

FREEDOM
IN THE
WORLD
2007

THE ANNUAL SURVEY OF
POLITICAL RIGHTS AND
CIVIL LIBERTIES

F R E E D O M H O U S E

Freedom in the World
2007

The findings of *Freedom in the World 2007* include events from December 1, 2005 through December 31, 2006.

Freedom in the World 2007

The Annual Survey of Political Rights & Civil Liberties

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Freedom in the World 2007: Freedom Stagnation Amid Pushback Against Democracy

Arch Puddington

The year 2006 saw the emergence of a series of worrisome trends that together present potentially serious threats to the stability of new democracies as well as obstacles to political reform in societies under authoritarian rule. These trends were among the principal findings of *Freedom in the World 2007*, Freedom House's annual survey of political rights and civil liberties worldwide. The survey findings note that the percentage of countries designated as Free has failed to increase for nearly a decade and suggest that these trends may be contributing to a developing "freedom stagnation." Major findings also include a setback for freedom in a number of countries in the Asia-Pacific region, a more modest decline in Africa, and an entrenchment of authoritarian rule in the majority of countries of the former Soviet Union.

One of the most troubling developments identified is a growing "pushback" against organizations, movements, and media that monitor human rights or advocate for the expansion of democratic freedoms. A systematic effort to weaken or eliminate pro-democracy forces is most prevalent among authoritarian regimes in the former Soviet Union. But governments in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America have also taken steps to diminish freedom of assembly, smother civil society, and silence critics.

Thus far, this campaign to stifle civil society and squeeze potential sources of pro-democracy activism has mainly played out in those societies already under dictatorial rule, such as Belarus and Uzbekistan, and those clearly moving in an authoritarian direction, such as Russia and Venezuela. The pushback against democracy therefore poses a much greater threat to the spread of freedom in authoritarian settings than to those societies where a strong measure of democratic liberties has been achieved. Significantly, the past year saw modest declines in such key authoritarian states as Iran and Zimbabwe.

In the longer established democracies of North America, Western Europe, and the South Pacific, lively debate continued about whether laws enacted to combat terrorism following 9/11, and other policies pursued by governments, constitute serious infringements on civil liberties. In many instances, concerns focused on the heightened scrutiny being given to certain minorities and immigrant communities in these countries.

On a global scale, the state of freedom in 2006 differs little from that of 2005.

The number of countries judged by *Freedom in the World* as Free in 2006 stood at 90, representing 47 percent of the world's 193 polities and 3,004,990,000 people—46 percent of the global population. The number of Free countries increased by one since the previous survey for the year 2005.

4 Freedom in the World—2007

The number of countries qualifying as Partly Free stood at 58, or 30 percent of all countries assessed by the survey, with 1,083,000,000 people living in Partly Free societies, 17 percent of the world's total. The number of Partly Free countries did not change from the previous year.

Forty-five countries were judged Not Free, representing 23 percent of the total polities. The number of people living under Not Free conditions stood at 2,448,600,000—37 percent of the world—although it is important to note that about one half of this number lives in just one country: China. The number of Not Free countries did not change from 2005.

The number of electoral democracies remained unchanged at 123. Three countries joined the ranks: Haiti, Zambia, and Montenegro, the last of which is a new country to the survey. Developments in three countries—Nigeria, Thailand, and the Solomon Islands—disqualified them from the electoral democracy list.

Freedom in the World—2007 Survey

The population of the world as estimated in mid-2006 is 6,536.8 million persons, who reside in 193 sovereign states. The level of political rights and civil liberties as shown comparatively by the Freedom House Survey is:

Free: 3,005.0 million (46 percent of the world's population) live in 90 of the states.

Partly Free: 1,083.2 million (17 percent of the world's population) live in 58 of the states.

Not Free: 2,448.6 million (37 percent of the world's population) live in 45 of the states.

A Record of the Survey (population in millions)

Year under Review	FREE	PARTLY FREE	NOT FREE	WORLD POPULATION
Mid-1992	1,352.2 (24.83%)	2,403.3 (44.11%)	1,690.4 (31.06%)	5,446.0
Mid-1993	1,046.2 (19.00%)	2,224.4 (40.41%)	2,234.6 (40.59%)	5,505.2
Mid-1994	1,119.7 (19.97%)	2,243.4 (40.01%)	2,243.9 (40.02%)	5,607.0
Mid-1995	1,114.5 (19.55%)	2,365.8 (41.49%)	2,221.2 (38.96%)	5,701.5
Mid-1996	1,250.3 (21.67%)	2,260.1 (39.16%)	2,260.6 (39.17%)	5,771.0
Mid-1997	1,266.0 (21.71%)	2,281.9 (39.12%)	2,284.6 (39.17%)	5,832.5
Mid-1998	2,354.0 (39.84%)	1,570.6 (26.59%)	1,984.1 (33.58%)	5,908.7
Mid-1999	2,324.9 (38.90%)	1,529.0 (25.58%)	2,122.4 (35.51%)	5,976.3
Mid-2000	2,465.2 (40.69%)	1,435.8 (23.70%)	2,157.5 (35.61%)	6,058.5
Mid-2001	2,500.7 (40.79%)	1,462.9 (23.86%)	2,167.1 (35.35%)	6,130.7
Mid-2002	2,717.6 (43.85%)	1,293.1 (20.87%)	2,186.3 (35.28%)	6,197.0
Mid-2003	2,780.1 (44.03%)	1,324.0 (20.97%)	2,209.9 (35.00%)	6,314.0
Mid-2004	2,819.1 (44.06%)	1,189.0 (18.59%)	2,387.3 (37.33%)	6,395.4
Mid-2005	2,968.8 (45.97%)	1,157.7 (17.93%)	2,331.2 (36.10%)	6,457.7
Mid-2006	3,005.0 (46.00%)	1,083.2 (17.00%)	2,448.6 (37.00%)	6,536.8

* The large shift in the population figure between 1997 and 1998 is due to India's change in status from Partly Free to Free.

Three countries experienced positive status changes: Guyana moved from Partly Free to Free, and Haiti and Nepal moved from Not Free to Partly Free. Two countries experienced negative status changes: both Thailand and Congo (Brazzaville) moved from Partly Free to Not Free.

At the same time, the number of countries that experienced negative changes in freedom without meriting a status change outweighed those that received positive changes: 33 countries underwent negative changes, as opposed to a mere 18 with positive changes.

Several of the countries that showed declines during the year are those already counted among the world's most repressive states: Burma, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Eritrea, and Iran. Yet declines were also noted in a number of countries rated Free or Partly Free, but whose democratic institutions remain unformed or fragile, as well as in societies that had previously demonstrated a strong measure of democratic stability: South Africa, Kenya, Taiwan, Philippines, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and Hungary. (A full list of country advances and declines, with explanations for the changes, follows in an appendix).

Year Under Review	Free	Partly Free	Not Free
1976	42	49	68
1986	57	57	53
1996	79	59	53
2006	90	58	45

In 2006, Freedom House began publishing a more detailed set of data for the countries assessed by *Freedom in the World*. In addition to the overall political rights and civil liberties ratings that have traditionally been made public, for the first time, Freedom House released each country's scores in the seven subcategories that determine our ratings: political process, political pluralism and participation, functioning of government (including corruption and transparency), freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights. This move toward greater transparency in our ratings goes further to convey the "whys" that drive broader country ratings shifts, both positive and negative. Moreover, closer attention to *Freedom in the World's* subscores allows for a more precise analysis of global and regional trends in freedom. For policy makers and scholars, this has meant a clearer and more detailed window into individual country performance, trajectory, and the underlying reasons for political change. While this additional set of scores will be released later this year, a preliminary assessment points to several discernible trends that affected a substantial number of countries or presented particular problems in certain regions:

Several discernible trends that affected a substantial number of countries or presented particular problems in certain regions:

1. A decline in freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Although a decline in press freedom affected both democracies and authoritarian states, it was a particular problem in countries

where authoritarian-minded leaders are moving to eliminate or marginalize independent voices. Emblematic of this trend is the announcement at year's end that Venezuela leader Hugo Chavez intends to deny a license renewal to a television station that has been critical of his policies.

2. A weakness in the rule of law. This was reflected in part in an upsurge in violence, street crime, and policing failures, especially in Latin America, as well as in seriously flawed judicial systems in a number of African countries.

3. Pervasive corruption and a lack of government transparency. These prob-

Year under Review	Number of Electoral Democracies
1996	118
2001	121
2006	123

lems, deeply rooted in many cases, ranked as a crucial impediment to democratic governance across many parts of the world, especially Africa, the Middle East, the former Soviet Union, and Latin America.

LATIN AMERICA: SUCCESSFUL ELECTIONS AMID CRIME AND UPHEAVAL

Despite the prevalence of some alarming trends, the past year was marked by an impressive number of competitive and fair elections in relatively new democracies and societies experiencing social turbulence. In Latin America alone, successful elections were conducted in Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Mexico, and Nicaragua. The winning candidates included leftist populists, conservatives, and candidates with moderately left-of-center platforms. Still, each of these countries suffers from serious domestic problems that, in many cases, have weakened the fabric of their democratic institutions. A range of disturbingly high rates of violent crime, economic instability and massive inequality, and endemic corruption plague them all. Under these circumstances, the fact that these countries have conducted elections that are competitive, with a relatively level playing field in which opposition parties are free to campaign, as well as guarantees for minority participation, is a worthy achievement. Democracy will remain incomplete and therefore vulnerable, however, if governments fail to curb corruption, strengthen the rule of law, and protect the rights of minorities and the indigenous. Indeed, there is already a disturbing tendency in Latin America whereby parties or political movements refuse to accept the results of elections that were deemed fair—as evidenced by this year's developments in Bolivia and Mexico, both countries with serious divisions between those of European descent and indigenous peoples.

ASIA-PACIFIC: A YEAR OF SETBACKS

The dominant development in the region was the military-led coup that ousted Thailand's democratically elected president, Thaksin Shinawatra. The coup itself occurred without significant violence and, while all political activity and demonstration was suspended for some time, the military has subsequently avoided policies of overt repression. Thaksin's style of governance had led the country's *Freedom in the World* rating to decline in recent years. Nevertheless, Thailand had represented an important gain for democracy in Asia, and the coup caused its political rights rating to decline to the lowest possible for the survey, as well as its status to drop from Partly Free to Not Free.

Another important setback occurred in Sri Lanka, which saw decreases in both its political rights and civil liberties ratings due to the Tamil Tigers' intimidation of civilians and increased harassment of the press. East Timor experienced a significant decline as the result of rioting and violent clashes involving both members of the defense forces and civilians, as well as a lack of government accountability. In Fiji, the ratings for both political rights and civil liberties dropped because of a coup that removed the elected prime minister from office and replaced him with an interim military government. Taiwan saw a small decline in its political rights rating due to concerns over corruption at the highest levels of government. There were also modest but ominous declines in Burma, Malaysia, the Philippines, and the Solomon Islands.

Although China continued to reflect dynamic change in the economic sphere, there was little evidence of openings toward political freedom or enhanced individual liberties. Heightened activism among the country's middle class have led some to hope that the ripple effects produced by those changes that have enabled China to emerge as a major force in the global economy may transform the country's political culture. Unfortunately, the past year was dominated by further repression of the press and internet, the prosecution of civic activists and the lawyers who represent them, and increased efforts to keep religion under the control of the state.

The region's most important positive development was Nepal's climb from Not Free to Partly Free due to the end of direct rule by King Gyanendra, the return of parliament, and improvements in the rule of law.

Although the factors contributing to freedom's decline in the region varied from country to country, ethnic and religious division stood out as a major problem in some countries—Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Fiji—and a potential source of discontent in others, including Indonesia, which retained its designation as Free. Perhaps the most disquieting aspect of the year's developments is the fact that three countries previously considered showcases of Asian freedom—Thailand, the Philippines, and East Timor—experienced considerable setbacks.

When the Oceania countries of Australia and New Zealand and the small island nations such as Vanuatu and Nauru are factored out of the analysis, the gains for freedom in Asia appear somewhat less impressive over the life of the *Freedom in the World* survey. A thirty-year perspective shows that in 1976, there were 2 Free countries in Asia proper, 11 Partly Free, and 10 Not Free. For the year 2006, the breakdown for the core Asia countries is 6 Free, 8 Partly Free, and 10 Not Free. Japan is the only country designated as Free in both 1976 and 2006. The other Free country in 1976, Sri Lanka, has since fallen to Partly Free due to a protracted civil conflict. Clearly, the countries that have joined the Free category include globally important states with significant populations and thus represent important strides: South Korea, India, Taiwan, and Indonesia. But the more significant regional trends are the persistence of authoritarian rule in China and Southeast Asia, the continuing dictatorships in Burma and North Korea, and an outright decline in freedom throughout most of south Asia (India excepted).

AFRICA: AFTER PROGRESS, MODEST REVERSALS

After several years of steady and, in a few cases, impressive gains for democracy, Sub-Saharan Africa suffered more setbacks than gains during the year. One country, Congo (Brazzaville), saw its *Freedom in the World* status decline from Partly Free to Not Free due principally to a heightened lack of transparency and openness on the part of the government. Other countries suffered declines as well—including those that have made some promising gains in the past—such as Burundi, Chad, Madagascar, Cote d'Ivoire, Mauritius, Somalia, South Africa, and Guinea Bissau. More modest declines were registered in Eritrea, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Kenya, Seychelles, and Zimbabwe.

There were also several important gains during the year. Congo (Kinshasa) saw its political rights rating improve because of successful presidential elections, the first in the country's history. Liberia, which showed progress in fighting corruption

and expanding government transparency, enjoyed a notably peaceful environment during Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's first year as president. Conditions also improved in Malawi and Benin, as well as in Mauritania, which took important steps toward political pluralism and a functioning electoral framework.

As in Asia, the causes for decline in Africa varied from country to country. A region-wide analysis, however, reveals several factors that were common to the decline of freedom in a number of countries. One is a lack of government transparency and openness in government conduct. A related issue is increased pressure by governments on freedom of expression and the media in countries with high levels of freedom, such as Ghana and Mali, as well as in countries with generally poor freedom records, including Burundi and Gabon. Another factor is regime pressure on opposition political parties and figures. Perhaps the most significant factor, however, is a weakness in the rule of law that is reflected in the scores of a number of countries, including generally high performers, such as South Africa, and countries with less impressive records in protecting freedom, such as Chad, Ethiopia, and Eritrea.

RUSSIA AND ITS NEIGHBORS: A BLEAK PICTURE

The year saw little significant change for freedom in the region. As was the case the previous year, the only relatively bright spots among the non-Baltic countries of the former Soviet Union were Ukraine and Georgia, which have been designated as Free and Partly Free, respectively. Modest declines were noted in Russia, for its crackdown on nongovernmental organizations; Azerbaijan, for the regime's increasingly tight grip on the media; and Kyrgyzstan, for a decline in religious freedom.

Russia's pervasive influence throughout the region bodes ill for reform prospects. President Vladimir Putin has systematically weakened or marginalized independent media, advocates for democracy, and regime critics generally. The murder of crusading journalist Anna Politkovskaya, carried out in gangland assassination style, is but the latest, albeit the most disturbing, case in a series of journalist killings that have gone unsolved by the government. Putin placed further restrictions on the ability of opposition parties to effectively campaign for office, while government policies tolerated discrimination against Russian citizens from the country's North Caucasus and encouraged the mistreatment of immigrants from Georgia and other Caucasus countries.

Russia thus serves as a model for authoritarian-minded leaders in the region and elsewhere. Although its relations with Belarus were briefly frayed due to a dispute over energy prices, Russia has otherwise gone out of its way to support the region's autocrats and to oppose efforts by the United Nations and other bodies to condemn or impose sanctions on dictatorships with records of blatant human rights abuse. The region has produced three countries whose human rights and democracy records are among the world's worst: Belarus, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Leadership in all three share a ruthless determination to crush independent voices of opposition, whether in the press, the political arena, or civil society.

Both Ukraine and Georgia succeeded in further consolidating some of the reforms that had been instituted after their respective democratic revolutions. Ukrainian democracy, however, was somewhat tarnished by continuing corruption and

political stalemate that occurred during the protracted process of establishing a governing coalition after parliamentary elections that failed to produce a clear winner.

Meanwhile, democracy grew deeper roots in most of Central and Eastern Europe, even as some experienced polarization and governance difficulties. The only major ratings change occurred in Bosnia-Herzegovina, due to the generally successful administration of national elections. More modest improvements were noted in Albania, for enhanced anti-corruption efforts; Croatia, for bolstering laws against hate crimes; and Romania, due to reform of the judiciary. Hungary registered a modest setback due to riots and civil unrest that occurred in an intensely polarized political environment.

In general, the year brought further evidence of the European Union's (EU) powerful influence on the post-Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Throughout the region, countries have amended their political process, transparency, treatment of minorities, rule of law, and basic civil liberties to meet the strict standards of EU membership. Moreover, EU standards have prevented new member states from backsliding, even as some have experienced political division and discontent over economic change.

MIDDLE EAST: CHANGE AT A GLACIAL PACE

The Middle East/North Africa region saw little change over the past year. The civil liberties ratings of both Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates increased as a result of improvements in freedom of assembly, while Syria's rating gained due to a small improvement in greater personal autonomy. Modest declines were registered in Egypt for repression of the political opposition and in Bahrain and Iran for the curtailment of freedom of assembly.

While the Middle East continues to lag behind other regions in the development of free institutions, the fact that progress has been made since the September 11, 2001 attacks gives some cause for optimism. In 2000, the region had 1 Free country (Israel), 3 Partly Free countries (Jordan, Morocco, and Kuwait), and 14 Not Free countries. By 2006, the number of Partly Free countries and territories had risen to seven with the addition of Bahrain, Lebanon, Yemen, and the Palestinian Authority. In the latter, the hopes that competitive elections would lead to steps forward were dashed as a result of incursions by Israeli military forces, as well as the continued operation of militias engaged in violence against Israel and their own political rivals.

Worth noting is the fact that this progress was made under difficult circumstances: the invasion and occupation of Iraq, ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the rise of radical Islamism, increased terrorism, Iran and Syria's encouragement of anti-democratic forces, and generally poor economic records by non-oil-producing states.

Unfortunately, a confluence of these negative trends poses a powerful threat to the gains for freedom in Lebanon. The promising achievements of the Cedar Revolution were seriously jeopardized by the conflict with Israel that erupted as a result of the actions of the Hezbollah militia's capture of an Israeli serviceman, followed by Hezbollah's efforts to bring down the elected government, and especially by Syria and Iran's ongoing campaigns to destroy the country's democracy.

UNITED STATES AND EUROPE: IMMIGRATION, COUNTERTERRORISM, FREE SPEECH

Although the United States and almost all countries in Western Europe registered the highest possible ratings on the freedom index—a 1 for both political rights and civil liberties—*Freedom in the World* noted several problems in a number of these established democracies. In the United States, the gains made by the opposition Democratic Party in mid-term congressional elections somewhat allayed apprehensions over the level of competitiveness of the country's political process. However, the United States suffered from a series of political corruption cases and weakness in the enforcement of laws meant to ensure the rights of workers to form unions and engage in collective bargaining. There was, as well, continued controversy over the counter-terrorism policies of the Bush administration: the continued detention of terrorism suspects at the naval base in Guantanamo Bay; the detention of some terrorism suspects in various facilities in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere; the enactment of legislation that allows the government to employ what some believe are methods bordering on torture in the interrogation of terrorism suspects; and the government's eavesdropping on phone calls and email messages without judicially approved warrants. A number of cases arising from counter-terrorism policies are currently making their way through the judicial system, and the fact that the Democratic Party controls both houses of Congress will likely bring enhanced legislative scrutiny to the administration's actions.

At the same time, the survey again took note of problems facing a number of European societies grappling with large numbers of immigrants from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. In particular, the survey pointed to the failure to integrate non-white immigrants into the fabric of European economic and cultural life. The problems associated with the increase of Muslim immigration rose to the surface during the furor over the publication of a series of cartoons in a Danish newspaper that were regarded as anti-Muslim, and an ongoing controversy over laws that prohibit Holocaust denial and hate speech. Although press freedom is protected throughout Europe, fears have been expressed over the potential for self-censorship in matters relating to Muslims, immigration, religious differences, and other sensitive issues.

THE "PUSHBACK" AGAINST DEMOCRACY

The pushback against democracy, a phenomenon that has been gaining momentum for several years, emerged as a major obstacle to the spread of freedom in 2006. While there is nothing especially new about the suppression of democracy advocates by dictatorships and authoritarian regimes, certain features of the current pushback distinguish it from past methods of political repression.

First, the targets of the pushback are less likely to be political parties or labor unions—the targets of the past—but, rather, independent nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), other civil society institutions, and the press. Second, regimes are generally less likely to employ the traditional techniques of extreme repression: military rule, mass arrests, assassinations, torture, and coups. Instead, governments often use legalistic tactics to put potential voices of opposition out of business, including the smothering of free media by regime-directed economic pressure (such as discouraging advertisers from doing business with independent newspaper and

broadcast outlets), the denial of licenses to privately-owned television stations, unabashed state takeovers, and criminal slander charges against reporters who criticize the leadership. Another increasingly common tactic is use of the tax police to investigate and reinvestigate NGOs that are critical of government policies. Third, a number of regimes have recently adopted policies that make it difficult or impossible for domestic NGOs to receive support from foreign sources. This can be an important weapon given the lack of local sources of financial support in impoverished countries.

An element of global cooperation also distinguishes the current drive against democracy and democracy promotion. For example, a 2005 statement issued at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, an entity comprised of Russia, China, and several Central Asian countries attacked democracy assistance by asserting that, "the right of every people to its own path of development must be fully guaranteed."

In addition to China and Russia, Iran, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Venezuela have all adopted policies designed to suppress NGOs, restrict freedom of assembly, or marginalize the press.

The pushback against democracy is particularly disturbing insofar as it affects societies in which political parties are weak or unformed. In this context, it is often civil society that serves as the principal driving force behind democratic change and the protection of human rights. Organizations that fight for women's rights, advocate for government transparency, protest police abuse and torture, defend the rights of minorities, and protect academic freedom are what prevent societies with troubled political conditions from declining into despotism.

CONCLUSION: A LOOMING FREEDOM STAGNATION?

Freedom House began publishing its annual index of global freedom in 1972. By any standard, the expansion of political democracy, personal liberties, and good government practices over the ensuing years has been nothing short of remarkable. A quarter century ago, in 1981, *Freedom in the World* designated 54 countries, 33 percent of the world's total at the time, as Free. In 2006, 90 countries were judged Free, or 47 percent of all countries. Even more striking is the shift in the number of countries designated as Not Free: 39 percent of the world's countries held the status of Not Free in 1981, whereas 23 percent stand as Not Free in 2006.

Freedom's expansion has touched every region, with substantial shifts in the formerly Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in Latin America, where juntas and strongmen gave way to democratically elected governments. In 1981, huge swathes of the globe seemed mired in despotism and dictatorship: the Soviet Union, China, much of Africa, and practically every country of the Middle East. The year 1981 marked the culmination of a period in which Marxist-Leninist movements appeared to have scored impressive gains in Southeast Asia, Africa and, to a lesser extent, Central America and the Caribbean. Right-wing strongmen maintained a firm grip on power in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, South Korea, and the Philippines, while South Africa remained tightly controlled by the apartheid regime.

The past quarter century has thus produced unprecedented gains for political freedom. As we acknowledge this particular record of progress, we must also take a

hard look at freedom's more recent trajectory. And here, the record gives serious cause for concern.

For the past nine years, since 1998, the proportion of countries designated as Free has remained essentially unchanged at 46 percent. To be sure, this period has seen a number of key countries—Mexico, India, Indonesia, Ukraine, and several countries of the former Yugoslavia—progress. It has also seen significant setbacks, however, most notably in Russia, Venezuela, and Pakistan. China's continued resistance to allowing its citizens to exercise their essential political rights and civil liberties has meant that over 2 billion people continue to live in a Not Free society. While some countries of the Arab Middle East have made progress over the past decade, change for the region overall continues to move at a glacial pace; it still suffers from a "freedom deficit." Globally, there is a discernible trend whereby countries achieve a modest level of freedom—these are the Partly Free countries of the survey—and then experience a failure to move forward to liberal democracy. Does this apparent halt in progress suggest that we are facing a period of freedom stagnation?

As frequently pointed out, many of freedom's gains during the final years of the Cold War and the immediate post-Soviet period occurred in what might be considered the easiest cases: Central European countries with historic ties to the democratic world, Latin American countries with (inconsistent) democratic histories, and Asian countries with strong economies and close ties to the United States and Europe.

Yet, consider the arguments of many scholars and regional experts made not so long ago: that democracy was not the natural state of affairs in Central Europe and especially in the Balkans; that Catholic (and Orthodox) societies were destined to an autocratic fate; that personal freedom was alien to Asian culture; and even that Third World societies generally needed the firm hand of authoritarianism, as opposed to the messiness of democracy, in order to secure development for their populations. These arguments have been discredited as the citizens of these countries have asserted their right to universally recognized political freedoms. The gains have been achieved in such diverse settings as El Salvador, Slovakia, Indonesia, and Ghana, suggesting that relatively recent histories of dictatorship, civil conflict, and weak democratic institutions do not necessarily prohibit progress.

Indeed, while elections themselves are not sufficient, the ability to elect—and remove—one's leaders is a fundamental mechanism of democratic accountability. One of the most important achievements of the modern democracy movement is the expansion in the number of countries that regularly conduct fair and competitive elections. As noted above, successful elections were conducted throughout South and Central America during the past year, despite an alarming surge of criminal violence, political polarization, and dissatisfaction with economic globalization. Not so long ago, coups were the normal state of affairs in various regions. Today, the significance of the coup in Thailand is magnified by the fact that the event is so rare.

That elections have become the norm in some two-thirds of the world's countries is due, in part, to the international norms that have been established and to the willingness of the international community to apply these norms. Numerous private and quasi-government entities monitor elections and publicize violations of accepted polling standards. The EU insists on fair and competitive elections as a requirement for membership, and the Commonwealth and the Organization of American States emphasize elections in their charters and monitoring activities.

Meanwhile, a growing number of organizations monitor and comment on other specific dimensions of freedom: corruption and transparency, minority rights, press freedom, religious freedom, academic freedom, worker's rights, and women's equality. Offenders worldwide may very well be paying more attention as a number of governments and transnational organizations have incorporated assessment of freedom indicators into their foreign-assistance allocation processes.

These initiatives should be strengthened and expanded if we are to avoid the consolidation of a freedom stagnation or even a reversal of recent gains. At the same time, it is essential to identify and protest against the tactics employed by those currently driving the pushback against democracy. That those countries responsible for this campaign against freedom's expansion include some of the largest and most powerful in the world make a redoubled effort all the more important.

This report was completed with the assistance of Camille Eiss and Aili Piano.

Introduction

The *Freedom in the World 2007* survey contains reports on 193 countries and 15 related and disputed territories. Each country report begins with a section containing the following information: **population**, **capital**, **political rights** [numerical rating], **civil liberties** [numerical rating], **status** [Free, Partly Free, or Not Free], and a **ten-year ratings timeline**. (Beginning this year, data on gross national income per capita [GNI/capita], life expectancy, religious groups, and ethnic groups are no longer included in this section). Each territory report begins with a section containing the same information, except for capital. The population figures are drawn primarily from the *2006 World Population Data Sheet* of the Population Reference Bureau.

The **political rights** and **civil liberties** categories contain numerical ratings between 1 and 7 for each country or territory, with 1 representing the most free and 7 the least free. The **status** designation of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free, which is determined by the combination of the political rights and civil liberties ratings, indicates the general state of freedom in a country or territory. The ratings of countries or territories which have improved or declined since the previous survey are indicated by notations next to the ratings. Positive or negative trends which do not warrant a ratings change since the previous year may be indicated by upward or downward trend arrows, which are located next to the name of the country or territory. A brief explanation of ratings changes or trend arrows is provided for each country or territory as required. For a full description of the methods used to determine the survey's ratings, please see the chapter on the survey's methodology. The **ten-year ratings timeline** lists the political rights and civil liberties ratings and status for each of the last ten years. Each year that is included in the timeline refers to the year under review, *not* the edition of the survey. Thus, the ratings and status from the *Freedom in the World 2007* edition are listed under "2006" (the year that was under review for the 2007 survey edition).

Following the section described above, each country and territory report is divided into two parts: an **overview** and an analysis of **political rights and civil liberties**. The overview provides a brief historical background and a description of major recent events. The political rights and civil liberties section summarizes each country or territory's degree of respect for the rights and liberties which Freedom House uses to evaluate freedom in the world.

Afghanistan

Population: 31,100,000

Capital: Kabul

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	5,6NF	5,5PF	5,5PF

Overview: In 2006, the framework for a parliamentary democracy was further consolidated as the new Afghan parliament began operations in December 2005 and gradually established itself as a functioning arm of government. However, concerns remain that the weak role of political parties, as well as the presence of many warlords in the legislature, will hamper its effectiveness vis-a-vis the executive branch. Limited progress has been made on various issues, including attempts by the central government to address issues of corruption and transparency, as well as strengthening judicial and law enforcement services. In a prevailing atmosphere of weak rule of law and impunity, however, numerous human rights abuses, including attacks on aid workers, political and social activists, journalists, and schools, as well as systematic violations of women's rights, were reported during the year. A marked increase in violence in 2006, underscored particularly by a rise in suicide attacks by the Taliban and other antigovernment forces, contributed to heightened lack of security and further hampered the work of local and international humanitarian organizations in rebuilding Afghanistan's shattered infrastructure and institutions.

Located at the crossroads of the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Indian subcontinent, Afghanistan has for centuries been caught in the middle of great power and regional rivalries. After besting Russia in a contest for influence in Afghanistan, Britain recognized the country as an independent monarchy in 1921. King Zahir Shah ruled from 1933 until he was deposed in a 1973 coup. Afghanistan entered a period of continuous civil conflict in 1978, when a Communist coup set out to transform this highly traditional society. The Soviet Union invaded in 1979, but faced fierce resistance from U.S.-backed mujahideen (guerrilla fighters) until its troops finally withdrew in 1989.

The mujahideen factions overthrew the Communist government in 1992 and then battled each other for control of Kabul, killing more than 25,000 civilians in the capital by 1995. The Taliban militia, consisting largely of students from conservative Islamic religious schools, entered the fray and seized control of Kabul in 1996. Defeating or buying off mujahideen commanders, the Taliban soon controlled most of

the country except for parts of northern and central Afghanistan, which remained in the hands of the Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance coalition.

In response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States launched a military campaign aimed at toppling the Taliban regime and eliminating Saudi militant Osama bin Laden's terrorist network, al-Qaeda. The Taliban crumbled quickly, losing Kabul to Northern Alliance forces in November 2001 and surrendering the southern city of Kandahar, the movement's spiritual headquarters, in December.

As a result of the December 2001 Bonn Agreement, an interim administration headed by Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun tribal leader, took office. The UN-brokered deal sought to balance demands for power by victorious Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara military commanders with the reality that many Pashtuns, who are Afghanistan's largest ethnic group, would not trust a government headed by ethnic minorities. In June 2002, the United Nations administered an emergency *loya jirga* (gathering of representatives) that appointed a Transitional Administration (TA) to rule Afghanistan for a further two years. Karzai won the votes of more than 80 percent of the delegates to become president and head of the TA, decisively defeating two other candidates.

One of the TA's primary challenges was to assert central government authority while curbing the power of regional strongmen. Karzai signed a December 2002 decree banning political leaders from taking part in military activity, and also undertook several reshuffles of provincial governors and other key officials. Significant victories included the ouster of regional strongman Ismael Khan as governor of Herat in September 2004 and the co-option of ethnic Uzbek leader General Abdul Rashid Dostum into the cabinet in March 2005. The TA initiated a voluntary program of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) in 2003, and when the first phase of the program ended in 2005, an estimated 60,000 men had been disarmed. However, there are still an estimated 125,000 armed men in Afghanistan.

In December 2003, a 502-member constitutional *loya jirga* met to debate a draft constitution. Because of disagreements among the delegates, proceedings stretched on for three weeks before the amended draft was ratified in January 2004. It describes Afghanistan as an Islamic republic in which no law should contravene the beliefs and practices of Islam, and provides for a presidential system of government and a National Assembly composed of two houses. Equal rights for women and men are guaranteed, as is the right to practice minority religions, although human rights advocates expressed concern that inadequate mechanisms have been put in place to guarantee the provision of these and other rights.

Other key milestones include the holding in October 2004 of Afghanistan's first elections since 1969, a process overseen by the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB). More than 75 percent of registered Afghans voted in a presidential poll contested by 17 candidates, including one woman. Karzai, the incumbent, won 55 percent of the vote, while the main challengers—Yunus Qanooni, Haji Mohammed Mohaqeq, and Dostum—won 16, 11, and 10 percent, respectively. In December 2004, Karzai formed a cabinet that was a balanced mix of regional power brokers and technocrats.

After delays due to logistical complications and security concerns, in September 2005 relatively peaceful elections were held for the lower house of the newly

reconstituted parliament and the 34 provincial councils. In total, almost 5,800 candidates (over 10 percent of whom were women) stood for the elections. Slightly more than half of all registered voters took part, a lower level of turnout than that for the presidential election, which perhaps reflected increasing disillusionment with the political process. The voting process itself was marred by what the IEMB termed "serious localized fraud," although the overall results were broadly accepted both by Afghans and by the international community. Disappointingly, a large number of warlords and others involved in organized crime as well as human rights violations were elected; according to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), 80 percent of victorious candidates had links to militia groups. However, despite staging a heightened number of attacks in the months leading up to both elections (around 600 people were killed in Taliban-related attacks from January to August 2005), the Taliban were unable to significantly disrupt the electoral process.

