

Polity IV Country Report 2010: Rwanda

<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>-3</td> <td>-4</td> <td>-1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>+1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td colspan="3">16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td colspan="3">No</td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2009	2010	Change	Polity:	-3	-4	-1	Democ:	0	0	0	Autoc:	3	4	+1	Durable:	16			Tentative:	No			
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SCODE	RWA	CCODE	517	Date of Report	1 June 2011																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
1	0	0	3	4	2																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date		4 August 1993		Begin Date																					
				5 July 1994																					
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution	2003																								
Executive(s)	President Paul Kagame (FPR); seized power in 1994; designated president, 23 March 2000; elected 25 August 2003, reelected 9 August 2010; 93.1%																								
Legislature	<p>Bicameral:</p> <p>Chamber of Deputies (80 seats; 53 proportionally elected, 24 female members elected by provincial councils, 2 by the National Youth Council and 1 by the Federation of the Associations of the Disabled; most recent elections, 15 September 2008)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Coalition of Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) & 6 other parties: 42 (Coalition consists of RPF, Christian-Democratic Party/PDC, Islamic Democratic Party/PDI, Rwandese Socialist Party/PSR, Prosperity and Solidarity Party/PSP, Party for Progress and Concord/PPC, and Democratic Union of the Rwandese People/UDPR)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Social Democratic Party (PSD): 7</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Liberal Party (PL): 4</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Indirectly elected members: 27</p> <p>Senate (26 seats; 12 elected by provincial and sectoral councils, 8 appointed by the president to ensure representation of historically marginalized communities, 4 by the Forum of political formation and 2 elected by the staff of the universities. Former presidents can request to be a member of the senate.)</p>																								
Judiciary	Supreme Court																								

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Self-Selection (4)

Democratic norms and institutions have failed to take root in this society which has been plagued by chronic ethnic tensions and violence in the post-colonial era. With the migration of Tutsi pastoralists into Central Africa in the 16th century, indigenous Hutu agriculturalists were quickly subordinated under a Tutsi-dominated feudal kingdom. Both Germany and Belgium relied on this pre-existing ethnic hierarchy to secure their colonial ambitions in Rwanda throughout the first half of the 20th century. However, by the late 1950s an increasingly politicized Hutu majority, with the support of the Belgian military, sparked a revolt which resulted in the overthrow of the Tutsi monarchy in 1959. Two years later, in September 1961, the Party of the Hutu Emancipation Movement (PARMEHUTU) won an overwhelming victory in a UN-supervised referendum. With the granting of independence from Belgium in July 1962, Gregoire Kayibanda, leader of PARMEHUTU, became the country's first president. Fearful of Tutsi political ambitions in the post-colonial era, Hutu hegemony was maintained by the systematic persecution of Tutsis and the increasing subversion of democratic institutions to Hutu nationalist leaders and agendas.

While Kayibanda was reelected president in 1969, beset by increasing ethnic violence between Hutu and Tutsi in the early 1970s he was ousted by Major General Juvenal Habyarimana in a bloodless coup. President Habyarimana dissolved the National Assembly, abolished all autonomous political activity and reinforced the state ideology of Hutu power. In 1975 Habyarimana established a one-party state under the control of the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND). The authoritarian MRND, which was dominated by Hutus from Habyarimana's political base in the north of the country, controlled the political arena in Rwanda for the next fifteen years. President Habyarimana was reelected in 1978, 1983 and 1988 in restricted national elections.

In the summer of 1991, under increasing military assault from Tutsi-led rebels in Uganda and from mounting political pressure from Hutu opposition parties inside Rwanda, Habyarimana stated his intention to reestablish a multiparty system. Despite the slight liberalization of the political arena in the early 1990s, President Habyarimana continued to drag his feet on the establishment of a broad-based national unity government. As the military offensive against the Kigali government escalated in early 1993, President Habyarimana signed a peace accord with his rivals. The Arusha Accords, signed in August 1993, outlined a plan for greater power sharing with both the Hutu opposition and the Tutsi rebels. Habyarimana failed to implement the objectives outlined in the Arusha Accords as extremists within the Hutu power movement began to dominate both the political discourse and actions of the government.

President Habyarimana was killed in April 1994 when his airplane was shot down on its approach to Kigali airport. In the midst of increasing social anarchy, as Hutu militias engaged in a pogrom of ethnic cleansing against Tutsis and Hutu opponents, Theodore Sindikubgabo became president of a Hutu-dominated transitional government. The FPR, the Tutsi-dominated rebel group that had been fighting the Habyarimana government since the late 1980s, rejected this transitional government and continued to pursue its military objectives. In the aftermath of the 1994 genocide of over 800,000 Tutsis in the spring of 1994, the FPR captured Kigali, drove the Hutu militias into neighboring countries and established an interim government of national unity based on the framework established under the Arusha Accords. While the post-genocide government is broadly inclusive, FPR members continue to wield the most influence. FPR member Pasteur Bizimunga, a Hutu, was nominated as president in 1994, but real executive power was held by Vice President Paul Kagame. Kagame, a Tutsi, was designated president in March 2000. In April 2002 President Kagame ruled out an extension of the term of his FPR interim administration which was due to expire in 2003.

