

## Polity IV Country Report 2007: Romania

<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><b>Polity:</b></td> <td>9</td> <td>9</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Democ:</b></td> <td>9</td> <td>9</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Autoc:</b></td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Durable:</b></td> <td></td> <td>11</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Tentative:</b></td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2006	2007	Change	<b>Polity:</b>	9	9	0	<b>Democ:</b>	9	9	0	<b>Autoc:</b>	0	0	0	<b>Durable:</b>		11		<b>Tentative:</b>		No		
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<b>Tentative:</b>		No																							
SCODE	<b>RUM</b>	CCODE	<b>360</b>	Date of Report	<b>1 November 2008</b>																				
<b>Polity IV Component Variables</b>																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
3	3	4	7	2	4																				
<b>Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)</b>																									
End Date		15 November 1996		Begin Date																					
				15 November 1996																					
<b>Polity Fragmentation: No</b>																									
<b>Constitution</b>	1991/2003																								
<b>Executive(s)</b>	President Traian Băsescu (Justice and Truth Alliance ADA: PNL-PD); directly elected 28 November and 12 December 2004, 51.2%																								
<b>Legislature</b>	<p>Bicameral:</p> <p>Chamber of Deputies (332 seats; 314 proportionally elected, 18 representatives of ethnic minorities; most recent elections, 28 November 2004)</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">National Union (UN – coalition of Social Democratic Party (PSD) and Humanist Party of Romania (PUR)): 132</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Justice and Truth Alliance (ADA – coalition of Democratic Party (PD) and National Liberal Party (PNL)): 113</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Party of Great Romania (PRM): 47</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Hungarian Democratic Alliance of Romania (UDMR): 22</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Ethnic representatives: 18</p> <p>Senate (137 seats; proportionally elected; most recent elections, 28 November 2004)</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">UN: 57</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">ADA: 49</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">PRM: 21</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">UDMR: 10</p>																								
<b>Judiciary</b>	Constitutional Court; Supreme Court																								

## **Narrative Description:<sup>1</sup>**

### **Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)**

The communist era in Romania came to a close in December 1989 following a brief popular uprising and the ouster and execution of Communist Party boss Nicolae Ceausescu. In early 1990, dissident members of the Communist Party led by Ion Iliescu formed a provisional government called the National Salvation Front (NSF). Iliescu won the presidency in a landslide (85%) and the NSF secured a legislative majority in Romania's first open elections in May 1990 amid widespread allegations of fraud. Despite his heavy-handed treatment of dissent and questions regarding the sincerity of his reformist agenda, Iliescu was reelected in September 1992 (62%). He was defeated in the November 1996 elections by Democratic Convention of Romania leader Emil Constantinescu but was returned to office with a 67% margin in the December 2000 presidential runoff election out of an original field of 13 candidates. The president is not allowed to be affiliated with a political party while in office. The Constitution was amended in 2003, extending the president's term of office to 5 years. Traian Băsescu, the center-right opposition candidate won the presidency in two rounds of elections held in November and December 2004, narrowly defeating Prime Minister Adrian Nastase. After a failed effort by the legislature to impeach him, President Basescu won a national referendum on his leadership in May 2007.

### **Executive Constraints: Executive Parity or Subordination (7)**

Executive authority is vested in the office of the president. The president is assisted by a 23-member professional cabinet headed by a prime minister who is appointed by the head of state. The constitution grants the president strong powers. The legislature is comprised of several competing factions (socialists, liberal reformers, nationalists, ethnic minority groups) and has experienced great difficulty acting as cohesive block to limit the powers of the executive branch. The judiciary is a separate branch of the Government; however, in practice the executive branch exercises influence over the judiciary.