The new parliament convened in December 2005, with delegates first familiarizing themselves with working procedures and building up internal structures such as the committees that are responsible for reviewing all previous decrees enacted by the TA. Qanooni, former presidential contender and head of the New Afghanistan Party, was narrowly elected as Speaker of the lower house in January. On several occasions, the fledgling legislative body asserted its authority by questioning government ministers, and it also summoned officials from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) after three incidents in late August in which civilians were killed by coalition forces. In its most important tussle with the executive branch, parliament refused to approve Karzai's nominations for the new cabinet en masse, approving 20 but rejecting 5; another key step was its rejection of Fazl Hadi Shinwari as Karzai's nominee to continue as chief justice of the Supreme Court, on the grounds of his advanced age and lack of higher education requisite for the post. However, some analysts remain concerned that the legislative branch is not moving quickly enough to address political and economic reforms or to pass key legislation, and that it remains weak and largely subservient to the executive.

The UN-mandated ISAF, which has been managed by NATO since August 2003, is responsible for providing security in Kabul and other major urban centers, and in July 2006, NATO assumed command over combat troops in southern Afghanistan who are hunting the Taliban, providing a unified command over most of the approximately 33,000 foreign peacekeeping and combat troops. However, much of the country, particularly the south and east, remains unstable and lawless; in these areas, military commanders, tribal leaders, rogue warlords, drug traffickers, and petty bandits hold sway and are reluctant to submit to the leadership of the central government.

More than 3,000 civilians, law enforcement personnel, troops, officials, and foreign aid workers were killed and injured during 2006 by an increasing number of bombings, rocket attacks, and other violence by the Taliban and their supporters; air strikes by coalition forces; and recurrent fighting between various factional militias, criminal gangs, drug smugglers, and bandits. Levels of casualties among militants have also risen as coalition forces have aggressively engaged them throughout the southern provinces. In addition to targeting foreign troops and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), Taliban supporters have increasingly staged attacks

on local police forces, progovernment clerics, and ordinary Afghan citizens, with a growing reliance on the use of suicide bombers.

In 2006, suicide attacks became more frequent, widespread, and effective, with more than 100 attacks killing several thousand throughout the country in the bloodiest year since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. In the most high-profile attack, Hakim Taniwal, the governor of southeastern province of Paktia, was assassinated by a suicide bomber in September 2006. The west and north of the country have witnessed an increase in attacks on aid workers, both Afghan and foreign, that attempt to disrupt development work. Those involved in the rapidly expanding drugs-trafficking trade are also contributing to the violence. The marked deterioration in security throughout the year posed a major challenge to the ability of central and provincial government authorities to control areas under their jurisdiction, deliver basic services, and engage in vital reconstruction efforts.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Afghanistan is not an electoral democracy. While elections have been held and the structures of government mandated by the 2001 Bonn Agreement are now in place, significant problems remain with regard to the political framework as well as levels of effective governance and transparency. The new constitution, adopted in January 2004, and the May 2005 electoral law provide for a president, directly elected for a five-year term, who has the power to appoint ministers (subject to parliamentary approval), and a bicameral National Assembly. In the directly elected, 249-seat Wolesi Jirga (House of the People), members stand for five-year terms, and in the 102-seat Meshrano Jirga (House of Elders), two-thirds of members are indirectly elected by the provinces and one-third are appointed by the president. At least 68 of the 249 Wolesi Jirga seats (slightly more than a quarter) are reserved for women, while 10 are reserved for the nomadic Kuchi community. Provisions for women's representation have also been made for the Meshrano Jirga and provincial councils, and Afghanistan's first female governor was appointed in March.

The October 2004 presidential election was judged to be relatively free and fair despite allegations of intimidation by militias and insurgent groups, multiple voter registrations, partisanship within the JEMB, and other irregularities such as ballot stuffing and the improper use of indelible ink on voting day. Legislative elections originally scheduled for 2004 were postponed until September 2005 to allow more time for the government to map out district boundaries and conduct a census, enact election laws, and improve the security situation. As with the 2004 elections, these polls were marred by allegations of localized fraud, intimidation, and other irregularities that were not deemed by the Electoral Complaints Commission to have altered the overall results. During the campaign period, seven candidates and six election workers were killed, but the polling day itself was largely peaceful. The safety of winners in the postelection period was threatened by a law known as the "assassination clause," which stated that if the winning candidate died or was disqualified prior to the convening of the new Parliament, his seat would be filled by the candidate with the next highest number of votes. However, this law was amended in 2006 following the assassination of several winners in late 2005.

An elected executive and a bicameral legislature are now in place, and these functioned as a central government that was treated as legitimate by various re-

gional strongmen, although its writ over many areas outside Kabul remained limited. The new parliament contains a broadly representative blend of ethnic groups and, as mandated, a high proportion of women. Observers remain concerned that more than half of elected members maintain ties to armed groups or are former warlords who have been involved in human rights abuses in the past. The balance of power between the executive and the newly functioning legislature, as well as between the centrally appointed provincial governors and the newly elected local bodies, remained contentious and subject to negotiation throughout the year, as the process of defining the roles and responsibilities of various branches of government continued.

Restrictions on political activity remain a concern. Levels of political freedom are higher in Kabul and the eastern provinces, but a prevailing atmosphere of violence and insecurity in the south and west of the country contributes to widespread self-censorship and limits political choices. Some candidates for the 2005 elections faced intimidation from local power brokers as well as the security forces. The 2003 Political Parties Law prohibits the registration of political parties that are backed by armed forces or that oppose Islam or promote racial, religious, or sectarian hatred and violence. Concern has been raised that the vague provisions of the law could be used by the Ministry of Justice to deny registration to parties on flimsy grounds. In addition, the adoption of the single-nontransferable-vote system for the 2005 legislative elections, in which voters elect individual candidates and party names or symbols do not appear on the ballot, was viewed by analysts as a disadvantage for new political parties. Parties have also not been given a formal role within the new parliament, which further weakens their ability to contribute to a stable parliamentary system, according to a May 2006 report by the International Crisis Group. During the year, there were several attacks on members of parliament as a result of political rivalries.

Widespread corruption, nepotism, and cronyism remain issues of concern, although the government has professed a commitment to improving transparency and accountability, particularly in the disbursement of foreign aid, which makes up a significant part of the national budget. Corrupt behavior is exacerbated by extremely inadequate salary levels for public sector workers, who take bribes to make ends meet. During 2005, the government took a hard line against corruption, insisting that officials provide documentation of property and other assets, and initiating screening procedures for bureaucrats. In April, two former deputy ministers were jailed for three years on embezzlement charges. Under pressure from the donor community, further efforts were made to tackle the issue during 2006. At the London Conference on Afghanistan, held January 31-February 1, the Afghan Compact laid out targets regarding governance and administration, calling for a clear and transparent appointments system to be agreed on within six months and fully implemented within two years, as well as for anticorruption legislation to be implemented. In August, the head of the anticorruption and bribery commission announced that files had been completed on 68 people accused of bribery and corruption, and President Hamid Karzai gave the attorney general full authority to investigate and prosecute cases of official corruption. Afghanistan was not ranked in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Afghan media continue to grow and diversify but faced a number of threats in 2006. A revised press law passed in December 2005 guarantees the right to freedom

of expression and prohibits censorship, but does retain certain restrictions such as registration requirements and overly broad guidelines on content. It also establishes five commissions intended to regulate media agencies and investigate complaints of misconduct. In June 2006, intelligence officials at the National Security Directorate issued instructions to a number of news media outlets to restrict their coverage of security issues, terrorist incidents, the conduct of foreign troops, or other subjects perceived to harm the national interest. Media diversity and freedom are markedly higher in Kabul, and some warlords display limited tolerance for independent media in the areas under their control. However, the number of outlets has grown steadily; authorities have granted approximately 300 licenses to independent publications, and dozens of private radio stations and six private television stations are now broadcasting. Some, such as the popular Tolo TV, have been criticized by conservative clerics for airing programs that "oppose Islam and national values," and several stations have been fined or given warnings for broadcasting "un-Islamic" material or offending local culture. Ali Mohaqiq Nasab, editor of the monthly women's rights magazine *Haqooq-i-Zan*, who had been arrested in October 2005 by the high court for publishing articles deemed to be "anti-Islamic" and sentenced to two years' imprisonment, was freed in December 2005 after his sentence was reduced on appeal.

A number of journalists were threatened or harassed by government ministers, politicians, police and security services, and others in positions of power as a result of their reporting. Many practice self-censorship or avoid writing about sensitive issues such as Islam, national unity, or crimes committed by specific warlords. In December 2005, Fahim Ihsan, a television reporter, died after being beaten, possibly in connection with his critical coverage of local government officials; he had previously received death threats. In July 2006, a cameraman was killed in a suicide bombing in Kandahar; on several occasions, reporters were assaulted when attempting to cover the news; two German freelancers were killed by unidentified gunmen in October; and an Italian journalist was kidnapped in southern Afghanistan in the same month and was held for several weeks before being released. Reporters have also faced difficulties in covering proceedings at the newly established parliament, with several being assaulted and many more denied access on various occasions. The use of the internet and mobile phones continues to grow rapidly and has broadened the flow of news and other information, particularly for urban Afghans.

Religious freedom has improved since the fall of the ultraconservative Taliban government in late 2001, and the present government has attempted to pursue a policy of greater religious tolerance despite pressure from Islamist groups. The new constitution establishes Islam as the official state religion but does not prohibit the practice of other religions, according to the U.S. State Department's 2006 International Religious Freedom Report. Shias (who make up approximately 20 percent of the population), particularly those from the Hazara ethnic group, have traditionally faced discrimination from the Sunni majority, and relations between the two religious groups remain somewhat strained. Sectarian riots, possibly stoked by political rivals, erupted in Herat in February, killing 8 and injuring more than 200. The small numbers of non-Muslim residents in Afghanistan are generally able to practice their faith, although Hindus and Sikhs have had some difficulty in building new houses of worship and accessing their traditional cremation grounds. During the

year, there were a number of attacks by militant groups on mosques and clerics who were openly critical of the Taliban or who expressed progovernment views, as well as occasional harassment of reformist Muslims and religious minorities. Conversion is not legally prohibited but is strongly discouraged. In March 2006, Abdul Rahman, who had converted to Christianity during his time living abroad, was detained and faced the possibility of being charged with apostasy before the charges were dropped; because of potential threats against his life, he was granted asylum in Italy.

Academic freedom is not officially restricted. Two students at Herat University were suspended in May 2005 as a result of their comments during a debate on Islam, but they were later reinstated. In 2004, government regulations were amended so that married women could attend high school classes. Particularly in the southern provinces, schools and teachers, predominantly those in which the teachers or pupils include females, have been the target of threats and violent attacks by fundamentalist groups and local warlords. This trend worsened in 2006, according to a July Human Rights Watch report that documented numerous incidents, including a rocket attack on a school that killed 6 children and injured 14 in April. More than 150 schools were torched, and several hundred more were closed for fear of being attacked, which deprived several hundred thousand students of educational opportunities. In all, schools in 27 of Afghanistan's 30 provinces have been targets of attacks that have led to the deaths of several dozen teachers and students.

Rights to assembly and association have been formally restored, subject to some restrictions, by the new constitution, but are applied erratically in different regions. In addition, police and security forces have occasionally used excessive force when confronted with demonstrations or public protests. Violent protests in February 2006, sparked by the international controversy about cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad that were published in a Danish newspaper, led to the deaths of over a dozen people throughout the country. Following a deadly traffic accident involving U.S. troops in Kabul, violent demonstrations broke out in May during which at least 8 people were killed and more than 100 were injured, according to the IRIN, a UN humanitarian news and information service.

Hundreds of international and Afghan NGOs and aid agencies are able to operate freely, but their effectiveness is impeded by the poor security situation in much of the country. Both foreign and Afghan NGO staff members have been targeted for attack, and several dozen were killed during 2006, according to the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office. Civil society activists, particularly those who focus on human rights or accountability issues, continue to face some threats and harassment.

Despite broad constitutional protections for workers, labor rights are not well defined, and there are currently no enforcement or resolution mechanisms. Unicef has estimated that a quarter of Afghan children between the ages of 7 and 14 are involved in various forms of work, mainly in the domestic sector.

There is no functioning, nationwide legal system, and justice in many places is administered on the basis of a mixture of legal codes by judges with minimal training. Outside influence over the judiciary remains strong, and judges and lawyers are frequently unable to act independently because of threats from local power brokers or armed groups. Salaries for judges are woefully inadequate, and corruption and bribery are widespread. In rural areas with no police or judicial institutions, unelected and often conservative tribal councils dispense justice. The Supreme Court, com-

posed of religious scholars who have little knowledge of civil jurisprudence, is particularly in need of reform, although the replacement of Fazl Hadi Shinwari as chief justice was a positive step. The administration's plans to rebuild the judiciary have proceeded slowly, although a new criminal procedure code was promulgated in early 2004 and some progress has been made with the construction of courts and correctional facilities. However, in April 2005, the justice minister noted that more than 50 percent of Afghans still did not have access to judicial or legal services, according to the IRIN news service.

Prison conditions remain extremely poor, with many prisoners being illegally detained and prisoners being forced to rely on their relatives to provide food and other provisions, according to the AIHRC. Prison riots in Kabul in February 2006 left 5 dead and over 50 wounded. In July, human rights groups raised concern over government plans to reestablish the Department for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (notorious for imposing severe restrictions on behavior and dress under the Taliban), as part of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, expressing worry that the department could be used as a tool for repression.

Since taking power in 2002, the administration has faced the question of whether to bring to justice, co-opt, or simply ignore perpetrators of past abuses. The cabinet approved, in 2005, an Action Plan on Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation, including elements of commemoration for victims, truth-seeking and justice mechanisms, and the vetting of potential employees in the state sector, but the plan was not formally launched by the government until December 2006. Many perpetrators were elected to the National Assembly despite calls for them to be disqualified, and some, such as warlord Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, have firmly established their dominant position in the new parliament, making any attempt at prosecution difficult.

In a prevailing climate of impunity, government ministers, as well as warlords in some provinces, sanction widespread abuses by the police, military, and intelligence forces under their command, including arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, extortion, and extrajudicial killings. The AIHRC, which was formed in August 2002 and focuses on raising awareness of human rights issues in addition to monitoring and investigating abuses, received more than 2,000 complaints of rights violations during 2006, including illegal detention and torture, land-grabbing and forced migration, kidnapping and child trafficking, and forced marriage. This represented a decrease from the previous year and of these, 46 percent were resolved.

Human Rights Watch has documented numerous cases of abuse of Afghan detainees by U.S. forces over the past several years, and eight detainees are confirmed to have died while in U.S. custody. Several U.S. service personnel have been given prison sentences of up to four months as punishment for prisoner abuse, in verdicts that the Afghan government and human rights groups have criticized as being insufficiently severe. The AIHRC has not been allowed access to detention centers where some 500 Afghans are being held by coalition forces. In addition, some warlords, political leaders, and the national intelligence agency maintain private prisons and do not allow access to detainees, many of whom are being held without charge.

Hundreds of civilians have been killed as a result of bombings, rocket attacks, and other acts of terror by suspected Taliban sympathizers and other Islamist groups; during localized fighting between ethnic factions, particularly in the north; or during skirmishes between Taliban supporters on one side and government forces and the

U.S. military on the other. In 2006, in a shift of tactics by insurgents, the use of suicide attacks increased dramatically. Previously, the foreign military presence was divided between U.S.-led coalition forces actively hunting the Taliban and al-Qaeda in the south and east of the country, and the NATO-run ISAF, which focused on peacekeeping and providing security in Kabul and other major urban centers. In July 2006, NATO assumed command of military operations in southern Afghanistan as well, taking charge of a total of 33,000 troops drawn from 39 different countries. Despite the establishment of over a dozen Provincial Reconstruction Teams consisting of mixed groups of U.S. and NATO military forces and development personnel in various regional centers, the security situation in much of the country continues to be extremely poor. In addition to political and terrorist violence, criminal gangs kidnap prominent Afghans as well as foreigners for money, while narco-traffickers and local warlords employ violence and extortion to defend their operations and influence.

The Bonn Agreement recognized the need to create a national army and a professional police force, but progress on both fronts has been slow. By the end of 2006, the Afghan National Army had a strength of approximately 34,000 personnel, out of a proposed eventual force of 70,000; however, these recruits have been well trained and participated ably in a variety of counterterrorism operations, as well as being deployed to prevent factional clashes and to provide security around polling centers during the 2005 elections. In contrast, the Afghan National Police, which numbers approximately 60,000, have been plagued by inadequate training, illiteracy, corruption, involvement in drug trafficking, and high levels of desertion.

An estimated 2,000 armed groups, with as many as 125,000 members, continue to operate. In 2003, the TA initiated a voluntary DDR program targeting members of various irregular militia forces, and by the program's end in mid-2005, over 60,000 militiamen had been demobilized and a considerable amount of heavy weaponry had been collected. A follow-up initiative, the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) program, has managed to collect more than 24,000 weapons since June 2005. However, as the security situation has deteriorated, widespread progress on disarmament has stalled, and there are still an estimated 100,000 illegal weapons, mostly small arms, in Afghanistan. Many civilians, particularly in rural areas where the government is unable to provide security, are reluctant to hand over their weapons.

More than 3.7 million Afghan refugees have returned to their homes in the last five years, but the rate of returns slowed in 2006, and several million more remain in Pakistan and Iran. In addition, more than 150,000 civilians continue to be displaced within the country; thousands more were displaced during 2006 as a result of increased fighting in the southern provinces as well as smaller skirmishes between warlords in the north. Humanitarian agencies and Afghan authorities have been ill-equipped to deal with the scale of the repatriation, while the poor security situation compounded by widespread land-grabbing meant that many refugees were unable to return to their homes and instead congregated in and around major urban centers. In the absence of a functioning legal system, the state remains unable to effectively protect property rights.

The end of Taliban rule freed women from the extremely harsh restrictions and punishments that had kept them veiled, isolated, and, in many cases, impoverished. Women's formal rights to education and employment have been restored, and in

some areas women are once again participating in public life. The new constitution contains the significant provisions of guaranteeing equal rights for women and reserving a quarter of the seats in the Wolesi Jirga and the provincial councils for women. Record numbers of women registered to vote—an average 41 percent of all registered voters were women—and took part in the recent elections. In addition, more than 500 women, approximately 10 percent of the total number of candidates, registered to contest the 2005 parliamentary elections. However, a 2005 Human Rights Watch report noted that women in the political sphere, particularly those standing as candidates, faced significant threats and harassment from armed factions and conservative religious leaders. Social norms restricting women's ability to travel independently and appear in public, particularly in the south, also negatively affected their ability to run for office and to participate fully as members of the new parliament.

Despite women's political gains, societal discrimination and violence against women remain pervasive, with domestic violence occurring in an estimated 95 percent of households, according to one survey. Women's choices regarding marriage and divorce, particularly their ability to choose a marriage partner, remain circumscribed by custom and discriminatory laws, and the forced marriage of young girls to older men or of widows to a male relation of their husband is a problem. Nearly 60 percent of Afghan girls are married before the legal age of 16, according to a report by the IRIN news service. To the extent that it functions, the justice system discriminates against women; in most cases, according to a 2005 Amnesty International report, complaints of violence against women, including abduction, rape, forced marriage, and murder, are not adequately investigated by authorities. Cases of self-immolation by women seeking to escape abusive marriages, particularly in the province of Herat, were a growing concern in 2006 after several years of decline, according to the AIHRC, which recorded at least 100 such instances in 2005. Honor killings of women who are believed to have brought shame on a family's name are also reportedly on the rise. As a result of continued lawlessness, women and children are subject to abduction, trafficking, and sexual violence. In certain areas, ruling warlords impose Taliban-style dress and behavioral restrictions on women. While record numbers of children have returned to school, a number of girls' schools were subject to attacks from Islamic fundamentalists during the year, and the literacy rate for women remains at only 14 percent.

Albania

Population: 3,200,000

Capital: Tirana

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Trend Arrow: Albania received an upward trend arrow due to increased efforts to combat corruption.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4.4PF	4.5PF	4.5PF	4.5PF	3.4PF	3.3PF	3.3PF	3.3PF	3.3PF	3.3PF

Overview:

In June 2006, Albania signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union (EU), a move generally seen as the first step toward full EU membership. Under international pressure, the government undertook a series of reforms aimed at eradicating corruption and strengthening the rule of law, striving to fulfill the conditions for further integration with Europe.

From World War n until 1990, former dictator Enver Hoxha's xenophobic Communist regime turned Albania into the most isolated country in Europe. The Communist government collapsed in 1990, and in March 1992, multiparty elections brought the Democratic Party (DP), led by Sali Berisha, to power. Continuing poverty and corruption weakened Berisha's government, and in 1997, the collapse of several popular pyramid investment schemes resulted in widespread arms looting and violence.

From 1997 to 2005, Albania was ruled by the Socialist Party (SP), led by Prime Minister Fatos Nano. Albania's first parliamentary elections since 1997 were held over four rounds between June and August 2001. Although international monitoring groups acknowledged "serious flaws" in the election process, the polls were nevertheless deemed valid. Berisha's DP announced a boycott of parliament in protest against electoral irregularities and did not resume participation until January 2002.

However, the truce between Berisha and Nano proved fragile, and by the beginning of 2003, Albania's short-lived national political unity disintegrated. More signs of the continued turmoil within Albanian politics came with the resignation of Foreign Minister (and former prime minister) Ilir Meta, a bitter Nano rival, in July 2003. Disagreements within ruling factions in the government prevented the nomination of a replacement for the rest of the year.

The July 3, 2005, legislative elections, in which more than 20 parties fielded candidates, were considered the most unpredictable since 1991. The two major parties urged their voters to support smaller allies in hopes that those parties would clear the 2.5 percent threshold to enter parliament and thus supplement their own repre-

sentation. Although the opposition DP won a clear victory, the ruling SP contested the results in many constituencies. The consequence was a lengthy delay in obtaining final results until September, when Prime Minister Berisha formed a government. The DP ultimately obtained 56 seats, with a further 24 controlled by its allies. Meta formed his own Socialist Movement for Integration, which took seats away from the SP. The SP was perceived to have lost support due to the country's corruption, internal party disputes, and voters' desire for change. While the election was not free from fraud, it was praised for bringing Albania's first change of power without significant violence in the post-Communist era.

The relationship between political parties in the Kuvendi Popullor (People's Assembly) remained highly adversarial throughout 2006, particularly after contentious debates over the makeup of the Central Election Commission and scheduling of local elections. The DP insisted that the elections take place at the end of December 2006 or early January 2007, whereas the opposition claimed that bad weather would have a negative impact on the vote. As of December 31, 2006, the date for local elections was not finalized. Furthermore, several political deadlocks hindered the work of the parliament.

The ruling coalition, led by the DP, scored a major victory in June 2006 by signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union (EU), a move generally seen as the first step toward full EU membership. The EU continued to pressure the government during the year to accelerate judicial reforms and increase anticorruption efforts. As a result, the government introduced several key reforms, including a new law to improve judges' qualifications and clarify disciplinary proceedings. Moreover, the government sought to minimize corruption by reducing bureaucratic requirements for various permits and licensing and reducing the number of administrative staff.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Albania is an electoral democracy. However, elections held in July 2005 for the 140-seat Kuvendi Popullor (People's Assembly) were judged to have complied only partially with international standards. Observers noted flawed procedures, including multiple voting and violations of secrecy. Although there was one death due to election-related violence, this was minimal compared with previous elections. Single-member districts comprise 100 of the parliamentary seats; the remaining are filled by proportional representation. People's Assembly members are elected for four-year terms. The prime minister is designated by the parties that form a majority coalition. The president holds a largely symbolic post and is chosen by the People's Assembly for a five-year term.

With the involvement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Albania began reforming its election process before the 2005 elections. Votes are now counted in a limited number of designated locations under the authority of local electoral commissions. Procedures for administrative and judicial review of postelection disputes were improved, and new campaign finance laws were put into place. An agreement between the major parties on the boundaries of electoral zones cleared the way for approval of the new electoral code in January 2005, with a new law related to the zones passed in March. While the OSCE concluded that the reforms did not resolve all potential problems, they did represent a major step forward.

A number of political parties operate throughout the country. The two major parties, the DP and the SP, differ more with regard to the personalities of their respective leaders than their political platforms or ideology. While, traditionally, Prime Minister Berisha's DP found its support in the north of the country and former prime minister Nano's SP in the south, these divisions have been diminishing. The Greek minority is represented mostly through the Union for Human Rights, which has three seats in parliament. Other minorities are poorly represented and participate minimally in public life.

Although corruption pervades all areas of life in Albania, the government appears to be willing to address the problem. The European Commission reported that the number of public officials prosecuted and sentenced for corruption increased during the first quarter of 2006. Moreover, the government has augmented its efforts to combat corruption in the tax and customs departments—which have traditionally been the most problematic in this respect—and has reduced the bureaucratic procedures necessary to obtain various permits and licenses. Albania was ranked 111 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index, which is an improvement over last year's ranking of 126 out of 159 countries surveyed.

While the constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and freedom of the press has improved since the fall of communism, problems remain. The intermingling of powerful business, political, and media interests inhibits the development of independent and objective media, and suits against journalists for legitimate criticism are common. Moreover, journalists are still subjected to intimidation and attacks, although the identity of the perpetrators is not always clear. In December 2005, a journalist for the daily *Gazeta Shqiptare* was attacked and beaten by two unknown assailants. In a separate incident in December, unidentified persons threw explosives near a building that houses three newspapers. Investigations into both of these cases were pending at year's end. The government does not limit internet access. As of December 2005, only 2.4 percent of the population had accessed the internet, due largely to widespread poverty and poor infrastructure in rural areas.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion and religious practice, and Albania has not seen the inter-religious turmoil typical of its neighbors. The government does not require registration of religious groups and has been reasonably accommodating in recognizing religious minorities. Jehovah's Witnesses, who were subjected to negative media coverage in previous years, received government cooperation and assistance in efforts to suppress their negative image.

The government generally does not limit academic freedom, although it has interfered in appointments at educational institutions. Corruption is rife throughout the university system, with bribes often needed to matriculate and pass exams. Prior to leaving office, the Nanos government ended the requirement that high school students pass an admission exam in order to enter universities, though the Berisha government reversed the decision because the universities lacked the capacity to accommodate all new admissions.

Freedom of association is generally respected, although police have been known to use excessive force against protesters. Independent nongovernmental organizations are active, and their impact on the government is slowly growing. The constitution guarantees the rights to organize and bargain collectively, and, with the ex-

ception of military personnel, civil servants, and the police, all workers have the right to strike. However, effective collective bargaining remains limited, and union contracts are often difficult to enforce. The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but the structure of the judicial system leaves room for government pressure. Both the judiciary and law enforcement agencies are inefficient and prone to corruption, and judicial proceedings can be unduly long and unjustifiably delayed. Enforcement of judicial decisions is weak, especially when rulings are against government interests. The government has undertaken measures to combat corruption, develop judicial infrastructure, and institute a case-management system, though problems remain. In 2006, the Council of Ministers approved a new law that aims to improve the quality of judges, randomize the assignment of cases, and clarify disciplinary actions against judges. Moreover, judicial transparency has increased as more judicial decisions have been made available to the public. Despite these reforms, an October 2006 OSCE report on the state of the criminal justice system in Albania concluded that the legal rules were frequently ignored or manipulated to achieve a desirable outcome, and that corruption impeded functioning of the justice system.

Police undergo human rights training and monitoring but often use excessive force and torture. In 2006, the government increased efforts to punish ill-treatment and torture by law enforcement officials. In 2005 and the first quarter of 2006, 40 such cases were initiated, 16 cases were tried in court, and 3 cases resulted in sentencing.

Widespread lawlessness plagues large parts of Albania. Weak state institutions have augmented the power of crime syndicates, and international law enforcement officials claim that Albania has become an increasingly important transshipment point for drug smugglers. The weakness of state institutions in northern Albania has resulted in the resurgence of traditional tribal law in these areas, including blood feuds involving revenge killings among different families and clans.

Although Albania has created a basic framework to protect ethnic minorities, implementation of many measures is incomplete. Albania's 95,000 Roma face significant discrimination and social and political marginalization. According to a 2006 European Commission report, 78 percent of Roma live in poverty and 39 percent in extreme poverty, and the living conditions for Roma worsened in Tirana during the year.

The constitution places no legal restraints on women's role in politics and society, but women are vastly underrepresented in most governmental institutions. Traditional patriarchal social mores pose significant limits on the position of women in society. Many groups, particularly in northern Albania, abide by a medieval moral code according to which women are considered chattel. A gender equality law was adopted in 2004, but the situation for women has improved only slightly. Domestic violence is common and is not a criminal offense. Women who seek redress against domestic abuse are often ignored by the authorities, who lack training regarding how to deal with such issues. Albania is a source country for trafficking in women and children. Roma and Egyptian children are disproportionately affected, and internal trafficking is increasing. As the result of a national strategy to combat trafficking, there has been a notable reduction in trafficking across the Adriatic and Ionian seas over the last two years. Moreover, a number of traffickers have been successfully tried and convicted in Albanian courts.

Algeria

Population: 33,500,000

Capital: Algiers

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview: In 2006, the Algerian government began the implementation of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's Charter for Peace and Reconciliation that pardons both militants and government agents for crimes committed during the country's bloody civil war. Many victims' groups have criticized the Charter, which was adopted by public referendum in 2005, for failing to bring perpetrators of violence to justice. Meanwhile, as Bouteflika continued to consolidate his power during the year, rumors circulated of his plan to hold a referendum allowing him to run for a third term as president.

Algeria's long anticolonial struggle culminated in an eight-year-long war of independence (1954-62) that ended more than a century of French colonial rule. In 1965, the military overthrew the country's first president, Ahmed Ben Bella, and installed Houari Boumedienne. The military has played a key role in Algerian politics ever since. Economic upheaval, spurred in large part by the 1986 oil market collapse, culminated in violent riots in 1988.

Once peace was restored, President Chadli Benjedid legalized political parties after more than 30 years of single-party rule under the nationalist, pro-independence National Liberation Front (FLN). The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which was formed in 1989 as an umbrella organization of Islamist opposition groups, quickly enjoyed significant public support. In January 1992, with the FIS poised to win a commanding majority in parliamentary elections, the army forced Bendjedid to resign and canceled the vote. The FIS was banned and its leaders imprisoned.

The military declared a state of emergency, which technically remains in effect. Over the next decade, Algeria was racked by violence on a massive scale as Islamist militants took up arms against the regime. Human rights groups estimate that at least 150,000 people were killed in massacres and acts of terrorism committed by various Islamic groups, the army, and government-supported militias. In addition, more than 6,000 people were "disappeared," mostly at the hands of security forces.

In 1999, Algeria held presidential elections that were marred by allegations of fraud and manipulation. Six of the seven candidates for president withdrew in protest, leaving former foreign minister—and the army's favored candidate—Abdelaziz Bouteflika to run unopposed. After Bouteflika took office, the government intro-

duced a civil harmony law which granted amnesty to Islamists who renounced violence. Although over 5,000 militants surrendered by January 2000, two of the most violent groups—the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC)—continued their attacks. While the violence has subsided over the last several years, acts of terror by militant groups still take place, and the government estimates that up to 1,000 militants remain active. Meanwhile, government violations of human rights continue to occur on a regular basis.

During the May 2002 elections to the lower house of parliament, the National People's Assembly (APN), the FLN secured 199 of 389 seats. The army-backed Rassemblement National Democratique (RND), which held 155 seats in the previous parliament, captured only 48 seats.

Islah, an Islamist "reform" party, won 43 seats, and the Mouvement de la Soci& pour la Paix (Movement for a Peaceful Society, or MSP, previously known as Hamas), took 38 seats. The remaining seats went to leftist and Islamist parties and independents. Elections to the upper house of parliament, the Conseil de la Nation (CN) were held in December 2003. The FLN won 22 seats; the RND, 17; the MSP, 4; and Islah, 2; one seat went to an independent candidate.

In the April 2004 presidential election, Bouteflika captured 85 percent of the vote against five other candidates. Bouteflika's most serious challenger was former prime minister Ali Benflis, whom he had removed from office in 2002. The army, long at the political helm of the country, announced its neutrality. While voter turnout was low, and some opposition candidates claimed fraud, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other international monitors declared the election to have been free of serious problems.

In a September 2005 referendum, more than 97 percent of voters backed the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, a government-sponsored general amnesty that pardons militants and government agents alike for crimes committed during Algeria's civil war and provides for victims to receive compensation. According to a government report, about 40,000 people have benefited from the Charter, with almost 38,000 applications for compensation having been filed and over 2,000 Islamists released from prison. However, many victims' groups have criticized the charter for not addressing the issue of the disappeared; in September 2006, one Algerian minister claimed that the problem of the disappeared "no longer exists." International human rights groups have denounced the charter for not allowing perpetrators to be brought to justice for their actions. Critics also maintain that the criteria for determining which militants may benefit from the amnesty are far too vague and subject to political considerations. While many FIS leaders have been released from prison, they have not been integrated into the political structure in any meaningful way.

