

Polity IV Country Report 2006: Paraguay

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2005</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2006</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 colspan="3">14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td colspan="3">Yes</td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2005	2006	Change	Polity:	8	8	0	Democ:	8	8	0	Autoc:	0	0	0	Durable:	14			Tentative:	Yes			
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SCODE	PAR	CCODE	150	Date of Report	21 November 2007																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
3	3	4	7	2	3																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date		22 June 1992		Begin Date																					
				23 June 1992																					
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution	1992																								
Executive(s)	President-elect Oscar Nicanor Duarte Frutos (ANR); directly elected 27 April 2003, 37.1%																								
Legislature	Bicameral: Chamber of Deputies (80 seats; proportionally elected; most recent elections, 27 April 2003) National Republican Alliance/Red Party (ANR): 37 Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA): 21 Movement Fatherland of the Best (MPQ): 10 National Union of Ethical Citizens (UNACE): 10 Other parties: 2 Chamber of Senators (45 seats; proportionally elected; most recent elections, 27 April 2003) ANR: 16 PLRA: 12 MPQ: 7 UNACE: 7 Other parties: 3																								
Judiciary	Supreme Court																								

Narrative Description:

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

After 35 years of dictatorial rule, General Alfredo Stroessner was ousted in a bloody military coup. The 1992 constitution institutionalized democratic procedures for executive recruitment in Paraguay. The subsequent elections of 1993 and 1998 were deemed to be both “free and fair” by both domestic and international observers. Despite these promising trends, the democratic transition in Paraguay has proven to

be quite tumultuous. Many of the problems associated with the democratic transition in this country could be directly related to the “reserved domains of power” held by the military.

It is widely recognized that General Oviedo manipulated the primary process in 1992 that resulted in Carlos Wasmosy becoming the presidential candidate of the ruling Colorado Party. Moreover, when Wasmosy won the presidency in 1993, this victory was tainted by the fact that Oviedo threatened to stage a coup if the Colorado Party was voted out of office (stating that the military “would govern together with the Colorado Party forever and ever”). Unfortunately for Oviedo, President Wasmosy actively sought to limit the role of the military in politics. As a result of this betrayal, General Oviedo staged a failed coup attempt in April 1996. Oviedo was forced to resign from his military post and was sentenced to ten years in prison. However, Oviedo continued to manipulate politics in Paraguay. In 1998 Raul Cubas, with the support of Oviedo’s political machine, was able to secure an electoral victory and become president. Owing his electoral success to Oviedo, he subsequently freed him from jail. The Supreme Court ordered President Cubas to place Oviedo back in jail but he refused to do so. After opposition legislators and Vice President Luis Maria Argana moved to have President Cubas impeached for defying the Supreme Court, Vice President Argana was mysteriously assassinated in March 1999 (most likely by loyalists to General Oviedo). After violent street demonstrations in Asuncion, Cubas and Oviedo fled the country. Luis Gonzalez Macchi, Head of the Senate, became interim president. In May of 2000 supporters of General Oviedo staged an unsuccessful coup.

In August 2003, Colorado party candidate, Nacanor Duarte Frutos, was elected to the post of president with 38% of the vote. President Duarte ran on a populist message of ending government corruption. In 2005 the President made repeated calls to reform the constitution to allow incumbent presidents to stand for re-election. Duarte subsequently abandoned this aspiration and endorsed his education minister, Blanca Ovelar, to succeed him.

Ahead of the April 2008 presidential election, Paraguay’s small opposition parties have decided to unite under the National Agreement (CN) banner. Fernando Lugo, a priest, has emerged as the main threat to the Colorado party dominance of the executive branch. While Lugo is part of the National Agreement alliance, he is not identified with any political party. He is likely to be the CN candidate for president in the upcoming election. Both the Catholic Church and the Supreme Court, which are strongly influenced by the Colorado party, have actively resisted a Lugo candidacy. Under the terms of the constitution, priests are not allowed to run for public office. In December 2006 Lugo said that he would “resign” from the priesthood in order to pursue the presidency. Church officials have countered that ordination is permanent, and while a priest can resign from active ministry, he does not cease to be a priest.

