albania

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2005</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2006</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polity:</td> <td>9</td> <td>9</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>9</td> <td>9</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td></td> <td>9</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td></td> <td>Yes</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2005	2006	Change	Polity:	9	9	0	Democ:	9	9	0	Autoc:	0	0	0	Durable:		9		Tentative:		Yes		<p style="text-align: center;">Authority Trends, 1946-2006: Albania</p>
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SCODE	ALB	CCODE	339	Date of Report	9 September 2007																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
3	3	4	7	2	4																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date		24 July 1997		Begin Date																					
				25 July 1997																					
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution	1998																								
Executive(s)	President Bamir Topi (PDS); elected by parliament, 20 July 2007 Prime Minister Sali Berisha (PDS); appointed by president and approved by parliament on 3 September 2005																								
Legislature	Unicameral: Assembly of the Republic (140 seats; 100 directly elected, 40 proportionally elected; most recent elections, 3 July 2005) Democratic Party of Albania (PDS): 56 Socialist Party of Albania (PSS): 42 Republican Party (PR): 11 Other parties: 30 Non-partisans: 1																								
Judiciary	Supreme Court																								

Narrative Description:

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

Albania is still struggling to emerge from decades of rigid, one-party rule under the personalist dictatorship of Enver Hoxha. In the immediate aftermath of Hoxha's death in 1985, and the subsequent abandonment of one-party rule in 1990, Albanian society was plagued by persistent economic turmoil, widespread political corruption and finally, in 1996-97, a wholesale collapse of central government authority. While Albania has made significant strides in reestablishing central political order over the past decade, nonetheless, the factional undercurrents in the political order continue to threaten the consolidation of democracy in this country.

Although the process of political liberalization began in 1990, party politics in the post-Hoxha era have continued to be dominated by remnants of the old communist party structure, now split into two opposing groups: the Democratic Party (PDS) and the Socialist Party (PSS). Albania's first multiparty

elections in 1992 brought the PDS and its leader, Sali Berisha, to power. Berisha, who was held responsible for the turmoil that engulfed the country during his administration, was forced to resign in July 1997 after the rival PSS won 101 of 155 seats in the People's Assembly in 1997 elections. Following Berisha's resignation, the PDS was largely discredited and repressed by the PSS-dominated government. Albanian government was headed for a time, unofficially, by an executive triumvirate, comprising the president, prime minister, and PSS party secretary. Bowing to pressure from the EU to bring factionalism under control and create greater stability, a rapprochement was forged between the PSS and PDS in 2002.

Over the past decade the office of prime minister has gained ascendancy over the post of president within Albania's political system. The Presidency (head of state) has become a largely ceremonial position with limited executive power. Government administration is primarily conducted by the Prime Minister (head of government) who is appointed by the President at the recommendation of the Parliament. In June 2002, Gen. (ret.) Alfred Moisiu was elected president as the consensus candidate of both the PDS and PSS. In July 2002, PSS leader Fatos Nano was appointed prime minister. Nano immediately formed a government of reconciliation that included both Pandeli Majko and Ilir Meta in senior posts (Nano, Majko, and Meta had held the prime minister's office for short periods at various times since 1997).

Under increasing pressure by the European Union to hold transparent elections, 27 parties competed in the legislative polling held in July 2005. These elections, which pitted the Socialist party (led by Prime Minister Nano) against the Democratic party (led by former-President Berisha), were deemed by international observers to be largely free and fair. While fraud and violence did not appear to be significant problems in this election, nonetheless, the disorganization and mismanagement of the polling process tainted the election as they fell significantly below international norms and standards. While the PSS contested the validity of a number of results, nonetheless, Berisha's Democratic Party (and its allies) scored a convincing victory. In mid 2007, rivalry between the ruling PDS and the opposition PSS was again in evidence as the legislature failed to agree on the choice of a new president. Bamir Topi gained office in a fourth round of voting on 20 July 2007 when five members of the PSS broke ranks to confirm Topi, giving him 85 votes (one more than the three-fifths majority needed for confirmation). Topi's election gave the PDS sole control of the executive leadership.