Since his reelection, Bouteflika has taken steps to consolidate his power, while the military's influence over the country's political life has been on the decline. In May 2006, Bouteflika appointed Abdelaziz Belkhadem prime minister. Belkhadem, a politician not favored by the army, is a close political ally of Bouteflika's and supporter of his reconciliation program. In addition, there have been rumors that Bouteflika plans to hold a referendum on a proposal allowing him to run for a third term in office.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Algeria is not an electoral democracy. While the 2004 presidential election may have signaled a cautious new start,

with opposition parties free to run nationwide campaigns, Bouteflika enjoyed the army's support throughout his first term, and government control of the broadcast media gave him a clear advantage during the campaign. Although Bouteflika is rumored to be in poor health, throughout 2006 there was widespread speculation that he intended to amend the constitution to allow himself the opportunity to run for office a third time and to extend the presidential term from five to seven years.

Constitutional amendments in 1996 introduced the formation of a bicameral parliament. The lower house (APN) has 389 seats with members serving five-year terms, and the upper house (CN) has 144 members serving six-year terms. Members of the APN are elected by direct universal suffrage. Of the 144 seats in the CN, 96 are chosen through indirect elections by local assemblies within each of the country's 48 *wilayas* (provinces). The president appoints another 48 members. Parliamentary elections have largely been free of systemic fraud. The next elections are slated for May 2007.

Although there are a number of active political opposition parties, new parties must be approved by the Ministry of the Interior before they can operate legally. Most of the Islamist parties that were banned in the early 1990s remain outlawed. Three-fourths of the members of the CN must approve a bill passed by the APN before it can become law. The APN is controlled by the president's party and its coalition members, the RND and MSP, making it difficult for opposition forces to challenge centralized rule.

Algeria continues to experience high levels of corruption in both the government and private sector. Algeria was ranked 84 of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although Algerian newspapers are aggressive in their coverage of local affairs, the government uses various methods to punish those critical of the regime. The government enforces strict antidefamation laws and influences content through the state-owned printing press and advertising company. In February 2006, the cabinet approved, as part of a decree implementing the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, Article 46, which says, "[A]nyone who, by speech [or] writing, . . . exploits the wounds of the National Tragedy . . . shall be punished by three to five years in prison and a fine of 250,000 to 500,00 dinars." While television and radio are government controlled, there is little monitoring or restriction of the internet.

Mohamed Benchicou, publisher of the defunct French-language daily *Le Matin*, was released from prison following the completion of his two-year sentence in June 2006. Benchicou was jailed in 2004 after being found guilty of violating currency laws. Algerian journalists and human rights activists believe that the charges against him were politically motivated and the result of the newspaper's harsh criticism of Bouteflika and powerful government ministers. Prior to his imprisonment, Benchicou had written a book entitled *Bouteflika, An Algerian Fraud*. Earlier in 2006, a reporter for the independent Arabic-language daily *El-Khabar* spent a month in prison after he was found guilty of defaming public officials. In July, following an original announcement in May on World Press Freedom Day, Bouteflika reiterated an amnesty for journalists who were on trial for defamation.

Like many other Muslim states, Algeria was affected by the fallout from the publication in Denmark in 2006 of cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad. According to international human rights groups and press reports, two Algerian publica-

tions—the weeklies *Panorama* and *Essafir*—were closed and their editors briefly imprisoned after they ran articles that criticized the Danish publication, but also printed the cartoons. According to press reports, several journalists working for two television stations were dismissed after the stations ran footage with images of the cartoons.

Algeria's population is largely Muslim, though the few non-Muslims residing in the country are generally free to practice their faith. As a result of the civil strife of the 1990s, the government monitors mosques in order to prevent political activity. The authorities generally do not restrict academic freedom.

The country's ongoing state of emergency places restrictions on freedom of assembly and association. Government permits, sometimes difficult to obtain, are required for public meetings. A decree bans demonstrations in Algiers, although a number of groups have violated this ban with little or no consequence. Security forces occasionally disperse peaceful demonstrations, sometimes violently. Permission is needed to establish a nongovernmental organization (NGO), and the government is wary of any organization with Islamist leanings. Algerian workers have the right to form labor unions, which must be approved by the Ministry of Labor. Workers also have the right to strike, which they sometimes do, but technically, a 14-day period of negotiations or arbitration must elapse before a strike can be considered legal.

Local and international human rights groups have long criticized the Algerian judicial system's lack of independence. Illegal searches and seizures and nontransparent trial procedures are prevalent. Algeria's human rights record remains poor. Although the situation is not as dire as it was during the height of the civil war in the 1990s, human rights groups such as Amnesty International have alleged that torture continues to be routinely practiced by the Department for Information and Security, known by its French acronym DRS. With the presidential decree of February 2006 implementing the Charter for Peace and Reconciliation, members of the armed forces and progovernment paramilitary groups have been granted amnesty; virtually all cases of forced "disappearance" that occurred during the civil war remain unresolved. Human rights activists have criticized the country's prison conditions, noting some facilities for their harsh treatment and overcrowding.

Algeria's population is comprised mostly of a mixture of Arabs and Berbers. Over the years, the Berbers of Algeria, particularly in the northern Kabylie region, have fought—sometimes violently—for recognition of their language and culture. Following the Black Spring riots of 2001, which were sparked by the killing of a young Berber man by government forces, the Algerian government began making concessions to the Berbers, including constitutional recognition of the Berber language Tamazight as a national language.

In addition to prominent FIS leaders, whose movements are closely monitored, most Algerians are free to travel within the country and abroad. Men who are of draft age are not permitted to leave Algeria without government consent. Under the state of emergency, the minister of the interior and provincial governors may deny residency in certain districts to persons regarded as threats to public order.

Algerian women continue to face discrimination, at both the legal and societal levels. According to the family code, which is based on Islamic law, women do not enjoy equal rights in marriage and divorce. There remains considerable room for improvement, particularly in the area of inheritance, where women receive less than men.

Andorra

Population: 100,000
Capital: Andorra la Vella

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: **Andorra continued in 2006 to participate in the European Union (EU) Savings Tax Directive, which undermines the country's status as a major tax haven.**

As a co-principality, Andorra was ruled jointly for 715 years, from 1278 to 1993, by French and Spanish leaders; since 1607 this has involved the president of France and the Spanish bishop of Seu d'Urgel, Spain, who, as of May 12, 2003, was Monsignor Joan Enric Vives i Sicília. The 1993 constitution modified this feudal system, keeping the titular heads of state but transforming the government into a parliamentary democracy. Andorra became a member of the United Nations in 1993 and a member of the Council of Europe in 1994.

In April 2005, the country held national elections returning the Liberal Party of Andorra (PLA) to power with 42 percent of the vote and 14 out of the 28 seats in the Consell General. The PLA, however, lost ground and no longer has the absolute majority it had gained in the 2001 elections. The Social Democratic Party (PS) doubled its support, winning 12 seats compared with the 6 it had won in 2001. The remaining 2 seats in the Consell are held by CDA-Segle-21, a union of the two center-right parties (Andorran Democratic Center Party, or CDA, and Century 21, or S21). PLA leader Marc Forne stepped down as *cap de govern* (executive council president) and was replaced by former foreign minister Albert Pinat Santolaria.

One of the main goals of the Pinat government is to move forward with reforms required by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to remove the country from its list of tax havens. The EU Savings Tax Directive, which provides a way to tax revenue from savings accounts held by European citizens in a member state other than their own country of residence or in certain non-EU countries, came into effect on July 1, 2005. Andorra agreed to participate in the directive, which is intended to prevent harmful tax practices, in November 2004.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Andorra is an electoral democracy. About 80 percent of registered voters participated in elections in 2005 to choose the members of the Consell General, which then selects the executive council (cabinet) president, who is the head of government. Popular elec-

tions to the 28-member parliament are held every four years. Fourteen members are chosen in two-seat constituencies known as "parishes," and 14 are chosen by a national system of proportional representation.

The people have the right to establish and join different political parties, and an opposition vote exists. However, more than 60 percent of the population consists of noncitizens, who have no right to vote and face a number of hurdles that bar them from becoming citizens. As a result, there is little participation by non-Andorrans in government and politics.

The country currently participates in the EU Savings Tax Directive, which is designed to reduce tax evasion in offshore accounts such as those found in Andorra. Because of a lack of available information, Transparency International did not review and rank Andorra in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech is respected across the country. There are two independent daily newspapers—*Diari d'Andorra* and *El Periódico de Andorra*—access to broadcasts from neighboring France and Spain, and unlimited internet access.

Although Roman Catholicism is the predominant religion and the constitution recognizes a special relationship with the Roman Catholic Church, the state has ceased providing the Church with subsidies. There are no restrictions on proselytizing, and Mormons and members of Jehovah's Witnesses continue to do so, unimpeded. Negotiations between the Muslim community and the government have still not produced a proper mosque for the close to 2,000 Muslims residing in the country. The Muslim community's 2003 request to convert some public buildings into a mosque was turned down by the government. Similar requests made to the Catholic bishop to use a former church were not well received. The government does provide public facilities for various religious functions for the Muslim community. Academic freedom is respected.

Freedom of assembly and association is generally respected. Domestic and international human rights organizations operate within the country with little government interference. Although the government recognizes that both "workers and employers have the right to defend their own economic and social interests," there is neither an explicit right to strike nor legislation penalizing antiunion discrimination. A law regulating collective bargaining has been expected from parliament for some time. There have been few advances in labor rights in the country since the creation of a registry for associations in 2001, which has enabled trade unions to gain the legal recognition that they had lacked previously.

The country's judicial system, which is based on Spanish and French civil codes, does not have the power of judicial review of legislative acts. Police can detain suspects for up to 48 hours without charging them with a crime. The country does not maintain a military force and depends on France and Spain for the defense of its borders. Prison conditions meet international standards.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance criticized Andorra, in its 2003 report, for the country's restrictive naturalization criteria. Even though a majority of those living in Andorra are noncitizens, a person can become a citizen only by marrying a resident Andorran or by residing in the country for more than 25 years. Prospective citizens are also required to learn Catalan, the national language. Although noncitizens receive most of the social and economic benefits of citizens, they lack the right to vote.

Immigrant workers, primarily from North Africa, complain that they lack the same rights as citizens. Although the law gives legal status to 7,000 immigrants, many immigrants hold only "temporary work authorizations." Temporary workers are in a precarious position, as they must leave the country when their job contract expires.

Citizens have the right to own property, but noncitizens can own only 33 percent of a company unless they have lived in the country for 20 years or more. A proposed law to reduce this requirement from 20 to 10 years is pending in parliament.

Women enjoy the same legal, political, social, and professional rights as men, although they are underrepresented in government. Today, only four women occupy seats in parliament. There are no specific laws addressing violence against women, which remains a problem across the country. There are no government departments for women's issues or government-run shelters for battered women. Abortion is illegal, except to save the life of the mother.

Angola

Population: 15,800,000

Capital: Luanda

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

The year 2006 saw continued delays in the holding of long-anticipated presidential and parliamentary elections, the first since 1992. An official date for the elections—already postponed into 2006—had yet to be set by year's end. While the government cited the country's dilapidated infrastructure as the main cause of delay, opposition parties and civil society organizations accused President Jose Eduardo dos Santos and his ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) of stalling for political gain. In August, the government signed a controversial peace agreement with representatives of oil-rich Cabinda's splintered secessionist movement; the agreement was not recognized by significant elements in the umbrella Cabinda Forum for Dialogue, which cast doubt on the durability of the agreement. In February, an outbreak of cholera in Luanda led to more than 2,000 deaths across the country.

Angola was at war continually for nearly three decades following independence from Portugal in 1975. During the Cold War, the United States and South Africa

backed the rebel group National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) led by Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, while the former Soviet Union and Cuba supported the Marxist Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) government. A 1991 peace agreement—the Bicesse Accord—that led to general elections in 1992 under UN supervision disintegrated when Savimbi lost the first round of the presidential vote and resumed fighting. The Lusaka Protocol, a subsequent peace agreement signed in 1994, also fell apart. The collapse of the peace process, ineffective sanctions, and the shooting down of two UN planes caused the UN Security Council to vote in February 1999 to end the UN peacekeeping mission in Angola.

A 2002 ceasefire between UNITA and the ruling MPLA, spurred by Savimbi's death earlier that year and formalized in the Luena Memorandum of Understanding, has held. However, the resettlement of 4 million refugees and internally displaced persons has exposed severe deficiencies in social services such as housing, education, and health care in this oil- and diamond-rich country. The conflict claimed 500,000 to 2 million lives, displaced more than 4 million people, and sent almost 500,000 fleeing to neighboring countries. The majority of resettled people today remain without land, proper shelter and food, health care, jobs, education, and even identification documents; more than 91,000 people remain internally displaced within Angola. The resettlement process has been slowed by the presence of an estimated 500,000 land mines and by a war-ruined infrastructure, which make large tracts of the country inaccessible to humanitarian aid. Women are vulnerable to sexual abuse and rarely receive demobilization benefits. Former child soldiers—estimates vary from 7,000 to 11,000—have also remained outside the disarmament process. In May 2006, the International Organization for Migration reported that the ongoing repatriation of more than 12,000 Angolans living in Zambia was slowed by a lack of donor funds and the threat of cholera.

The UN High Commission for Refugees, a lead actor in the humanitarian effort, has shifted its focus from repatriation and emergency relief to reintegration. More than 700,000 Angolans—mostly children and repatriated refugees—are dependent on food aid from the UN World Food Programme, and the government estimates another 100,000 Angolans will be vulnerable to food insecurity through 2007. Angola's increased oil revenues and related economic growth have led to a significant reduction in donor funding of humanitarian programs.

UNITA appears committed to peace and has made the transition from being a disarmed military organization to becoming Angola's largest opposition party. About 80,000 former rebel soldiers have been demobilized; 5,000 of them have been integrated into the armed forces and the police. However, the MPLA and UNITA disagree about how rapidly political and economic reforms can occur, and much disagreement surrounds the management of Angola's extensive oil and diamond resources.

Angola is Africa's second-largest oil producer. In 2005 and 2006, increased oil production, coupled with rising global oil prices, saw Angola's economy expand by 18 percent. As a result, foreign creditors seeking access to energy resources have extended billions of dollars in credit and loan guarantees to the Angolan government; in 2006, foreign financing allowed the government to almost double its national budget. Angola's leading creditor is China, which in 2005 granted Angola a \$3

billion loan to finance infrastructure recovery projects and in 2006 helped finance the construction of an oil refinery in Lobito, a new airport in Viana, and the reconstruction of the war-damaged Benguela railway. Despite these developments, corruption and mismanagement have prevented most Angolans from benefiting from the country's wealth. It is estimated that more than \$1 billion in oil revenue goes missing each year, and the bulk of new public investment has been directed at the oil sector or the country's urban coast. Eight-five percent of the population engages in subsistence agriculture, and the United Nations estimates that 70 percent of the population lives on less than \$1 a day.

Though the oil-rich exclave of Cabinda, located between the Democratic Republic of Congo (Kinshasa) and the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), is recognized internationally as part of Angola, the government has been fighting secessionists in the area with varying levels of intensity since 1975. Cabinda, a protectorate during Portuguese colonial rule, accounts for 60 percent of Angola's total oil revenues. In July 2006, Angolan officials began negotiations of a peace agreement with former Front for the Liberation of Cabinda (FLEC) leader Antonio Bento Bembe; Bembe claimed to represent the Cabinda Forum for Dialogue (CFD), a grouping of representatives from the Cabindan secessionist movements, civil society organization, the Catholic Church, and FLEC formed in 2004. In September, the Angolan government and Bembe signed a Memorandum of Understanding that ostensibly ends the fighting in the exclave and provides for the demilitarization of the separatists in exchange for a general amnesty and "special status" for Cabinda. However, Henriques N'Zita Tiago, the exiled leader of a rival FLEC faction, along with other elements in the CFD, rejected Bembe's leadership and vowed to disregard the agreement.

By July, a February 2006 outbreak of cholera in Luanda's Boa Vista slum had spread to 14 of Angola's 18 provinces, infecting more than 48,800 Angolans and leading to over 2,000 deaths, according to the World Health Organization. The international organization Doctors Without Borders attributed the deadly outbreak to a general lack of access to clean water in Luanda.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Angola is not an electoral democracy. Angolans freely elected their own representatives only once, in UN-supervised presidential and legislative elections held in September 1992. International observers pronounced the vote generally free and fair despite some irregularities. However, UNITA leader Jonas Malheiro Savimbi rejected his loss to MPLA president Jose Eduardo dos Santos in the first round of presidential voting and resumed fighting, preventing a run-off election.

The MPLA dominates the 220-member National Assembly; UNITA holds 70 seats. The National Assembly has little power, but members engage in heated debates, and legislation proposed by the opposition is sometimes adopted.

General elections originally planned for 1997 have continually been delayed. In 2004, President Dos Santos and the MPLA announced that presidential and legislative elections would take place in 2006; the interim period would be used for ensuring the country's electoral readiness by way of voter registration and education, civil disarmament, and the establishment of the proper administrative authorities. However, these efforts have proceeded slowly. In August 2005, an amended Electoral Law allowing Dos Santos to run for a third consecutive five-year term and es-

establishing a National Electoral Commission (NEC) dominated by the MPLA prompted opposition parties' complaints to the Supreme Court; these same elements accuse Dos Santos and the MPLA of delaying the elections in order to reap the political and economic benefits of Angola's oil boom. Nevertheless, the NEC has demonstrated a willingness to consult with opposition parties and some civil society groups. In February 2006, Dos Santos, citing Angola's still dilapidated infrastructure and lack of progress with voter registration, stated that elections were not likely to take place in 2006, pointing to 2007 or even early 2008 as a more realistic time; the president is mandated to announce the election date only 90 days prior. In October, Angola launched its long-awaited voter registration and education program.

Following the 2002 Luena Memorandum of Understanding, the two factions of the former rebel group UNITA merged into one party, representing the most significant opposition to the ruling MPLA. Eighty-seven other opposition groups have formed a coalition with negligible weight, and about 125 parties are registered in Angola.

While political violence is still a problem, it has decreased significantly in each year since 2002. The risk of increasing political violence as elections draw near is exacerbated by the millions of small arms in circulation amongst private citizens.

Corruption and patronage are endemic in the government. In February 2005, the International Monetary Fund delayed a mission to Angola after the Finance Ministry failed to provide the fund with data concerning the whereabouts of an extra \$600 million in oil revenues reaped by the country in 2004 as the consequence of high oil prices. The giving of *gasosas*—literally "fizzy drinks," but in reality a small bribe—underpins much of Angolan business in both rural and urban areas. In December 2005, a World Bank survey found outdated, poorly implemented, and corruption-prone bureaucratic regulations made Angola one of the world's most hostile environments for micro-enterprise. Angola was ranked 142 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Following the 2002 ceasefire between the government and UNITA, media restrictions became less stringent. Yet, despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression, journalists are often subject to intimidation, dismissal, detention, and legal sanction by authorities; the result is self-censorship. Defamation of the president or his representatives is a criminal offense, punishable by imprisonment or fines. In February 2006, the government approved a new Press Law, enacted in May. The law is an improvement on previous legislation: it ends the state monopoly on television broadcasting, calls for the creation of a public broadcaster that ensures the "right of citizens to inform, seek information and be informed," and allows journalists to use the truth defense in libel and defamation trials. However, the law includes several restrictive provisions and requires implementing legislation for the execution of some of the more positive reforms (including application for independent TV and radio licenses).

In July 2006, Reporters Without Borders reported on the murders of two Angolan journalists, though it was unclear whether their deaths were related to their work.

Private media outlets are often denied access to official information and events, and they report problems with funding. There are several independent weekly newspapers and radio stations in Luanda that criticize the government, but the state dominates media elsewhere. The only daily newspaper and the sole television station are state owned. As of 2006, authorities continued to prevent the outspoken Roman

Catholic radio station, Radio Ecclesia, from broadcasting outside Luanda. In addition, high-ranking government officials pressured independent media to cover the government in a more favorable light. Internet access is limited to a small elite, as most citizens lack computers or even electricity.

Religious freedom is widely respected, despite colonial-era statutes that ban non-Christian religious groups. The educational system barely functions, suffering from underpaid and often corrupt teachers and severely damaged infrastructure. According to UNICEF, only 6 percent of 10- to 11-year-olds attend school.

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly and association. Hundreds of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civic groups operate in Angola, demanding political reform and greater government accountability in human rights; in particular, churches have grown more outspoken. However, the government often denies NGOs access to Cabinda on security grounds and has not adequately fostered the participation of civil society in postwar reconstruction. Angola's increased oil revenues and related economic growth have led to a significant reduction in donor funding of humanitarian programs. In 2006, the government continued to block the registration of the Association for Justice, Peace, and Democracy (AJPD), pending since 2000; nevertheless, the AJPD continued to function throughout the year.

Increasingly, authorities are allowing opposition groups to hold demonstrations in Luanda. However, crackdowns are common in the interior of the country. In December 2005, police detained 13 people protesting the demolition of homes in Luanda; the detainees were reportedly beaten in custody. In July 2006, Angolan military forces raided the headquarters of the Cabindan NGO Mpalabanda and the home of its president. In October, the director of Mpalabanda, Raul Danda, was arrested after voicing his opposition to the peace agreement signed with FLEC leader Antonio Bento Bembe. That same month, a demonstration in Cabinda by some 30 people opposed to the agreement and to Danda's arrest was violently broken up by Angolan security forces.

The right to strike and form unions is provided by the constitution, but the MPLA dominates the labor movement and only a few independent unions exist. The lack of a viable economy has hindered labor activity.

The judiciary is subject to extensive executive influence. The government has yet to establish a Constitutional Court, as mandated by the constitution. Local courts rule on civil matters and petty crime in some areas, but an overall lack of training and infrastructure and a large backlog of cases inhibit judicial proceedings. Only 23 of the 168 municipal courts are operational; as a result, traditional or informal courts are utilized. However, the courts do occasionally rule against the government: in February 2005, the Supreme Court in Luanda overturned a 2004 conviction of the editor of the independent weekly *Semanario Angolense* for defaming the president. Prisoners are commonly detained for long periods in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions while awaiting trial. Prison conditions are life-threatening; prisoners are subject to torture, severe overcrowding, sexual abuse, extortion, and a lack of basic human services.

Severe human rights abuses—including torture, abduction, rape, sexual slavery, and extrajudicial execution—were perpetrated during the war by both sides. Though less frequently, security forces still perpetrate such actions. Displaced Angolans returning home have faced harassment, and police and security forces are rarely held accountable for shakedowns, muggings, rapes, or beatings. An estimated four

million weapons in civilian hands threaten to contribute to lawlessness. In addition, murders, beatings, and other human rights violations at the hands of government and private security forces continue to afflict Angola's lucrative diamond mining industry. Such abuses became less frequent after the government mandated more humane methods in carrying out "Operation *Brilhante*," a recent campaign to curb illegal diamond mining that led to the expulsion of more than 120,000 Congolese and West African migrant miners. In January 2005, the government established the office of the Justice Ombudsman as the national human rights institution, and former justice minister Paolo Tjipilica was confirmed for the post by the National Assembly. However, the government's failure to include civic actors in the process elicited protests from human rights organizations and civil society.

The disputed nature of the government agreement with separatist forces in Cabinda has caused concerns among human rights organizations of more severe human rights abuses in the exclave. These abuses could be stoked by both government attempts to enforce the agreement and infighting within Cabindan separatist factions. Accusations of rights abuses—torture, arbitrary detention, extrajudicial executions, restrictions on freedom of movement, and sexual violence—have been leveled throughout the duration of the conflict.

Eight provinces (about 50 percent of the country) contain areas that were heavily mined, which restricts freedom of movement. At least 80,000 people have lost limbs to mines over the years.

Angolans have the right to own property. However, the government dominates the economy, and the war discouraged the development of a private sector. In December 2005, authorities in Luanda destroyed more than 625 homes in the Cambamba neighborhood and forcefully evicted their inhabitants to make way for a new housing project. According to the U.S. State Department's 2006 human rights report, the property rights of traditional pastoral communities lack adequate protection.

Women occupy cabinet positions and National Assembly seats. Nevertheless, despite legal protections, de facto discrimination against women remains strong, particularly in rural areas. Violence against women is widespread; spousal abuse is common. Women are often the victims of land mines as they forage for food and firewood. Child labor is a major problem, and there were reports of trafficking in women and children for purposes of prostitution or forced labor. A recent study by the state's National Children's Institute and UNICEF found "a significant and growing" trend in the abuse and abandonment of children accused of witchcraft after the death of a family member (usually from HIV/AIDS).

Antigua and Barbuda

Population: 100,000

Capital: St. John's

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4.3PF	4.3PF	4.3PF	4.2PF	4.2PF	4.2PF	4.2PF	2.2F	2.2F	2.2F

Overview: In 2006, Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer launched an investigation against a popular radio announcer, previously affiliated with the Lester Bird administration. During the year, Antigua and Barbuda moved to diversify its international trading partners.

Antigua and Barbuda, a member of the Commonwealth, gained independence in 1981. In 1994, Vere Bird stepped down as prime minister in favor of his son Lester. In the run-up to the 1994 election, three opposition parties joined forces to form the United Progressive Party (UPP), which campaigned on a social-democratic platform emphasizing the rule of law and good governance. Parliamentary seats held by Bird's Antigua Labour Party (ALP) fell from 15 in 1989 to 11, while the number for the UPP rose from 1 to 5.

After assuming office, Lester Bird promised a less corrupt, more efficient government. However, the government continued to be dogged by scandals. In 1995, one of the prime minister's brothers, Ivor, received only a fine after having been convicted of cocaine smuggling. In the March 1999 elections, the ALP won 12 parliamentary seats; the UPP, 4; and the Barbuda People's Movement (BPM), 1.

On March 23, 2004, after a hard-fought and at times vitriolic, campaign, the UPP, led by Baldwin Spencer, defeated the ALP. Commonwealth observers declared the vote to have been generally free and fair. The election's results, which were not contested, were a crushing defeat for the ALP, which retained only 4 out of the 17 seats in parliament. The UPP won 12 seats, while the BPM, an ally of the UPP, won the Barbuda seat in a runoff election. Both the prime minister and his brother, Vere Bird Jr., lost their seats in parliament. The election brought an end to the political dynasty of the Bird family, which had dominated politics in Antigua and Barbuda since 1976.

In the spring of 2006, police detained ALP activist James "Tanny" Rose for questioning about financial transactions at the state-owned Antigua Broadcasting Service. Rose, who is a talk show host on Radio ZDK, which is owned by former prime minister Lester Bird, had gained notoriety through his scathing criticisms of the current government. Rose was later arrested and charged with wrongdoing in public office related to advertising commissions and sales during his tenure as director general of the state radio service.

In August 2006, the Ministry of Tourism announced a boom in development with 40 tourism-related new construction and renovation projects totaling nearly US\$1.4 billion over the next five years. However, in October, Antigua and Barbuda suffered a further setback to its struggle to preserve its online gambling industry when the U.S. Congress passed a bill prohibiting U.S. banks and credit card companies from settling transactions for patrons of internet gambling sites; the legislation undercuts a previous World Trade Organization ruling on the issue that favored Antigua and Barbuda. During the year, the country signed new agreements with China and Venezuela in a bid to diversify its international trading partners.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Antigua and Barbuda is an electoral democracy. The 1981 constitution establishes a parliamentary system: a bicameral parliament is composed of the 17-member House of Representatives (16 seats go to Antigua, 1 to Barbuda), to which members are elected for five-year terms, and an appointed Senate. Of the senators, 11 are appointed by the prime minister, 4 by the parliamentary opposition leader, 1 by the Barbuda Council (an 11-member local government body that runs the internal affairs of the island of Barbuda), and 1 by the governor-general. Sir James B. Carlisle has been governor-general since 1993. Antigua and Barbuda's prime minister is typically the leader of the majority party or coalition that emerges from the legislative elections.

Political parties can organize freely. The government plans to reform the electoral system by establishing an Independent Electoral Commission to review electoral law and redraw constituency boundaries, creating a new voter registry, and introducing voter identification cards.

Although the government introduced anticorruption and integrity legislation into parliament in October 2002, and in 2004 the Spencer administration passed legislation to improve governmental transparency, implementation has been slow. The Integrity of Public Life Bill, which parliament adopted in 2004, requires that public officials make an annual declaration of assets, with failure to comply becoming a punishable offense. In January 2005, the country became the fourth member of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States to ratify the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, which requires public officials to declare their assets and liabilities, improves cooperation on the collective fight against corruption, and strengthens corporate accounting practices. Antigua and Barbuda was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Antigua and Barbuda generally respects freedom of expression and freedom of the press, but in practice media outlets are concentrated among a small number of firms affiliated with either the current government or its predecessor. The family of former prime minister Lester Bird continues to control television, cable, and radio outlets. The government owns one of three radio stations and the television station. One of the Bird brothers owns a second station, and another brother owns the cable company. Opposition parties complain of receiving limited coverage from, and having little opportunity to present their views on, the government-controlled electronic media. In June 2005, Prime Minister Spencer sought new legislation to curb slander and harassment on the radio, but the opposition claimed this was an effort to restrict free speech. In August 2005, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights praised the country's efforts to pass the Freedom of Information Act to improve

public access to education; additional steps were taken to end the state's media monopoly. In the spring of 2006, an antigovernment radio host was arrested on charges stemming from corruption allegedly committed during the previous Bird administration. There is free access to the internet.

The government respects religious and academic freedom.

Nongovernmental organizations and labor unions can organize freely. The Industrial Court mediates labor disputes, but public sector unions tend to be under the sway of the ruling party. Demonstrators are occasionally subject to police harassment.

The country's legal system is based on English common law. The ALP had manipulated the nominally independent judicial system, which was powerless to address corruption in the executive branch. The UPP has sought to increase the transparency of public affairs through new legislation and to establish clear guidelines for investment practices.

The islands' security forces are composed of the police and the small Antigua and Barbuda Defence Forces. The police generally respect human rights; basic police reporting statistics, however, are confidential. The country's prison is in primitive condition and has been criticized for the abuse of inmates, though visits are permitted by independent human rights groups.

Increased patrols and the reintroduction of roadblocks and stiffer fines for firearms violations were offered as a response to higher levels of crime, which the government attributed to a new trend of gun possession among island youth and an influx of criminal deportees from the United States and Europe with links to the drug trade. In October 2005, Senate president Hazelyn Francis was assaulted and raped in her Antigua home, which intensified the debate around high levels of crime and prompted a review of security arrangements for government officials.

In March 2005, the government introduced the Equal Opportunity Act, which bars discrimination on the basis of race, gender, class, political affinity, or place of origin. Social discrimination and violence against women remain problems, however. The governmental Directorate of Women's Affairs has sought to increase awareness of women's legal rights. Women have gained ground in the political system, holding two cabinet posts, the positions of Speaker of parliament and president of the Senate, and, since 2005, the post of police commissioner.

Argentina

Population: 39,000,000

Capital: Buenos Aires

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Trend Arrow: Argentina received a downward trend arrow because of President Kirchner's centralization of power in the executive branch and limiting of other government branches' autonomy, including changing the tax system to limit the influence of provincial governors, gaining higher spending discretion at the expense of Congress, and politicizing the process of Supreme Court justice selection.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,3F	3,3F	2,3F	1,2F	3,3PF	3,3PF	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview:

President Nestor Kirchner governed with a stronger mandate in 2006 following legislative elections in October 2005 in which the ruling Justicialist Party (PJ), commonly known as the Peronist Party, gained a larger congressional majority. Kirchner benefited from a fourth consecutive year of impressive economic growth, as well as from his ultimately successful standoff with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and his departure from the orthodox policies of the 1990s. He also made strides in holding previously immune individuals responsible for the repression carried out during the former military dictatorship. However, 2006 saw a marked increase in the centralization of presidential power, which could prove to be at the expense of Argentina's still fragile democratic institutions.

The Argentine Republic was established after independence from Spain in 1816. Democratic rule was often interrupted by military coups. The end of Juan Peron's populist and authoritarian regime in 1955 led to a series of right-wing military dictatorships that spawned left-wing and nationalist violence. Argentina returned to elected civilian rule in 1983, after seven years of a far-right military regime whose vicious and mostly clandestine repression of leftist guerrillas and other dissidents was known as the "dirty war."

Provincial governor Carlos Menem, running on an orthodox Peronist platform of nationalism and state intervention in the economy, won a six-year presidential term in 1989 amid hyperinflation and food riots. As president, however, he implemented—mostly by decree—an economic liberalization program and unconditionally allied the country with U.S. foreign policy. While traditional Peronists criticized his policies as betrayals of the party's principles, his convertibility plan, which

pegged the peso to the U.S. dollar through a currency board, finally ended the country's chronic bouts of hyperinflation.

Buenos Aires mayor Fernando De la Rúa, of the center-left "Alianza" coalition, was elected president in October 1999. Facing an opposition-controlled National Congress, De la Rúa sought to cut spending, raise taxes, and push forward an anti-corruption agenda and unpopular labor reforms. De la Rúa appointed Menem's former economy minister in an effort to restore credibility to the government's failing economic program and to stave off default on Argentina's \$128 billion public sector debt. Record unemployment and reduced and delayed wages to government workers, effects of the highly overvalued and inflexible currency, created the kind of social mobilization and protest unseen for nearly a generation.