Executive Constraints: Executive Parity or Subordination (7)

Paraguay’s highly centralized government was fundamentally changed by the 1992 constitution. The new democratic constitution provided for a division of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government. From 1993 until 1998 the opposition parties controlled the Congress and were able to significantly limit the powers of President Wasmosy by rejecting important government proposals, overriding presidential vetoes, and rescinding legislation enacted by the previous Colorado-dominated Government. The strength of the Congress vis-à-vis the executive branch was most vividly demonstrated in the wake of General Oviedo’s failed coup attempt in 1996. Seeking to avoid a military confrontation, President Wasmosy agreed to appoint Oviedo as Defense Minister (a position that could constitutionally only go to a civilian). The National Assembly rejected this appointment. With the reappearance of a Colorado majority in the National Assembly in 1998 the executive branch has sought to reassert its dominance and constrain the powers of the legislative branch. While the Colorado Party has a small majority in both houses of Congress, nevertheless, factional differences within the party result in an unstable majority. Given the fractured nature of the Colorado Party, the legislature continues to be able to reject a significant number of executive branch initiatives. The judiciary remains weak and vulnerable to executive branch influence.

Political Participation: Factional Competition (7)

Politics in Paraguay remains highly factional in nature. On one level the dominant Colorado Party has been reliant on the military to ensure the continuation of their rule over opposition forces. However, at the same time, factions within the Colorado Party have periodically sought to reduce the direct power of the military in politics. This central political tension has resulted in the unstable nature of politics in Paraguay over the past two decades. Most recently, this tension has manifested itself in a failed coup in May 2000 by troops

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loyal to General Oviedo. While this putsch was quickly quelled, nevertheless, it demonstrates the fragile relationship between the military and civilian politicians in this country. Compounding this factional tension is the role of personalism and corruption among the political elite and their continued use of violence to achieve political objectives. The human rights record of the Government remains poor and, as demonstrated by the street violence in Asuncion in 1999, political competition often takes place outside of institutional channels. While some effort has been made in recent years to solidify a stable institutional relationship between the two dominant parties in Paraguay, the Colorado Party and the Liberal Party, factional tensions remain. In February 2000 President Gonzalez's "National Unity Government" suffered a severe setback when the Liberal Party withdrew its support, claiming that the President's Colorado Party had refused to share power with its coalition partners. Despite this setback, the election of a Liberal Party candidate to the office of Vice President in August 2000, the first time in over 90 years that an opposition candidate has won a national election, demonstrates the growing power of opposition forces in this historically isolated Latin American country.

President Luis González Macchi declared a state of emergency on 15 July 2002, following the deaths of at least two demonstrators in clashes with the police in the city of Ciudad del Este, and hundreds of arrests and injuries during clashes in Asuncion, the capital. Protesters, including indigenous people, trade unionists, and peasant farmers, also erected barricades on major highways. However, civic organizations and trade union federations warned their members not to participate in the demonstrations, supporting the government's claim that the protests had been orchestrated in an attempt to provoke a military coup or wider unrest. Vice President Julio César Franco, of the opposition Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA), together with Gen. (ret'd) Lino César Oviedo, who was in exile in Brazil, were blamed for organizing the demonstrations. Oviedo was wanted by the Paraguayan authorities on charges relating to his alleged role in the assassination of Vice President Luis María Argaña Ferraro in March 1999, and on further charges relating to his alleged involvement in an attempted coup in May 2000. Following the lifting of the state of emergency (on 17 July 2002), legislators of the ruling Colorado Party initiated impeachment proceedings against Vice President Franco.

In recent years the left has organized a concerted and united challenge to Colorado rule. In 2006, a 50,000 strong demonstration took over Asuncion to protest Colorado party rule. Leftists and indigenous-based organizations have united behind a Catholic bishop from one of Paraguay's poorest areas, Fernando Lugo, who has actively spoken out against the endemic poverty and deep inequality found in Paraguay. In 2006 these groups united under the National Agreement (CN) banner. In March 2007, Lugo and the CN staged a 20,000 strong demonstration against the Supreme Court, whose justices are all members of the Colorado party.