

Polity IV Country Report 2010: El Salvador

<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>Polity:</td> <td>8</td> <td>8</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>8</td> <td>8</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>26</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2009	2010	Change	Polity:	8	8	0	Democ:	8	8	0	Autoc:	0	0	0	Durable:		26		Tentative:		No		
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SCODE	SAL	CCODE	092	Date of Report	1 June 2011																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
3	3	4	6	2	4																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date		15 October 1979		Begin Date																					
				2 June 1984																					
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution	1983																								
Executive(s)	President Mauricio Funes Cartagena (FMLN); directly elected 1 June 2009, 51.3%																								
Legislature	Unicameral: Legislative Assembly (84 seats; 64 directly elected, 20 proportionally elected; most recent elections, 18 January 2009) Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN): 35 Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA): 32 National Conciliation Party (PCN): 11 Other parties: 6																								
Judiciary	Supreme Court of Justice																								

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

While electoral recruitment of the chief executive has long been a cornerstone of politics in El Salvador (most recently making a return in 1984), military interference and class warfare have undermined the democratic nature of this process. However, during the 1990s El Salvador saw a marked increase in the nature of democracy as the electoral system was reformed, the military returned to the barracks, and the conflict between the Government and leftist guerrillas was brought to a negotiated close. With the end of the 12-year civil war in 1992 the FMLN has successfully transformed itself from a mass-based guerrilla organization into a mass-based political party. The presidential elections of 1994, 1999 and 2004, all of which were won by candidates of the center-right ARENA party, were deemed to be “free and fair” by both

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.

domestic and international observers. In all of these elections the FMLN accepted its defeat without resorting to violence. Presidential elections in March 2004 brought the ARENA candidate, Tony Saca, to power. In presidential elections held 15 March 2009, the FMLN candidate, Mauricio Funes, narrowly defeated the ARENA candidate, Rodrigo Ávila; Funes assumed office on 1 June 2009.

Executive Constraints: Near Parity (6)

While the Constitution outlines significant checks on presidential authority, the legislative and judicial branches of government continue to struggle to limit the powers of the executive branch. Historically, the presidentialist nature of Central American politics, along with the endemic class warfare found in these countries, have worked together to restrict the preeminence of parliaments and limit the autonomy of the judiciaries throughout the region. Horizontal accountability in El Salvador (along with all of the other countries in Central America) has traditionally taken a backseat to strong central leadership in the defense of elite interests. However, during the 1990s both the legislative and judicial branches of government in El Salvador have increased their autonomy from, and oversight of, the executive branch. The oversight powers of the legislature were further enhanced in March 2000 when the FMLN established itself as the single biggest political force in the National Assembly. However, the ruling ARENA party had been able to retain its hold on power through its coalition with numerous smaller parties in the legislature. The FMLN candidate won the 2009 presidential election and assumed office 1 June 2009, thus completing the transformation of the FMLN from a revolutionary movement to a mainstream political party.

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

Political participation in El Salvador has become significantly less factional and more competitive in nature with the ending of the war in 1991 and the inception of the FMLN as a legitimate political party in 1992. However, the country's two largest parties, the FMLN and ARENA, continue to be plagued by internal divisions between hard line and moderate factions. While the Government's human rights record has made steady improvement since the end of the civil war, nevertheless, class divisions continue to spark violence in the rural countryside and electoral campaigns in El Salvador are often plagued by sporadic events of political violence. The ruling ARENA party, which had been linked to death-squads during the civil war, has rejected calls to scrap amnesty laws which protect former government and military officials from prosecution.