Executive Constraints: Parity (7)

Executive power in Albania has historically been considered more ineffectual than institutionally constrained. General dissatisfaction and, in some cases, popular uprisings have led to the resignations of President Berisha and various Prime Ministers, including Majko, Meta, and Nano, but none of these "discredited" executives have lost their leadership positions within the power structure of Albanian politics. Despite the general weakness of institutionalized executive constraints in Albania since the fall of communism, in recent years the independent power of the chief executive has been quite limited. From July 2002 until September 2005 executive power, while concentrated in the PSS, was diffused and checked among the three PSS leaders (Meta, Majko, and Nano) such that it was often not clear which, if any, of the leaders was able to promote any particular, independent agenda. Moreover, with the ascendancy of the prime minister position with the government structure, the institutional power of the legislature vis-à-vis the chief executive has been significantly enhanced. However, as a result of constant political pressures, endemic corruption, and overt ties to the ruling party, the judiciary continues to provide only a limited check on executive power.

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

Albania's first multiparty elections in 1992 brought the PDS and its leader, Sali Berisha, to power. Berisha was held responsible for the turmoil that engulfed the country in the years following the election and was forced to resign in July 1997 after the rival PSS won 101 of 155 seats in the People's Assembly (allied parties won an additional 21 seats). Berisha, however, remained active in politics following his forced resignation. In the wake of the 1997 elections the PSS used its power to limit the influence of the PDS in government. The PDS ended a ten-month long boycott of the Parliament in July 1999 (the boycott was called to protest alleged unfair practices by the PSS). During that year, the government reestablished its authority in many areas that had been controlled by local gangs since the 1997 crisis. Simmering internal tensions were considerably muted by external pressures and scrutiny, including a UN peacekeeping mission in Albania (withdrawn in August 1997) and a strong NATO presence in the immediate region (Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia). On 28 February 2001, the PSS and PDS agreed to an election pact that established a framework of conduct and code of ethics for the upcoming legislative elections.

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The June 2001 elections were characterized by the most peaceful and orderly campaign in the post-communist era. As a result, the PDS-led coalition Union for Victory (BF) made substantial gains. The post-election government was formed by a coalition between the PSS and three small parties. The BF, however, extended its boycott of the Assembly (since 2000) and only took their seats on 31 January 2002, following the resignation of Prime Minister Ilir Meta. Former Prime Minister Majko was reappointed to the position of Prime Minister in February 2002. In April 2002, an agreement was reached within the PSS to end intra-party feuding. Party leader Fatos Nano was appointed and approved as Prime Minister in July 2002 following Majko's resignation. A reconciliation government was formed by Nano that included both Majko (Defense Minister) and Meta (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs). However, rivalry between Nano and Meta continued through 2003 as a "Meta faction" emerged within the PSS that voted with the opposition on many occasions to block Nano's appointments. In December 2003, the PSS party congress reelected Fatos Nano as party leader and approved rule changes designed to tighten party discipline in response to Meta's obstructionist activities. In September 2004, Meta resigned from the PSS and formed a new political party, the Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI).

Amid growing popular discontent over the level of corruption within the government of Prime Minister Nano, the July 2005 elections returned Sali Berisha and his Democratic Party to power. International monitors indicated that the parliamentary poll had "only partially" complied with international standards. While voting was mainly peaceful and fraud was not systemic, nonetheless, standard democratic practices and procedures were often violated. While the Democratic Party, along with its allies, now control the legislative and executive branches of government, nonetheless, the Socialist party remains a potent opposition force in the country. However, this opposition is more personal and regional than ideological in nature. While Prime Minister Sali Berisha's Democratic Party has traditionally found its support in the north of the country, Nano's Socialists have traditionally had greater political success in the south of the country.