Following a constitutional referendum in May 2003, a new constitution was signed into law on 5 June 2003. In preparation for the upcoming presidential and legislative elections the government registered eight political parties but banned its main opposition, the Movement Democratique Republican (MDR) which it accused of promoting a "divisive ideology". In the election of 25 August 2003 President Kagame won a landslide victory over two Hutu candidates. International observers reported that although the election was a "positive step" for Rwanda's democratization process it was, nonetheless, marred by

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.

“numerous election irregularities” and cases of electoral intimidation. Kagame was inaugurated on 12 September 2003.

On 9 August 2010 President Kagame was overwhelmingly reelected, winning over 93% of the vote in elections that were deemed to be deeply problematic by international observers. The election campaign was marred by targeted violence and intimidation against political opponents of President Kagame, both Hutu and Tutsi, while all independent voices in the media were censored. In addition, a number of senior military officers, many who have become vocal in their displeasure with the President, were placed under house arrest during the campaign. The President’s use of a law that prohibits “genocide ideology” was liberally employed to sideline all significant political challengers to Kagame’s reelection bid. In recent years President Kagame has become increasingly challenged on several fronts, including by the formation of the Democratic Green Party. Led by Frank Habineza, this party taps into Kagame’s core base of political support, that of the previously exiled Tutsis who now hold influential positions within Rwandan society. Fearful of the rise of a Tutsi-supported challenger, President Kagame banned the party from participating in the election while one of its leaders was killed under mysterious circumstances. All three of the challengers to Kagame in the presidential race had ties to his Tutsi-dominated RPF.

Executive Constraints: Slight to Moderate Limitations (3)

Despite the inclusive nature of the post-genocide government, where the Tutsi-dominated FPR held a minority of cabinet portfolios and legislative seats, responsibility for defining public policy in Rwanda remained concentrated in the hands of a small circle of FPR members led by President Paul Kagame. The transitional national unity government and legislature, both established in 1994, extended their mandates in 1999 for an additional four years. In preparation for the return of electoral politics in 2003, a national constitution commission was established in November 2000 to replace the Fundamental Law that was adopted in 1995.

Elections for the legislative branch of government were held on 30 September 2003. These elections, the first since independence from Belgium 40 years earlier, resulted in a landslide victory for the four-party coalition led by President Kagame’s Rwandan Patriotic Front (FRP). Of the fifty-three seats contested in direct elections, forty were won by FRP candidates. In the aftermath of these elections, President Kagame appointed a new cabinet which closely resembled the cabinet of his transitional government. The cabinet, including the post of prime minister, were all filled by members of Kagame’s FPR. While the creation of this new legislative body marks a slight improvement in horizontal accountability in Rwanda, it does not appear as if this assembly will either be willing or able to fundamentally challenge the executive authority of President Kagame anytime in the foreseeable future.

Political Participation: Restricted Competition (2)

Post-colonial politics in Rwanda has been intractably tied up with the deep ethnic cleavages found in this society. Political tension between the majority Hutu population and the minority Tutsi community has erupted into systematic ethnic violence on three occasions since 1962, resulting in over one million deaths. While the FPR-led government has been accused of reprisal killings in the wake of the 1994 genocide, it has not engaged in the systematic killing of Hutu civilians. Nevertheless, it has come under increasing political fire for its continued efforts to restrict basic civil liberties and political rights.

Since the genocide of 1994, political parties closely identified with Hutu power have been banned while the remaining political parties agreed to suspend political activity until 2003. While the government relaxed controls on opposition political party activity in the months preceding the presidential and legislative elections of 2003, both elections were plagued by criticisms of electoral malpractice and intimidation. Although the subsequent government has committed itself to improving transparency and human rights practices, freedom of the press remains somewhat limited, and reports continue to surface of extra-legal detentions and suspicious disappearances of critical journalists. Government-led attempts to establish a national identity that supersedes Hutu and Tutsi ethnic identities have been problematic at best. The main challenge for the regime in 2006 and 2007 lies in containing the continuing threat posed by Rwandan opposition refugees and former-Interhamwe militias that fled to lawless regions in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Rwanda provides support for ethnic-Tutsi militias in the DRC in hope of maintaining a buffer zone along the border. It also has pressured the DRC government to increase security and disarm rebel militias in the bordering region, backed by threats of military intervention by Rwandan Army forces, as it has on several occasions since the FRP’s takeover in 1994. The RPF won a

landslide victory in September 2008 legislative elections, securing nearly 80% of the vote with the mainly Hutu opposition parties (Social Democratic Party and Liberal Party) winning token representation.