

## Polity IV Country Report 2010: South Africa

<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> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Polity:</b></td> <td>9</td> <td>9</td> <td>0</td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Democ:</b></td> <td>9</td> <td>9</td> <td>0</td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Autoc:</b></td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Durable:</b></td> <td></td> <td>16</td> <td></td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Tentative:</b></td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2009	2010	Change			<b>Polity:</b>	9	9	0			<b>Democ:</b>	9	9	0			<b>Autoc:</b>	0	0	0			<b>Durable:</b>		16				<b>Tentative:</b>		No				<p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">Authority Trends, 1946-2010: South Africa</p>
Score:	2009	2010	Change																																		
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<b>Tentative:</b>		No																																			
SCODE	<b>SAF</b>	CCODE	<b>560</b>	Date of Report	<b>1 June 2011</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	2 February 1990		Begin Date	27 April 1994																																	
<b>Polity Fragmentation: No</b>																																					
<b>Constitution</b>	1997																																				
<b>Executive(s)</b>	President Jacob Zuma (ANC); elected by the National Assembly 6 May 2009																																				
<b>Legislature</b>	Bicameral: National Assembly (400 seats; proportionally elected; most recent elections, 22 April 2009) African National Congress (ANC): 264 Democratic Alliance (DA): 67 Congress of the People (COPE): 30 Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP): 18 Other parties: 21 National Council of Provinces (90 seats; selected by the nine provincial legislatures)																																				
<b>Judiciary</b>	Constitutional Court; Supreme Court of Appeals																																				

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

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

The first European settlers arrived in South Africa in 1652. The Dutch Afrikaners (Boers) expanded their conquest of land in the region throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, however, centralization of political authority was not established until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Britain increased the pace of colonization and gained control of both the Boer- and Zulu-held regions. The Union of South Africa was

<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.

formed in 1910 and, in 1931, Afrikaner political ambitions were realized with the achievement of full independence within the Commonwealth of Nations. Under the guiding influence of the Afrikaner-based National Party, a policy of apartheid was established in 1948. While the white minority established a competitive system of democratic recruitment within South Africa, the majority black population remained disenfranchised. The apartheid policy placed severe economic, social and political restrictions on non-whites and established a series of “self-governing” rural homelands (or bantustans) for the various African “tribes.” In resistance to this policy of racial segregation and discrimination the African National Congress (formed in 1912) began an active campaign of national armed resistance to white rule during the 1960s and ‘70s. Under increasing international and domestic pressure, Prime Minister P.W. Botha, elected in 1978, ushered in a slow process of political reform in South Africa that culminated with the country’s first multiracial national elections held in 1994. Nelson Mandela, leader of the African National Congress (ANC), was elected president of South Africa in these elections thus bringing to an end the “racial democracy” of the apartheid system.

The chief executive in South Africa is recruited through a competitive multiparty system. The majority party (or majority coalition) in the National Assembly selects the chief executive. Members of the legislature are popularly elected through a proportional representation system. South Africans have experienced three successful national elections since the end of the apartheid system in 1994. All of these elections have been dominated by the African National Congress. In 1999 Thabo Mbeki, who had replaced Mandela as president of the ANC in 1997, became president of South Africa. Mbeki was reelected in 2004. On 18 December 2007, Mbeki lost a close vote to rival Jacob Zuma for leadership of the ANC and, as a result, he was forced to resign the presidency on 24 September 2008 in the run up to 2009 elections (he was constitutionally barred from seeking an additional term in office). The ANC-controlled National Assembly elected Kgalema Motlanthe to finish Mbeki’s term in office. Jacob Zuma was elected president by members of the ANC-controlled National Assembly on 6 May 2009 and was sworn into office on 9 May 2009.

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

The type of presidential system found in South Africa places significant constraints on the political autonomy of the chief executive. While the president is not directly accountable to the legislature (as is in the case in a traditional parliamentary system), nevertheless, s/he is chosen by the National Assembly. Moreover, under the terms of the 1997 constitution, political power is shared between the president and the Parliament.

While the institutional design of the South African government provides for significant horizontal accountability, the dominance of the ANC in the post-apartheid era has provided the executive branch with significant power to chart the course of the country with little interference from the legislature. In 2003 the ANC, through opposition party defections, achieved a two-thirds majority in parliament. The political dominance of the ANC was reaffirmed with their landslide victory in the 2004 legislative elections. The judiciary is largely independent from executive influence.

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

The post-apartheid era has been remarkably stable. South Africa’s transition from racial authoritarianism to a pluralist democracy was initially guided by two core parties, the white-based National Party and the black-based ANC. The first post-apartheid elections, held in April 1994, gave the ANC sixty-two percent of the vote and set the stage for a Government of National Unity (GNU), a power-sharing political body that was to rule for five years under an interim constitution. However, in 1996 the NP left the GNU and assumed the role of the loyal opposition within the legislature.

The African National Congress (ANC), under the leadership of Nelson Mendela and Thabo Mbeki, has won two successful democratic elections since 1994. Falling only one seat short of achieving a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly in the June 1999 elections (something that is generally not supposed to happen under a proportional representations electoral system), the ANC has, for all practical purposes, transformed South Africa into a one-party dominant democracy. With the defection of nine opposition MPs to the ANC in the spring of 2003 the ANC has finally gained the two-thirds majority necessary to change the constitution if it so desires. In preparation for the 2004 elections the former ruling party, the National Party, formed an alliance with the ANC.

The ANC continues to hold widespread support among the majority black population, although persistent problems of poverty, crime, inequality and corruption have begun to slowly tarnish the political gleam of

the ANC. While numerous political parties operate in South Africa, racial and regional-linguistic markers continue to define many of these new parties. Sporadic violence in the Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal continues to weaken the democratic process in South Africa. Moreover, the slow pace of land redistribution in the post-apartheid era has increased racial tensions in recent years and the ANC's adoption of pro-market reforms has weakened its alliance with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). During 2001 large street protests, led by COSATU and the SACP, were held in South Africa to challenge the ANC's policy of privatizing state-owned assets. Despite these problems, most political observers suggest that there is practically no risk of a coup or major rebellion occurring in South Africa. Freedom of speech and assembly are constitutionally protected and the civil rights of citizens are generally respected.