In December 2001, government efforts to stop a run on Argentina's banking system sparked widespread protests. At the same time, riots and looting of supermarkets in poorer districts erupted, some of which appeared to have been organized by rivals within the opposition Peronists. As the death toll reached 27, De la Rúa resigned. He was replaced by an interim president, who himself was forced to quit less than a week later. On December 31, 2001, Menem's former vice president, Eduardo Duhalde, was selected by Congress as Argentina's new president. A decade-old law prohibiting the use of the military for internal security, a sizable reduction in military strength carried out by the Menem government, and continuing civilian abhorrence of the legacy of the dirty war kept the military from intervening in politics during the weeks-long transition. A steep devaluation of the peso and a debilitating default on its foreign debt left Argentina teetering on the brink of political and economic collapse throughout 2002. Unemployment soared to levels unheard of since the founding of the republic, and violent crime spiraled out of control.

Nestor Kirchner, a relatively unknown governor from the Patagonian region and member of the Justicialist Party (PJ) [commonly known as the Peronist Party], was elected president in April 2003, becoming Argentina's sixth president in 18 months. In addition to working to stabilize the economy, Kirchner quickly moved to purge the country's authoritarian military and police leadership. Seeking to make human rights a trademark of his administration, Kirchner also took steps to remove justices from the highly politicized Supreme Court—considered the country's most corrupt institution—and signed a decree that permitted the extradition of former military officials accused of human rights abuses.

The 2004 admission by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that it had significantly contributed to the Argentine economic crisis, and the role the international financial institutions and private banks played in financing the hated military, allowed the Kirchner government unaccustomed room to maneuver in repaying foreign creditors. After making some efforts to put a brake on government spending, Kirchner presided over a long-hoped-for economic recovery. However, corruption and extrajudicial action by the country's law enforcement institutions continued to be a major problem, particularly in Buenos Aires province.

By March 2005, Economy Minister Roberto Lavagna was able to declare the end of a three-year battle to restructure what had become a record \$103 billion in defaulted debt, with more than three-fourths of the holders of Argentine foreign bonds agreeing to a nonnegotiable offer of 30 cents on the dollar. Argentina's financial position was also helped by Venezuela's purchase of more than \$500 million

in government bonds, which cushioned Buenos Aires's tense relations with the IMF. The economy grew some 9.2 percent in 2005, while unemployment fell from 21 to 13 percent and poverty rates from 55 to 38 percent. The country's improved economic fortunes, including the achievement of the largest debt reduction ever by a developing country, helped the Peronists increase their legislative majority after the October 2005 legislative elections, portrayed as a referendum on both Kirchner's presidency and his prospects for reelection in October 2007.

In June 2005, the Supreme Court ruled that laws passed in the 1980s to protect the military from prosecution—a move justified at the time of their promulgation as a way to help avoid a military coup—were unconstitutional, thus making Argentina a world leader in efforts to fight military impunity. In addition, in August 2006, Julio Simon, a police sergeant connected with the military junta, was sentenced to 25 years in prison for his role in the dirty war; he became the first individual to be convicted and sentenced since the impunity laws were overruled. More than 200 other dictatorship officials are under investigation and could face trial. Separately, in September 2006, federal judges reversed presidential pardons granted by Menem to three leaders of the 1976-83 military dictatorship.

In 2006, Kirchner implemented a series of measures centralizing political and economic power in the executive branch. Helped by the influence of his wife, who holds a Senate seat, Kirchner in August persuaded Congress to grant him the right to alter the budget without legislative approval; this privilege was created during the 2001 economic crisis but had expired in 2005. The now permanent executive power allows Kirchner to reallocate government spending as he sees fit, as long as the overall appropriation stays unchanged. He also changed the tax system to limit the power of historically powerful provincial governors, and created new state-owned enterprises while nationalizing privatized ones, such as the postal service and Buenos Aires's water utility company.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Argentina is an electoral democracy. As amended in 1994, the constitution provides for a president elected for four years with the option of reelection for one term. Presidential candidates must win 45 percent of the vote to avoid a runoff. The current president, Nestor Kirchner, was elected to his first term in a free and fair election in 2003; with a 70 percent approval rating, he is likely to run again in 2007.

The National Congress consists of the 257-member Chamber of Deputies directly elected for four years, with half the seats renewable every two years, and the 72-member Senate directly elected for six-year terms, with one-third of the seats renewable every two years. Two senators are directly elected in the autonomous Buenos Aires federal district.

The right to organize political parties is generally respected. Major political parties include the PJ (Peronist Party), the Frente para la Victoria (FV), the Radical Civic Union (UCR), the Alternative for a Republic of Equals (ARI), and the Republican Initiative Alliance (PRO). The Peronists have been a predominant force in politics in Argentina since 1946.

Kirchner's government initially made anticorruption pledges a central theme, and Decree 1172/03 established the public's right to information and other transparency guarantees. However, leading anticorruption activists have accused the Kirchner government of having stalled on its good-government agenda, particu-

larly in not ensuring the effective functioning of administrative controls. Argentina was ranked 93 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is guaranteed by law, and government meddling in the press is not nearly as heavy-handed as during the presidency of Carlos Menem. However, government officials are increasingly accused of verbally mistreating independent journalists, and provincial governments continue to boost the amount of official advertising disproportionately in favor of media outlets they consider friendly. As noted in a recent study by the Association for Civil Rights in Buenos Aires, government advertising accounted for three-quarters of the total revenue of a local media outlet in Tierra del Fuego province. Kirchner refuses to hold press conferences, saying that he prefers press photographers "because they don't ask questions," and government spokespeople allege press conferences are unnecessary because the president "speaks directly to the people." The final passage of a Freedom of Information Act is still pending; its passage is in jeopardy because of several amendments that would undermine its open-government provisions.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Nevertheless, the 250,000-strong Jewish community, the largest in Latin America, is a frequent target of anti-Semitic vandalism. Neo-Nazi organizations and other anti-Semitic groups remain active. In 2004, a federal court acquitted five men of being accessories in the 1994 car bombing of the Argentine Jewish Mutual Association (AMIA) community center, which resulted in 85 deaths. At the end of the three-year trial, not a single person was convicted for the attack. In 2005, Kirchner's government apologized to Argentina's Jewish community for a secret 1938 order barring Jewish immigrants fleeing the Nazis in Europe from entering Argentina.

Academic freedom is a cherished Argentine tradition and is largely observed in practice.

The rights to freedom of assembly and association are generally respected. Civil society organizations are robust and play a large role in society, although some fall victim to the corruption that continues to pervade Argentina's politics and economy. Labor is dominated by Peronist unions. Union influence, however, has diminished dramatically in the past decade because of corruption scandals, internal divisions, and restrictions on public sector strikes.

Menem's manipulation of the judiciary undermined the country's separation of powers and the rule of law. Although positive steps have been taken under Kirchner, including the appointment of magistrates of professional quality, the tenure of scores of incompetent and corrupt judges remains a serious problem. Moreover, in February 2006, Congress voted to change the composition of the body responsible for selecting judges, making it less professional and more political. Human Rights Watch has written that the move makes the courts more susceptible to political pressure. Separately, according to a study released in June 2005 by the University of Buenos Aires law school, of the 26,000 laws on the books nationally in Argentina, only 4,000—about 15 percent—were actually in force. The arbitrary application of superfluous laws leads to juridical insecurity, the study contends.

Public safety is a primary concern for Argentines. Within the last decade, crime in Argentina doubled, and in Buenos Aires, tripled. Much of the increase has been fueled by a marked growth in illegal drug consumption that began during the Menem

years and by the complicity of high-ranking judicial and law enforcement authorities in the drug trade. Frustration with levels of crime in Buenos Aires was manifested in an historically large anticrime rally on August 31, 2006.

In May 2002, the Argentine penal code was changed, and the penalty for being convicted of killing a police officer became a life sentence without the possibility of parole. Police misconduct includes growing numbers of alleged extrajudicial executions by law enforcement officers. The Buenos Aires provincial police have been involved in drug trafficking, extortion, and vice. Arbitrary arrests and abuse by police are rarely punished in civil courts owing to intimidation of witnesses and judges, particularly in Buenos Aires province. The torture of detainees in police custody in the province is endemic, and the provincial penal service is rife with corruption. Prison conditions are generally substandard throughout the country.

Argentina's estimated 700,000 to 1.5 million indigenous people are largely neglected. Approximately 70 percent of the country's rural indigenous communities lack title to their lands; however, the Kirchner government appears sensitive to their plight and has returned lands to several communities.

In 2002, the city of Buenos Aires significantly expanded the legal rights of gay and lesbian couples, although one poll conducted in 2005 reported that one in five gays say they have been the victims of violence related to their sexual orientation.

Women actively participate in politics in Argentina—two women occupy Supreme Court seats, and as of December 2005, women serve as economy and defense ministers. However, domestic abuse remains a serious problem, and child prostitution is reported to be on the rise.

Armenia

Population: 3,000,000

Capital: Yerevan

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF

Overview:

Over the course of 2006, the political landscape saw the dissolution of the governing three-party coalition after the resignation of then-Speaker of the National Assembly, Artur Baghdasarian. His party, Orinats Yerkir (Rule of Law), then went into opposition. Several leading members of his party subsequently joined other parties and formed a new "Entrepreneur" deputy group in the National Assembly. The poor administration of the 2005 national referendum, coupled with previously poorly

administered ballots, raised questions about the authorities' ability to conduct sound parliamentary elections, which are due to be held in May 2007.

After a brief period of independence from 1918 to 1920, a part of the predominantly Christian Transcaucasus republic of Armenia became a Soviet republic in 1922, while the western portion was ceded to Turkey. Armenia declared its independence from the Soviet Union in September 1991 following a nationalist movement for autonomy that had gained in strength when Mikhail Gorbachev was the Soviet president (1985-91) and became stronger once it became apparent that the USSR would likely disintegrate.

The banning of nine political parties prior to the 1995 parliamentary elections ensured the dominance of President Levon Ter Petrosian's ruling Armenian National Movement (ANM) coalition. In February 1998, Petrosian stepped down following the resignation of key officials in protest of his gradualist approach to solving the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, the disputed enclave in Azerbaijan. Prime Minister Robert Kocharian, the former president of Nagorno-Karabakh, was elected president in March of that year with the support of the previously banned Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaksutiun.

Parliamentary elections in May 1999 resulted in an overwhelming victory for the Unity bloc, a new alliance of Defense Minister Vazgen Sarkisian's Republican Party and former Soviet Armenian leader Karen Demirchian's People's Party, which campaigned on a political platform of greater state involvement in the economy and increased social spending. In June, Sarkisian was named prime minister and Demirchian became Speaker of the National Assembly.

The country was plunged into a political crisis on October 27, 1999, when five gunmen stormed the National Assembly and assassinated Sarkisian, Demirchian, and several other senior government officials. The leader of the gunmen, Nairi Hunanian, maintained that he and the other assailants had acted alone in an attempt to incite a popular revolt against the government. Meanwhile, allegations that Kocharian or members of his inner circle had orchestrated the shootings prompted opposition calls for the president to resign. However, because of an apparent lack of evidence, prosecutors did not press charges against Kocharian, who gradually consolidated his power during the following year. In May 2000, Kocharian named Republican Party leader Andranik Markarian as prime minister, replacing Vazgen Sarkisian's younger brother, Aram, who had served in the position for only five months following the parliament shootings.

In 2003, Kocharian was reelected in a presidential vote that was widely regarded as flawed. He defeated Stepan Demirchian, son of the late Karen Demirchian, in a second round runoff with 67 percent of the vote. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) described the elections as falling "short of international standards for democratic elections" and asserted that "voting, counting, and tabulation showed serious irregularities, including widespread ballot-box stuffing." During the runoff, which was held on March 5 of that year, authorities placed more than 200 opposition supporters under administrative detention for over 15 days; the detainees were sentenced on charges of hooliganism and participation in unsanctioned demonstrations. The Constitutional Court rejected appeals by opposition leaders to invalidate the election results, although it did propose holding a

"referendum of confidence" on Kocharian within the next year to allay widespread doubts about the validity of the election returns; Kocharian indicated that he would not comply with the proposal. In response to the problems associated with the election, a standoff emerged between Kocharian and the political opposition, formed by two major groups—the Artarutiun (Justice bloc) and the National Unity Party—with opposition parties choosing not to attend sessions of the National Assembly.

Protest rallies were organized in Yerevan from April to June 2004 over the failure of the government to redress the 2003 presidential vote. The authorities responded with violence, using police to disperse demonstrators in Yerevan with water cannons, batons, and stun grenades. After the crackdown by the authorities in April, these demonstrations grew ever smaller. In October, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a resolution expressing concern about the lack of investigation into the flawed 2003 elections and calling for steps to end pre-trial administrative detention, physical ill-treatment, and other abuses.

A national referendum held on November 27, 2005, was designed to bring about a clearer separation of powers among the judicial, executive, and legislative branches of government and to create a more even distribution of power between the executive and legislative branches by scaling back presidential powers. In spite of widespread apathy and a sense of disconnection from public affairs among average Armenians, the official results of the referendum showed 94 percent in favor of the referendum; turnout was reported to be 64 percent. The opposition, which believed that the proposed reforms did not go far enough, took issue with these figures, asserting that the authorities had inflated turnout figures.

There were few international observers for the referendum, although PACE sent 14 monitors, who voiced serious criticisms of the way the voting was conducted and suggested that the high turnout figure was questionable. While the monitors concluded that "the referendum generally reflected the free will of those who voted," they reported "serious abuse in several polling stations which cast a shadow over the credibility of the officially announced turnout." The monitors went on to say that "in a significant number of polling stations in Yerevan and other regions ... the extremely low voting activity did not correspond to the high figures provided by the electoral commissions. There were also clear instances of forged additional signatures on the voters register and of ballot stuffing. The electoral regulations, requiring the stamping of the ballot after completion, created numerous situations where the secrecy of the vote was not respected." Questions about the administration of the referendum, as well as the poor experience in other recent elections, have placed a spotlight on the May 2007 parliamentary elections. Meanwhile, implementation of the provisions of the referendum in 2006 was slow, raising further questions about the government's capacity to implement key institutional reforms.

The year 2006 saw particularly active political jockeying in advance of the 2007 parliamentary elections. Artur Baghdasarian, Speaker of the National Assembly, was pressured to step down from the government in May 2006 following a row over his comments about Armenia's foreign policy orientation. Baghdasarian suggested that Armenia move toward the West and its key institutions, including NATO, a suggestion that touched a sensitive nerve within the country's leadership, which seeks to maintain a strong relationship with Moscow. Tigran Torosian, a member of the Republican Party of Armenia, was elected Speaker following Baghdasarian's resignation.

Efforts to address the conflict over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh did not move forward in 2006, although several high-level meetings were held. President Kocharian met with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev in February and June of 2006, and mediators acting under the aegis of the OSCE's "Minsk Group" undertook renewed efforts to advance a solution to the longstanding dispute but had not made meaningful progress by year's end. The region, which is formally part of Azerbaijan, is now predominantly ethnically Armenian and effectively under Armenian control.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Armenia is not an electoral democracy. The 1995 and 1999 parliamentary and 1996 presidential elections were marred by serious irregularities. The most recent presidential and parliamentary polls, in February-March and May 2003, respectively, were strongly criticized by international election monitors, who cited widespread fraud, particularly in the presidential vote. The 1995 constitution provides for a weak legislature (the National Assembly) and a strong executive, who appoints the prime minister. Electoral reforms enacted in 2005 increased the number of parliamentary seats allocated by proportional representation from 56 to 90 and reduced the number of single-mandate seats from 75 to 41. Ninety-six of the 131 seats in parliament are occupied by progovernment parties or deputies that constitute the governing coalition. Armenia is scheduled to hold an election for the National Assembly in May 2007. The main contending parties in the parliamentary election are likely to be between the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA), the dominant party in the three-party coalition government, and Prosperous Armenia, which was established in early 2006 by Gagik Tsarukian, a parliamentary deputy, who is among Armenia's wealthiest businesspeople.

The president is elected by popular vote for a five-year term. The next presidential elections are scheduled for 2008.

At the exhortation of the Council of Europe, the Armenian government adopted modifications to the election code in 2005 and 2006. The amended code provides for a more balanced composition of election commissions, yet concerns remain about the potential for fair administration of the election process. For example, the OSCE cited the abolition of the quorum for election commissions to make decisions as a potential concern. Another measure viewed as a step in the right direction is a new vote-tabulation process, involving direct online summarization of preliminary Precinct Election Commission results at the Territorial Election Commission level through a computer network connected to the Central Election Commission.

Opposition parties have pursued a policy of disengagement, including with respect to the 2005 constitutional referendum and the 2003 election, which the opposition has characterized as illegitimate. President Robert Kocharian, whose term expires in 2008, does not belong to any political party and relies on a three-party coalition to rule the country.

Bribery and nepotism are reported to be common among government bureaucrats, and government officials are rarely prosecuted or otherwise removed for abuse of office. Corruption is also believed to be a serious problem in law enforcement. Armenia was ranked 93 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

There are considerable limits on press freedom in Armenia. The authorities maintain extensive control over broadcast media—which is the chief source of news for

most Armenians—including state-run Armenian Public Television (HI) and most private channels, whose owners are loyal to the president and therefore not apt to offer critical comment. A report issued in July 2006 by the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media, Miklos Haraszti, observed that Armenian "broadcast media can be described as predominantly pro-government, despite the transformation of state TV into a public broadcaster, and the existence of a number of private channels." In this same report, Haraszti noted that "Armenia has made significant progress in improving media legislation, but media pluralism remains limited to the independent, but financially weak and less influential, print media." The criminal code still includes libel as a criminal offense.

In 2002, the independent television station A1+ lost its license after the national television and radio broadcasting commission granted a tender for its broadcasting frequency to another channel. Journalists and opposition politicians criticized the closure of A1+, which had a reputation for balanced reporting, as a politically motivated decision to control media coverage in the run-up to the 2003 presidential and parliamentary elections. Following the decision, thousands of people demonstrated in a series of weekly protests over the station's closure and to demand Kocharian's resignation. Since losing its license in 2002, A1+ has brought numerous cases before the courts and filed multiple applications to obtain TV frequencies. All applications have been denied. As a last resort, A1+ has lodged two applications with the European Court of Human Rights. The first, which challenged results of an April 2002 tender on licensing, was submitted to the Court in January 2003. The second, challenging the seven subsequent tenders, was filed in September 2004. Both are under consideration by the Court.

Freedom of religion is generally respected, and most registered religious groups reported no serious legal impediments to their activities. The Armenian Apostolic Church, to which 90 percent of Armenians formally belong, enjoys some privileges not afforded to other faiths. While 50 religious groups are officially registered, the Jehovah's Witnesses have been denied registration repeatedly because of the group's strong opposition to compulsory military service. As of the end of 2006, 43 Jehovah's Witnesses were serving prison terms for evading military service.

The government generally does not restrict academic freedom. In September 2002, the Ministry of Education ordered the compulsory display of the portraits of Kocharian and the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church in secondary schools. The history of the Apostolic Church is a required school subject.

The authorities' violent response to spring 2004 protests represented a low point for freedom of assembly in Armenia. Authorities also brutally suppressed peaceful demonstrators and political activists following the 2003 presidential election. The PACE in 2005 condemned the use of violence by the Armenian authorities, criticizing them for the continued use of the administrative code to arrest protesters. In response to international criticism, the government in October 2005 adopted amendments to the law on organizing meetings, assemblies, rallies, and demonstrations. These measures took into account most of the recommendations put forward by the OSCE Venice Commission. In 2006, no such abusive behavior was in evidence. Whether this absence of abuse represents a permanent decision by the authorities or more temporary restraint will be put to the test in the run up to the May 2007 parliamentary elections.

Registration requirements for nongovernmental associations are cumbersome and time-consuming. Some 3,000 nongovernmental organizations are registered with the Ministry of Justice, although many of them are not active in a meaningful way. While the constitution provides for the right to form and join trade unions, labor organizations are weak and relatively inactive in practice.

The judicial branch is subject to political pressure from the executive branch and suffers from considerable corruption. In 2006, Justice Minister David Harutiunian outlined an ambitious proposal to enhance the independence of the judiciary and the country's law enforcement sector, although these reforms had not been advanced by the end of 2006. Police make arbitrary arrests without warrants, beat detainees during arrest and interrogation, and use torture to extract confessions. Cases of abuse go unreported out of fear of retribution. Prison conditions in Armenia are poor, and threats to prisoner health are frequent.

Although members of the country's tiny ethnic minority population rarely report cases of overt discrimination, they have complained about difficulties in receiving education in their native languages. The Yezidi community has claimed that police and local authorities sometimes subject them to discrimination.

Freedom of travel and residence is largely respected. However, registering changes in residency is sometimes complicated by the need to negotiate with an inefficient or corrupt government bureaucracy.

Citizens have the right to own private property and establish businesses, but an inefficient and often corrupt court system and unfair business competition hinder such activities. Key industries remain in the hands of oligarchs and influential clans who received preferential treatment in the early stages of privatization.

Domestic violence and trafficking in women and girls for the purpose of prostitution are believed to be serious problems. Representation of women in the current parliament is low: at year's end, only 7 out of 131 seats in the National Assembly were held by women. According to the election code, women shall now comprise 15 percent of a party's list for the proportional election and hold every tenth position on party lists, marking an improvement from the 2003 parliamentary elections.

Australia

Population: 20,600,000

Capital: Canberra

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Racial violence broke out between Australian young men of European and Lebanese origin in Sydney in December 2005. The government withdrew a controversial refugee asylum bill, marking a major defeat for the government of Prime Minister John Howard.

Britain claimed Australia as a colony in 1770. The country became independent in 1901 as a commonwealth of six states. In 1911, the government adopted the Northern Territories and the capital territory of Canberra as territorial units. Since World War II, political power has alternated between the center-left Labour Party and a conservative coalition of the Liberal Party and the smaller, rural-based National Party. John Howard of the ruling Liberal Party-National Party conservative coalition has been prime minister since 1996. Howard and his Liberal-National coalition again defeated Labour in the parliamentary elections of October 2004 with the help of a strong economy.

Australia continues to be active in promoting peace, restoring the rule of law, improving governance, and fighting terrorism in a number of Pacific island nations, specifically through providing them with experts and funding for military, police, and judicial training. The country sent several thousand soldiers and monitors to Papua New Guinea (PNG) to restore peace and order following a ceasefire in 1998 and has promised \$600 million and troops to reform the PNG army. After leading a multinational force in 2003 to restore law and order in the Solomon Islands following years of ethnic turmoil, Australia sent troops again in 2006 to quell widespread violence sparked by allegations of election fraud. Also in 2006, Australia sent 150 soldiers to quell violence and restore order in East Timor as well as a smaller number of soldiers to restore calm in the Tongan capital.

On the home front, concern about Muslim extremism and its connection to terrorism has led Canberra to open dialogues with moderate Muslim groups. The government maintains that it wants to keep mosques and Islamic schools from preaching or teaching anti-Australian messages and will monitor organizations for funding terrorists. Meanwhile, many of the approximately 350,000 Muslim residents are said to feel increasingly alienated. In August 2005, moderate Muslim leaders formed the

first Muslim political party, the Best Party of Allah, to provide a national voice for Muslims. An outbreak of racial violence in Sydney in December 2005 between young men of European and Lebanese descent and an attack on a mosque demonstrated the level of tension in some segments of society. The ethnic riots in Cronulla, a beachfront suburb of Sydney, were sparked by attacks on two lifeguards and other incidents of assault and intimidation in early December by persons reportedly of Middle Eastern origin.

Illegal migration has become a major political issue in recent years, and human rights groups have criticized the government's handling of asylum petitions and illegal migrants. In 2001 alone, some 1,500 persons, mostly from Afghanistan and Iraq, came by boat seeking refuge. To discourage them and their handlers from choosing Australia as a destination, Canberra has introduced several stringent measures, including placing illegal migrants in detention camps in the Pacific Island country of Nauru and adopting more rigorous screening procedures for establishing asylum claims. These measures have enjoyed considerable public support, particularly from legal migrants who complain that such refugees are "queue jumpers." However, criticism from human rights groups resulted in amendments to several controversial measures; for example, families with children are now freed from detention while their asylum claims are being processed.

The government tried to tighten asylum laws in 2006 following a political fallout with Indonesia sparked by Australia's granting of temporary protection visas to 42 Papuans seeking refuge from alleged abuse by Indonesian soldiers in February. The new system would have required all new arrivals by boat to have their claims heard in an offshore location, denied asylum seekers access to review under Australian law. If claims were upheld, asylum seekers would be resettled in a third country rather than be allowed entry to Australia. The bill failed to obtain adequate support to pass in August, however, representing a significant defeat for the government of Prime Minister John Howard.

Among key political developments, Kevin Rudd, a former diplomat, defeated Kim Beazley to assume leadership of the Labour Party, and Prime Minister Howard announced that he will seek a fifth term in the next general election in 2007.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Australia is an electoral democracy. The head of state is the British monarch, who appoints a governor-general to represent her in Australia. The governor-general is chosen at the recommendation of the prime minister, who is the leader of the majority party or leader of a major coalition. The governor-general has the responsibility of swearing in the prime minister when a new government is formed.

Voting is compulsory, and citizens participate in free and fair multiparty elections to choose representatives to Parliament. There are two houses of Parliament: the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate has 76 seats: 12 senators come from each of the six states, and 2 from each of the two mainland territories. Half of the state members are elected once every three years by popular vote to six-year terms, and all territory members are elected once every three years. The House of Representatives has 150 seats. All members are elected by popular preferential voting to serve up to three years, and no state can have fewer than 5 representatives.

The Liberal and Labour parties are the two major parties. Other parties include

the National Party, the Green Party, the Family First Party, and the Best Party of Allah, which was formed in 2005 to represent the interests of Muslim Australians.

Australia is regarded as one of the least corrupt societies in the world, ranking 9 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution does not provide for freedom of speech and of the press, but citizens and the media freely criticize the government without reprisal. The Australia Broadcasting Corporation operates national and local public television and radio stations and a television service for the Asia-Pacific region. A second public station delivers multilingual radio and television broadcasts. There are three major commercial television networks and many commercial radio stations. In August 2006, the government approved plans to ease restrictions on foreign media ownership—removing its 25 percent ceiling for metropolitan newspapers and 15 percent for television broadcasters—and allowing television stations and newspapers to merge. Internet access and mobile telephone use are widespread and competitively priced. Freedom of religion is respected, as is academic freedom.

Although the rights of assembly and association are not codified in law, the government respects these rights in practice. Workers can organize and bargain collectively. In December 2005, the government adopted the most comprehensive labor law amendments in a decade. Labor unions, church groups, and the Labour Party vehemently opposed an amendment to the Workplace Relations Act of 1996 that would exempt companies with fewer than 101 employees from unfair dismissal laws as well all companies with 101 or more employees in cases where dismissals are made for operational reasons. The Workplace Relations Amendment Act of 2005, also known as the "WorkChoices Act," requires employers to comply with five conditions: a 38-hour work week; a minimum wage established by the government; 10 days of personal/sick leave annually; 4 weeks of annual leave; and 12 months of unpaid parental leave for full-time employees. The December 2005 amendments took effect in March 2006.

The judiciary is independent, and prison conditions are generally good by international standards. In September 2005, the government outlined proposals for tough, new, antiterrorism laws that include tagging and detaining suspects for 48 hours without charge, "shoot to kill" provisions, making violence against the public and Australian troops overseas criminal offenses, and allowing the limited use of soldiers to meet terrorist threats on domestic soil. Many political leaders and counterterrorism experts voiced concerns about the impact of the new legislation on human rights and civil liberties. Only after introducing several amendments and a 10-year sunset clause was the government able to secure support from enough states and territories to pass the legislation in November 2005.

The indigenous Aboriginal people are underrepresented at all levels of political leadership and rank low in all social and economic development indicators. Compared with the general population, unemployment among Aborigines is three times higher, their life expectancy is 20 years shorter, and their imprisonment rate is 15 times higher. There are also claims of routine mistreatment by police and prison officials. Aboriginal groups have called for an official apology for the "Stolen Generation" of Aboriginal children who were taken from their parents by the government from 1910 until the early 1970s and raised by white foster parents and in orphanages.

The government has firmly rejected such an apology, arguing that the present generation has no responsibility to apologize for the wrongs of a previous generation.

Although women enjoy equal rights and freedoms and have attained greater parity in pay and promotion in public and private sector jobs, violence against women remains a serious problem, particularly within the Aboriginal population. Homosexuals can serve in the military, and federal law permits legal residence to foreign same-sex partners of Australian citizens. However, federal laws do not bar discrimination based on sexual orientation. The government has also amended the Federal Marriage Act in 2004 to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman "to the exclusion of all others" and in June 2006 struck down the Civil Unions Act of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) government, which gives formal recognition to same-sex partnerships.

Austria

Population: 8,300,000
Capital: Vienna

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: Although the 2006 parliamentary elections resulted in a surprising victory for the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPO), the party did not capture enough seats to form a government alone. After weeks of negotiation, the only possibility seemed to be a grand coalition with the center-right People's Party of Austria (OVP), but the two could not agree to form a government.

Modern Austria emerged at the end of World War I, when the Austro-Hungarian Empire was dismembered. It was voluntarily annexed to Nazi Germany in 1938 and suffered the defeat of Hitler's regime. Postwar Austria, by consent of the World War II Allies, remained neutral between the Cold War blocs. Focusing instead on economic growth, Austria has developed one of the wealthiest economies in Europe.

From 1986 until 2000, the two biggest political parties—the center-left Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPO) and the center-right People's Party of Austria (OVP)—governed together in a grand coalition. Members of the two parties shared in the administration of cabinet ministries, as well as in many other government functions. Labor relations were corporatist, with management and unions both

represented not only in individual firms' decision making, but also in national policy making.

The election of October 1999 saw the emergence of the first government since 1970 not to include the SPO. Instead, the OVP formed a coalition with the Freedom Party, a far-right nationalist party with vestigial Nazi sympathies. The Freedom Party had grown steadily in the polls as voters became disaffected with the power-sharing of the large parties and the near impossibility of major political change. The Freedom Party won its biggest-ever share of the vote, 27 percent, in the 1999 election and was thus included in a coalition with the OVP's Wolfgang Schuessel as chancellor. The reaction among fellow members of the European Union (EU) to the election results was immediate and dramatic. In 2000, the EU officially suspended ties with Austria. Support in Austria for the Freedom Party jumped, as Austrian voters resented the EU's interference. Later in 2000, the EU reinstated Austria.

One effect of the EU sanctions was that Joerg Haider, the Freedom Party's leader, withdrew from that post and contented himself with the governorship of the state of Carinthia. Haider had been both Freedom's biggest vote-winner and the source of its major controversies. For example, he referred to Nazi death camps as "punishment camps," though he also called the Nazi regime a "cruel and brutal dictatorship." With Haider's official withdrawal, Austrian politics returned to near normality, and Freedom was forced to moderate its far-right stances as it dealt with the day-to-day reality of governing.

After a Freedom Party leadership struggle, the party withdrew from the coalition in September 2002. The parliamentary elections of November 2002 saw Freedom's vote share fall from 27 percent in 1999 to 10 percent. In subsequent cabinet negotiations, the Freedom Party rejoined the coalition with the OVP, but this time clearly as the junior partner.

The Freedom Party continued to lose support in 2004. Though Haider was re-elected in Carinthia in March, the party fared badly in the European Parliament elections in June. Having captured 23 percent of the vote in those elections in 1999, the Freedom Party received just 6 percent in 2004. The poor performance fueled internal rifts in the party over whether it should remain in government and court unpopularity, or return to its role as an outsider. Most of the party's leadership and most of its members of parliament, as well as Haider, chose in spring 2005 to leave the party and form the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZO). The Freedom Party remained in parliament as a rump (though it retains many activists). The BZO became OVP's junior coalition partner.

In 2006, parliamentary elections confirmed the OVP's relative decline. The SPO won with 35 percent of the vote and 68 seats, while the OVP took 34 percent and 66 seats. The Green Party secured a surprising third-place tie with the Freedom Party with 21 seats. The BZO took 7 seats. Neither of the large parties was able to form a coalition with any combination of the smaller parties: Schuessel tried to combine with the Greens and either the Freedom Party or the BZO, without success. As a result, talks on renewing the grand coalition continued. However, antagonism between the SPO and the OVP, as a result of the hotly contested vote, made negotiations drag on until the end of the year. One issue was the SPO's campaign promise to cancel the OVP's purchase of 18 advanced (and expensive) Eurofighter jets, which the OVP refused. Despite the bad blood, chances of a grand coalition remain.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Austria is an electoral democracy. The lower house of the Federal Parliament, the Nationalrat (National Council), has 183 members chosen at simultaneous district, state, and federal polls to ensure both regional representation and broad proportional fairness. Members of the Nationalrat serve a four-year term, and the chancellor, appointed by the president, requires the support of the legislature to govern. The 62 members of the upper house, the Bundesrat (Federal Council), are chosen by state parliaments.

Perhaps ironically, the participation of the Freedom Party in government emphasized Austria's basic democratic rights when other European countries tried in 2000 to induce Austrians to forgo their duly elected choice. Though there are competitive political parties and free and fair elections, the traditional practice of grand coalitions in Austria disillusioned many with the political process. While frustration with the cozy relationship between the OVP and the SPO helped lead to the rise of the Freedom Party as a protest party, Freedom's participation in government brought it closer to the mainstream right.

