

Polity IV Country Report 2010: Djibouti

<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> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polity:</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>0</td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td></td> <td>11</td> <td></td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2009	2010	Change			Polity:	2	2	0			Democ:	3	3	0			Autoc:	1	1	0			Durable:		11				Tentative:		No				<p style="text-align: center;">Authority Trends, 1977-2010: Djibouti</p>
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SCODE	DJI	CCODE	522	Date of Report	1 June 2011																																
Polity IV Component Variables																																					
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																																
2	2	4	3	2	3																																
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																																					
End Date		9 April 1999		Begin Date																																	
				9 April 1999																																	
Polity Fragmentation: No																																					
Constitution	1992																																				
Executive(s)	President Ismail Omar Guelleh (RPP/FRUD); initially directly elected 1999; most recently reelected 8 April 2011, 80.6%.																																				
Legislature	Unicameral National Assembly (65 seats; directly elected from ethnic constituencies, 33 Issa and 32 Afar; most recent elections, 8 February 2008) Union for a Presidential Majority (UMP): 65 UMP is a coalition consisting of People's Rally for Progress, Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy, National Democratic Party, and Social Democratic People's Party																																				
Judiciary	Supreme Court																																				

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Transitional or Restricted Elections (7)

Since gaining independence from France in 1977, Djibouti has been dominated by the People's Rally for Progress Party (RPP). Under the strong leadership of President Hassen Aptidon (1977-99), the RPP gained control over virtually all aspects of political life in Djibouti. After a decade of strict one-party rule, a multiparty political system was re-established in 1992. The subsequent presidential election, won by Aptidon, was plagued by widespread opposition boycotts and credible reports of fraud. After 22 years of holding executive power, President Aptidon announced that he would not seek re-election in 1999. In the first free presidential election since independence, Aptidon's heir apparent and nephew, Ismael Omar

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.

Guelleh, easily defeated his opposition. While RPP dominance of the political system provided Guelleh with significant electoral advantages over opposition candidates, nevertheless, international observers declared the election to be generally free and fair. While none of the major parties boycotted the polls or challenged the results, these results were not confirmed by an independent electoral commission. In presidential elections held in April 2005, Guellah was reelected in polls boycotted by all opposition candidates. In April 2010 Djibouti's parliament, which is dominated by pro-government supporters, passed a constitutional amendment that allowed President Guelleh to run for a third term in office. The constitutional amendment also shortened presidential mandates from 6 to 5 years and set 75 as the age limit for presidential candidates. President Guelleh subsequently gained re-election in April 2011 presidential elections which were, again, boycotted by all opposition parties.

Executive Constraints: Slight to Moderate Limitations (3)

Despite the return of multiparty politics in 1992, Djibouti's political arena continues to be dominated by the RPP. Under this hegemonic party system horizontal accountability remains limited. The president, in consultation with his cabinet and the ruling party, dominates the political agenda while the legislative and judicial branches of government serve subordinate roles. Both the National Assembly and the judiciary have proven themselves to be little more than "rubber-stamp" institutions. In the fraud-plagued legislative elections of 1997 and 2003 the RPP won complete control of the National Assembly with sixty-five out of sixty-five possible seats. In the 2008 legislative elections, boycotted by all opposition parties, the pro-government coalition once again took all the seats.

Political Participation: Factional Competition (7)

Two main ethnic groups have long competed for political dominance in Djibouti. Historically the relationship between the majority Issa population (who are of Somali origin) and the minority Afar community (who are of Ethiopian descent) has alternated between periods of political accommodation and intolerance. During the early independence years the political balance between these two groups was upset by President Aptidon's decision to establish a one-party state dominated by his ethnic group (Issa) and clan (Mamassan). Issa domination of the government, civil service and the ruling party triggered an Afar-led civil war in Djibouti starting in 1991. Led by the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD), the civil war in Djibouti was largely resolved in 1994 with the signing of a power-sharing agreement with the government. Despite this agreement and the power-sharing arrangement, the common perception was that the Issa population continued to dominate the political arena and a radical faction of the FRUD continued to wage war against the government. However, in February 2000 the government and this radical wing of FRUD signed a peace agreement, effectively bringing an end to the civil war being waged in the north of the country. While the Issa and Afar communities are currently experiencing a phase of reconciliation and compromise, citizens from other Somali clans, Issak, Gadabursi and Darod, and those of Yemeni and other origins, continue to face political discrimination.

As of 2009, the fragile political reconciliation between the country's dominant ethnic clans continued to function as the Somali Issas, who constitute over 60% of the country's population, and the Ethiopian Afar minority, who comprise 35% of the total population, held a roughly equal number of top-level cabinet posts. Additionally, the legislature included members from all clans within Djibouti society. While Issa representatives commanded 45% of the seats, Afars held 40% and the smaller minority groups constituted the remaining 15%. Moreover, while President Guella is from the Issa clan, his prime minister is Afar.

In general, the RPP continues to place significant constraints on opposition political activity in the country. In September 2002 a 1992 law that allowed only three other parties to compete with the ruling party expired, opening the way for the establishment of full multiparty politics in this country. While opposition parties are now allowed to openly operate within the country, the RPP government has little tolerance for protest activity and actively seeks to undermine those individuals and groups that attempt to challenge their political hegemony and restructure the political system along fully democratic lines. No legislative seats were won by opposition parties in the most recent parliamentary elections of 2003.

Factionalism in Djibouti is characterized by the ethnic divisions described above. While in the 1990s the Afar-dominated FRUD represented the primary opposition to the Issa ethnopolitical faction (supporters of Presidents Aptidon and Guellah), the leadership of FRUD was systematically co-opted by RPP following the peace accords of 1994 and 2000. Since this time, the primary opposition faction has been a coalition of groups opposed to President Guellah and the RPP, known as the Union for a Democratic

Change. This democratic reform-touting coalition consists of four principal parties: Republican Alliance for Democracy, formed by former FRUD leader Ahmed Dini Ahmed; Movement for Democratic Renewal and Development, formed from previously militarized elements of FRUD; Djibouti Party for Development; and Djibouti Union for Democracy and Justice. Despite winning 37% of the popular vote in the 2003 legislative election, this coalition failed to win any legislative seats and has been effectively blocked from political influence. Legislative elections held on 8 February 2008 were boycotted by the opposition parties, resulting in the Union for a Presidential Majority coalition taking all seats. Opposition parties also boycotted presidential elections held on 8 April 2011.