


Polity IV Country Report 2007: Poland

<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 colspan="3">16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td colspan="3">No</td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2006	2007	Change	Polity:	10	10	0	Democ:	10	10	0	Autoc:	0	0	0	Durable:	16			Tentative:	No			
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SCODE	POL	CCODE	290	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			6 February 1989	Begin Date																					
				2 July 1991																					
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution	1997																								
Executive(s)	President Lech Kaczyński (PiS); directly elected 9 and 23 October 2005, 33.1% and 54%																								
Legislature	Bicameral: Sejm (460 seats; proportionally elected; most recent elections, 21 October 2007) Civic Platform (PO): 209 Law and Justice (PiS): 166 Democratic Left Alliance (SLD): 53 Polish People's Party (PSL): 31 German Minorities: 1 Senate (100 seats; directly elected; most recent elections, 21 October 2007) PO: 60 PiS: 39 Non-partisans: 1																								
Judiciary	Supreme Court; Constitutional Tribunal																								

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

The Solidarity movement in Poland began with a call for free labor unions in the Gdansk shipyards in 1980 and eventually succeeded in dismantling the communist system that had dominated the country through the

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.

Polish United Workers' Party since the late 1940s. Under pressure to reform from the Gorbachev government in the Soviet Union, the Polish government lifted its ban on Solidarity in April 1989, restored rights to the Catholic Church, ended state control of the media, and implemented a new pluralist constitution. Solidarity swept the June 1989 legislative elections and a grand coalition was formed with Tadeusz Mazowiecki as the nation's first noncommunist premier since before the war. Then, in the 1990 presidential elections, Solidarity leader Lech Walesa became president, replacing Communist President Wojciech Jaruzelski. The Walesa administration governed over a very tumultuous transition from a command to a free market economy, made even more problematic by the broad array of nascent, yet vocal, political parties that made governing coalitions extremely fragile and agreements difficult to reach. Walesa lost a very close runoff election in November 1995 to Aleksander Kwasniewski, a former minister in the Communist government who ran for the ruling Democratic Left Alliance (SLD). Kwasniewski was reelected in October 2000.

Unlike most of the other members of the former Soviet bloc, Poland is a parliamentary democracy in which the President has very limited powers. In October 2005 Lech Kaczynski of the conservative Law and Justice Party won the office of president in second round balloting. This election, in conjunction with the parliamentary elections held in September 2005, confirmed a fundamental swing to the right in Polish politics. In these elections the left-wing Democratic Left Alliance was soundly defeated by the conservative Law and Justice and Civic Platform parties. Prime Minister Marcinkiewicz (Law and Justice Party) formed a conservative minority government with two smaller political parties after negotiations with the Civic Platform collapsed. In May 2006 the Law and Justice Party reached a majority coalition agreement with the Self-Defense Party and the League of Polish Families. In July 2006 Prime Minister Marcinkiewicz resigned his post and was replaced by Jaroslaw Kwansienwski, the President's twin brother. In August 2007 the governing coalition collapsed, paving the way for early elections. In these elections, held in October 2007, the center-right pro-EU Civic Platform emerged victorious.

Executive Constraints: Executive Parity or Subordination (7)

The president holds full authority in foreign and defense matters and is empowered to appoint a Council of Ministers (Cabinet) based on the nominations of the prime minister and with legislative approval; he calls legislative elections, and declares a national state of emergency. Decrees in other areas require countersignature by the prime minister. The president is empowered to veto legislation, but vetoes can be overridden by a two-thirds vote of the Sejm. An acting president cannot dissolve the Sejm; but the president can be indicted and brought before the Tribunal of State by a two-thirds vote of the lower house. Prime Minister and Cabinet appointments are made jointly by the President and the Sejm. The Sejm can pass a vote of no-confidence in the government or in an individual minister. The government must resign after a newly elected Sejm begins session. The Senate has veto power over laws adopted by the lower house and has the right to initiate legislation, although most bills originate in the lower house. The judiciary is independent but inefficient.

Political Participation: Institutionalized Open Electoral Participation (10)

Political participation is procedurally open, but not yet fully consolidated. The current multiparty system is composed of several coalitions that are divided on issues of economic reform, foreign debt, and industrial unrest, making a cohesive single-party government difficult to achieve. Parties' and coalitions' influence and voter support are fluid and unstable. Moreover, in recent years the institutional power of the political left had largely evaporated as the Democratic Left Alliance lost over 160 seats in the 2005 parliamentary elections. The collapse of the political left in Poland has given rise to two conservative parties; the Civic Platform and the Law and Justice party. While the Civic Platform draws its support mainly from the prosperous, pro-business western regions of the country, the Law and Justice party finds its support in the poorer, more traditional eastern regions of the country. Despite the significant gains in the consolidation of liberal political institutions in Poland in recent years, human rights and civil liberties may still be subject to limited and sporadic violation. In particular, there are some marginal restrictions in law and in practice on freedom of speech and of the press.