Austria is less corrupt than during the 1980s, when campaign donation laws were tightened somewhat. However, 2006 was marked by the collapse of Bawag, a bank owned by a union federation with strong ties to the SPO, with media stories about bad loans, the covering up of losses, and the lavish lifestyles of its executives. Austria was ranked 11 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The media are free, though not highly pluralistic. The end of the monopoly by the state broadcaster ORF has not brought significant competition to the broadcast market, and print media ownership is concentrated in a few hands. Harassment and libel lawsuits by politicians (notably from the Freedom Party) against investigative and critical journalists have hampered reporters' work. There are no restrictions on internet access.

Nazi and anti-Semitic speech and writing are banned, and in 2005, David Irving, a British historian, was arrested on charges of Holocaust-denial. He was sentenced to three years in prison in February 2006.

Religious freedom is respected in Austria and enshrined in the constitution. There are 13 officially recognized religions, which enjoy the ability to draw on state funds for religious education. Joining the group of state-recognized religions requires a period of 10 years as a "confessional community" with fewer privileges and requires that the religion in question have a membership equaling at least 0.05 percent of Austria's population. The Jehovah's Witnesses have complained that this practice violates their freedom of religion, although they are recognized as a confessional community. Academic freedom is generally respected.

The rights to freedom of assembly and association are protected in the constitution. Civic and nongovernmental organizations are able to operate without restrictions. Trade unions have traditionally been powerful. They not only are free to organize and to strike, but have been considered an essential partner in national policy making.

The judiciary is independent, and the Constitutional Court examines the compatibility of legislation with the constitution. Austria is a member of the Council of Europe, and its citizens have recourse to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. The quality of prisons and police generally meet high European

standards, though isolated incidences of police brutality, as well as crowded and sometimes harsh prison conditions, are reported.

Residents generally are afforded equal protection under the law. However, immigration has fueled some resentment toward minorities and foreigners: as of 2002, Austria had one of the highest numbers of asylum seekers per capita in the world. Since a tightening in December 2003, the asylum law is among the strictest in the developed world. Under that law, criticized by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), some asylum seekers could be deported while appeals of their cases are held. New arrivals will be asked for full statements within 72 hours. The UNHCR has also criticized shortages of qualified legal advisers and interpreters for detainees.

A 1979 law guarantees women freedom from discrimination in various areas, especially the workplace. A 1993 law sought to increase women's employment in government agencies, where women were underrepresented.

↓ Azerbaijan

Population: 8,500,000

Capital: Baku

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Trend Arrow: Azerbaijan received a downward trend arrow due to a decline in press freedom, including President Aliyev's increasingly tight grip on the media.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,4PF	6,4PF	6,4PF	6,5PF	6,5PF	6,5PF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

In a year that saw Azerbaijan's oil output surge, questions arose concerning the ability of the country's political system to effectively manage this new wealth. With little progress on judicial reform—and increased pressure on news media—the institutional accountability needed for sound management of billions of dollars in public funds was not apparent. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan's leadership obtained long-sought-for recognition from the United States, with a presidential meeting between George W. Bush and Ilham Aliyev at the White House in April 2006.

After enjoying a brief period of independence from 1918 to 1920, Azerbaijan entered the Soviet Union in 1922 as part of the Transcaucasian Soviet Federal Republic and became a separate Soviet republic in 1936. Following a referendum in 1991, Azerbaijan declared independence from the disintegrating Soviet Union.

In 1992, Abulfaz Elchibey, leader of the nationalist opposition Azerbaijan Popu-

lar Front, was elected president in a generally free and fair vote. A military coup one year later ousted him from power and installed the former first secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, Heydar Aliyev, in his place. In the October 1993 presidential elections, Aliyev was credited with receiving nearly 99 percent of the vote. Azerbaijan's first post-Soviet parliamentary elections, held in November 1995, saw five leading opposition parties and some 600 independent candidates barred from the vote in which Aliyev's Yeni Azerbaijan Party (YAP) won the most seats. In October 1998, Aliyev was chosen president with more than 70 percent of the vote in an election marred by irregularities.

In November 2000, the ruling YAP captured the majority of seats in the parliamentary election. The Azerbaijan Popular Front and the Communist Party came in a distant second and third, respectively. International monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe cited widespread electoral fraud, including the stuffing of ballot boxes and a strong pro-government bias in state-run media. Despite widespread criticism of the elections, the Council of Europe approved Azerbaijan's application for membership just days after the vote, in an apparent effort to encourage engagement with a country sorely in need of political reform. The decision to approve Azerbaijan's application was widely criticized by international human rights groups.

An August 2002 national referendum led to the adoption of a series of constitutional amendments, some of which critics charged would further strengthen the ruling party's grip on power. One controversial amendment stipulated that the prime minister become president if the head of state resigns or is incapacitated. Critics charged that the aging and ailing Aliyev would appoint his son, Ilham, prime minister in order to facilitate a transfer of power within the Aliyev family. Opposition groups and the OSCE charged that the referendum was marred by fraud, including ballot-box stuffing, intimidation of election monitors and officials, and inflated voter-turnout figures of nearly 90 percent.

In the months preceding the October 2003 presidential election, the political environment was marked by uncertainty over Heydar Aliyev's declining health and its implications for his reelection bid. Aliyev collapsed during a live television broadcast in April and left Azerbaijan that summer to receive medical treatment abroad. At the same time, government officials continued to deny that his health problems were serious, and he remained the official YAP candidate for the presidential election. In June, Aliyev's son, Ilham, who had assumed the position of prime minister, was officially nominated as a presidential candidate, and the elder Aliyev withdrew his candidacy in favor of his son's on October 2, 2003.

In the 2003 presidential ballot, final election results released by the Central Election Commission showed Ilham Aliyev defeating seven challengers with nearly 77 percent of the vote. His closest rival, opposition Musavat Party leader Isa Gambar, received only 14 percent of the vote, while six other candidates received less than 4 percent each. According to OSCE observers, the election was marred by widespread fraud. During violent clashes between security forces and demonstrators in Baku in October, in which at least one person was reportedly killed and several hundred were injured, the authorities unleashed a crackdown against the opposition in which more than 600 people were detained. Among those arrested were opposition party leaders and supporters who had not been directly involved in the preceding days'

violence, along with many election officials who refused to certify fraudulent election results. Heydar Aliyev, who had long dominated the country's political life, died in December 2003.

Over the course of 2004 and 2005, Ilham Aliyev sought to consolidate his position among the country's ruling elite. In the immediate run-up to the November 2005 parliamentary election, a number of former and current senior officials were detained in response to what the regime claimed was a coup attempt. However, another school of thought suggests that the detentions were a move on the president's part to further consolidate control over the country's political elites.

Less than half of all registered voters cast ballots in the November 2005 election, the lowest voter turnout in a decade. More than 2,000 candidates registered for the 125 constituencies. However, about a fourth of these candidates ultimately withdrew, in some cases because of intimidation, leaving 1,550 to take part on election day. The elections resulted in the opposition's capturing 10 of 125 seats in the Milli Majlis (National Assembly), with a substantial majority going to the ruling YAP and its allies. The results of the elections were contested by the opposition, which organized a number of rallies in the country's capital.

Azerbaijan's leadership has pledged to advance a democratic reform program but has been slow to do so in practice. Critical to this effort is the authorities' lackluster performance in the sphere of judicial reform. Apart from a promising but limited reform measure to improve the selection of judges, the overall judicial infrastructure remains weak and the administration of justice is often capricious and subject to widespread corruption. The weak state of the judicial system and the news media, among other important institutional weaknesses, raises concerns that there are insufficient institutional checks to ensure the sound management of the country's growing energy wealth.

The country presents a particularly important test case as a pivot for many of the issues currently challenging Western policy makers; it is a secular Muslim country of eight million in the strategically important Transcaucasus region with the Caspian Sea, a key pathway to South-Central Asia to the east, Russia to the north, and Iran to the south. Azerbaijan's oil wealth, predicted to balloon in the coming years, furthers the extent to which the country presents a unique and complex foreign policy challenge for Western countries. The United States granted President Aliyev the long-sought opportunity to meet with President Bush at the White House in April 2006, where the two men addressed energy and security issues. This generated some controversy as human rights and democracy groups questioned whether the country's democratic track record merited a White House meeting.

A settlement for the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, over which Armenia and Azerbaijan fought in the early 1990s, remained beyond reach in 2006. High-level talks occurred over the course of the year but did not achieve any breakthroughs. The region, which is formally part of Azerbaijan, is now predominantly ethnically Armenian and effectively under Armenian control. The self-described Nagorno Karabakh Republic is not recognized by any international organization or country, including Armenia.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Azerbaijan is not an electoral democracy. The country's constitution provides for a strong presidency, and the country's Parliament, the 125-member Milli Majlis, exercises

little independence from the executive branch. Presidential and parliamentary terms are five years.

The 1993, 1998, and 2003 presidential and 1995 and 2000 parliamentary elections were considered neither free nor fair by international observers. The 2005 parliamentary elections were likewise afflicted by extensive irregularities. The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights cited among the elections' shortcomings "interference of local authorities, disproportionate use of force to thwart rallies, arbitrary detentions, restrictive interpretations of campaign provisions and an unbalanced composition of election commissions." President Ilham Aliyev issued two decrees, in May and October 2005, directing the administration of free and fair elections; these decrees effectively went unheeded.

Azerbaijan's main political parties include the New Azerbaijan Party (YAP); Azerbaijan National Independence Party (ANIP); Party of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan (PPFA); Azerbaijan Democratic Independence Party (ADIP); Musavat (Equality); Democratic Party of Azerbaijan (DPA); and Islamic Party.

Corruption is deeply entrenched throughout society, with government officials rarely held accountable for engaging in corrupt practices. The lack of judicial and parliamentary independence from the executive, among other institutional obstacles, creates an environment that enables corruption. The issue of corruption is increasingly important as Azerbaijan is enjoying enormous proceeds from the country's burgeoning energy sector. The deep institutional corruption that afflicts Azerbaijan raises questions about the potential temptation of growing energy wealth and whether the current system can curb corruption on an even grander scale. Azerbaijan was ranked 130 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

While Azerbaijan's constitution guarantees freedom of speech and the press, the authorities use a variety of tools to limit press freedom in practice. The broadcast media are the main source of information in the country. Of the 16 television stations, 4 broadcast to a national audience; all 4 of these have clear or likely links to the regime. Independent and opposition papers struggle financially in the face of low circulation, limited advertising revenues, and heavy fines or imprisonment of their staff. State businesses rarely if ever advertise in opposition newspapers. While there is some pluralism in the print media, it is irrelevant to the extent that newspapers have relatively low print runs, are not distributed regularly in rural areas, and are frequently too expensive for many people to purchase on a regular basis. The government does not restrict access to the Internet, and Internet cafes are plentiful in the country's capital, Baku.

The year 2006 saw a further decline in press freedom, including an increase in defamation suits against journalists. The OSCE media freedom representative, Miklos Haraszti, emphasized the corrosive impact of criminalizing defamation during a meeting with Aliyev in October 2006. Haraszti noted that despite a March 2005 directive from Aliyev to officials to stop defamation claims, such suits increased over the course of 2006. Haraszti also cited the case of Sakit Zahidov, a satirical writer whose works appeared in the daily *Azadliq*, who was arrested and convicted on what many believe to be contrived charges.

Following the flawed presidential election in 2003, the Council of Europe, of which Azerbaijan is a member, adopted a resolution demanding that the government of Azerbaijan immediately implement a series of measures that included the creation of

public service television to allow political parties to better communicate with the country's citizens. In August 2005, Azerbaijan's first public service broadcasting channel (iTV) took to the airwaves. The channel's creation shortly in advance of the November 2005 election minimized its impact on the election process. The opposition was afforded some television airtime during the election campaign, but overall news coverage was slanted toward the ruling YAP party and its candidates. In 2006, iTV's content became increasingly friendly toward the regime, which raised questions about the nascent broadcaster's ability to add an independent voice to an otherwise closed national broadcast landscape. The last weeks of 2006 saw a concerted effort to hinder the remaining few outlets that provide independent information to mass audiences. These measures included a decision by the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council requiring Azerbaijani broadcast companies to acquire a license to re-broadcast programs from such news sources as the British Broadcasting Corporation and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. A campaign to knock off the air ANS, a broadcast enterprise that has been able to take a somewhat independent line, punctuated a year that saw a spike in defamation suits against journalists as well as other forms of harassment of news professionals.

The government restricts some religious activities of members of "nontraditional" minority religious groups through burdensome registration requirements and interference in the importation and distribution of printed religious materials. Islam, Russian Orthodoxy, and Judaism are considered traditional religions, and their members can generally worship freely.

The government generally does not restrict academic freedom. However, some faculty and students have experienced political pressure, including reported threats to lower the grades of students participating in opposition political activity. After the October 2003 election and in advance of the 2005 parliamentary poll, some professors and teachers said that they were dismissed because of their membership in opposition parties.

The government often restricts freedom of assembly, especially for political parties critical of the government. Registration with the Ministry of Justice is required for a nongovernmental organization (NGO) to function as a legal entity, and the registration process has been described as cumbersome and nontransparent. A week before the 2005 parliamentary elections, Azerbaijan lifted a ban on NGOs receiving more than 30 percent of their funding from foreign sources to serve as election monitors. Although the law permits the formation of trade unions and the right to strike, the majority of trade unions remain closely affiliated with the government, and most major industries are state owned.

The judiciary is corrupt, inefficient, and subservient to the executive branch. Arbitrary arrest and detention are common, particularly for members of the political opposition. Detainees are often held for long periods before trial, and their access to lawyers is restricted. Police abuse of suspects during arrest and interrogation reportedly remains commonplace, with torture sometimes used to extract confessions. In 2005 the government instituted judicial exams as part of the selection process for new judges. Judicial selection and the examination process have been monitored by a number of international NGOs and outside observers, and this early effort is recognized as a step in the right direction. Prison conditions are reportedly severe, with many inmates suffering from overcrowding and inadequate medical care.

Farhad Aliyev, the former minister of Economic Development, and his brother, Rafik, a businessman, have remained in prison since they were accused in November 2005 of being among alleged coup plotters arrested in advance of that year's parliamentary elections. In May 2006, Andreas Gross and Andreas Herkel, rapporteurs of the Monitoring Committee of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, were denied permission to visit Farhad Aliyev, as well as other prisoners whose detention has a political dimension, including Ruslan Bashirli and Ramin Tagiyev, activists in the youth organization Yeni Fikir, and Natig Efendiyev, the Democratic Party's deputy chairman. An application was submitted against the government of Azerbaijan in September 2006 in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France, on behalf of the imprisoned Aliyev brothers. Some members of ethnic minority groups, including the small Armenian population, have complained of discrimination in areas including education, employment, and housing. Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Azeris who fled the war in Nagorno-Karabakh have been prevented by the Armenian government from returning to their homes and remain in Azerbaijan, often living in dreadful conditions.

Significant parts of the economy are in the hands of a corrupt elite, which severely limits equality of opportunity. In a system with few institutional checks on graft, the rapid growth of the energy sector has offered considerable opportunities for corruption. Supporters of the political opposition face job discrimination, demotion, or dismissal.

Traditional societal norms and poor economic conditions restrict women's professional roles. Domestic violence is a problem, and there are no laws regarding spousal abuse. In 2004, Azerbaijan adopted a new national program to combat human trafficking. Azerbaijan is believed to be both a country of origin and a transit point for the trafficking of women for prostitution.

Bahamas

Population: 300,000
Capital: Nassau

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: Buoyed by the country's strong economic performance in 2006, the Bahamas' Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) remained well positioned to win upcoming elections in 2007. Although the Bahamas maintained its relatively clean record of stable democratic

governance, the country was not immune to the trends of rising violent crime that affected much of the Caribbean.

The Bahamas, a 700-island archipelago in the Caribbean, gained independence in 1973 and is part of the Commonwealth. Lynden Pindling served as the country's first prime minister and head of the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) for 25 years. After years of allegations of corruption and involvement by high officials in narcotics trafficking, Pindling was defeated by the Free National Movement (FNM) in 1992. His successor, Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham, promised honesty, efficiency, and accountability in government. The FNM captured 32 seats in the House of Assembly, while the PLP took 17 seats.

In the 1997 legislative elections, in which the number of Assembly seats was reduced from 49 to 40, Ingraham took credit for revitalizing the economy by attracting foreign investment, and his FNM won 34 seats to the PLP's 6. In April 1997, Pindling resigned as opposition leader and was replaced by Perry Christie. In the May 2002 parliamentary poll, the PLP won 29 seats, while the FNM received only 7, with independents claiming 4. Ingraham retired from politics, fulfilling a promise he had made prior to the elections. He was replaced as prime minister by Christie who, while not as popular as Ingraham, was able to capitalize on the large majority of the PLP. Christie and Ingraham are close personal friends and business partners, and the economic and political policies of the Bahamas remained remarkably consistent under both prime ministers.

Rising crime rates in the late 1990s, which undermined the early accomplishments of the Ingraham government, were linked to illegal trafficking in narcotics and gunrunning. Ingraham is credited with having subsequently improved the country's international reputation with policies that reduced money laundering and improved counternarcotics cooperation with the United States. His administration established a new antidrug intelligence unit and announced plans to bring the financial sector into full compliance with international standards and practices by strengthening requirements to report suspicious and unusual transactions. The Bahamas has promoted tourism and allowed the banking industry to grow. As the Caribbean's only upper income country, the Bahamas has established a model service economy, based on an impressive tourism sector—which accounts for 30 percent of national income—and offshore financial services.

However, the Christie administration has not been able to effectively curb narcotics trafficking, and the incidence of violent crime associated with drug-gang activity has proved difficult to contain. In addition, the offshore financial system, despite having undergone reforms, continues to be used for illicit purposes. Several banks have been named in U.S. fraud cases, while at least two individuals have been convicted domestically on fraud and forgery charges.

In August 2004, Christie was urged to disclose his knowledge of illegal contributions to the PLP coffers in the 2002 race. The Coalition for Democratic Reform, a short-lived offshoot of the PLP, and the FNM—the main opposition party—joined in this call. The PLP denied that the political donations were illegal or improper, and the issue no longer poses a serious threat to the government. Although Christie is unlikely to run again, the PLP remained well positioned to triumph in elections due to be called in 2007.

The Bahamas has prioritized the effort to build closer ties with the United States. The government has allowed the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to place armed sky marshals on selected flights between the two countries. At the same time, the nation has been under pressure from the U.S. government to reduce existing ties with Cuba. However, Bahamians are sensitive to the perception that their international policy is determined by Washington and have continued to maintain independent foreign relations, including upgrading relations with Cuba. However, the Bahamas still has not established a full embassy in Havana. Nevertheless, migration to the Bahamas from Cuba and Haiti remains a political flashpoint. In December 2004, a riot occurred at the Carmichael Detention Center, which houses Cubans and Haitians awaiting deportation; detainees later complained to Amnesty International that they are sometimes beaten and denied sanitation and medical care. In March 2006, two Cuban dentists whose boat stalled in Bahamian waters en route to the United States were finally released after a year of detention. The government had cited concerns that releasing the refugees to the United States would touch off a wave of Cuban immigrants attempting to reach Florida via the Bahamas.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The Bahamas is an electoral democracy. A 49-member House of Assembly, directly elected for five years, was reduced to 40 members in 1997, in keeping with a campaign promise by the FNM. The 16 members of the Senate are appointed—9 by the prime minister, 4 by the leader of the parliamentary opposition, and 3 by the governor-general. The Bahamas recognizes the British monarch as its formal head of state, with an appointed governor-general serving as the queen's representative. The head of the majority party in parliament typically serves as prime minister.

Political parties can organize freely. The two leading parties are the FNM, headed by Tommy Turnquest, and the ruling PLP, led by Perry Christie; Christie was hospitalized following a stroke in May 2005, but has since recovered.

The Bahamas was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The Bahamas has a well-developed tradition of respecting freedom of the press and freedom of expression. Daily and weekly newspapers, all privately owned, express a variety of views on public issues, as do the government-run radio station and four privately owned radio broadcasters. Opposition politicians claim that the state-run television system, the Broadcasting Corporation of the Bahamas, gives preferential coverage to the ruling party. Full freedom of expression is constrained by strict libel laws. There is free access to the internet.

Rights to religious and academic freedom are respected.

The Bahamas guarantees freedom of assembly. Constitutional guarantees of the right to organize civic organizations are generally respected, and human rights organizations have broad access to institutions and individuals. Labor, business, and professional organizations are generally free from governmental interference. Unions have the right to strike, and collective bargaining is prevalent.

The judicial system is headed by the Supreme Court and a court of appeals, with the right of appeal under certain circumstances to the Privy Council in London. Some progress has been reported in reducing both the length of court cases and the backlog of criminal appeals. Nevertheless, some murder suspects have been held for up

to four years before being brought to trial. In March 2006, the Privy Council ruled that death sentences for individuals convicted of murder in the Bahamas are unconstitutional. Violent crime is a continuing problem, although the country has not suffered the same crime levels as exist in much of the rest of the Caribbean. The Royal Bahamas Police Force has made progress in reducing corruption in the force, including introducing new procedures to limit unethical or illegal conduct. While the police are well-trained and have been recognized for their key role in regional efforts to stem the drug trade, coordination with the Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF) has been hampered by concerns about establishing the RBDF's role in law enforcement. The United States views the Bahamas as a key partner in combating drug trafficking, and in November 2005, the two countries renewed a bilateral agreement to continue U.S. funding for narcotics control and law enforcement.

Nongovernmental organizations have documented the occasional abuse of prisoners and arbitrary arrest. Although prior governments made important efforts to relieve prison overcrowding, there are persistent reports that this continues to pose a problem for the Christie administration, and poor medical facilities are still the norm. Children continue to be housed with adults, a situation that creates a permissive environment for sexual abuse. May 2005 marked the completed construction of a new "correctional training institute" that will provide job training to inmates and help to separate convict populations sentenced for different crimes.

Discrimination against persons of Haitian descent persists, and between 30,000 and 40,000 Haitians reside illegally in the Bahamas. Strict citizenship requirements and a stringent work-permit system leave Haitians with few rights.

The Bahamas is an accessible transit area for illegal aliens seeking entrance to the United States. No legislation regulates the processing of asylum seekers, whose influx has created social tension because of the strain on government services. The Bahamian government forcibly repatriates most asylum seekers, including Haitians and Cubans. No laws specifically address trafficking in persons, but there are also no reports of such activity.

The government remains strongly opposed to homosexuality. The Bahamian Plays and Films Control Board banned the gay-themed, American film *Brokeback Mountain*, in 2006, prompting local gay rights groups to voice concerns about censorship and free speech violations.

Violence against women is widespread, and child abuse and neglect remain serious issues of concern. In October 2006, a man convicted of attempting to rape an elderly woman was sentenced to eight lashes with a cat-o'-nine-tails, prompting condemnation from human rights groups. A high incidence of child labor also continues to be a concern, and children who work face a high risk of sexual exploitation.

↓ Bahrain

Population: 700,00
Capital: Manama

Political Rights: 5
Civil Liberties: 5
Status: Partly Free



Trend Arrow: Bahrain received a downward trend arrow due to new legal restrictions on freedom of assembly.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	6,5NF	5,5NF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF

Overview:

In November 2006, the Kingdom of Bahrain held parliamentary and municipal elections that were mired in controversy. Accusations mounted over political naturalization of foreigners and gerrymandering of electoral districts before the elections to sway the vote in favor of the Sunni minority. Islamist parties were victorious in the lower house, claiming 30 out of the 40 seats, with the Shia party Al-Wefaq winning 17. Meanwhile, legal revisions pertaining to curtailing freedom of assembly, banning the defense of detainees, and continued censorship of the internet reversed steps to advance civil liberties.

The al-Khalifa family, which has ruled Bahrain for more than two centuries, comes from Bahrain's minority Sunni Muslim population in this mostly Shiite Muslim country. Bahrain gained independence in 1971 after more than a hundred years as a British protectorate. The country's first constitution provided for a national assembly with both elected and appointed members, but the king dissolved the assembly in 1975 for attempting to end al-Khalifa rule; the al-Khalifa family ruled without the National Assembly until 2002.

In 1993, the king established a consultative council of appointed notables, although this advisory body had no legislative power and did not lead to any major policy shifts. In 1994, Bahrain experienced protests sparked by arrests of prominent individuals who had petitioned for the reestablishment of democratic institutions such as the national assembly. The disturbances left more than 40 people dead, thousands arrested, and hundreds either imprisoned or exiled.

Sheikh Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa's March 1999 accession to the throne following his father's death marked a turning point in Bahrain. Hamad released political prisoners, permitted the return of exiles, and eliminated emergency laws and courts. He also introduced the National Charter, which set a goal of creating a constitutional monarchy with an elected Parliament, separation of powers with an independent judicial branch, and rights guaranteeing women's political participation.

In February 2001, voters overwhelmingly approved the National Charter. However, the process of political reform ultimately disappointed many Bahrainis by the time local and parliamentary elections were held, in May and October 2002, respectively. Leading Shiite groups and leftists boycotted these elections, protesting political campaigning restrictions and electoral gerrymandering aimed at diminishing the power of the Shiite majority. Sunni groups won most of the seats in the new National Assembly. Despite the boycott, opposition groups fared well at the polls, and the new cabinet included opposition figures.

On November 25, Bahrainis participated in parliamentary and municipal elections. Shiite groups that boycotted the last election decided to take part. Al-Wefaq, the Shiite political society, submitted 19 candidates to contest seats, but no women were on their list. The results went overwhelmingly to the Islamist parties, with 30 out of 40 seats in their favor. The remaining 10 were awarded to the liberal candidates. Al-Wefaq, in particular, won a total of 17 seats with 42 percent of the vote. King Hamad appointed a liberal Consultative Council, the upper house of the bicameral Parliament, to offset the overwhelmingly Islamist Council of Representatives, or lower house. Scandals emerged in the wake of the elections surrounding claims that a secret group within the government led by a senior official was determined to keep the Shiite majority unrepresented. Further accusations were made with regard to increased naturalization both of foreign workers and other Arabs in advance of the elections, supposedly with the intent of increasing the number of Sunni voters. Meanwhile, the Bahrain Transparency Society monitored the electoral process and campaigns and established a telephone hotline to report irregularities in the poll process. The elections were considered generally free and fair by civil society groups, and turnout was reported at 61 percent.

In December 2006, Bahrain appointed former minister Jawad Oraied as the country's first Shia deputy prime minister. Also, Dr. Nizar al-Baharna, a former member of Al-Wefaq, was appointed minister of foreign affairs in a cabinet reshuffle the same month.

In January 2006, the U.S.-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement was formalized.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Bahrain is not an electoral democracy. Bahrain's 2002 constitution gives the king power over the executive, legislative, and judicial authorities. He appoints cabinet ministers and members of the 40-seat Consultative Council, the upper house of the National Assembly. The lower house, or Council of Representatives, consists of 40 popularly elected members. The National Assembly may propose legislation, but the cabinet must draft the laws. A July 2002 royal decree forbids the National Assembly from deliberating on any action that was taken by the executive branch before December 2002—the date the new National Assembly was inaugurated.

Formal political parties are illegal in Bahrain, but the government allows political societies or groupings to operate and organize activities in the country. In August 2005, the king, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, ratified a new political associations law making it illegal to form political associations based on class, profession, or religion and requiring all political associations to register with the Ministry of Justice.

Although Bahrain has some anticorruption laws, enforcement is weak, and high-ranking officials suspected of corruption are rarely punished. Bahrain was ranked 36

out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is limited in Bahrain. The government owns all broadcast media outlets, although the country's three main newspapers are privately owned. In May 2006, the Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs warned that all reporting should be documented with known sources. In July, Bahraini authorities blocked access to Google Earth, Maps, and Video. While these restrictions were removed after some lobbying efforts, the government continues to control access to opposition and human rights websites and to censor access to web blogs. These activities were stepped up in advance of the parliamentary elections and amid the scandal over an alleged anti-Shia conspiracy in the government.

Islam is the state religion. However, non-Muslim minorities are generally free to practice their religion. All religious groups must obtain a permit from the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs to operate, although the government has not punished groups that have operated without this permit.

Bahrain has no formal laws or regulations that limit academic freedom, but teachers and professors tend to avoid politically sensitive topics and issues in the classroom and in their research. Bahrain has ambitions to be the regional education hub in the Gulf and announced in December 2006 the establishment of a \$1 billion Higher Education City. The project aims to turn the education sector into a major industry, by attracting international universities to the country, including a U.S. university, as well as an international center for research, housing, and entertainment and sports facilities.

In July 2006, the Consultative Council removed protections for freedom of assembly. Citizens must obtain a license to conduct demonstrations, rallies, and marches, which are now banned from sunrise to sunset in any public arena. The new legislation further stipulates that protesters are forbidden to carry any weapons, flammable products, or sticks.

Bahrain has seen strong growth in the number of nongovernmental organizations working in charitable activities, human rights, and women's rights, but restrictions remain on these groups. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) was closed and dissolved by the government in September 2004, and its executive director, Abd al-Hadi al-Khawaja, was arrested after he criticized the prime minister and the government for their performance on poverty and economic rights; the center resumed activities in 2005. In a continuing battle, the Ministry of Social Development has threatened to pursue legal action against a number of civil and human rights groups who are operating without permits. The 1989 Societies Law prohibits any society from operating without an official permit.

Bahrainis have the right to establish independent labor unions without government permission. A royal decree giving workers the right to form labor unions also imposes limits, including a two-week notice to the company before a strike and a prohibition on strikes in vital sectors such as security, civil defense, transportation, hospitals, communications, and basic infrastructure. The law gives workers the right to strike after a strike action is approved by three-quarters of union members in a secret ballot. A new amendment to the labor law passed in October 2006 stipulates that private sector employees can no longer be dismissed for union activities. The decree instructs courts to reinstate the employee and orders the employer to com-

pensate the employee for the period spent out of work when it is proven that the dismissal was based on union activities.

The judiciary is not independent of the executive branch. The king appoints all judges, and courts have been subject to government pressure. In the spring of 2005, Bahrain announced a plan to reform its judicial system, with measures to improve court efficiency to make trials quicker. The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for public security within the country and oversees the police and internal security services, and members of the royal family hold all security-related offices. In 2005, the government proposed new antiterrorism legislation that provided the death penalty for terrorist groups and jail terms for those who use religion to spread extremism. This legislation has been criticized with the warning that its interpretation of terrorist crimes was too broad and would lead to a heightened risk of torture and arbitrary detention. Bahraini police are reputed to often use excessive force to disperse crowds and contend with detainees. However, living conditions within prison facilities have greatly improved. Prisoners are permitted to make weekly phone calls to their families, and prisoners of all faiths have access to holy books and priests.

Although Shias constitute a majority of the citizenry, they are underrepresented in government and face discrimination in the workplace. Over the past five years, Bahrain has taken steps to integrate stateless persons, known as *bidoon* and consisting mostly of Shias of Persian origin, into the country, offering citizenship to several thousand. Nevertheless, *bidoon* and citizens who speak Farsi as their first language continue to face some social discrimination and special challenges finding employment.

Although women have the right to vote and participate in local and national elections, they are underrepresented politically. Before 2006, no woman had been elected to office in municipal or legislative elections. In the latest parliamentary elections, 18 women sought positions. One candidate, Lateefa al-Gaood, won her seat as there were no other candidates in her district. Five women ran in the municipal elections, but none won office. In January 2005, the king swore in a new cabinet, including Fatima al-Balushi as Minister of Social Affairs, who became the second female minister in Bahrain's history. In June 2006, Haya Rasheed al-Khalifa was elected president of the UN General Assembly, and Mona al-Kawari was appointed the first female judge in the kingdom as well as in the Gulf region. Women are generally not afforded equal protections under the law.

In December 2006, the government announced plans to introduce unemployment benefits that would provide \$400 per month to jobless Bahrainis, most of whom are women. The bill had yet to be implemented by year's end. Eighteen thousand Bahrainis were expected to benefit from this new measure.

Bangladesh

Population: 146,600,000

Capital: Dhaka

Political Rights: 4

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,4PF	2,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF

Overview:

Bangladesh continued in 2006 to grapple with lawlessness, widespread corruption and criminality, and a somewhat diminished Islamist threat, while being wracked by growing political polarization in anticipation of elections scheduled for January 2007. After a heightened campaign of bombings and other forms of intimidation by Islamist groups in late 2005, the government initiated a crackdown in early 2006 that culminated in the arrest and conviction of two primary militant leaders. The opposition Awami League (AL), which remains marginalized within parliament, relied on national strikes and other forms of protest to press for its main demands, which, in preparation for the forthcoming elections, included the reform of the caretaker government system and the Electoral Commission. For its part, the coalition government led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party resisted giving in to these demands until massive demonstrations in late October, in which several dozen protestors were killed, forced it into a compromise. The president assumed control of the caretaker government charged with overseeing elections, but by year's end the primary AL demands of a neutral interim government and election commission, as well as a clean voters' list, had not been wholly met, and uncertainty clouded the prospects for elections scheduled for January 22, 2007.

With the partition of British India in 1947, what is now Bangladesh became the eastern part of the newly formed state of Pakistan. Bangladesh won independence from Pakistan in December 1971, after a nine-month war during which Indian troops helped defeat West Pakistani forces stationed in Bangladesh. The 1975 assassination of Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by soldiers precipitated 15 years of military rule and continues to polarize Bangladeshi politics. The country's democratic transition began with the resignation in 1990 of the last military ruler, General H. M. Ershad, after weeks of prodemocracy demonstrations. Elections in 1991 brought the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) to power under Khaleda Zia.

