

Polity IV Country Report 2007: Cuba

<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>-7</td> <td>-7</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>7</td> <td>7</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td></td> <td>46</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td></td> <td>Yes</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2006	2007	Change	Polity:	-7	-7	0	Democ:	0	0	0	Autoc:	7	7	0	Durable:		46		Tentative:		Yes		
Score:	2006	2007	Change																						
Polity:	-7	-7	0																						
Democ:	0	0	0																						
Autoc:	7	7	0																						
Durable:		46																							
Tentative:		Yes																							
SCODE	CUB	CCODE	040	Date of Report	1 November 2008																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
2	1	4	3	4	1																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date		1 January 1959		Begin Date																					
				3 December 1961																					
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution	1976; amended in 1992 to permit direct parliamentary elections																								
Executive(s)	President of the Council of State Raul Castro; first designated to hold executive authority due to the illness of Fidel Castro, 31 July 2006; indirectly elected president by National Assembly, 24 February 2008																								
Legislature	Unicameral: National Assembly of People's Power (614 seats; directly elected from lists compiled by mass organizations, all candidates are members of the Cuban Communist Party; most recent elections, 20 January 2008)																								
Judiciary	Supreme Court																								

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Designation (3)

Fidel Castro, who overthrew the Batista government by force in 1959, has been at the center of power in the Cuban political system for nearly 50 years. In 1961, Castro declared Cuba to be a one-party Communist state and in 1976 he formally established procedures for designating his brother, Raul, to be his successor if he should become physically or mentally incapacitated. Suffering from what has been widely rumored to be stomach cancer, Fidel Castro made Raul “interim” chief executive of Cuba on 31 July 2006. Official power was transferred on 25 February 2008 when Raul Castro was unanimously selected by the National Assembly to succeed his brother as president. Contrary to some expectations, Raul Castro did not choose a younger member of the Party to be his first vice-president, opting instead for the 77-year-old Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, a hardline communist ideologue and member of the old guard. What has been most noticeable about the political succession from Fidel to Raul is that it has been characterized by an

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.

overwhelming sense of political stability and order. There has been no apparent evidence of any rivalry or schisms within the ruling elite that would pose a threat to Raul's consolidation of political power in the post-Fidel era.

Executive Constraints: Slight to Moderate Limitations (3)

In the post-revolution communist political order, Fidel Castro enjoyed virtually unlimited authority. Castro was the Chief of State, Head of Government, First Secretary of the Communist Party and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He exercised ultimate control over all aspects of life through the Communist Party and the state security apparatus. Castro personally chose the membership of the Politburo, the select group of loyalists that headed the Party. With the transfer of executive power to Fidel's brother, Raul, the unlimited power of the chief executive has been slightly restrained. Raul, despite his significant power, does not enjoy the same degree of political authority over the Politburo as had his brother.

The legislative body meets only twice a year for a few days to acknowledge executive decisions and policies of the Government. The National Assembly elects a 31-member Council of State as its permanent organ. The judiciary is subordinate to the will of the Government and Communist Party.

Political Participation: Repressed Competition (1)

There are no contested elections for the National Assembly as the Communist Party is the only legal political entity in the country. This hegemonic regime continues to demonstrate its capacity and willingness to suppress opposition and dissent by maintaining a pervasive system of vigilance through undercover agents, informers and the Committees for the Defense of Revolution that impose ideological conformity and root out "counter-revolutionary" behavior. The authorities routinely harass, arbitrarily arrest, and defame dissenters. In June 2002, in response to increasing international pressures and a proposal to hold a referendum on the future of socialism in Cuba, the National Assembly unanimously adopted a constitutional amendment declaring the Socialist system in Cuba as permanent and irrevocable.

The Cuban opposition to communist rule has historically been voiced by the very large émigré population that has received asylum in the U.S. However, since 2003 domestic opposition against the communist regime has become increasingly vocal and strident. In both 2003 and 2005 dissidents held public rallies in Havana in defiance of the ban on political opposition. These acts of political defiance produced a crackdown on the political opposition by the Castro regime. While many believe that Raul Castro will likely liberalize the economic system in coming years, few expect any significant changes to the communist government's tight control over the political system.