

Polity IV Country Report 2007: Croatia

<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>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>7</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2006	2007	Change	Polity:	9	9	0	Democ:	9	9	0	Autoc:	0	0	0	Durable:		7		Tentative:		No		
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Tentative:		No																							
SCODE	CRO	CCODE	344	Date of Report	1 November 2008																				
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		16 December 1999		Begin Date																					
				26 November 2000																					
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution																									
		1990																							
Executive(s)																									
President Stjepan Mesic (HNS); initially directly elected 2000, reelected 2 and 6 January 2005, 65.9%																									
Prime Minister Ivo Sanader (HDZ); appointed by the president as leader of the ruling parliamentary coalition, 9 December 2003																									
Legislature																									
Unicameral:																									
Assembly [or <i>Sabor</i>] (153 seats; proportionally elected, 6 seats reserved for Croat diaspora and 5 for minorities exceeding 8% of population; most recent elections, 25 November 2007)																									
Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ): 66																									
Social Democratic Party and allies (SDP): 56																									
Croatian People's Party and allies (HNS): 7																									
Croatian Peasant Party and allies (HSS): 8																									
Other parties: 8																									
Non-partisan minority representatives: 8																									
Representatives of Croats abroad: 6																									
Judiciary																									
Supreme Court; Constitutional Court																									

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

Croatia entered a transitional period with the illness and sudden death of President Franjo Tudjman in December 1999. Tudjman had ruled Croatia in an increasingly authoritarian manner with the backing of his

¹ 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.

nationalist Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) party since 1990. During Tudjman's illness (November 1999), the Supreme Court appointed an interim president to preside over the government until multiparty elections could be held in February 2000. With Tudjman gone, the HDZ could not maintain its hold over Croatian politics. Receiving only 40 of 151 seats the lower house in the January 2000 legislative elections, the HDZ was ill-prepared to contest the presidential elections held the following month. Stjepan Mesic of the Croatian People's Party (HNS) won the presidency in a run-off election with the HDZ candidate placing a distant third. President Mesic was supported by a coalition government comprising former oppositional parties. With the 7 February 2000 presidential elections and the peaceful transfer of executive office, Croatia moved toward completing a major democratic transition to open, competitive elections. Mesic was re-elected president in a run-off election in January 2005.

In November 2000, the lower house of parliament approved constitutional changes that further reduced the power of the presidency and moved the country closer to parliamentary rule by making the cabinet accountable directly to parliament. As such, the popularly elected president shares executive authority with the prime minister who is chosen by and accountable to the legislature. Ivica Racan of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) became prime minister in January 2000 as leader of the ruling six-party coalition in parliament. Following the November 2003 legislative elections (which also saw an increase in the number of seats in parliament to 152), Ivo Sanader of the HDZ party succeeded as prime minister. Sanader was given a new mandate to form a government in November 2007 after his HDZ party won the most seats in parliamentary elections.

Executive Constraints: Executive Parity or Subordination (7)

The president of Croatia serves as head of state and commander of the armed forces and approves certain appointments in local and regional governments. The prime minister is the head of government and is accountable only to parliament. In the new conditions established after the death of its stridently nationalistic leader, Franjo Tudjman: open, competitive elections, the combination of a small party president with a new, moderate, six-party coalition in parliament, and, more recently, constitutional changes to increase the sharing of executive power helps to increase the transparency of the executive's role and end the blurring of the powers of the presidency with those of the government and the ruling party that had occurred under the previous regime. In March 2001 the Chamber of Representatives approved constitutional changes that eliminated the (nationalist HDZ-dominated) upper house, the Chamber of Districts. The judiciary increased its independence in 2000 as the government reduced efforts to exert political influence over court decisions. However, the judiciary continued to suffer from bureaucratic and funding problems, as well as instances of political influence at various levels.

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

Since Tudjman's death in 1999, Croatia has made steady gains in institutionalizing democratic party competition. Croatia's electorate unseated the ruling HDZ in 1999, replacing it with a left-center coalition which pledged to reform the economy, democratize the political system and move the country closer to the West. The reformist movement was further sealed in the 2000 presidential election when a member of the left-center coalition, Stjepan Mesic, won the electoral contest and pledged his commitment to a restoration of the rule of law. According to international observers, the two rounds of presidential elections in 2000 were conducted in calm and orderly fashion, and voters were able to express their political will freely. However, some minor groups, notably ethnic Serbs who had taken refuge in neighboring countries under the previous regime, remained unable to assert their citizenship and exercise their right to vote. During the war of 1991-95, 280,000 ethnic Serbs fled their homes. While efforts have been made at repatriating ethnic Serbs to the country and restoring their property to them, progress has been halting and imperfect. As of 2007, only about 130,000 have returned to the country. Ethnic Serbs currently account for 5% of the total population.

President Mesic's tenure in office has been characterized by his administrations concerted effort to weaken executive power and dampen the influence of the Croatian nationalists. In November 2000, constitutional changes were passed that weakened the presidency and moved the government under parliamentary control. Moreover, in March 2001 constitutional changes eliminated the HDZ-controlled upper house of parliament. While initially resistant to the reform efforts of the new regime, in recent years the HDZ has largely abandoned its nationalist origins and has transformed itself into a European-style center-right conservative party. This transformation allowed them to win the 2003 and 2007 parliamentary elections and permitted the country to gain entrance into the European Union.

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