

Polity IV Country Report 2007: Papua New Guinea

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2006</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2007</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>32</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2006	2007	Change	Polity:	10	10	0	Democ:	10	10	0	Autoc:	0	0	0	Durable:		32		Tentative:		No		
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Tentative:		No																							
SCODE	PNG	CCODE	910	Date of Report	1 November 2008																				
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		Begin Date		16 September 1975 (Ind.)																					
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution	1975																								
Executive(s)	Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare (NAP); previously held office 1975-1980 and 1982-1985; elected by parliament and appointed by the Governor-General, 5 August 2002, reelected 13 August 2007																								
Legislature	Unicameral: National Parliament (109 seats; 89 directly elected from open electorates, 20 from provincial electorates and national capital district; most recent elections, 30 June-14 July 2007) National Alliance Party (NAP): 27 Papua New Guinea Party (PNGP): 8 People's Action Party (PAP): 6 United Resources Party (URP): 5 Pangu Pati/Papua New Guinea United Party (PANGU): 5 People's Democratic Movement (PDM): 5 Other parties: 33 Non-partisans: 19 Nullified: 1																								
Judiciary	Supreme Court																								

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

A constituency under Australia's rule until 1975 when it gained independence, Papua New Guinea has an institutionalized tradition of parliamentary government, with regular elections that are relatively free and fair, although election violence is not uncommon. The parliament and, accordingly, the government are not controlled by any single party, but collectively by several parties and non-partisans, and the prime minister's post has rotated among them. Mikere Morauta of the PDM was chosen to be the prime minister in 1999 following the resignation of Bill Skate of the PPP. Morauta resigned his leadership of the PDM following the June 2002 general elections in the hope that a new PDM leader could mount an effective challenge to the NAP leader in forming a ruling coalition in parliament but the move could not prevent the election of Sir Michael Somare of the National Alliance Party as Prime Minister. Somare was one of the founding figures of the country and received a unanimous vote of support after the twelve PDM legislators decided to boycott the vote. Somare was reelected on 13 August 2007 following July 2007 parliamentary elections. While election processes are essentially free and fair, nonetheless, incidences of vote-buying, ballot-rigging, clan voting, intimidation and cheating are quite common, especially in the country's highlands. While over 100 people were killed in election-related violence in 2002, only 3 casualties were reported in 2007.

Executive Constraints: Executive Parity or Subordination (7)

Papua New Guinea's government system is fashioned according to the British model. Effective political authority is vested in the prime minister and a National Executive Council (Cabinet), which operate under the supervision of a governor-general representing the British monarchy. The governor-general appoints the prime minister on behalf of the British monarch, but essentially the prime minister is elected from among the legislative majority leaders. Cabinet members, as well as the prime minister, must also be members of the National Parliament. The prime minister and the Cabinet must resign in the event of a simple majority "no confidence" vote in the Parliament. Effective accountability of the government to the legislature is demonstrated by the fact that three prime ministers were replaced following the 1997 elections on account of passed or pending "no confidence" votes. Despite these institutional regulations on the chief executive, the prime minister is strengthened by the high turnover rate in parliament. In every election more than 70% of incumbents lose their seats. This high rate of turnover undercuts the institutional strength of the National Assembly. The judiciary is independent but its efficiency is impeded by understaffing.

Political Participation: Institutionalized Open Electoral Competition (10)

In Papua New Guinea's multi-party politics, relatively stable and enduring parties compete for political influence on non-extremist conservative or liberal platforms and representing the interests of urban communities (PP), highlanders (NAP), island communities (PPP) and other social groups. However, no single party has ever maintained a strong parliamentary majority, and independent candidates often gain the largest number of legislative seats. Party allegiance is generally weak, and voting across party lines is common among legislators. The Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Law of 2001 tried to ameliorate the problem of party switching by restricting the ability of serving members of parliament from changing party affiliation during their elected term. As a general rule, the country's population comprises some 1,000 tribes and over 800 distinct languages and is scattered over hundreds of islands; as such, legislators are more likely to be elected for their local prominence than for their party affiliation.

Political competition in Papua New Guinea has traditionally been considered free and fair in nature. However, the 2002 elections were widely considered to be the worst in the country's history. These elections were plagued by widespread delays in voting, allegations of fraud and electoral violence. Over 100 people were killed in political violence during the 2002 ballot. Armed political gangs had hijacked the election in the mountainous interior, killing opponents and destroying ballot boxes, forcing the election commission to declare six seats null and void, and reducing the size of parliament to 103 seats. Most of these problems were confined to the Southern Highland Province. More than 2,000 soldiers were deployed to the Southern Highlands in early 2007 ahead of scheduled parliamentary elections.

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.

A conflict with the secessionist Bougainville Revolutionary Army on Bougainville Island escalated into a serious armed conflict in 1990-1994 but was eventually brought to peaceful resolution through talks. The Bougainville peace agreement and an enabling constitutional amendment were passed into law by parliament in January 2002. The agreement granted the island of Bougainville self-government with a high level of autonomy followed (between 10 and 15 years later) by a referendum on independence. Under this agreement the federal government would retain control over defense and the economy but all other functions would be conducted by a freely elected indigenous government. In December 2004, Papua New Guinea's parliament approved a Bougainville constitution which paved the way for the conduct of elections in this semi-autonomous region. In May 2005 voting took place on Bougainville to elect its first autonomous government. In these elections, former separatist rebel Joseph Kabui was elected leader of the semi-autonomous region of Bougainville.

Despite the regulated and competitive nature of party politics in Papua New Guinea, endemic poverty, rampant crime and increasing gang violence threatens to undermine the social stability of the country. Over 2/3 of the population in Papua New Guinea lives in makeshift shantytowns and unemployment stands at near 70%. According to a recent report conducted by the Australian government, Papua New Guinea is heading toward economic and social collapse and full-scale state failure is predicted within the next 15 years. The country's capital, Port Moresby, is largely controlled by criminal gangs and is considered one of the most dangerous cities in the world. According to the Australian report, Papua New Guinea's weak central government has allowed international criminal gangs to relocate from other parts of Southeast Asia in recent years. In an effort to stem the impending tide of state collapse, in late 2004 the Australian government dispatched over 300 policemen to its former colony as part of their five year plan to reassert central government authority in the country. These forces were sent to both the capital city and to the mountainous highlands where tribal fighting has been reportedly on the increase in recent years. However, by mid-2005 the Australian troops were forced to leave the country after the courts determined their presence to be unconstitutional.