Polity IV Country Report 2010: Iraq

Score:	2009	2010	Change
Polity:	-66	3	x
Democ:	-66	4	x
Autoc:	-66	1	x
Durable:		0	
Tentative:		Yes	

Authority Trends, 1946-2010: Iraq

SCODE	**IRQ**		CCODE	**645**	Date of Report	**1 June 2011**

Polity IV Component Variables					
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP
2	2	4	4	3	3

Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)			
End Date	9 April 2003	Begin Date	21 December 2010

Polity Fragmentation: No

Constitution	15 October 2005
Executive(s)	Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki (Islamic Dawa Party), originally approved by the United Iraqi Alliance majority in the National Assembly on 20 May 2006, following the removal of Ibrahim al-Jaafari; reelected 11 November 2010 President Jalal Talabani (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK), first elected by the Transitional National Assembly on 6 April 2005, reelected by the Iraqi National Assembly on 22 April 2006; reelected 11 November 2010

Legislature	Unicameral:
	National Assembly (325 seats; proportionally elected, every third candidate on party list must be a woman; 8 seats reserved for minorities; most recent elections, 7 March 2010)
	    Al-Iraqiyya (Iraqi National Movement): 91
	    State of Law Coalition: 89
	    National Iraqi Alliance: 70
	    Kurdistan Alliance: 43
	    Other: 32

Judiciary	Supreme Court

Narrative Description:[1]

<u>Executive Recruitment:</u> *Transitional or Restricted Elections* **(7)**
The Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party seized power in Iraq in a 1968 military coup. Saddam Hussein was appointed President and Chairperson of the Ba'athist Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) in 1979 upon the retirement of his predecessor, Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr. Saddam Hussein served as chief executive, prime minister, and commander of the armed forces. All members of the RCC were high-ranking members of the Baath party and the government essentially rubberstamped all decisions forwarded by Hussein. Opposition to Hussein was silenced by an efficient security force that maintained its hold on power through intimidation and fear. In 1995, in an attempt to add legitimacy to Hussein's tyrannical rule, the RCC called the first-ever direct presidential elections in Iraq. As the sole candidate, Hussein was subsequently approved as president by a reported 99.9% of the electorate in a poll that did not provide for secret ballots and was widely considered a sham.

President Hussein was forced from power on 9 April 2003 as U.S.-led coalition forces took control of Baghdad. A US-led Coalitional Provisional Authority was established on 21 April 2003. In June 2004 the US handed sovereignty over to an interim Iraqi government headed by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. On 30 January 2005 an estimated eight million Iraqis voted in elections for a Transitional National Assembly. The Shia United Iraqi Alliance won a majority of assembly seats. In April 2005 the Parliament selected Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani as president while Ibrahim Jaafari, a Shia, was named as prime minister.

A fifty-five member constitutional committee proposed a new constitution by national referendum in October 2005, which passed. The first elections under the new constitution were held for the Council of Representatives on 15 December 2005, in which the United Iraqi Alliance lost twelve seats but retained dominance with 128 of 275 seats. Although violence under the transition government continued to intensify leading up to these elections, they were generally considered free and fair. Jaafari, who emerged from the December 2005 election as the country's first prime minister under the new constitution, quickly proved unable to win the support of Kurdish or Sunni parties in parliament. In a compromise move, Jaafari was replaced by Nuri al-Maliki on 20 May 2006. Maliki brought some Sunnis into his government and has tried to maintain a measure of stability in the chaotic violence plaguing Iraq. At the same time, the Kurdish areas in the north have operated autonomously, especially as they remain isolated from the political center by the continuing Sunni and al Qaeda insurgencies that have separated much of the Sunni territories from the Shia-dominated government's control. Without the US military presence in Iraq holding the country together, Iraq would very likely be characterized by fragmentation of the Kurd and Sunni regions and factionalism within the Shia region. The radical Mahdi Army and other Shia militias in the Shia-dominated region have been associated with ethnic cleansing, mass disappearances, and summary executions; these elements have infiltrated the police and armed forces and this makes rapprochement between Shia and Sunni populations extremely problematic, and unlikely in the near term, particularly as former members of the Sunni political elite remain barred from reintegration due to their former-membership in the ruling Ba'ath party.

A new election law was passed on 8 November 2009 and new elections were held on 7 March 2010. On 15 January 2010 the electoral commission banned 499 candidates because of ties to the former Ba'athist regime, including both Sunni and Shia secularists; no candidates from religious parties were banned. The official results of the elections gave the al-Iraqiyya coalition led by former-Prime Minister Ayad Allawi a slight plurality (91 seats) over the State of Law coalition led by current Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki (89 seats) and the National Iraqi Alliance led by former-Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari (70 seats). Maliki challenged the results and called for a recount of the vote but his demand was denied by the electoral commission. Despite this setback, Maliki was able to politically outmaneuver Allawi and, after a nine month period of intense lobbying, was able to form a coalition government in 21 December 2010 with National Iraqi Alliance supporters of Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. In early February 2011 Prime Minister Maliki announced that he would not seek a third term in office when his mandate runs out in 2014. Maliki also stated that he would support the insertion of a clause in the constitution that would institutionalize a two-term maximum for the office.

Executive Constraints: *Moderate Limitations* **(4)**
The current Prime Minister of Iraq experiences, at once, an enormous concentration of authority in the executive office of the central government and offsetting constraints due to his need to ensure the support of the Shia-nationalist group led by Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. Also serving to constrain the executive's independence of action is the need to keep the main body of Arab-Sunnis within the orbit of central authority and the need to maintain flows of assistance and other forms of support from the US government. Most governmental institutions in Iraq, including especially the judiciary, are weak, broken, or wholly dependent on patronage.

Political Participation: *Factional/Restricted Competition* **(6)**
Similar to the Bosnia and Hercegovina (re)established by the 1995 Dayton Accords which exists *de jure* but languishes *de* facto in a tripartite separation of ethnic enclaves, present-day Iraq is simply a pantomime state in which the formerly repressed, majority, Shia group dominates the central state, tolerating only token participation by Sunni and Kurdish groups. The large Sunni minority has been effectively sidelined due to its former support, or deference, to the Ba'athist regime led by Saddam Hussein and the blanket prohibition of former Ba'athists from holding political office or other positions of authority. Kurdish populations in the north enjoy a near-independence for their region with the only point of connect being the ongoing dispute over control of oil reserves centered near Kirkuk along the ethnic dividing line between Kurds and Sunni Arabs. Sunnis find themselves sandwiched between the majority Shia-dominated regime in Baghdad and the minority Alawite-dominated regime in Syria and very limited prospects for their favorable inclusion in either regime, although the Syrian regime has found itself under unrelenting pressure to include their own Sunni majority in 2011. Whatever cohesion exists among Iraq's three main ethno-religious groups was forged by the active intervention of United States' combat forces which, at the height of their strength, numbered nearly 160,000 during the "surge" in 2008.

US forces ended their official combat mission in Iraq on 31 August 2010. All US troops are scheduled to withdrawal by the end of 2011. The political system has stabilized in recent years and levels of political violence have dropped dramatically. The number of civilians killed in political violence in 2010 was at the lowest level since the 2003 US-led invasion, with under 4,000 reported. Despite this positive trend, 13 of Iraq's 18 administrative regions still experience the constant threat of low-level political violence by non-state actors.