In April 2007 Parliament voted to suspend President Basescu on the grounds of abuse of office and began impeachment proceedings against him. The attempt to impeach the President followed a period of escalating tensions between him and Prime Minister Callin Tariceanu over the pace of political reforms necessary to become a full member of the European Union. The President had accused the Parliament of dragging its feet on anti-corruption legislation and had criticized the judiciary for its lack of independence in prosecuting cases of government graft. In response, Prime Minister Tariceanu charged that the President had overstepped his political authority, claiming that the head of state's role was limited to overseeing matters of foreign affairs. This standoff caused a split in the ruling coalition of Tariceanu's National Liberal Party (PNL) and Basescu's Democratic Party (which had contested the last parliamentary election under the Alliance for Justice and Truth banner). In April 2007, the Prime Minister fired five out of eight cabinet ministers that had been loyal to the President. When the Constitutional Court declared the Prime Minister's charges against the President as being insufficient to suspend him from performing his duties, the Parliament decided to call a national referendum on his suspension. In preparation for the 20 May referendum, an interim President was established. Basescu, the country's most popular politician, survived this referendum and was returned to office. The President argued that the move against him was partly sponsored by members of parliament who were being investigated for corruption and feared that the new and tougher rules would affect them personally.

### **Political Participation: Political Liberalization: Limited and/or Decreasing Overt Coercion (9)**

National elections provide fair opportunities for political competition among multiple political parties and groups. Many of the political parties, however, remain relatively weak, fluid and personalistic in nature. The constitution guarantees one parliamentary seat to each of 19 ethnic minority organizations. Relations with the large ethnic-Hungarian population have improved despite the rather dramatic gains made by the ultra-nationalist Party of Great Romania (PRM) in recent elections; the PRM is the second largest party in the legislature and its presidential candidate, Corneliu Tudor, forced a runoff election against Iliescu in 2000. Liberal parties have felt compelled to support the minority government of the PDSR in order to block an alliance between it and the PRM. The National Union, an alliance between the Social Democratic Party

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

and the Humanist Party of Romania, gained the most seats in legislative elections held in November 2004; while the center-right opposition candidate narrowly defeated PSD president and Prime Minister Adrian Nastase for the presidency. The government generally respected the rights of its citizens; however, several serious problems remained. Also, the government failed to rescind the prohibitions on "defamation of the nation" and "defamation of public officials" used to harass and punish journalists who report governmental or bureaucratic corruption. In 1999 several journalists were arrested and tried during the year for reporting on corruption by local government officials; journalists who were investigating corruption cases were also targets of violence.

Political rivalry between President Traian Basescu and Prime Minister Tariceanu has increasingly exhibited characteristics of factional politics. Once allies in the Justice and Truth Alliance which opposed the rule of President Iliescu, by 2007 they had become bitter rivals. While Basescu assumed the office of president in 2004 and Tariceanu became prime minister in a fragile four-party coalition, the Justice and Truth Alliance quickly began to fracture along ideological and personal lines. While Basescu has assumed the identity of a populist reformer, Tariceanu has become increasingly associated with the powerful, and often corrupt, business elite within the country. Under increasing pressure by the European Union to enhance the rule of law in Romania and root out corruption, President Basescu has sought to reform the judiciary and increase the transparency of government. The Prime Minister actively sought to prevent this from happening by initiating impeachment proceedings against the President. With the support of Social Democrat MPs in the legislature (who were opposed to President Basescu's initiative to open the files of the communist era), in April 2007 the National Assembly voted to remove the President, accusing him of exceeding his constitutional powers. Once the Constitutional Court found no evidence for these claims that the President abused his power, the parliament called for a national referendum on his rule. In a national vote held on 19 May 2007, the public overwhelmingly rejected the initiative to remove the President. Seeing a downturn in their political support for their part in the impeachment drive, the Social Democrats soon turned against the Prime Minister and his Liberal Party. Governing with only a minority coalition to begin with, and facing increasing public criticism for his plan to impeach the President, the hold on power by the Prime Minister was viewed as tenuous at best. However, the governing coalition was able to withstand a vote of no confidence forwarded by the Social Democrats in October of 2007. With both Basescu and Tariceanu able to hold on to their respective positions of political power, the Romanian political system has become increasingly deadlocked.