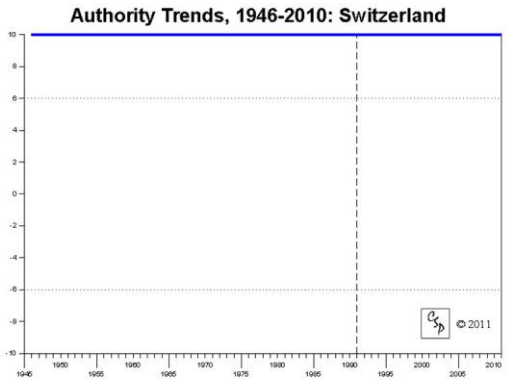
Polity IV Country Report 2010: Switzerland

Score:	2009	2010	Change
Polity:	10	10	0
Democ:	10	10	0
Autoc:	0	0	0
Durable:		162	
Tentative:		No	



SCODE	**SWZ**	CCODE	**225**	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		Begin Date	12 September 1848 (Ind.)

Polity Fragmentation: No

Constitution	1999 (rewritten from 1874 constitution)
Executive(s)	President Micheline Calmy-Rey (SPS); elected by the legislature from the nine-member Federal Council for a one-year rotating term, 2010
Legislature	Bicameral: National Council (200 seats; proportionally elected; most recent elections, 21 October 2007) Swiss People's Party (SVP): 62 Social Democratic Party (SPS): 43 Freethinking Democratic Party (FDP): 31 Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP): 31 Other parties: 33 Council of States (46 seats; directly elected by cantons; most recent elections, 21 October, 11, 18, and 25 November 2007) CVP: 15 FDP: 12 SPS: 9 SVP: 7 Other parties: 3
Judiciary	Federal Supreme Court

Narrative Description:[1]

Executive Recruitment: *Competitive Elections* (8)

Executive authority is vested in the nine-member Federal Council as a collegial presidency, and major executive decisions are made by a majority vote of its members. The Federal Council is elected by a joint session of the legislature, which is formed by free multi-party elections once in four years. Presently, the Federal Council is made up by representatives of five parties: Swiss People's Party (SVP), Social Democratic Party (SPS), Freethinking Democratic Party (FDP), Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP), and Conservative Democratic Party (BDP). Each year, by tradition, a different member of the council fills the largely ceremonial post of Federal President on a rotating basis. The office does not confer the status of head of state, which is held jointly by all members of the council.

For decades, the Federal Council was made up by a grand coalition of all the main parties in parliament, in an effort to ensure stability and promote consensus. Between 1959 and 2003, membership was based on a fixed formula which gave the liberal Free Democrats two seats, the center-left Social Democrats two, the center-right Christian Democrats two and the right-wing Swiss People's Party one, regardless of any changes in their share of MPs. This formula was amended in 2003, when the anti-EU Swiss People's Party overtook the Free Democrats and Social Democrats to become the most popular party, and was given a second post, at the expense of the waning Christian Democrats.

In December 2007, the rising Swiss People's Party ended decades of consensus politics when it suspended its two members of the Federal Council and declared itself in opposition. The move was a response to parliament's refusal to re-elect the party's controversial leader, Christoph Blocher, to the Federal Council over its anti-immigration election campaign. The Swiss People's Party regained a seat on the council with the election of Ueli Maurer in December 2008. Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, one of the two Federal Council members expelled from the Swiss People's Party in 2007, retained her office, but as a member of a new moderate breakaway group, the Conservative Democratic Party.

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

Swiss system is strongly influenced in its operation by the use of the popular initiative and the referendum, through which the electorate plays a direct role in making important political, economic, and social decisions at all levels of government. The Constitution stipulates that the sovereign power rests with the people, who vote on proposed legislation several times a year. Since the federal government is elected by the legislature, it is dependent on its continued support to remain in office. Furthermore, the Swiss system grants considerable autonomy to individual cantons, which also limits the powers of the federal government. Finally the rotating federal president serves his/her one-year term as "the first among equals" and has limited powers within the Federal Council. The judiciary is separate and independent of the Government.

Political Participation: *Institutionalized Open Electoral Competition* (10)

Representative democracy and civil liberties based on a national consensus have been instituted in Switzerland since the middle of the 19th century. The new Constitution that was approved by voters in 1999 and came into force in 2000 provides for new protection of citizens' rights including equal access to political process. Political participation is generally consolidated and consensual in nature and characterized by durable party organizations: conservative SVP, social-democratic SPS, liberal FDP and regionalist CVP; these same parties have been governing the country in a stable coalition since 1959.

[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.