

Polity IV Country Report 2010: Japan

<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>10</td> <td>10</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>10</td> <td>10</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>58</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2009	2010	Change	Polity:	10	10	0	Democ:	10	10	0	Autoc:	0	0	0	Durable:		58		Tentative:		No		<p style="text-align: center;">Authority Trends, 1946-2010: Japan</p>
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Durable:		58																							
Tentative:		No																							
SCODE	JPN	CCODE	740	Date of Report	1 June 2011																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
3	3	4	7	5	5																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date		2 September 1945		Begin Date																					
				29 April 1952																					
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution	1947																								
Executive(s)	Prime Minister Naoto Kan (DPJ); elected by the Diet, 8 June 2010																								
Legislature	Bicameral: House of Representatives (480 seats; 300 directly elected, 180 proportionally elected; most recent elections, 30 August 2009) Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ): 308 Liberal Democratic Party (LDP): 119 Clean Government Party (Komeito): 21 Other parties: 32 House of Councillors (242 seats; 144 directly elected, 98 proportionally elected; half renewed every three years; most recent elections, 11 July 2010. <i>Total seats shown.</i>) DPJ: 106 LDP: 84 Komeito: 19 Your Party: 11 Other parties: 22																								
Judiciary	Supreme Court																								

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

Japan is a parliamentary democracy in which executive recruitment is highly competitive. The chief executive is selected by the dominant party (or coalition) in the National Assembly. Members of the National Assembly are selected through democratic elections. The conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) ruled continuously between 1955 and 1993. While the LDP lost its hegemonic power briefly in the mid-1990s, since 1996 almost all governments have been LDP-led coalitions. In September 2007 Yasuo Fukuda was named president of the ruling LDP and prime minister of the country. As a result of parliamentary elections held 30 August 2009, the LDP was replaced as the largest party in parliament for the first time since its formation in 1955. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) outpolled the LDP nearly 3 to 1, taking 308 seats in the 480-seat House of Representatives. The DPJ has experienced a succession of three prime ministers in a little less than two years: Yukio Hatoyama took office 16 September 2009 and was followed by Naoto Kan on 8 June 2010 and Yoshihiko Noda on 2 September 2011.

Executive Constraints: Executive Parity or Subordination (7)

Japan has a parliamentary form of government in which the Diet (House of Representatives) selects the prime minister from its own membership. The prime minister is usually, but not necessarily, the leader of the largest party in the Diet. The prime minister is dependent on the continued support of the legislative body for retaining his/her position of authority. In July 2007 the ruling LDP suffered a crushing defeat in upper house elections and provided the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) control of the Senate. The DPJ has since used its position to block a number of key government proposals, throwing the country into an unprecedented political deadlock. However, the Senate can only delay the implementation of Government initiatives passed by the Diet. While the judiciary also places a check on the arbitrary power of the executive branch, nonetheless, the long reign of the LDP has produced a judicial branch which more often than not defers to the executive branch on important issues of domestic and foreign policy.

The LDP has governed almost without interruption since 1955. It is a broadly conservative party but contains different factions that must compete for power. While the influence of these factions has declined somewhat in recent years under the leadership of Prime Minister Koizumi, nonetheless, they remain an important constraint on executive authority. Cabinet posts are distributed in such a manner as to balance the relative power of these factions inside the LDP. Koizumi's successor as Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, was relatively weak in the sense that he was not the leader of a powerful faction within the LDP. Although chosen largely due to his public popularity, Abe's leadership quickly became untenable as popular support evaporated due to a string of scandals involving members of his government and the LDP suffered a decisive defeat in elections to the upper chamber of the legislature. Abe was replaced as party leader on 23 September 2007 and, consequently, as prime minister by Yasuo Fukuda.

Political Participation: Institutionalized Open Electoral Competition (10)

Japan is a competitive multiparty democracy under the guiding influence of the Liberal Democratic Party. Since 1946 Japan's political development has rested mainly with a small group of conservative politicians, civil servants, and businessmen identified with the center-right LDP (established in 1955 from a merger of the existing Liberal and Democratic parties). While opposition parties have actively competed in the electoral arena in the post-WWII era, their ability to seriously challenge the LDP has been, up until recently, very limited. The ruling LDP stayed in power through its skillful handling of the economy, the lack of a unified opposition, an electoral system weighted towards rural areas (core supporters of the LDP), and rampant corruption. The LDP has always consisted of factions driven more by influence and patronage than by ideology. In 1993 the factional struggles within the LDP caused it to fracture, leaving a trail of constantly realigning parties in its wake. While the LDP retained a plurality of seats in the Diet, nonetheless, a seven party coalition took power and sought to restructure the political system. Changes in electoral rules and efforts to combat endemic corruption were enacted to weaken the institutional power of the LDP. While the LDP remains the dominant party in Japan (regaining government control in 1996), institutional reforms and a downturn in the post-war economic miracle have evened out the playing field on

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.

which it must compete. In elections to the House of Councillors in July 2004, the LDP won only 49 seats to the 50 seats won by the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). However, with its coalition partner's (Komeito) seats, the LDP retained a narrow majority. This majority was further extended after the legislative elections of September 2005 as the LDP and its coalition partners garnered over two-thirds of the seats in the Diet. The LDP was finally displaced as majority party for the first time since 1955 in August 2009 elections in which the DPJ won an overwhelming majority