The political deadlock began in 1994, when Sheikh Hasina Wajed's center-left Awami League (AL) party began boycotting parliament to protest alleged corruption in Zia's BNP government. The AL and the BNP differ relatively little on domestic policy; many disputes reflect the personal animosity between Hasina, the daughter

of independence leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and Zia, the widow of a former military ruler allegedly complicit in Mujibur's assassination. The AL boycotted the February 1996 elections, which the BNP won, but then forced Zia's resignation in March and triumphed in elections held in June. The BNP also marked its time in opposition by boycotting Parliament and organizing periodic nationwide strikes.

In October 2001, the AL was voted out of office in elections marred by political violence and intimidation. A new four-party coalition, dominated by the BNP and including two Islamist parties—the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Islami Oikyo Jote—was sworn into power with a convincing majority of 214 of the 300 seats in Parliament. The AL initially refused to accept the election results and since then has intermittently boycotted parliament as well as regularly organizing countrywide *hartals* (general strikes) and other forms of protest action to pressure the government on various issues.

The level of political violence has remained high and has increased since August 2004, when a series of grenades exploded at an AL rally in Dhaka, nearly killing Hasina and leaving 22 people dead and hundreds injured, including several top party leaders. Although the government appointed an independent commission to investigate the attacks, the commission's impartiality was called into question and the perpetrators of the bombings have not yet been brought to justice. In January 2005, another grenade attack at an AL rally left five people dead, including senior party leader Shah A. M. S. Kibria.

Recent years have also seen growing levels of general lawlessness, as well as insecurity and violence caused by Islamist extremist groups. Many of these groups advocate the imposition of Islamic law and have threatened to kill government ministers as well as judges and lawyers, civil society activists, and journalists in order to achieve this aim. They are widely believed to be behind a number of bombings, attacks, and other instances of harassment over the past several years. Two of the largest—the Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB)—were banned in February 2005 and hundreds of activists were arrested, but the government remained otherwise reluctant to admit that these groups posed a significant threat. However, their spread and influence became impossible to ignore when, in August 2005, nearly 500 small bombs were simultaneously detonated in 63 out of Bangladesh's 64 districts, targeting primarily government buildings, courts, and press clubs. Suspects arrested after the attacks confirmed that the highly coordinated blasts were the work of the JMB, which had left leaflets at the scenes of some blasts. Further bomb attacks on judges and courthouses, in which several judges were killed, took place in November 2005, and Bangladesh's first suicide attack occurred in December.

In response, the government initiated a serious crackdown in early 2006 that culminated in the arrest of Shaikh Abdur Rahman, head of the JMB, and Siddiquil Islam (more popularly known as Bangla Bhai, or "Bengali brother"), head of the JMJB, in early March. Approximately 800 members of the two groups were also detained. In May, these two men, as well as several other JMB leaders, were sentenced to death for their role in masterminding the 2005 attacks; these sentences were upheld on appeal to the Supreme Court. Although officials then declared that the Islamist threat had been contained, some analysts remain skeptical, noting that other militant groups continue to operate, and that the presence of Islamist parties in the coalition government leads to a certain level of tolerance for their activities.

Much of the focus in the latter half of 2006 was on the forthcoming general elections, scheduled for January 2007. This issue has proved to be as contentious as many others, with the two parties unable to reach consensus on key points, which led to heightened levels of political tension and violence during the year. Since 2005, one of the main demands of the AL and its allies is that Bangladesh's unique "caretaker government" (CG) system, by which a neutral, nonparty, temporary government organizes each parliamentary election, be reformed. The AL alleges that the BNP has actively tried to subvert the neutrality of the CG by ensuring that K. M. Hasan, a former chief justice of the Supreme Court and a former BNP member, was placed to assume the role of head of the CG. It is also raised concerns regarding the conduct and impartiality of the Election Commission (EC) and the preparation of a new voter list, alleging, as have journalists and international observers, that the revised list had been padded, with approximately 8 percent of the voter names being fabricated. (In February 2005, the commission, ignoring a Supreme Court order, decided to draw up a new voter list, which was later declared invalid after the initial legal ruling was upheld.) The AL placed its electoral reform proposals before parliament in February, but when these were ignored, it then stepped up its program of street agitation, calling a 36-hour strike in June, and threatening to boycott the elections if its demands were not met.

Meanwhile, the BNP strengthened its position heading into the elections through an alliance made in August with the third largest parliamentary force, former disgraced dictator General Ershad's Jatiya Party. Ershad had previously spent time in prison on corruption charges and is currently free on bail with 17 further charges pending against him; these were dropped shortly before the BNP-led government's term expired on October 27.

As the BNP ceded power, continuing disagreements over the proposed head of the CG led to three days of violent rallies at the end of October during which at least 20 people died and dozens more were injured. When Hasan withdrew, President Iajuddin Ahmed appointed himself "chief adviser" or head of the CG, a move initially accepted by the AL, which gave him several weeks to prove his neutrality. After he failed to perform to their satisfaction, the AL accused him of partisanship and challenged his appointment on the grounds that in his dual role, excessive power was concentrated in his hands. They also began a nationwide transport blockade in order to force the resignation of the head of the EC, which occurred on November 23, although he was replaced by only a marginally less divisive figure. Further opposition-led agitation continued through year's end in order to protest the conduct of the EC as well as the still problematic voters' list.

In late November, the AL's legal challenge to the president's actions was stayed by the chief justice of the Supreme Court, leading to riots outside the building and demonstrating for many the fact that the higher judiciary had also become impossibly politicized. On December 9, President Ahmed ordered that the army be deployed to help maintain law and order, although it was later placed on standby. Demonstrations around the presidential palace were banned. As Bangladesh headed for elections scheduled for January 22, the political situation remained highly polarized and precarious, while observers speculated that the army might eventually intervene in order to stabilize the situation.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Bangladesh is an electoral democracy. A referendum held in 1991 transformed the powerful presidency into a largely ceremonial head-of-state position in a parliamentary system. Terms for the unicameral National Parliament and the prime minister are both for five years. Parliament is composed, since 2004, of 345 members, of which 300 members are directly elected, and 45 are female candidates who are nominated by political parties and indirectly elected by other members of Parliament. The 1996 vote was the first under a constitutional amendment requiring a CG to conduct elections. The most recent national elections, held in October 2001, were described as generally free and fair despite concerns over polling irregularities, intimidation, and violence. More than 140 people were killed throughout the campaign period in what was Bangladesh's most violent election to date.

Political power regularly changes hands, and elections are polarizing events that are competitive and bitterly fought. The winning side often sees little need to build consensus, while the losing side frequently resorts to boycotts, strikes, and demonstrations in order to achieve its aims. In recent years, political violence during demonstrations and general strikes has killed hundreds of people in major cities and injured thousands, and police often use excessive force against opposition protesters. Party leaders are also targeted; in September 2006, five AL leaders were beaten severely during street protests and sustained serious injuries. Local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) reported that more than 300 people were killed and almost 9,000 were injured in politically motivated violence in 2005. Student wings of political parties continue to be embroiled in violent campus conflicts.

Endemic corruption and criminality, weak rule of law, limited bureaucratic transparency, and political polarization have combined to undermine government accountability. Both major parties—the BNP and the AL—have undermined the legislative process through lengthy parliamentary boycotts while in opposition, and parliament remains a weak institution; for much of 2006, it had effectively ceased to function. Minority groups are underrepresented in Parliament. An Anti-Corruption Commission, which is authorized to conduct investigations and try corruption cases in special courts, was launched in November 2004. However, critics remain concerned that the new body is not truly independent, either politically or financially. The *Financial Express* noted in August 2005 that election financing was a major source of political corruption. Criminality pervades politics, particularly at the local level, with both major parties maintaining links to criminal networks in order to extend their hold on power. Bangladesh was ranked 156 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Despite legal provisions for freedom of speech, media continue to face a number of pressures, the most striking of which is the high level of violence directed against members of the press and the impunity enjoyed by those who attack them. Journalists are regularly harassed and violently attacked by a range of actors including organized crime groups, political party activists, government authorities, the police, and Islamist groups. Reporter Belial Hossain Dafadar was murdered in September 2006, and numerous others received death threats or were physically assaulted. Many journalists practice self-censorship when reporting on topics such as corruption, criminal activity, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, or human rights abuses. The case of journalist and writer Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury, who was

arrested in 2003, charged with sedition, and spent 17 months in jail before being released on bail in 2005, remained open throughout 2006 as he awaited trial. Choudhury also received death threats, and in July the offices of his magazine were bombed. Although the print media are diverse and opinionated, the state owns most broadcast media, whose coverage favors the ruling party. Political considerations influence the distribution of government advertising revenue and subsidized newsprint on which most publications depend. Access to the internet is generally unrestricted.

Islam is the official religion. Religious minorities have the right to worship freely but face societal discrimination and remain underrepresented in politics and government employment. Recent years have seen an increase in both general intolerance and attacks by Islamist groups against members of religious minorities, Muslim sects, and secular Muslims. Violence against the Hindu minority flared after the 2001 elections, when BNP supporters attacked Hindus because of their perceived support for the rival AL party. Atrocities, including murder, rape, kidnapping, and destruction of property, forced hundreds of Hindus from their homes, some across the border into India. Hindus (who comprise approximately 10 percent of the population) and other smaller religious minorities, such as Buddhists and Christians, continue to face occasional harassment and violence at the hands of Islamist groups.

In the last several years, according to a June 2005 Human Rights Watch report, the 100,000-strong Ahmadiyya Muslim sect, which is considered heretical by some mainstream Muslims, has also faced increased attacks from Islamist groups, including attacks on Ahmadiyya mosques and homes, as well as killings, beatings, and economic and educational boycotts of Ahmadiyyas. Anti-Ahmadiyya extremists have publicly demanded that the government declare Ahmadiyyas to be non-Muslims, but the government has not bowed to such pressures. In January 2004, the government announced a ban on the publication and distribution of the sect's publications, but this order was suspended by the Supreme Court in December 2004. In June 2006, an anti-Ahmadiyya group, Khatme Nabuwat Andolon Bangladesh, announced its intention to hold a series of hartals near Dhaka in order to force the government to make such a declaration, but the police effectively prevented the protestors from carrying out their program, and were generally more proactive regarding the protection of Ahmadiyyas and their mosques during the year. In August, the government announced plans to recognize the religious degrees awarded by private religious schools, or *madrassas*, with the intention of increasing job prospects for graduates, as well as increasing government control over the curriculums at such institutions.

While authorities largely respect academic freedom, research on sensitive political and religious topics is discouraged, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report. Political polarization at many universities, which occasionally erupts into protests and clashes between students and security forces, inhibits the ability of some students to receive an education. In recent years, a number of professors who espouse secular views or advocate the separation of religion and politics have been harassed, threatened, attacked, or killed by suspected Islamists; in an August 2006 case, Hasan Azizul Huq of Rajshahi University received death threats from a group affiliated with the student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami political party.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, but the government fre-

quently limits this right in practice. Demonstrators are occasionally killed or injured during clashes with police. Numerous world-class NGOs operate in Bangladesh and fulfill a wide variety of basic needs in fields such as education, health care, and microcredit programs. However, those that are perceived to have links to the opposition or that criticize the government, particularly on human rights issues, such as Proshika and the PRIP Trust, have been subject to intense official scrutiny and harassment since the 2001 elections.

A 2005 Amnesty International report noted that at least eight human rights defenders have been assassinated since 2000, and that numerous others have been injured or subjected to other threats from attackers linked to criminal gangs or the armed factions of political parties. Others have been subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention at the hands of authorities in retaliation for expressing their views, and some have been tortured or otherwise mistreated while in custody. In February 2005, two social development NGOs were firebombed by suspected Islamist groups, with at least eight workers injured, according to a BBC report.

Union formation is hampered by a 30 percent employee approval requirement and restrictions on organizing by unregistered unions. Employers can legally fire or transfer workers suspected of union activities. The law prohibits many civil servants from joining unions; these workers can form associations but are prohibited from bargaining collectively. In May, protests by thousands of garment workers over pay and working conditions turned violent, with workers setting fire to factories and bringing the industry to a standstill.

The Supreme Court displays "some independence" and often rules against the executive, according to the U.S. State Department's human rights report. However, the judiciary has become increasingly politicized, according to reports by the Economist Intelligence Unit, the International Crisis Group, and others, who note that there are politically appointed judges at every level and that the executive frequently meddles directly in lower court decisions. Corruption is also an issue. The government continues to delay implementing the separation of the judiciary from the executive as ordered by a 1999 Supreme Court directive. Judges have faced increased death threats and attacks from Islamist groups who advocate the introduction of Islamic law, which culminated in the killing of two judges in Jhalakathi by the JMB in November 2005.

The judicial system is severely backlogged, and pretrial detention is lengthy. Many defendants lack counsel, and poor people have limited recourse through the courts. Prison conditions are extremely poor, and severe overcrowding is common. According to the New Delhi-based Asian Centre for Human Rights, hundreds of juveniles are illegally detained in prisons in contravention of the 1974 Children's Act. Prisoners are routinely subjected to unwarranted arrest and detention, demands for bribes, and physical abuse (including torture) at the hands of law enforcement officials. The majority of police abuses have traditionally gone unpunished, which has contributed to a climate of impunity. However, a recent report by the Ministry of Home Affairs noted that over the past several years, nearly two-thirds of the 117,000-strong police force had been disciplined, and 750 officers had been sacked for offenses ranging from corruption to abuse of power.

Many of these forms of abuse are facilitated by the existence of legislation such as the 1974 Special Powers Act, which permits arbitrary detention without charge,

and Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which allows individuals to be detained without a warrant. Authorities regularly detain thousands of political opponents and ordinary citizens (particularly prior to planned political agitation) and use serial detentions to prevent the release of political activists. Amnesty International has highlighted a continuing pattern of politically motivated detentions, noting that senior opposition politicians and academics, journalists, and human rights activists critical of government policies are particularly at risk of prolonged detention and ill-treatment in custody. In April 2004, the high court directed the government to amend certain sections of the code within six months, but this directive has not yet been acted upon. Unlike many of its South Asian neighbors, Bangladesh does not yet have a national human rights commission, which could help address rights abuses.

Faced with a continuing deterioration in law and order, in October 2002 the government deployed nearly 40,000 army personnel as part of "Operation Clean Heart," an anticrime drive in which more than 45,000 people were detained, over 40 of whom died in police custody. Legislation passed in February 2003 granted members of the security forces immunity from prosecution in civilian courts for abuses committed during the operation. Further efforts were made to tackle criminal activity with the 2004 deployment of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), an elite unit composed of approximately 4,500 members of the armed forces and police. Although these policies were initially popular among Bangladeshis weary of rising crime rates and a general climate of impunity for criminals, both domestic and international groups criticized the police and army for excesses committed during their operations, particularly the RAB's record on extrajudicial executions, either in custody or in shootout battles. According to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report, 396 alleged criminals died in 2005 at the hands of law enforcement agencies, including the RAB, with 340 of these deaths attributed to "crossfire." In 2006, the RAB was expanded and currently comprises 12 regional battalions.

A number of Islamist militant groups operate throughout the country and occasionally carry out bombings and other attacks. After several dozen civilians were killed in such attacks during the last three months of 2005, the government implemented a crackdown in early 2006 that severely weakened these groups. Although they continue to operate, attacks by Islamists dramatically decreased in 2006. The primary aim of most groups—though their tactics vary—is the imposition of Islamic law (Sharia), with many also supporting the spread of madrasa education, the veiling of women, and an end to "un-Islamic" practices such as celebrating traditional festivals and watching movies. The government also struggles to contain a Maoist movement in northern Bangladesh that is connected to the banned Purbo Bangla Communist Party. Clashes between militants and police in which civilians were also killed led to the deaths of more than 130 people during the year, according to data compiled by the South Asia Terrorism Portal.

Tribal minorities have little control over land issues affecting them, and Bengali-language settlers continue to illegally encroach upon tribal lands in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) with the reported connivance of government officials and the army. A 1997 accord ended a 24-year insurgency in the CHT that had sought autonomy for indigenous tribes and had resulted in the deaths of 8,500 soldiers, rebels, and civilians. However, as documented by the Asian Centre for Human Rights, the terms of the accord have not been fully implemented, tribal inhabitants continue to be forced

off their land to make way for the construction of army camps, and refugees have been unable to reclaim possession of their lands upon return to the CHT. The security forces have also been implicated in a range of additional human rights violations, including the suppression of protests and the arrest and detention of political activists on spurious charges. Indigenous peoples also remain subject to attacks, including killings, rapes, and the destruction of houses and other property, from Bengali settlers, according to Amnesty International.

Roughly 260,000 ethnic Rohingyas fleeing forced labor, discrimination, and other abuses in Burma entered Bangladesh in the early 1990s; some 22,000 Rohingya refugees and 100,000 other Rohingyas not formally documented as refugees remain in the country. Bangladesh also hosts in camps some 300,000 non-Bengali Bihari Muslims who were rendered stateless at independence in 1971, many of whom initially sought repatriation to Pakistan.

Rape, dowry-related assaults, acid throwing, and other forms of violence against women occur regularly. A law requiring rape victims to file police reports and obtain medical certificates within 24 hours of the crime in order to press charges prevents most rape cases from reaching the courts. Police also accept bribes not to register rape cases and rarely enforce existing laws protecting women. The Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF), a local NGO, recorded 165 acid attacks from January to November 2006, affecting 204 victims, with the majority being carried out against women. While investigation of acid-related crimes remains inadequate, the police have taken some steps to more vigorously prosecute offenders. Under the stringent Acid Crime Prevention Act of 2002, 32 people were convicted for acid attacks in 2005, according to ASF, and the 2006 statistics represent a decline from the previous year.

Under the legal codes pertaining to Muslims, women have fewer divorce rights than men and female heirs do not inherit equally with their male counterparts. In rural areas, religious leaders occasionally issue *fatwas* (religious edicts) that impose flogging and other punishments on women accused of violating strict moral codes. Women also face some discrimination in health care, education, and employment, and are underrepresented in politics and government. However, in May 2004, Parliament amended the constitution to provide for 45 seats reserved for women in Parliament. Trafficking in both women and children remains extensive, though the government has taken steps to raise awareness and to prosecute traffickers somewhat more vigorously. Child labor is widespread.

Barbados

Population: 300,000
Capital: Bridgetown

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: In 2006 Barbados remained the top country in Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of human development. Crime was reduced to its lowest level in nearly two decades, although the overburdened penal system suffered from a backlog of cases. Prompted by frustration with the two-party system, the Clement Payne Movement established a new political party, the People's Empowerment Party (PEP), as an opposition force favoring trade union rights and greater state intervention in the economy.

Barbados gained its independence from the United Kingdom in 1966 and is a member of the Commonwealth. In the 1994 legislative elections, the governing Barbados Labour Party (BLP) won 19 seats; the opposition Democratic Labour Party (DLP) captured 8 seats; and the New Democratic Party (NDP), a splinter of the DLP established in 1989, gained 1 seat. Prime Minister Owen Seymour Arthur, an economist elected in 1993 to head the BLP, promised to build "a modern, technologically dynamic economy," create jobs, and restore investor confidence. The BLP retained power in 1999 by winning 26 of 28 parliamentary seats, leaving Arthur firmly in control of the country.

In the May 23, 2003, elections, the BLP won 23 seats in the House of Assembly, ratifying Arthur's administration. Meanwhile, the DLP, which was strengthened under the uncontested leadership of Clyde Mascoll, claimed the remaining 7 seats in the expanded 30-seat parliament. In June 2003, the Public Accounts Committee's independent oversight of government accounts was enhanced, which gave the DLP the ability to better monitor official expenditures.

In 2004, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago became embroiled in a bitter struggle over their maritime boundary and associated fishing rights. The dispute arose out of the 1990 Maritime Delimitation Treaty that Trinidad and Tobago had signed with Venezuela. Barbados decided to submit the issue to binding arbitration by the United Nations. In October 2005, the two countries began arguments in their maritime dispute case before the nongovernmental Arbitration Tribunal of the International Centre for Dispute Resolution in London, and the case eventually went before the UN-supported Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Hague. The final verdict, delivered in April 2006, was seen as a victory for both parties, because it recognized the rights

of Barbadian fisherman to fish in Trinidadian waters but rejected a claim by Barbados to exclusive maritime access.

On a separate note, Barbados decided not to join the Venezuela-backed regional energy pact known as PetroCaribe, which offered Caribbean countries a guarantee that they would receive Venezuelan oil on favorable terms of financing. The Barbadian government expressed concern that the ensuing debt would become unsustainable.

Barbados has been more successful than other Caribbean countries in combating violent crime; in 2006, Barbados's crime rate remained at historically low levels. Joint patrols of the Royal Barbados Police Force and the all-volunteer Barbados Defence Force have been successful in containing the rise of violent crime, often linked to narcotics trafficking, which had begun to emerge as a major concern. The country had largely recovered from the fallout from a March 2005 prison riot, in which the island's largest penitentiary was set on fire, that lasted for three days. The Barbadian government had called on 120 security personnel from its Caribbean neighbors to help restore order and evacuate the aging, badly overcrowded prison. A new facility, designed to house 1,250 inmates, was due to be completed by early 2007, slightly later than originally projected.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Barbados is an electoral democracy. The 30-member House of Assembly is elected for a five-year term. The governor-general appoints the 21 members of the Senate: 12 on the advice of the prime minister, 2 on the advice of the leader of the opposition, and the remaining 7 at the discretion of the governor-general. The prime minister is the leader of the political party with a majority in the House.

Political parties are free to organize. Historically, power has alternated between two centrist parties—the DLP and the BLP. In addition to the parties holding parliamentary seats, other political organizations include the small, left-wing Worker's Party of Barbados. In 2006, the Clement Payne Movement established a new political party known as the People's Empowerment Party (PEP) as an opposition force favoring trade union rights and greater state intervention in the economy. The party's leader, David Comissiong, claimed that the current two-party system dominated by the DLP and BLP did not adequately address the full spectrum of the population's needs. The PEP got off to an inauspicious start when its founding members clashed over the new party's direction. The party, which lacks a constitution, regular meetings, or concrete committees, seems unlikely to be a durable force in Barbadian politics.

Barbados was ranked 24 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is fully respected. Public opinion expressed through the news media, which are free of censorship and government control, has a powerful influence on policy. Newspapers, including the two major dailies, are privately owned. Four private and two government radio stations operate. The single television station, operated by the government-owned Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, presents a wide range of political viewpoints. There is free access to the internet.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, which is widely respected for mainstream religious practices. In April 2005, members of Barbados's small Rastafarian community complained that a new measure allowing prison authorities to cut the hair of high-risk prisoners infringed upon their religious custom of wearing long hair

in dreadlocks. Prison authorities overruled this complaint, citing the need for stricter security precautions following the March 2005 prison riot. Academic freedom is fully respected.

Barbados' legal framework provides important guarantees for freedom of assembly, which is widely respected. The right to organize civic organizations and labor unions is respected. Two major labor unions, as well as various smaller ones, are active.

The judicial system is independent, and the Supreme Court includes a high court and a court of appeals. Lower-court officials are appointed on the advice of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission. There are occasional reports and complaints of excessive force used by the Royal Barbados Police Force to extract confessions, along with reports that police do not always seek warrants before searching homes.

The prison system is overcrowded and outdated, with more than 800 inmates housed in a building built for 350. However, separate facilities are provided for female prisoners and children, and the government allows private groups to visit prisons. Barbados is considering judicial reform that would reduce overcrowding by keeping courts open longer to hear more cases per year. Implementation was stalled due to the lack of available judges. Although the authorities have made significant efforts to discharge prison personnel alleged to have beaten inmates, their prosecution has not made significant progress.

In October 2002, Attorney General Mia Mottley announced that a National Commission on Law and Order would be established to reduce lawlessness. The commission published a Plan on Justice, Peace, and Security in June 2004 that included 68 recommendations on constitutional support for social institutions, governance and civil society, cultural values, law enforcement, and criminal courts, among others. Some recommendations, such as the retention of corporal punishment in schools, provoked fierce debate, but few new policies were established.

The country's crime rate, fueled by an increase in drug abuse and narcotics trafficking, has given rise to human rights concerns. The number of murders has remained constant over the last several years, and an execution has not been administered in more than two decades, but juries are getting tough on crime by sentencing violent criminals to death. Meanwhile, a constitutional change under discussion would allow convicts to be hanged as soon as possible after their appeals are exhausted. In an effort to restore the death penalty against two convicts who had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment by the Barbados High Court in 2002, in 2005 the government appealed the case to the newly formed regional Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), which Barbados has ratified as its highest appellate court. In November 2006, the CCJ dismissed the government's case and rejected efforts to impose the death penalty on the convicts.

Barbados has refused to sign a bilateral agreement granting U.S. military personnel immunity from proceedings in the International Criminal Court. The United States responded by suspending military education programs and military equipment sales. The impasse has dampened efforts to control drug trafficking in the region.

In July 2005, dozens of Guyanese were denied entry into Barbados, which prompted claims of discrimination and a government inquiry. No formal measures have been taken and Guyanese migration to Barbados remained a source of tension in 2006.

The 2006 UN Human Development Report gave Barbados the 31st highest rank-

ing in the world for economic and social development, which was the best score in Latin America and the Caribbean. The report measured life expectancy, educational attainment, per capita income, and other important indicators. Women comprise roughly half of the country's workforce. A domestic violence law passed in 1992 gives police and judges greater power to protect women. Violence against and abuse of women and children continue to be serious social concerns.

Belarus

Population: 9,700,000

Capital: Minsk

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	7.6NF	7.6NF	7.6NF

Overview:

Belarus's 2006 presidential elections handed President Alyaksandr Lukashenka his third term in the country's most controversial elections yet, which outside observers declared neither free nor fair. The authorities' attacks against the opposition and suspected voting fraud provoked the largest public protests to occur on the streets of Minsk since Lukashenka came to power more than a decade ago. Belarus's president responded by intensifying repression of all forms of opposition, and several key opposition leaders received prison sentences. Since then, the opposition has dwindled, with the government exerting growing pressure on opposition parties, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), independent media outlets, and educational establishments.

Belarus declared independence in 1991, ending centuries of foreign control by Poland, Russia, and, ultimately, the Soviet Union. Stanislau Shushkevich, a reform-minded leader, served as head of state from 1991 to 1994. That year, voters made Alyaksandr Lukashenka, a member of Parliament with close links to the country's security services, Belarus's first post-Soviet president. Lukashenka pursued efforts at reunification with Russia and subordinated the government, legislature, and courts to his political whims while denying citizens basic rights and liberties. A controversial 1996 referendum, highly criticized by domestic monitors and the international community, adopted constitutional amendments that extended Lukashenka's term through 2001, broadened presidential powers, and created a new bicameral parliament (the National Assembly).

In October 2000, Belarus held deeply flawed elections to the House of Repre-

sentatives, Parliament's lower house. State media coverage of the campaign was limited and biased, and approximately half of all opposition candidates were denied registration. Following a boycott by seven opposition parties, only three opposition candidates were elected.

Lukashenka won a controversial reelection in September 2001 amid accusations from former security service officials that the president was directing a government-sponsored death squad aimed at silencing his opponents. Four politicians and journalists critical of the regime disappeared during 1999 and 2000. Western observers judged the election to be neither free nor fair. On election day, Lukashenka declared himself the victor with 75 percent of the vote over opposition candidate Uladzimir Hancharyk (15 percent). However, independent nongovernmental exit polls showed that Lukashenka had received 47 percent of the vote and Hancharyk 41 percent—an outcome that by law should have forced a second round. By 2002, Lukashenka had launched a campaign of political retribution against those who had opposed him during the presidential campaign.

Legislative elections and a parallel referendum on the presidency were held in October 2004. The Central Election Commission claimed that 90 percent of voters took part in the plebiscite, and some 79 percent of them voted in favor of the government's proposal that would allow Lukashenka to run for a third term in 2006. According to the official election results, not a single candidate fielded by opposition parties entered the National Assembly. A monitoring effort by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) declared on October 17, 2004, that the parliamentary elections fell "significantly short" of Belarus's OSCE commitments. An exit poll conducted by The Gallup Organization/Baltic Surveys, which collected data during the weeklong voting process, found that just 48.4 percent of all eligible voters in the country said yes to the referendum, far short of the official 79 percent. Thus, according to independent poll data, the referendum actually failed to amend the Belarusian constitution or to give Lukashenka the right to run for reelection, as claimed by Belarus authorities.

Ukraine's Orange Revolution, unfolding only five weeks after the constitutional referendum in Belarus, frightened the regime into thinking that a similar series of protests could take place in Belarus. Lukashenka boosted the law enforcement agencies in 2005 and purged their ranks of potential dissenters. The amendments to the Law on Interior Troops introduced in February 2005 allowed for the discretionary use of firearms against protesters on orders from the president, suggesting that the police were preparing for street protests.

More opposition figures were effectively barred from politics throughout the year. Mikhail Marynich, a former government minister and a potential contender for the presidency, was sentenced to five years in jail in December 2004 on charges of stealing computers from his own nongovernmental organization (NGO). Siarhiej Skrabets, leader of the opposition in the previous parliament, was arrested in May 2005 on corruption charges.

The March 19, 2006, presidential elections, in which Lukashenka won a third term, were neither free nor fair, and the OSCE declared that the voting did not meet democratic standards. Although four candidates competed, Lukashenka's victory was clear from the start. On March 2, just a few weeks before the election, police detained and beat Alexander Kozulin, one of the opposition candidates.

Lukashenka's government took harsh, repressive measures against the opposition, harassing and arresting opposition campaign workers. In the weeks before the election, the state security agency KGB created a climate of intimidation by accusing the opposition of preparing a violent overthrow of the government and warning that peaceful protesters could face charges of terrorism, with sentences ranging from eight years to the death penalty. None of the major polling companies could conduct exit polls during the election, which made it difficult to detect voting fraud. The opposition asserted that Lukashenka could not have won the 83 percent of the vote that he claimed.

The elections provoked the largest public protest of Lukashenka's tenure; protestors who erected a five-day tent camp on October Square in Minsk were ultimately dispersed by the authorities. Initially, 10,000 to 15,000 activists gathered on March 19, but their numbers quickly dwindled to 2,000 to 5,000, with only a few hundred spending the night. Between 500 and 1,000 individuals were arrested on March 25, including former candidate Kozulin. In July, a Minsk court sentenced him to five and one-half years in prison for his role in the protest; his sentence was much longer than those for other protesters, who typically received 10 to 15 days. In prison, Kozulin staged a 53-day hunger strike, ending on December 11, that brought attention to the plight of the opposition. As many as 26 journalists from Canada, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Russia, Poland, Ukraine, and the United States were assaulted and detained during the protests, and some had to serve 15-day prison terms.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Despite a constitutional guarantee of universal, equal, and direct suffrage, Belarus is not an electoral democracy. Serious and widespread irregularities have marred all recent

elections.

The National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus is composed of two houses. The 110 members of the House of Representatives are popularly elected for four years on the basis of single-mandate constituencies. The Council of the Republic consists of 64 members, of whom 56 are elected by regional councils and 8 are appointed by the president. The constitution vests most power with the president, giving him control over the government, courts, and even the legislative process by stating that presidential decrees have a higher legal force than the laws. The National Assembly serves largely as a rubber-stamp body.

As a result of the concentration of power in the hands of the president, political parties play a negligible role in the political process. Opposition parties have no representation in the National Assembly, while propresidential parties serve only formal functions. In late September 2006, the Ministry of Justice filed suit with the Supreme Court to suspend the activities of the opposition Belarusian Party of Communists, claiming that it had violated the law on parties because membership had dropped below 1,000.

The authorities constantly harass opposition leaders: former presidential candidate Alyaksandr Milinkevich was sentenced to 15 days in prison for organizing an unsanctioned antigovernment protest on the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear accident (April 26, 2006), and United Civic Party leader Anatol Lyabedzka was imprisoned on July 17 for 10 days on charges of swearing in a public place; Lyabedzka had also served 10 days in March. On November 1, the regime sentenced

opposition Youth Front leader Zmitser Dashkevich to 18 months in prison, provoking protest from the European Union (EU). Such harassment continued throughout the year. In September, UN special rapporteur Adrian Severin called for an investigation into the role of high government officials in the disappearance of four politicians and journalists critical of the Belarusian government in 1999 and 2000.

Belarus was ranked 151 out of 161 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index because of the increasing bureaucratization of the economy and the overall lack of transparency in the government.

The Lukashenka regime systematically curtails press freedom. The Committee to Protect Journalists listed Belarus as one of the 10 most censored countries in the world in May 2006. Libel is both a civil and a criminal offense. State media are subordinated to the president, and harassment and censorship of independent media are routine. Belarusian national television is completely under the control and influence of the state and does not provide coverage of alternative and opposition views. The State Press Committee issues warnings to publishers for unauthorized activities such as distributing copies abroad or reporting on unregistered organizations; it also can arbitrarily shut down publications without a court order. The news bulletins and daily playlists of all FM radio stations are censored. The state-run press distribution monopoly refused in November 2005 to continue distribution of most of the country's independent newspapers.

Harassment and legal attacks against independent newspapers and broadcast media were widespread in 2006. The newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* faces criminal and potential libel charges of 1 billion rubles (\$467,000) for a July 11 article about the personal finances of Hryhory Kisel, the head of the government's ONT television station.

Internet sites within the country are under the control of the government's State Center on Information Security, which is part of the Security Council of Belarus, and their impact is limited. An OpenNet Initiative analysis of the internet during the 2006 presidential campaign found that generally opposition websites were available during the campaign period. However, many of the key opposition sites were not accessible on election day or on some days following the elections, when major demonstrations took place.

