

Polity IV Country Report 2010: Portugal

<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 colspan="3">34</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td colspan="3">No</td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2009	2010	Change	Polity:	10	10	0	Democ:	10	10	0	Autoc:	0	0	0	Durable:	34			Tentative:	No			
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SCODE	POR	CCODE	235	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	24 April 1974		Begin Date	26 April 1976																					
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution	1976 (1982, 1989)																								
Executive(s)	President Anibal Cavaco Silva (PSD); directly elected 22 January 2006, reelected 23 January 2011; 53.0%																								
Legislature	Unicameral: Assembly of the Republic (230 seats; proportionally elected; most recent elections, 5 June 2011) Social Democratic Party (PSD): 108 Socialist Party (PS): 74 People's Party (PP): 24 Unitarian Democratic Coalition (CDU): 16 Left Bloc (BE): 8																								
Judiciary	Supreme Court of Justice																								

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

Antonio Salazar had instituted a corporatist dictatorship in Portugal in 1928 following a 1926 military coup that ended a brief, but troubled, experiment with electoral politics. Salazar was replaced by Marcello Caetano in 1968 after the aging dictator fell ill. Caetano's insistence on retaining Portugal's colonial empire caused friction within the military that culminated in a 1974 left-wing military coup whose leadership was intent on ending colonialism and instituting a civilian-led parliamentary government. Direct election of a president began in 1976 and since that time the military has withdrawn from politics and the process of selecting presidential candidates has been competitive and elections have been transparent.

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.

Beginning in the 1980s, candidates from two major political parties (PS and PSD) have alternated in winning elections and taking presidential office. Rotation of chief executives is ensured by the constitutional provision allowing an individual to serve no more than two consecutive five-year terms as president. Current President Anibal Cavaco Silva (PSD) was inaugurated on 9 March 2006, replacing President Jorge Sampaio (PS) who had served two five-year terms in office. On 23 January 2011, Portugal elected conservative Anibal Cavaco Silva to a second presidential term, delivering a significant political blow to the minority Socialist government led by Prime Minister Jose Socrates. This election took place under the backdrop of a severe budget crisis and deeply unpopular austerity policies enacted by the Socialist government.

Executive Constraints: Executive Parity or Subordination (7)

Portugal has a real separation of powers with checks and balances typical of most consolidated democracies. The president needs the legislature's approval in appointing the prime minister, and the assembly can call confidence votes against the government; the assembly is itself subject to dissolution. The legislature is vested with the powers to ensure that laws and the Constitution are implemented correctly. It also approves administrative laws, budget and economic plans, and international treaties that originate from the executive authority. The judiciary is recognized as independent from other branches of power.

Political Participation: Institutionalized Open Electoral Competition (10)

Both executive and legislative branches of government in Portugal are freely elected by secret ballot in multi-party elections that take place regularly in accordance with the Constitution. Major political parties are durable, inclusive in character and have mass-based national constituencies. The two dominant groups which alternately win the president's office and majorities in the legislature are the Social Democratic Party (PSD), a mildly conservative party that promotes private enterprise but supports social welfare, and the Portuguese Socialist Party (PS), a left-wing party that calls for greater social justice while respecting public liberties and the will of the majority. Both more conservative (like PP) and more radical (like PCP) parties are also represented in the legislature. None of the parties controls a stable majority and coalition-building has been an important part of the political process.