

Polity IV Country Report 2010: The Gambia

Score:	2009	2010	Change	<p>The graph shows a line representing authority trends from 1965 to 2010. The y-axis ranges from -10 to 10. The line starts at approximately 8 in 1965, remains relatively flat until 1990, then drops sharply to about -8 in 1994, and remains at that level until 2010. A vertical dashed line marks the year 1994, with an 'x' at the peak of the drop.</p>		
Polity:	-5	-5	0			
Democ:	0	0	0			
Autoc:	5	5	0			
Durable:		13				
Tentative:		No				
SCODE	GAM	CCODE	420	Date of Report	1 June 2011	
Polity IV Component Variables						
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP	
2	0	0	2	4	2	
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)						
End Date			23 July 1994	Begin Date		24 July 1994
Polity Fragmentation: No						
Constitution 1996						
Executive(s) President Yahya Jammeh (APRC); initially seized power in 1994; initially directly elected October 1996; most recently reelected 22 September 2006, 67.3%						
Legislature Unicameral: National Assembly (53 seats; 48 directly elected, 5 appointed by the president; most recent elections, 25 January 2007) Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC): 42 Other parties: 5 Non-partisans: 1 Appointed: 5						
Judiciary Supreme Court						

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Gradual Transition from Self-Selection (5)

Despite its poverty, since its independence The Gambia had developed a reputation as one of Africa's most consistent supporters of multiparty parliamentary government. Its popular leader, Dawda Kairaba Jawara, and his political party, the People's Progressive Party (PPP), while clearly dominating politics, refrained from using their advantages to undermine the opposition and institute one-party rule. In July 1994, a bloodless military coup led by Yahya Jammeh ousted President Jawara's civil administration and established an Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council in its stead, claiming as justification a goal of rooting out governmental corruption. The 1970 constitution was suspended and all political parties were

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.

banned. The ban was lifted in August 1996 following the promulgation of a new constitution and in preparation for September 1996 and January 1997 elections; however, the former president was forced into exile and his party (PPP), along with two other opposition parties, was banned from taking part in the elections. The September 1996 presidential elections were widely viewed as fraudulent. Jammeh was reelected in October 2001 and September 2006 in presidential elections that were underscored by scattered violence, government intimidation and accusations of fraud. Jammeh's main rival in the 2006 poll rejected the results, saying there had been widespread intimidation by local chiefs, governors and members of the security forces. Prior to the election, the head of the independent electoral commission was sacked. The opposition claimed that after his ouster, many non-Gambians were illegally registered to vote.

Executive Constraints: Slight Limitations (2)

The current polity has distinct features of a "strong" presidential regime; however, a separation of powers is also present. As a result of the last minute decision by the main opposition party (United Democratic Party; UDP) to boycott the January 2002 legislative elections, the president's Ruling Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction party (APRC) swept most seats (with the majority of candidates running unopposed). Not surprisingly, the outcome of this electoral process provided the president with near total political control in the country. In the January 2007 legislative elections, the ruling APRC won 42 of 48 seats further consolidating the control of the president. The APRC has close ties to the military. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, the judiciary, especially at lower levels, reportedly is subject at times to executive branch pressure, although the courts have demonstrated their independence on occasion.

Political Participation: Restricted Competition (2)

Upon seizing power in 1994, the Jammeh military regime suspended the constitution and banned all political parties while promising a rapid return to civilian administration. Despite the promulgation of a new constitution in 1996 that declared Gambia a multiparty state, political activity in this country continued to be heavily restricted. While the new constitution dissolved the ruling military junta and eased restrictions on the formation of new opposition parties, established parties (other than the president's own party) continued to be outlawed. Moreover, the government continued to use its considerable powers of office to coerce and intimidate the opposition. Security forces arbitrarily arrested opposition politicians and journalists and restricted freedom of assembly and association.

Prior to the October 2001 presidential elections, the ban on the party of the former President Jawara (PPP) was lifted and it joined an opposition bloc with the UDP in support of presidential candidate Qusainou Darboe, who finished a distant second (33%) in the balloting. While the presidential balloting was considered relatively free and fair to most observers (despite some serious irregularities), the campaign running up to the vote was less so. Following the election, the government cracked down on the opposition, arresting scores of opposition leaders including one of the UDP top leaders. The UDP boycotted the January 2002 legislative elections, thereby ensuring the APRC's complete and continuing domination of the government.

In late 2004 the government enacted new laws that severely curtailed the independence of the press. In response, in early 2005 Gambia's five main opposition parties formed a coalition, the National Alliance for Development and Democracy (NADP), to compete in the 2006 presidential election. Throughout 2005 the opposition faced considerable harassment by the government. In November 2005 the government arrested three opposition leaders for alleged involvement in "subversive activities." All three were members of the NADP.