Despite constitutional guarantees that "all religions and faiths shall be equal before the law," government decrees and registration requirements have increasingly restricted the life and work of religious groups. Amendments in 2002 to the Law on Religions provide for government censorship of religious publications and prevent foreign citizens from leading religious groups. The amendments also place strict limitations on religious groups that have been active in Belarus for fewer than 20 years. The government signed a concordant with the Belarusian Orthodox Church in 2003, and the Church enjoys a privileged position. The authorities forced a Pentecostal pastor to resign from her teaching job when she complained about an Orthodox priest's lecture to students denouncing "sects" such as Baptists and Pentecostals. In December 2005, the authorities refused to renew the visas of two Polish Catholic priests, including one who had worked in the country for 10 years. For the first time, the authorities imprisoned someone for holding an illegal religious service: on March 3, 2006, a Minsk judge sentenced the pastor of Christ's Covenant Reformed Baptist Church, Gregory Vyazorsky, to 10 days in jail for holding

unsanctioned services on February 5. In a positive development, on December 1, 2005, Lukashenka freed all registered religious organizations from paying land taxes.

Academic freedom is subject to intense state ideological pressures, with institutions that use a Western-style curriculum, promote national consciousness, or are suspected of disloyalty being subject to harassment and liquidation. The most highly regarded secondary school, the National State Humanities Lyceum, was shut down in 2003. In 2004, the leading private institution of higher learning, the European Humanities University, was closed; it subsequently relocated to Lithuania. Official regulations stipulate the immediate dismissal and revocation of degrees to students and professors who join opposition protests. Lukashenka has detained several scientists who disagree with his conclusion that the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear accident have largely been overcome in the country. In September, middle school staff and students protested a government ban on teachers from Poland; the government accuses them of working in Warsaw's interests to undermine the Belarus government.

The Lukashenka government limits freedom of assembly by groups independent of and critical of the president's regime. Protests and rallies require authorization from local authorities, who can arbitrarily withhold or revoke permission. When public demonstrations do occur, police typically break them up and arrest participants.

Freedom of association is severely restricted. More than a hundred of the most active NGOs critical of the authorities were liquidated or forced to close down from 2003 through 2005. Housing rules, which make it impossible for opposition parties and NGOs to rent inexpensive office space, became a pretext for liquidating hundreds of local chapters of opposition parties in June 2005. As a follow-up move, in December 2005, Lukashenka signed into law amendments to the Criminal Code that criminalize participation in an unregistered or liquidated political party or organization, allowing for further punitive measures against groups that refused to shut down. The amendment provided for jail terms ranging from six months to two years for serious cases.

New regulations introduced in August 2005 ban foreign assistance to NGOs, parties, and individuals who promote "meddling into the internal affairs" of Belarus from abroad. In the 2006 election year, the government arrested four activists from the U.S.-funded unregistered civic initiative Partnerstva, which tried to monitor elections and conduct an exit poll, several weeks before the elections in February; they remained in jail until their trial began in July. Two were sentenced to six months and shortly released, while the others must serve terms of one and two years. Independent trade unions are subject to harassment, and their leaders are frequently arrested and prosecuted for peaceful protests and dismissed from employment.

Although the country's constitution calls for judicial independence, courts are subject to significant government influence. The right to a fair trial is often not respected in cases with political overtones. Human rights groups continue to document instances of beatings, torture, and inadequate protection during detention in cases involving leaders of the democratic opposition. In 2006, numerous independent civic leaders, opposition political activists, independent journalists, and others who oppose government policies experienced arbitrary persecution, arrest, and imprisonment.

An internal passport system, in which a passport is required for domestic travel and to secure permanent housing, limits freedom of movement and choice of residence. Citizens traveling abroad have to reapply for a permission stamp in their passport every five years. In September 2005, the Constitutional Court bowed to government pressure and renounced an earlier decision to outlaw the stamp system. Wiretapping by state security agencies limits the right to privacy. The country's command economy severely limits economic freedom.

Women are not specifically targeted for discrimination, but there are significant discrepancies in income between men and women, and women are poorly represented in leading government positions. As a result of extreme poverty, many women have become victims of the international sex-trafficking trade.

Belgium

Population: 10,500,000

Capital: Brussels

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In October 2006, the far-right Vlaams Belang party garnered its best support yet after it captured 20 percent of the vote in local elections in the northern region of Flanders. In February, a Belgian court found three men guilty of belonging to an Islamic group with links to terrorist attacks in Madrid and Morocco. Hundreds of asylum seekers protested in Brussels against a new draft law that makes it more difficult for immigrants to get working papers.

Modern Belgium dates from 1830, when the territory broke away from The Netherlands and formed a constitutional monarchy. Today the monarchy is largely ceremonial. Belgium was one of the founding members of the European Union (EU) and still hosts the central administration of the organization in Brussels.

Ethnic and linguistic conflicts broke out between the different communities in the country during the 1960s, prompting a number of constitutional amendments in 1970, 1971, and 1993 that devolved considerable central government power to the three regions in the federation: French-speaking Wallonia in the south, Flemish-speaking Flanders in the north, and Brussels, the capital, where French and Flemish share the same status. The small German minority in Wallonia, which consists of around 70,000 persons, has also been accorded cultural autonomy. Another 1993

amendment granted the three regional assemblies primary responsibility in a number of important policy areas, including housing, education, and the environment, while keeping foreign policy, defense, justice, and monetary policy in the hands of the central state. The Flemings, living in the more economically dynamic region, generally favor greater decentralization of state power to the country's regions.

During parliamentary elections in May 2003, the two main political party blocks—the Liberals (the Flemish Liberal Democrats, or VLD, and the Reform Movement, or MR) and the Socialists (the Socialist Party, or PS, and the Socialist Party Alternative, or SPA)—both gained at the expense of the Greens, which dropped from 20 to 4 seats in the lower house (Chamber of Deputies) and were forced out of the ruling coalition. The Socialists led slightly with 27 percent of the vote compared with 26 percent for the Liberals. Altogether, the coalition holds 97 of the 150 seats in the lower house.

During local elections in October 2006, the far-right Vlaams Belang party (the former Vlaams Blok) enjoyed its best showing yet, gaining 20 percent of the vote in the northern region of Flanders. The party did, however, drop to second place in its stronghold, the city of Antwerp. In 2005, a language dispute flared over the division of an electoral district that includes suburban Flanders and parts of Brussels; the conflict concerns how the district should be divided between the country's Flemish- and French-speaking political parties.

In May 2006, a gunman with far-right sympathies opened fire in the center of Antwerp killing a Malian nanny and the two-year-old girl in her care. The killings raised concerns across the country about growing intolerance in Belgium and the rising support for the Vlaams Belang.

Belgium is seeking the extradition from Senegal of Chad's former dictator, Hissene Habre, after a Belgian judge in 2005 issued an international arrest warrant charging Habre with atrocities committed during his eight years of rule, 1982-1990. The indictment was originally issued under Belgium's previous "universal jurisdiction" law, which allowed the prosecution of suspects of severe human rights abuses, no matter where the offenses were committed. In 2003, the law was repealed under international pressure and amended so that those charged had to be living in Belgium. However, the Habre case was allowed to continue because the investigation was already underway. In May 2006, the United Nations gave Senegal 90 days to put Habre on trial or send him to Belgium to face the charges there.

In February 2006, a Belgian court found three men guilty of belonging to an Islamic group with links to the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004 and in Morocco in 2003. The trial, which began in November 2005, was the first to cover the country's new antiterrorism laws, which stipulate a maximum of 5 years for belonging to a terrorist organization and 10 years for playing a coordinating role in terrorist attacks. In total, 13 men, all Moroccans or Belgians of Moroccan descent, went on trial. Eight of the defendants were found guilty of lesser charges and two were acquitted.

A bogus report on the country's public television station, RTBF, reported that the Dutch-speaking Flemish region had declared independence from the country and that Belgium as a nation ceased to exist. The spoof, which caused panicked calls to the station, was called irresponsible and in poor taste by the prime minister's office.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Belgium is an electoral democracy. In February 2004, parliament granted non-EU immigrants who have been living in the country for at least five years the right to vote in local elections. More than 91 percent of all registered voters turned out at the polls during the last parliamentary elections, in 2003. Voting, however, is compulsory for those eligible.

Parliament consists of two houses: the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The 150 members of the Chamber of Deputies are elected directly by proportional representation. In the Senate, there are 71 seats, 40 of which are elected directly by popular vote and 31 indirectly. In both houses, members serve four-year terms. The prime minister, who is the leader of the majority party or leading coalition, is appointed by the monarch and approved by Parliament. The current prime minister, Guy Verhofstadt, has been in office since 1999.

The party system is highly fragmented, with the leading party, the VLD, receiving only a little more than 15 percent of the vote in the 2003 election. In addition, political parties are generally organized along ethno-regional lines, with separate organizations in Flanders and Wallonia, a factor that makes for difficult coalitions.

In November 2004, Belgian courts banned the xenophobic Vlaams Blok Party for violating the country's antiracism laws. The party changed its name to Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interests) and removed some of the most overt racist elements in its platform, such as its call for the mandatory expulsion of all Muslim immigrants. However, the party maintains its anti-immigrant and anticrime policies, as well as its commitment to an independent Flanders.

Belgium was ranked 20 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedoms of speech and the press are guaranteed by the constitution and generally respected by the government. The Belgian Chamber of Deputies voted unanimously in March 2005 to approve a law on the protection of journalists' sources in Belgium. The vote came after police raids on the home and office of a Brussels reporter in 2004, which shocked the community of international journalists. The new law protects journalists from home searches and seizures, and gives them the right to silence if called as a witness. Journalists can only be forced to reveal sources to "prevent crimes that represent a serious attack on the physical integrity of one or several third parties." Newspapers have gone through increased concentration of ownership since the 1960s, as corporations have steadily been buying papers. As a result, a handful of corporations currently run most of the country's newspapers. The government does not limit access to the internet.

Freedom of religion is protected in Belgium, where the state grants subsidies to Christian, Jewish, and Muslim institutions. About half of the population identifies itself with the Roman Catholic religion. A number of minority religions have complained of discrimination by the government, which has been criticized for its characterization of some non-Catholic religious groups as "sects." The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Freedom of association is guaranteed by law, except for membership in groups that practice discrimination "overtly and repeatedly." Freedom of assembly is also respected. About 63 percent of the Belgian workforce is unionized. A gentleman's agreement between workers and employers, reached in 2002, bolstered the right to

strike. Up to that point, employers were able to use the courts to ban strikes. Employers found guilty of firing workers because of union activities are required to reinstate the worker or pay an indemnity. According to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the fines are probably too low to act as a deterrent, as Belgian employers prefer to pay the fines rather than reinstate dismissed employees active in union affairs.

The judiciary is independent, and the rule of law generally prevails in civil and criminal matters. In July 2004, the UN Human Rights Committee issued a report that expressed concerns about a number of human rights abuses, including acts of abuse and racial discrimination committed by the police forces in the country. The report also expressed concerns about the treatment of rejected asylum seekers and illegal immigrants awaiting deportation who, after being released from detention centers for aliens, were often placed in unsanitary conditions in the transit zone of Brussels national airport, sometimes for several months.

Seventeen people—mainly soldiers and others with far-right and xenophobic sympathies—were held, in September 2006, on suspicion of trying to destabilize the country through acts of terrorism. The arrests were made during a raid on the barracks and homes of the suspected members that led to a seizure of homemade bombs. Specific antiracism laws prohibit and penalize the incitement of discrimination, acts of hatred, or violence based on race, ethnicity, or nationality. Despite these protections, equality of opportunity for foreigners is undermined by a relatively high degree of racial and ethnic intolerance in society. Police are also empowered to reprimand or even imprison women found dressed in the *burqa* (full-body covering) on the streets.

In March 2006, hundreds of asylum seekers protested in Brussels against a new draft law that makes it more difficult for immigrants to get working papers. The protesters complained that the draft law does not clarify how those without papers can remedy their situation.

In March 2006, the Belgian parliament voted in favor of granting homosexual couples the same rights as heterosexual couples in adopting children.

The law provides for the free movement of citizens at home and abroad, and the government does not interfere with these rights.

The government actively promotes equality for women. In 2003, the government created the Institute for the Equality of Men and Women. The institute, which was formerly the Ministry of Labor's Division of Equal Opportunity, is empowered to initiate sex-discrimination lawsuits. In 1994, the country passed a law stipulating that two-thirds of each party's candidates must be of a different gender. Women won more than 35 percent of the seats in the lower house of Parliament (Chamber of Deputies) during elections in 2003, a 10 percent increase since prior elections in 1999. Belgium is a destination and transit point for trafficked persons. However, according to the U.S. State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report for 2006, the country made considerable efforts to prosecute traffickers, provide protection to victims, and prevent trafficking. In 2005, the country prosecuted its first sex tourist, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison. The accused, a Belgian national, had abused more than 200 children in Thailand over a 20-year period.

Belize

Population: 300,000

Capital: Belmopan

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview: During 2006, Belize experienced a decrease in the civil unrest that had characterized the country in the previous year. Major challenges, such as corruption scandals, the debt crisis, human trafficking, and violent crime, continued to confront the country, although the government took steps to address several of these concerns.

Belize achieved independence from Britain in 1981 and is a member of the Commonwealth. The government has changed hands three times, alternating between the center-right United Democratic Party (UDP) and the center-left People's United Party (PUP).

The current prime minister, Said Wilbert Musa, was first elected in 1998, when the PUP won 26 seats in the House of Representatives. Musa was reelected in 2003, which was the first time in the country's history that an incumbent was elected to a second consecutive term, and the PUP took 22 seats in the House of Representatives. However, the Musa government was handed a defeat in early 2006, when the opposition UDP captured a majority of seats in all local elections. The UDP's victory at the local level meant that the party's leader, Dean Barrow, did not step down; he will probably challenge Musa in the 2008 presidential elections. The PUP's defeat in local elections is a likely result of public dissatisfaction with corruption scandals, increased taxation, and growing crime rates since Musa's reelection. Polls conducted late in 2005 also indicated that support for the current administration is weak, with only 20 percent of those polled approving of the Musa presidency.

Despite moves to counter allegations of corruption, the Musa administration continued to be faced with the issue in 2006, and allegations fueled discontent with the government. While the government used a U.S.-sponsored computerized system, initiated in 2005, to check passports, reports in 2006 indicated that blank Belizean passports continued to go missing from the Immigration and Nationality Department and that there were illegal sales of Belizean birth certificates.

Concerns about the country's debt burden, which is estimated at nearly \$2 billion, continued to plague the Musa administration during the year. In response, the government announced plans to restructure Belize's nearly \$1 billion in external debt and to impose tighter fiscal measures and budget cuts. However, following a series of public protests and strikes, the government agreed to modify the budget propos-

als and to grant promised pay increases; in 2005, a series of unpopular new taxes that were the result of the debt crisis had sparked rioting that left at least one person dead. Privatization also remained an important issue in 2006, as protests continued over the privatization of the telecom industry. Reports of the future re-privatization of the water industry raised concerns about the potential for irregular government actions.

Human trafficking became a major issue in Belize in 2006, when the U.S. State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons Report ranked Belize a Tier 3 country, signifying that it is not in compliance with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking in persons as outlined by U.S. legislation. The cabinet responded by agreeing to implement a short-term plan proposed by the United States, which resulted in intensified intelligence gathering, unannounced raids, assistance to victims of trafficking, and a public information and education campaign. Belize was later removed from the Tier 3 list after taking such actions; however, a strategic plan is being created to improve the compliance of the U.S. 2003 Trafficking in Persons Act, as such trafficking remains a major challenge facing the country.

Drug trafficking continued to be a problem in Belize. The U.S. State Department reported that drug transit through Belize has increased as a result of insufficient counternarcotics efforts and internal government corruption. Few advances toward curbing money laundering were made in 2006, as the resources allocated to investigate the issue remained insufficient. Violent crime also continued unabated. In 2005, Belize had one of the highest murder rates in the Caribbean, with roughly 27 murders per 100,000 people.

Oil became a crucial issue in 2006, when commercial-quality crude oil was discovered in Belize's western border region. Estimates indicate that these reserves would be able to produce up to 50 million barrels of crude oil, which could represent substantial future earnings for this traditional oil-importing nation. However, the discovery has aroused concern on the part of civil society activists regarding environmental implications of oil extraction and the provocation of illegal activities. Belize also signed an agreement with Venezuela's PetroCaribe in 2006, which has agreed to supply the majority of Belize's oil on advantageous financing terms. Until the 2006 agreement, the United States supplied the majority of Belize's oil, and skeptics now contend that the deal with PetroCaribe is the country's move to join other politically left-leaning countries in the region.

Belize and Guatemala improved relations over their long-standing border dispute in 2006. The countries participated in a series of meetings as part of an agreement signed in 2005 requiring that they identify issues and laws that are to be the subjects of negotiation, establish their positions, and seek to resolve their differences when possible. Currently, the countries are discussing issues of commerce, tourism, development, infrastructure, security, justice, immigration, and maritime matters.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Belize is an electoral democracy. The current head of state is the Queen of Belize, Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom, and is represented by the governor-general. Parliament is bicameral. In the bicameral National Assembly, the 29-seat House of Representatives is elected for a five-year term. The 12 members of the Senate are also appointed to five-year terms with 6 appointed by the governor-general on the advice of the

prime minister, 3 by the leader of the parliamentary opposition, and 3 by the Belize Advisory Council. There are no restrictions on the right to organize political parties, and Mestizo, Creole, Maya, and Garifuna parties have seats in the National Assembly. The country's major parties include the center-right UDP and the center-left PUP.

Government corruption scandals have included the illegal sale of passports and birth certificates and bad loans made by the country's social security board. Belize was ranked 66 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Belize has a free and open media system, although laws allow for some government control. The government may imprison (for up to three years) or fine (up to \$2,500) journalists or others who write in a critical way about the public financial disclosures of government officials. The Belize Broadcasting Authority also has the right to prior restraint of all broadcasts for national security reasons or reasons of national emergency. However, the government has not moved against journalists or invoked these rights for many years.

Although Belize has no daily newspapers, the country is a lively market for weeklies, with 10, including 2 supported directly by political parties, circulating nationally or regionally. Belize also has 10 radio stations, some which are networked nationally, and 2 television networks, along with a variety of cable outlets. Internet access is the second highest in Central America, after Costa Rica, with nearly 20 percent of people having an internet connection. There were no direct threats to journalists in 2006, and the Belizean media are notable for their diversity of opinions, with little or no fear of government reprisal for criticism.

There is full freedom of religion in Belize. Academic freedom is respected.

Freedoms of assembly and association are generally respected. A large number of nongovernmental organizations are active in social, economic, and environmental areas.

Although labor unions have seen their numbers shrink, Belize has a number of well-organized unions that represent a cross-section of workers. In recent years, unions have demonstrated their leverage over Belizean politics. Official boards of inquiry adjudicate disputes, and businesses are penalized for failing to abide by the labor codes. However, the government has done little to improve the regulation of antiunion discrimination, and in practice, receiving reparations for dismissal on grounds of union organizing is extremely rare.

The judiciary is independent and nondiscriminatory, and the rule of law is generally respected. Lengthy backlogs of trials continue; however, recently the backlog of cases has decreased, despite an increase in crime, because of the dismissal of several cases. Cases are often prolonged for years while defendants are free on bail. Reports of police misconduct are investigated by the department's internal affairs office or by an ombudsman's office. Extrajudicial killing and use of excessive force are among the country's primary human rights concerns.

Prisons do not meet minimum standards, although the Hattieville Prison was privatized and is run by a nonprofit foundation that has made some progress in improving the physical conditions of inmates. Drug trafficking and gang conflicts within Hattieville have contributed to an increase in crime. There have been investigations into the brutalization of prisoners by prison authorities, and at least three senior prison officers have been dismissed as a result of allegations of brutality and bribery.

The government actively discourages racial and ethnic discrimination. Although the Maya claim to be the original inhabitants of Belize, the government has designated only 77,000 acres as Mayan preserves, and no recent action has been taken regarding the 500,000 acres of disputed land. Most of the indigenous population lives in the south, the poorest part of the country. The Belize Human Rights Commission is independent and effective, although the commission is allocated limited resources and there has been discussion in Parliament about dissolving the ombudsman position.

Most of the estimated 40,000 Spanish speakers who have immigrated to this largely English-speaking country since the 1980s do not have legal status. Undocumented Guatemalan, Honduran, and Salvadoran workers, especially in the service and agricultural sectors, continue to be exploited. Chinese and Indian nationals have been found to be working as bonded labor, and the majority of women working in brothels are from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Violence against women and children remains a serious concern, as does human trafficking.

Benin

Population: 8,700,000

Capital: Porto-Novo

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Trend Arrow: Benin received an upward trend arrow due to free and fair March presidential elections, which allowed for the peaceful transfer of power to an independent candidate.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,2F	2,2F	2,3F	2,2F	3,2F	3,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview:

Despite doubts that Mathieu Kerekou would refuse to abdicate the presidency and fears that this might result in election delays, presidential power was officially and peacefully transferred to an independent candidate, Boni Yayi, in 2006. Winning out over 25 other candidates from around the country, Yayi—the former president of the regional development bank of West Africa—had been a relative novice to the Beninese political scene.

Benin was once the center of the ancient kingdom of Dahomey, the name by which the country was known until 1975. Six decades of French colonial rule ended in 1960, and Mathieu Kerekou took power 12 years later, ending a series of coups

and countercoups. He imposed a one-party state under the Benin People's Revolutionary Party and pursued Marxist-Leninist policies. However, by 1990, economic hardship and rising internal unrest forced Kerekou to hold a national conference that eventually ushered in democracy. The transition culminated in his defeat by Nicephore Soglo in the 1991 presidential election, and the country's human rights record subsequently improved. Kerekou made a comeback in the 1996 presidential poll.

Presidential elections in 2001 were marred by technical and administrative problems, as well as allegations of fraud against Kerekou that led to a boycott by the second- and third-place finishers in the first round of voting. The boycott gave Kerekou a solid victory, with 84 percent of the vote in the second round of voting, in which he ran against an obscure fourth-place candidate. Several members of the Autonomous National Electoral Commission (CENA) stepped down in protest before the second round of voting, citing a lack of transparency and poor administration of the election.

In March 2003, Benin held National Assembly elections that gave the ruling party coalition—the Presidential Movement—a majority in Parliament for the first time since multiparty democracy was introduced more than a decade ago. Voter turnout was low, and there were some logistical problems, but the polls were considered free and fair. Opposition party members had accused the ruling party of intimidation ahead of the elections. As part of the country's decentralization process and in an effort to rebuild voter confidence after the flawed election in 2001, local elections were held ahead of these legislative polls. Pro-Kerekou parties came out ahead in the local polls.

The 2006 presidential election was widely anticipated as a true measure of Benin's democratic progress because both Mathieu Kerekou and Nicephore Soglo—the two key players on Benin's political stage—were ineligible to run, as they had both exceeded the constitutional age limit of 70. Despite Kerekou's vowing in 2005 not to change the constitution to remain in power, as many other African leaders have done in recent years, doubts persisted about his sincerity until the day of the election. In December 2005, the government announced a funding shortage in the election coffers and hinted that the date of the election might be pushed back to accommodate further fund-raising. This announcement created widespread concern that Kerekou was using a lack of funds as an excuse to hold on to power. A national outcry manifested itself through mass protests in the streets of Cotonou, strikes by trade unions, and independent efforts to raise money for the election. More than rhetoric, these efforts resulted in nongovernmental representatives raising more than \$13 million, which was presented to CENA on the eve of election day.

With the two historic candidates out of the race, the presidential contest was relatively open, and Kerekou's refusal to name a successor confounded traditional political party alliances. Despite some delays in opening voting booths and a few irregularities in voter registration, 26 separate candidates, including 2 women, competed in the first round of elections, held, as originally scheduled, on March 5. With 35.8 percent of the vote, Boni Yayi—an independent candidate and former president of the regional development bank—surprised most observers by dominating the first round. Yayi went on to win the second round of elections on April 6 against Adrien Hougbedji, the candidate for the Democratic Renewal Party, capturing 75 percent of the vote. The high voter turnout in both rounds of the election, presence

of independent monitors who considered the election to be free and fair, and widespread support that he received from opposition political parties in the second round of the election, have all given Yayi substantial legitimacy with which to govern in the coming years.

In keeping with his campaign promise to bring "young, new, and honest people" to government, Yayi composed his new cabinet primarily of political novices. However, the divisions within Benin's traditional political parties leading up to the election have resulted in a disorganized legislature, where alliances for or against the new government continue to be ambiguous. Any significant political progress will be improbable until the next legislative elections, originally scheduled for 2007. However, in June, the National Assembly voted to revise the constitution, seeking to extend the term of a legislator from four to five years; it has yet to be seen whether this proposed revision will be upheld.

Approximately 6,000 of the 25,000 Togolese refugees who fled politically instigated violence in 2005 have returned home as the political situation across the border has quieted slightly. Nonetheless, the presence of a persistently large population of foreign refugees receiving international aid has frequently created tensions with the local population. In February 2006, when inhabitants of the Lokossa refugee camp took 10 employees of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees hostage in an effort to expedite their emigration papers, violence sparked between refugees and the local population. Nine Beninese homes and 92 refugee tents were burned, and the entire population of the refugee camp was temporarily relocated to a school building 7 kilometers away.

In May, while locals were siphoning petrol from a tanker after the driver lost control, the heat from the vehicle's engine mixed with the leaking fuel and caused an explosion that resulted in 75 people dead and many others injured. The event caused the government to officially ban the sale of smuggled petrol products, predominantly brought across the border from Nigeria. The sale of contraband Nigerian fuel has traditionally been a standard of the Beninese economy, as the majority of the population cannot afford to pay the high price for permissible fossil fuels.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Benin is an electoral democracy. Benin held its first genuine multiparty elections in 1991 and now has dozens of political parties. The 25-member independent electoral commission, CENA, oversaw the conduct of the 2006 presidential poll, which was widely considered to be free and fair.

The president is elected by popular vote for a five-year term and serves as both the chief of state and head of government. Delegates to the 83-member, unicameral National Assembly serve four-year terms, though the legislature has recently proposed extending the term limit to five years.

Historically, Benin has been divided between northern and southern ethnic groups, which are the main roots of current political parties. Major political parties include the Democratic Renewal Party, the Social Democratic Party, and the Renaissance Party of Benin. In the build-up to the 2006 presidential election, many of the political parties and alliances fractured over whom to nominate. The Presidential Movement—a union of parties that supported Mathieu Kerekou's regime—had won a historic majority in the last legislative election. But in 2006, unsure of whom to

support now that Kerekou could no longer run, the Movement crumbled as many of the parties within it chose to support rival candidates. Absent a united Presidential Movement, control of the National Assembly is currently uncertain and little effective legislation can be expected to come out of the National Assembly before the next legislative election in 2007.

Corruption, although not at the level of some neighboring countries, continues to be endemic in Benin. Two separate bodies have been established to combat corruption in recent years, both with little visible impact. In a symbolic step to reassure the public of his intention to fight corruption during his tenure, the newly elected president, Boni Yayi, signed into law an official code of conduct for governmental management. Also under Yayi, Sefou Fabohoun, an influential petrol businessman and politician, has been arrested on charges of fraudulent business management. Benin was ranked 121 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression are largely respected in practice. However, in September 2006, three newspaper editors were detained for allegedly insulting the president; all were released three days later by order of the state prosecutor, and all charges were dropped. An independent and pluralistic press publishes articles highly critical of government and political party leaders. Benin has dozens of daily newspapers, magazines, and private radio stations and at least two private television stations. Internet access is unrestricted, though limited by financial means.

The government actively seeks to ensure religious and academic freedom. In recent years, through a number of high-profile cases, the Constitutional Court has reaffirmed the right of access to religion and the separation of church and state, particularly within public schools.

Freedom of assembly is respected in Benin, and requirements for permits and registration are often ignored. Protests were conducted peacefully and went undisturbed by the police following the government's announcement that it was financially unable to hold the 2006 presidential election on time. Numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights groups operate without hindrance. The right to organize and join unions is constitutionally guaranteed, and unions played a central role in the democratization of Benin in the early 1990s. Six of Benin's seven trade unions organized strikes in January 2006 in response to proposed government delays in the election, temporarily immobilizing schools, government offices, and media outlets.

The judiciary is generally considered to be independent and among the more sophisticated in West Africa, but is inefficient and susceptible to corruption. Nonetheless, court decisions are largely respected by both the legislature and the presidency. Harsh prison conditions and occasional unjustified arrests continue to impede progress. Moreover, according to a local NGO, Dispensary of Prisoners and Indigents, only 10 percent of prison inmates in Benin have been successfully tried and sentenced.

Relations among Benin's ethnic groups are generally good, although regionalism occasionally occurs along ethnic lines. Minority ethnic groups are well represented in government agencies, the civil service, and the armed forces.

Human trafficking to and from neighboring countries and from rural to urban

neighborhoods continues to be widespread despite government efforts to combat it. Following international accords signed with other West African nations attacking regional trafficking operations, the National Assembly passed a law formally outlawing human trafficking in January 2006. However, Benin has not exhibited the financial means with which to enforce these ambitions.

Although the constitution provides for gender equality, women enjoy fewer educational and employment opportunities than men, particularly in rural areas. In cooperation with UNICEF, the government has enacted a campaign to increase awareness of the need to educate women, including ads promoting education for girls on the shirt backs of motorcycle taxi drivers and billboards. A new Family Code, promulgated in 2004, improves women's inheritance, property, and marriage rights, and prohibits forced marriage and polygamy. Nonetheless, in family matters, these legal rights are frequently ignored.

Bhutan

Population: 900,000

Capital: Thimphu

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7.7NF	7.6NF	7.6NF	7.6NF	7.6NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF

Overview:

Bhutan took several significant steps forward in its ongoing political reform process in 2006, including King Jigme Singye Wangchuck's announcement in January that he will transfer power to his son in 2008, when elections to a new Parliament are scheduled to be held. The king continued to conduct public consultations on a new 34-article draft constitution, and established several new government commissions in preparation for the transition. Some progress was made toward resolving Bhutan's long-standing refugee problem, as the United States offered to take in 60,000 Bhutanese refugees currently residing in camps in Nepal.

Britain began guiding this Himalayan land's affairs in 1865 and, in 1907, installed the Wangchuk monarchy. However, a 1949 treaty gave India control over Bhutan's foreign affairs. In 1972, the current monarch succeeded his father to the throne.

Reversing a long-standing policy of tolerating cultural diversity in the kingdom, in the 1980s the government began requiring all Bhutanese to adopt the dress of the ruling Ngalong Drukpa ethnic group. Authorities said that they feared for the survival of Drukpa culture because of the large number of Nepali speakers, also known

as Southern Bhutanese, in the south. The situation worsened in 1988, when the government began using a strict 1985 citizenship law to arbitrarily strip thousands of Nepali speakers of their citizenship. The move came after a census showed Southern Bhutanese to be in the majority in five southern districts.

Led by the newly formed Bhutanese People's Party (BPP), Southern Bhutanese held demonstrations in September 1990 against the new measures. Arson and violence that accompanied the protests led authorities to crack down on the BPP. As conditions worsened, tens of thousands of Southern Bhutanese fled to Nepal in the early 1990s, many of them forcibly expelled by Bhutanese forces. Credible accounts suggest that soldiers raped and beat many Nepali-speaking villagers and detained thousands as "anti-nationals."

In December 2003, with support from Indian forces, the army expelled about 3,000 members of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), an Indian separatist group, from southern Bhutan. However, the security situation in much of southern Bhutan remains poor; in September 2004, a bomb blast in the border town of Gelephu killed or injured several dozen people. Later that month, 111 Bhutanese were convicted of providing assistance to militant groups and were sentenced to long prison terms. In September 2006, a tenuous ceasefire between the Indian army and the ULFA broke down amid reports that the ULFA were once again organizing bases in southern Bhutan. India doubled troop levels along the Bhutan border in October to prevent attacks from across the border.

During the past several years, the government has made further progress on the issue of political reform. After several years of review, a 39-member drafting committee published a draft constitution in March 2005. The 34-article draft provides for a bicameral Parliament, a two-party political system, and some fundamental rights. However, it does uphold the primacy of the monarchy, and analysts note that it may not adequately define and protect the rights of Bhutan's sizable Nepalese minority, many of whom are currently refugees in Nepal.

In January 2006, King Jigme announced that he would step down in 2008, to be succeeded by his son, Dasho Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck. Parliamentary elections are also scheduled to be held in 2008.

In preparation for the transition, in January, King Jigme created the constitutional posts of Election Commissioner, Anti-corruption Commissioner, and Auditor General. Mock polls held in September and frequent consultations with the Election Commission of India have demonstrated Bhutan's commitment in preparing for the elections. The king remains popular among the public, however; many Bhutanese remain apprehensive of political change and seemingly prefer the monarchical system to one with greater political freedom.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Bhutan is not an electoral democracy. King Jigme Singye Wangchuk and a small group of elites make key decisions and wield absolute power. The 150-member National Assembly has little independent power, although some analysts note that debate within the Assembly has become more lively and critical in recent years. Every three years, village headmen choose 105 *chimis*, or National Assembly members, while the king appoints 35 seats and religious groups choose 10 seats. For the 105 district-based seats, each village nominates one candidate by consensus. Human rights activists

allege that in reality, authorities suggest a candidate to the headman in each village and the headman asks families to approve the candidate. In September 2005, the law was amended so that chimis would be elected by adult franchise rather than the one-vote-per-household system that existed previously.

