

## Polity IV Country Report 2010: Benin

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2009</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2010</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Polity:</b></td> <td>7</td> <td>7</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Democ:</b></td> <td>7</td> <td>7</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 colspan="3">19</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Tentative:</b></td> <td colspan="3">No</td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2009	2010	Change	<b>Polity:</b>	7	7	0	<b>Democ:</b>	7	7	0	<b>Autoc:</b>	0	0	0	<b>Durable:</b>	19			<b>Tentative:</b>	No			
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SCODE	<b>BEN</b>	CCODE	<b>434</b>	Date of Report	<b>1 June 2011</b>																				
<b>Polity IV Component Variables</b>																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
3	3	4	5	2	4																				
<b>Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)</b>																									
End Date		25 February 1990		Begin Date																					
				25 March 1991																					
<b>Polity Fragmentation: No</b>																									
<b>Constitution</b>	1990																								
<b>Executive(s)</b>	President Yayi Boni (independent); directly elected 5 and 19 March 2006, reelected 13 March 2011, 53.1%																								
<b>Legislature</b>	Unicameral: National Assembly (83 seats; proportionally elected; most recent elections, 30 April 2011) Cauri Forces for an Emerging Benin (FCBE): 41 Unite the Nation (UFN): 30 Other parties: 12																								
<b>Judiciary</b>	Constitutional Court; High Court of Justice																								

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

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

Benin's former president, Mathieu Kérékou, was initially brought to power in a 1972 military coup. Establishing a one-party socialist state in 1975, President Kerekou, otherwise known as "the political chameleon," abandoned state socialism in 1989 and paved the way for multiparty elections. Since this time Benin has been a beacon of democracy and stability in Africa. Despite the increasingly successful steps towards electoral democracy in Benin, voting malpractice and government corruption continue to threaten democratic consolidation in this poor West African country.

The 1990 constitution institutionalized a multiparty democracy with a directly elected president. In 1991, after losing the country's first multi-candidate presidential election, President Kerekou handed power

<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.

to Nicephore Soglo. Kérékou subsequently regained the presidency in the 1996 presidential elections and was named the victor of controversial presidential elections held in March 2001. This election, which international observers deemed free although not completely fair, was won by Kerekou with 84% of the vote in the second round after his main rival, former President Soglo, withdrew from the race. Both Kerekou and Soglo passed age 70 shortly after this election, constitutionally prohibiting them from contesting the presidency again. Kerekou did not seek to amend the Constitution, and allowed the 2006 election to proceed freely. The presidential election was held on March 5 and 19, 2006. Yayi Boni, independent candidate and Chairman of the West African Development Bank, handily defeated rival Adrien Houngbédji for the presidency with 36% of the vote in the first round of voting and 75% of the vote in the second round. The election was generally considered free and fair. President Yayi Boni again defeated his main rival, Adrien Houngbédji of the Democratic Renewal Party, in the most recent election, held 13 March 2011 and involving a total of thirteen candidates; Boni polled 53% of the votes to avoid another runoff election.

**Executive Constraints: Substantial Limitations (5)**

The legislature of this impoverished country remains undisciplined and does not provide a consistent counterweight to the power of the president, who continues to enjoy the considerable support of the military. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the transparent 1999 legislative elections, the opposition gained a significant number of seats and was able to elect Adrien Houngbedji as president of the National Assembly. While a loose coalition of pro-government deputies held a slim majority in the National Assembly, defections from the pro-government alliance were common. The lack of clear majority in the National Assembly delayed passage of legislation and led to endless horse-trading at the parliament every time a bill was voted upon. The opposition gained additional seats in elections on 30 March 2003, although Kerekou's supporters ("The Presidential Movement") remained dominant with fifty-two of eighty-three seats. The most recent parliamentary elections were held 31 March 2007, but the degree to which the new parliament, led by the Cauri Forces for an Emerging Benin, will be able to constrain the president remains to be seen.

The 1990 Constitution provides for an independent judiciary but the president has important powers in regard to the court system. The judiciary remains inefficient and susceptible to corruption and executive influence.

**Political Participation: Democratic Retrenchment: Limited Overt Coercion (9)**

Between 1991 and 2001 voting in Benin was structured along geographic lines as opposition parties gained strength in the center and the south of the country while parties supporting President Kérékou were dominant in the north and the west. This geographic division reflects a history of regional rivalries in Benin. Historically, the south has enjoyed significant economic and political advantages over the north. Despite recent progress in lessening these inequities, political parties continued to have a regional foundation and ethnic rivalries remained prevalent. The contentious 2001 presidential election highlighted the partisan divide in Benin politics as the institutions of governance became increasingly threatened by these factional divisions. More recent elections, however, have seen a decrease in the politicization of ethnic divisions. The country has no majority ethnic group and a diversity of ethnic groups populate government agencies, the civil service and the armed forces. The makeup of the 2007 National Assembly reflected the ethnic diversity of the country: 11 members were from the Nago and Yoruba ethnic groups, 24 from the Bariba, Somba, and Dendi ethnic groups, and 34 from the Fon, Goun, Adja and other smaller groups.

President Kerekou's decision to abide by constitutional requirements and not run for re-election in 2006 was a major step towards regular peaceful transfers of executive power in the country. The subsequent presidential election, deemed free and fair, and the 2007 parliamentary elections, have been suggestive of significant improvements in democratic political participation in Benin. Although President Yayi Boni survived an assassination attempt while campaigning in March 2007, the government did not respond with repression or coercion, and participation does not appear to be systemically factional. In recent years the traditional political structures have given way to an explosion of smaller parties and fragile alliances. There are currently over 50 political parties operating in Benin. There are no government restrictions on political opponents and no single party or group has been able to dominate the political arena.