Since 1998, the king has taken several steps to increase the influence of the National Assembly. He removed himself as chairman of Bhutan's Council of Ministers; in addition, he gave the National Assembly the power to remove the king from the throne and to elect cabinet members from among candidates nominated by the king. In July 2004, the Assembly resolved that it would meet biannually in order to take a more active role in approving legislation. A new Royal Advisory Council, which is expected to play a role similar to that of an upper house of parliament, was elected in October 2004. Local government structures have been granted greater executive authority and now are headed by elected leaders.

Political parties are illegal in Bhutan; the opposition Druk National Congress operates in exile. Women and members of all major ethnic groups are represented in the National Assembly, although ethnic Nepalese remain underrepresented.

The Bhutanese government operates with limited transparency or accountability, although steps have been taken in recent years to improve both. In January 2006, King Jigme created the Anti-Corruption Commission, responsible for investigating reports of corruption and preventing corruption through education and advocacy. The Anti-Corruption Act, passed in July, endowed the commission with substantial investigatory powers and put in place protections for whistle blowers. The commission is currently investigating several complaints that have been made through the whistle-blower mechanism on their website. Bhutan was ranked 32 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Bhutanese authorities restrict freedom of expression. Under the 1992 National Security Act, any criticism of King Jigme and Bhutan's political system is prohibited. The Bhutan Information, Communications and Media Act, passed in July 2006, is designed to regulate the information, communications, and media industries. Two private radio stations in Thimpu are awaiting licenses under the new law, and in September, Kuzoo FM 90, Bhutan's first independent radio station, began broadcasting. Many observers have however expressed concern that the law, which is primarily concerned with technological specifics, licensing, and ownership, provides no specific protections for journalists, and does not guarantee freedom of information.

Two new independent newspapers, the *Bhutan Times* and the *Daily Observer*, were launched in April and June, respectively. Although the papers have published mainly progovernment articles, with the *Times* particularly supportive of the government stance toward refugees in Nepal, both papers have occasionally been critical of the government. The government-owned publication *Kuensel* generally reports news that portrays the kingdom in a favorable light, although it does provide occasional coverage of criticism of government policies during Assembly meetings. State-run broadcast media do not carry opposition positions and statements.

Cable television services, which carry uncensored foreign programming, thrive in some areas but are hampered by a high sales tax and the absence of a broadcasting law. In March 2005, in response to concerns voiced by authorities as well as by members of the public, the Association of Private Cable Operators resolved to limit

cable access to 30 channels, with a complete ban on 12 music and other channels that provided "controversial" content such as wrestling. Internet access is growing and is unrestricted. Two new internet service providers were licensed during the year, and the online edition of *Kuensel* provides a somewhat lively forum for discussion and debate.

While Bhutanese of all faiths generally can worship relatively freely, government policy favors the Drukpa Kagyupa school of Mahayana Buddhism, which is the official religion. The government helps fund the construction and maintenance of Buddhist monasteries and shrines and subsidizes some monks, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 Report on International Religious Freedom. A 3,500-member Monastic Body is the sole arbiter on religious matters, and monks also wield political influence. Some members of the country's small Christian minority are reportedly subject to harassment by local authorities. In January 2006, two men were arrested for preaching and projecting a CD visual of Jesus Christ. They were imprisoned and originally sentenced to three and a half years in jail, although the charges were dropped shortly after and they were released in July. No restrictions on academic freedom have been reported, although Bhutan's first university opened only in 2003.

Freedoms of assembly and association are restricted. Citizens may participate in a peaceful protest only if the government approves of its purpose. In recent years, security forces have arrested Bhutanese for taking part in peaceful prodemocracy demonstrations. They have also arrested and deported Southern Bhutanese refugees living in Nepal who entered and demonstrated inside Bhutan for the right to return home.

Nongovernmental groups (NGOs) that work on human rights, the refugee issue, or other overtly political issues are not legally allowed to operate inside the country. Only two NGOs exist—the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature and the National Women's Association of Bhutan; both collaborate with the government. The government prohibits independent trade unions and strikes. In any case, some 85 percent of the workforce is engaged in subsistence agriculture. Draft labor legislation under preparation would prohibit forced labor, discrimination, sexual harassment, and child employment in the private sector.

Bhutan's judiciary is not independent of the king, and legal protections are incomplete as a result of the lack of a fully developed criminal procedure code and deficiencies in police training. However, litigants' rights have been bolstered by legislation that provides for legal counsel in court cases. In addition, in 2003, the king approved the establishment of a five-member National Judicial Commission (NJC) to oversee the appointment of judges and other judicial staff. In September 2006, the king expanded the number of members of the High Court from four to nine, appointing five new justices on the recommendation of the NJC. Capital punishment was abolished in March 2004, and a new penal code was enacted in August 2004.

Arbitrary arrest, detention, and torture remain areas of concern. Approximately 70 political prisoners continue to serve lengthy prison sentences. However, the government's human rights record has improved since the early 1990s, when soldiers and police committed serious human rights abuses against Nepali-speaking Bhutanese.

The government's expulsion of tens of thousands of Nepali-speaking Bhutanese

in the early 1990s, and recent bilateral efforts to repatriate them, have underscored the tentative nature of citizenship in the kingdom. Prior to the expulsions, the government stripped thousands of Southern Bhutanese of their citizenship under a 1985 law that tightened citizenship requirements. The new law required both parents to be Bhutanese citizens in order for citizenship to be conferred on a child. In addition, Bhutanese seeking to verify citizenship had to prove that they or both of their parents were residing in Bhutan in 1958.

While the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) asserts that the overwhelming majority of refugees who entered camps in Nepal have documentary proof of Bhutanese nationality, the Bhutanese government continues to maintain that many of the refugees either left Bhutan voluntarily or were illegal immigrants. Following a violent incident at one of the refugee camps in December 2003, bilateral efforts to continue the repatriation process have remained stalled, and the Bhutanese government continues to deny the UNHCR access to Bhutan. A 2004 report by the Human Rights Council of Bhutan (HRCB), a consortium of Bhutanese human rights organizations based in Nepal, documented government efforts to settle Bhutanese from the north in lands formerly occupied by the refugees, which makes it difficult for refugees to return. Amid the continued stalemate, the UNHRC has increasingly advocated for a third-party solution, and in October 2006, the United States stated that it was prepared to take in up to 60,000 refugees, over half of the approximately 106,000 expelled in 1990. However, it remains to be seen if refugees will agree to this offer.

Conditions for Nepali speakers living in Bhutan have improved somewhat, but several major problems remain. According to a 2003 report by the HRCB, ethnic Nepalese are required to obtain official "security clearance certificates" to enter schools, receive health care, take government jobs, or travel within Bhutan or abroad. However, in a positive step, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 religious freedom report, in early 2005 the Bhutanese government began to issue national identity cards to some ethnic Nepalese who have relatives living in the refugee camps. Restrictions on dress and cultural practices were imposed in the late 1980s in an attempt to safeguard Bhutan's heritage. A 1989 royal decree requires all citizens, including those from minority ethnic groups, to wear the traditional dress of the ruling Drukpas in public places, including schools, government offices, and religious buildings. In September 2004, it was decreed that all women had to adhere to the custom of wearing a scarf draped over two shoulders instead of one, according to *The Economist*. In December 2004, Bhutan became the first country in the world to ban the sale and use of tobacco.

Women participate freely in social and economic life but continue to be underrepresented in government and politics despite some recent gains. The application of religious or ethnically based customary laws regarding inheritance, marriage, and divorce sometimes results in discrimination against women. There are no reports that trafficking of women or children is a problem in Bhutan.

Bolivia

Population: 9,100,000

Capital: La Paz (administrative), Sucre (judicial)

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	2,3F	3,3F	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview: In December 2005, coca growers' association leader Evo Morales became the first Bolivian president to win an outright majority in the country's 25 years of democracy, as well as its first indigenous president. Morales's left-wing Movement toward Socialism (MAS) party also won the most seats in Congress. On May 1, 2006, Morales announced the nationalization of all hydrocarbon resources in Bolivia, decreasing international investor confidence in the government. On July 2, Bolivians participated in a dual vote, selecting delegates for a Constituent Assembly while also voting on the issue of regional autonomy. The assembly began its work in August and quickly fell into procedural crisis, while strident rhetoric from all sides led to significantly increased political polarization throughout the country.

After achieving independence from Spain in 1825, the Republic of Bolivia endured recurrent instability and military rule. However, the armed forces, responsible for more than 180 coups in 157 years, have refrained from political intervention since 1982.

In 1993, Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, a wealthy U.S.-educated businessman, was elected president. During his first term in office, he initiated a sweeping privatization program. Under U.S. pressure, he also stepped up eradication of the country's illegal coca production. The measures provoked widespread public protests and, combined with unhappiness over official corruption, caused a decline in his popularity as well as that of his party, the center-right Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR). Hugo Banzer Suarez, a former dictator turned democrat, succeeded Sanchez de Lozada in the 1997 presidential election, but the terminally ill Banzer resigned in 2001. He was succeeded by reformist Vice President Jorge Quiroga, who finished the remaining year of Banzer's term.

No candidate in the June 2002 presidential election won a majority of the popular vote; under Bolivia's constitution, members of the National Congress were tasked with deciding the outcome of the election. They selected Sanchez de Lozada, who had received a small plurality of votes, over Evo Morales, a radical indigenous leader of the country's coca growers. Concurrent congressional elections resulted in the MNR-led coalition winning 17 seats in the Senate and 71 in the Chamber of Depu-

ties. The opposition, dominated by Morales's Movement toward Socialism (MAS) party, won 10 seats in the upper house as well as 59 deputy seats.

The coca industry has played a substantial role in the Bolivian economy for several decades. In 1995, Bolivia harvested enough coca leaf to produce 240 metric tons of cocaine; by 2005, U.S.-sponsored antidrug efforts had resulted in that figure dropping to 90 metric tons—a substantial loss of income for the more than 50,000 Bolivian coca growers, whose families were left without viable alternatives. Additionally, anger at the severe human rights abuses perpetrated by Bolivian security forces resulted in numerous protests. In 2002, Morales gained prominence by capitalizing on the unpopularity of these policies among Bolivia's majority Indian population, many of whom speak Spanish as a second language, use the coca leaf for traditional medicine, and have been excluded from the benefits of neoliberal economic reforms.

In 2003, Bolivian indigenous groups, workers, students, and coca growers revolted over the planned construction of a \$5 billion pipeline for the export of Bolivian natural gas through longtime rival Chile; the sale of the gas to the United States and Mexico was also highly unpopular. The mass protests against Sanchez de Lozada were aggravated by resentment over the failure of nearly two decades of democratic reform and economic restructuring to improve the lot of the Indian majority in a country where 64 percent of the population lived in poverty. In October, the violence culminated in the forced resignation of Sanchez de Lozada, who fled to Miami in the United States after less than 15 months in office and at least 120 deaths stemming from protests.

Vice President Carlos Mesa, a nonpartisan former media personality and historian, assumed office and attempted to govern without the support of any of the traditional political parties. On July 18, 2004, Mesa prevailed overwhelmingly in a national referendum regarding the disposition of oil and gas reserves that had split the country between its Indian majority and European-descended elites. The vote permitted natural gas exports while imposing greater state control over the oil and gas industries and raising export taxes substantially.

The outcome of the referendum was hailed by some as a step toward greater political stability, but it led to a fall in foreign investment in the energy sector as Bolivia's neighbors sought more stable energy sources. Furthermore, the dispute between the impoverished, marginalized, and largely indigenous residents of the resource-poor Altiplano (highlands) and the wealthier, fairer-skinned people living in the energy-rich eastern lowlands resulted in ever more protests and political polarization. Mesa was subsequently forced from power in June 2005.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Eduardo Rodriguez Veltze assumed the presidency with the narrowly defined mandate of presiding over new elections. After negotiations over the allocation of congressional seats were completed, elections were held on December 18, 2005. Evo Morales won the presidency with 53.7 percent of the ballots, and voter turnout was a strong 84.5 percent. The victory made Morales the first president to garner an outright majority since the transition to democracy. The United States and some other international observers expressed concern over his triumph because of his alignment with leftist Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez as well as his campaign platform, which included the legalization of coca production, anticorruption efforts, and elections for a new Constituent Assembly. Morales's

MAS also emerged as the largest party in Congress and won three of nine races for departmental prefect (provincial governor); the posts were being filled through direct elections for the first time.

The Morales government moved cautiously at first, but signaled a dramatic shift with the May 1, 2006, nationalization of Bolivia's hydrocarbon resources. To emphasize the change, Morales dispatched the army to take physical control of oil and gas fields. The government also announced a substantial land-reform plan that was viewed as a threat by large, wealthy landowners in the eastern lowlands. In October, following violence between rival groups of tin miners, the government announced the nationalization of that industry as well, though implementation of the announced nationalization plan did not occur by year's end.

On July 2, in an increasingly tense atmosphere, Bolivians returned to the polls to elect members of a Constituent Assembly and cast votes on the issue of regional autonomy. Turnout was once again around 84 percent. The MAS and its allies won a majority of the Constituent Assembly, but not the two-thirds required to overhaul the constitution on their own. In addition, four departments voted in favor of regional autonomy while five rejected the idea; throughout the rest of the year the implications of this vote remained disputed, and the Constituent Assembly was tasked with resolving the autonomy issue. The Constituent Assembly was locked in a stalemate nearly from the moment it began its work, with MAS delegates insisting on an absolute majority vote for changes to individual articles, in contrast to the two-thirds supermajority approval insisted on by the opposition. Regional and ethnic friction increased steadily throughout the year, reaching a crescendo in December with mass rallies in Santa Cruz and other urban centers. Radicals on both sides even spoke of civil war. Meanwhile, social protests and strikes returned, challenging the ability of the Morales government to mollify its lower-class, western base without enraging eastern elites. The government's alliance with Venezuela also led to tension with the United States and some of Bolivia's neighbors, who were uneasy about a plan to build military bases on Bolivia's borders with Venezuelan assistance.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Bolivia is an electoral democracy. Both the 2005 presidential elections and the 2006 Constituent Assembly elections were generally free and fair. The principal complaint regarding the 2005 election was related to the hundreds of thousands of citizens who were unable to vote after being stricken from the electoral rolls. Though the purge was carried out in accordance with the law, many voters complained that poor bureaucratic communication and other extenuating circumstances hindered their ability to reregister in time. As a result of reforms that were enacted in 1993 and 1994 and took effect in 1997, presidential terms in office were extended from four to five years. The National Congress consists of a 130-member Chamber of Deputies and a 27-member Senate, and all members serve five-year terms. Senators are elected by party-list proportional representation. In the lower house, 68 members are elected in district races and 62 are elected through proportional representation.

Bolivians have the right to organize political parties. Many of the traditional political parties, notably the MNR, which had been the dominant party since the 1952 revolution, saw their power effectively eliminated in the wake of the 2005 elections. Throughout 2005, a raft of political party desertions led political figures to

form new political groupings in order to run for regional offices. The new dominant party is President Evo Morales's MAS, while the opposition in both the 2005 and Constituent Assembly elections was led by the center-right PODEMOS party. The national electoral council regulates the transmission of advertising by political candidates and parties in the mass media, placing limits on their frequency and duration.

The European-descended elite controlled the machinery of government for most of Bolivia's postindependence history, but over the last decade the indigenous majority has played an increasingly prominent role. Indeed, the Aymara and Quechua ethnic groups form the political base of the MAS and intend to alter the constitution significantly in order to incorporate traditional Andean institutions and decision-making structures.

The broad immunity from prosecution enjoyed by legislators is a serious stumbling block in the fight against official corruption. Fighting corruption was a major theme of the Morales campaign. A new anticorruption law was submitted in April to Congress (though it was still not approved at year's end), and investigations were opened throughout the year into possible corruption charges against dozens of former government officials, including nearly every living former president. Bolivia was ranked 105 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although the constitution guarantees freedom of expression, the media are subject to some limitations in practice. In the recent past, journalists covering corruption stories have occasionally been subjected to verbal intimidation by government officials, arbitrary detention by police, and violent attacks. Additionally, Morales has taken an aggressive verbal approach to press criticism, going so far as to characterize opposition journalists as "terrorists." The climate of hostility toward journalists increased along with general political tensions toward the end of the year; over a dozen journalists were assaulted during the political protests of November and December. The press, radio, and television are mostly private, and the government does not restrict access to the internet.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution. The government does not restrict academic freedom, and the law grants public universities autonomous status.

Bolivian law provides for the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, although the security forces have killed several people during recent violent social protests. Government-sponsored as well as independent human rights organizations exist, and they frequently report on brutality by the security forces. The congressional Human Rights Commission is active and frequently criticizes the government. However, rights activists and their families are subject to intimidation. Nongovernmental organizations are required to register with the appropriate departmental government, although the rule is only episodically enforced. The right to form labor unions is guaranteed by the constitution, and unions are an active force in Bolivian society.

The judiciary, headed by the Supreme Court, remains the weakest branch of government. It is corrupt, inefficient, and the object of intimidation by drug traffickers, as are Bolivia's mayoral, customs, and revenue offices. In recent years, the government has made serious efforts to improve the administration of justice, including making justice more accessible to poor and rural citizens. However, the selection of Supreme Court judges and members of the Judicial Council, the highest disciplinary and ad-

ministrative organ, by a two-thirds vote of the National Congress—a threshold adopted to prevent the majority party from filling all vacancies—has instead resulted in a political quota system that also violates the principles of judicial independence and impartiality. In 2006, friction between the executive and the judiciary increased as salaries of public officials were cut in half and the judiciary was accused of bias and corruption by members of the executive branch. Four out of ten Supreme Court justices resigned; at year's end, Morales named temporary replacements by decree amid continued mutual recriminations between the president and opposition members.

Although Bolivia's code of criminal procedure recognizes the conflict-resolution traditions of indigenous communities, efforts to reform the judiciary have not included meaningful efforts to codify and incorporate customary law, at least for minor crimes, as a means of reaching out to the indigenous majority. The lack of a codified system has in recent years resulted in dozens of acts of "communal justice"—including lynching—in violation of international human rights norms. Prison conditions are harsh, and there were several violent incidents involving inmates in 2006, including a prison battle in Santa Cruz that left five people dead. Crime in La Paz and other major cities is increasing steadily, and the national police, which a decade earlier had been the object of an ambitious but truncated U.S. Justice Department reform effort, are considered both inefficient and corrupt.

Bolivia remains a hemispheric leader in the unequal distribution of wealth and is the poorest country in South America. In the 2001 census, approximately 62 percent of the population over 15 years of age identified themselves as indigenous, primarily from the Quechua and Aymara groups. More than 520 indigenous communities have been granted legal recognition under the 1994 Popular Participation Law, which guarantees respect for the integrity of native groups. The languages of the indigenous population are officially recognized. However, Indian territories are often neither legally defined nor protected, and coca growers and timber thieves exploit Indian lands illegally. Some rural employers keep Indians in debt peonage, charging workers more for room and board than they earn in wages. The observance of customary law by indigenous peoples is common in rural areas. In the most remote areas, the death penalty, forbidden by the constitution, is reportedly sometimes used against those who violate traditional laws or rules. Indigenous rights were a major theme of the 2005 elections and the 2006 debate over the Constituent Assembly.

The law provides for freedom of movement within the country, and the government generally respects this right in practice. However, protesters often block highways as well as city streets, causing serious economic losses. Property rights are increasingly uncertain in Bolivia. Foreign investors have grown wary in the wake of hydrocarbon nationalization and the possible state takeover of "unproductive" mines, while sporadic land invasions by landless peasants continue to occur in the eastern lowlands. In December, the government, despite an opposition boycott of the Senate intended to deny quorum, succeeded in passing a new land law that would allow for the redistribution of land deemed unproductive. Eastern landowners fear it will be used to confiscate their holdings. Critics also decried the heavy-handed manner in which the law was passed, which included the use of "alternate" senators to replace those boycotting the chamber.

Homosexuals are viewed as undesirables who live outside society's normal moral code. The Bolivian penal code is silent on the issue of homosexuality, but homo-

sexuals are not free from abuses, including beatings and extortion, by police officers operating largely outside of the law.

Violence against women is pervasive. However, no system exists to record the incidence of cases, and rape is a serious but underreported problem. Women generally do not enjoy social status equal to that of men, and many women do not know their legal rights. Child prostitution is a problem, particularly in urban areas and in the Chapare region, as is child labor.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Population: 3,900,000
Capital: Sarajevo

Political Rights: 3*
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: Bosnia and Herzegovina's political rights rating improved from 4 to 3 due to the successful administration of the 2006 general elections, deemed free and fair by observers.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	3,3PF

Overview: In October 2006, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) held the first nationwide elections to be fully administered by BiH authorities, rather than international officials, since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995. International and domestic observers deemed the vote generally free and fair, despite some minor infractions. Also in 2006, after months of negotiations, a proposed constitutional reform was defeated in the Parliament.

Formerly a constituent republic within socialist Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is among the most ethnically diverse countries in the region. The population consists of three ethnic groups: Bosniaks, who are mainly Muslim; Serbs, who are largely Orthodox Christian; and Croats, who strongly identify with the Roman Catholic Church. As Yugoslavia began to disintegrate in the early 1990s, BiH was recognized as an independent state in April 1992. A 43-month-long civil war immediately ensued, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of people and the forced resettlement of approximately half of BiH's population. In November 1995, the Dayton Peace Accords brought an end to the civil war by creating a loosely knit state composed of the Bosniak-Croat "Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina" and the largely Serb "Republika Srpska."

The Dayton Accords gave the international community a decisive role in running postwar BiH, manifested in the significant powers and authority (known as the "Bonn powers") granted to international civilian agencies such as the Office of the High Representative (OHR). Despite considerable efforts by the international community to aid the country's integration, most aspects of political, social, and economic life remain divided along ethnic lines. In the October 2002 presidential and legislative elections, Bosnians voted mostly for their respective nationalist parties—the (Bosniak) Party of Democratic Action (SDA), the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). In 2005, however, the country made some progress at the urging of the European community. The leadership agreed to form a unified military under a single defense ministry, set to begin functioning in July 2007. The Republika Srpska that year adopted a plan for an integrated police force, and the central Parliament passed legislation that grouped the three public broadcasting services under a single umbrella corporation.

The October 2006 elections shifted power to more moderate parties, which nonetheless took nationalist stances in order to appeal to the constituents in their respective ethnic groups. The Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) emerged as the winner in the Republika Srpska, and the Party for BiH (SzBiH) won the most votes in the Bosniak-Croat federation. The SNSD president, Milorad Dodik, hinted that he would support full statehood for the Republika Srpska if Kosovo, a UN-administered province in neighboring Serbia, became independent. The SzBiH leader, Haris Silajdzic, on the other hand, seemed resolute about stripping the country's constituent entities of their powers and creating a unitary BiH. The international election observation mission, along with several domestic groups, deemed the vote free and fair, despite some irregularities in vote counting.

One of the biggest surprises in the October 2006 elections occurred in the race for the Croat seat in the tripartite presidency. Zeljko Komsic, the candidate of the traditionally multiethnic Social Democratic Party (SDP), won despite his lack of "true Croat credentials." Moreover, the HDZ alleged that the SDP was able to manipulate Bosnia's complex electoral system—in which all voters in the Bosniak-Croat federation can cast a ballot for either a Croat or Bosniak candidate—to place Komsic in the office despite his lack of popularity among Croat voters. Komsic fought during the 1990s ethnic war for the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (as opposed to the Croatian Defense Unit) and was later appointed ambassador to Belgrade. Croat nationalists, including Croat leaders of the Catholic Church, called for Komsic to give up his seat, and the incumbent member of the presidency initially refused to step down. Despite the controversy, Komsic and the other two members of the presidency were sworn in on November 7.

To advance the goal of providing the citizens and government of BiH with more ownership of government affairs, the international community has begun reducing its involvement. According to the European Commission, the number of legally binding decisions imposed by the OHR dropped from 91 at the end of 2005 to 46 as of September 2006. Moreover, in June 2006, the Peace Implementation Council announced that the OHR would close in June 2007 if the country passed the council's final review, set to take place early that year.

Some of the most important reforms in BiH stalled in 2006. A constitutional reform—fashioned after months of negotiations among political parties—did not pass

a parliamentary vote in April 2006. The unsuccessful plan aimed to strengthen the central administration and Parliament of BiH, among other things. Moreover, the police reform, which had passed the Parliament in October 2005, had not been implemented as of the end of 2006 because of hindrance from the Republika Srpska government.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina is not an electoral democracy. In general, voters in BiH can freely elect their representatives, but the OHR has the authority to remove publicly elected officials if they are deemed to be obstructing the peace process, and ethnic divisions are institutionalized on several levels of government. The country does not have a single president, but a three-member presidency composed of one Bosniak, one Serb, and one Croat. The National Assembly is a bicameral body: the House of Peoples consists of 58 delegates, including 17 Bosniaks, 17 Serbs, 17 Croats, and 7 delegates belonging to other ethnic groups—all elected by the Bosniak-Croat federation legislature and the Republika Srpska Assembly; the House of Representatives has 98 members popularly elected by secret ballot. The most important parties include the (Serb) SNSD, the (Bosniak) SzBiH, the (Bosniak) SDA, the SDS, and the HDZ.

Corruption, which remains a serious problem in the country, is largely present in local politics, but it also penetrates the top levels of the Bosnian leadership. In June 2006, the government passed a new strategy for the fight against corruption and organized crime. It remains to be seen whether this initiative will be successfully implemented. Bosnian courts have made some progress in prosecuting individuals accused of corruption. In November 2006, a former member of the presidency, Dragan Covic, was convicted and sentenced to five years in prison for his involvement in organized crime and tax evasion. BiH was ranked 93 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution and the human rights annex to the Dayton Peace Accords provide for freedom of the press; however, this right is not always respected in practice. From January to June 2006, Free Media Helpline documented 41 reported violations of journalists' freedoms, including instances of pressure by politicians and law enforcement. A large number of independent electronic and print media organizations operate in BiH. However, broadcast outlets and the press continue to be plagued by a relatively low level of professionalism, a reliance on foreign funding for survival, and the fact that most media outlets appeal only to narrow ethnic audiences. State-owned companies sometimes withhold advertising from media outlets that print or broadcast information critical of the government. Journalists who criticize the government or publish politically sensitive material at times face public denunciations and threatening telephone calls from government officials. During the 2006 election campaigns, the media respected legal requirements guaranteeing candidates free airtime on public broadcasters. However, according to the October 2006 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) election monitoring report, most of the media devoted a disproportionately large amount of time to the activities of the authorities, thus creating an environment more favorable to incumbents. Internet access in the country is open and unrestricted.

Citizens enjoy full freedom of religious belief and practice, but only in areas where their particular group represents a majority. A 2004 Law on Religious Freedom grants

churches and religious communities legal status akin to those enjoyed by nongovernmental organizations. Acts of vandalism against holy sites associated with all three major faiths—Islam, Orthodox Christianity, and Roman Catholicism—were on the rise in 2006, presumably due to the pronounced nationalist sentiments in the run up to the elections. For example, in March, unknown perpetrators destroyed 23 historical tombstones that date back more than 400 years in a graveyard near a mosque in Banja Luka. In August, a Serb Orthodox Church in Petrovo was sprayed with anti-Serb graffiti. In October, a mortar shell was fired at a mosque in the Mostar area, causing significant damage.

While the various governments in BiH do not restrict academic freedom at institutions of higher education, ethnic favoritism in appointments to academic positions, the politicization of such appointments, and widespread corruption remain problems. According to local media outlets, students can purchase a doctoral diploma for approximately \$30,000 and a passing grade for around \$ 1,500. The curriculums of primary and secondary schools are subject to intensive political influences. In parts of the region of Herzegovina, students of different ethnicities are divided into different classrooms, have separate school entrances, learn from conflicting textbooks, and attend classes in different time shifts. This policy of "two schools under one roof" was established under pressure from local politicians to prevent cultural assimilation. The main sensitive subjects include history, geography, and language; depending on their ethnic background, children learn from textbooks printed in Zagreb, Croatia; Belgrade, Serbia; or Sarajevo, BiH. The Bosnian branch of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights warns that the current situation resembles a "practice of open segregation and apartheid."

The constitution provides for freedoms of assembly and association, and the various levels of government generally respect these rights in practice. However, ethnic or religious minorities in a particular area often find it more difficult to exercise these rights than the local majority population. Although there are no legal restrictions on the right of workers to form and join labor unions, there are growing allegations of discrimination against union members.

Corruption in the judiciary, police forces, and civil service forms a considerable obstacle to the establishment of the rule of law in BiH. The judiciary remains influenced by nationalist political parties and the executive branch of government. Judges who demonstrate some independence are reported to have come under various forms of intimidation. The War Crimes Chamber of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, established in 2005, has successfully prosecuted and convicted several individuals, demonstrating that Bosnian judicial institutions are slowly maturing. However, the most sought-after indicted war criminals—former Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadzic and former Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladic—remain at large.

Ethnic nationalism in Bosnian society is widespread and presents a major obstacle to the country's integration. Individuals are discriminated against in terms of employment, housing, and social services in regions not dominated by their own ethnic group.

In 2004, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees announced that one million Bosnian refugees and displaced persons had returned since the end of the war, roughly half the total number driven from their homes during the fighting. The vast majority of property-restitution cases left over from the war have now been resolved.

Despite these relative successes, however, many people are returning to their pre-war homes only to sell their property and move back to areas in which they are members of the local ethnic majority. Consequently, BiH is now divided into relatively ethnically homogenous Bosniak, Croat, and Serb areas. In cases where returnees decide to stay in areas where their group constitutes a minority, they are faced with discrimination, threats, and attacks. For example, in March 2006, a Bosniak returnee to Bratunac, Republika Srpska, received a threatening letter that reportedly stated, "How many of you do we need to slaughter so you finally understand that this land is not Turkish, but Serb?"

Women are legally entitled to full equality with men. However, they are significantly underrepresented in politics and government and face frequent discrimination in the workplace in favor of demobilized soldiers. To compensate for the absence of women in public life, political parties are legally required to include three women among the top 10 names on their lists of candidates. At the end of 2006, women captured 14 percent of seats in the BiH House of Representatives and 23 percent of seats in the RS National Assembly. Domestic violence remains a problem, and the police are still largely unresponsive to violent domestic disputes. A significant problem in postwar BiH is its emergence as a destination country for women trafficked for the purposes of prostitution, and UN reports claim that the large international civil and military presence in the country provides considerable demand for such services. A Bosnian criminal code that went into effect in March 2003 criminalizes trafficking in human beings and increases penalties for such offenses.

Botswana

Population: 1,800,000
Capital: Gaborone

Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview: In 2006, a court case brought by San (Bushmen), whom the government had forced off their ancestral lands in the Central Kgalagadi Game Reserve (CKGR), continued to generate domestic and international controversy. After hearing closing arguments in September, a three-judge panel of the high court in Lobaste ruled 2-to-1 in December that the San were wrongfully evicted and should be allowed to return to the CKGR. Separately, the government in August presented Parliament with a landmark national broadcasting bill aimed at establishing a community broadcasting

sector and expanding the reach of private media. In January, the government reintroduced school fees at public secondary schools.

Elected governments, all led by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), have ruled the country since it gained independence from Britain in 1966. A referendum on whether the president should be directly elected, rather than chosen by the National Assembly, was withdrawn shortly before a scheduled vote in late 1997. Vice President Festus Mogae, a former central bank chief, rose to the presidency when Ketumile Masire retired in 1998, and was confirmed as the country's leader in 1999. The ruling BDP won by a wide majority in legislative elections that year. Polling was deemed free and fair, although the BDP enjoyed preferential access to state-run media.

The BDP firmly defeated a fractured opposition in October 2004 legislative elections, taking 44 of the 57 contested seats in the National Assembly and securing Mogae a second term in office. The main opposition party, the Botswana National Front, won 12 seats, while the Botswana Congress Party won a single seat. International observers declared polling free and fair, but recommended measures to strengthen the democratic process, including giving the opposition equal access to state-run media and setting the date for elections well in advance.

In 2002, a suit brought by 243 members of the San ethnic group, also known as Bushmen, challenged a 1997 government decision to evict them from their lands in the Central Kgalagadi Game Reserve (CKGR) and relocate them to nearby settlements. The San, an indigenous group that traditionally lived by hunting and gathering, claimed that the government acted unlawfully by cutting off water, food, and health services and confiscating water tanks and livestock in the reserve in 2002, forcing them to leave what they considered their ancestral lands. The government argued that maintaining the services was prohibitively expensive and asserted its right to clear the area for wildlife and tourism. The San and some rights groups contend that the government intends to exploit diamond resources in the reserve. In March 2006, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination pressed the government to reopen negotiations with leaders of the San community over the dispute. The rights group Survival International continued to accuse the government of launching a "massive crack-down" on the San in 2005 and blocking their access—along with that of their legal representatives and of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—to the game reserve. The government has denied these allegations. In December 2006, a three-judge panel of the high court in Lobatse issued a long-awaited ruling in favor of the San, judging them wrongly evicted from the CKGR and ordering the government to allow them to return.

Economic progress in Botswana has been built on sound fiscal management and low rates of corruption, and privatization is progressing slowly. Efforts are under way to diversify the economy, in which diamonds account for 76 percent of export earnings and 33 percent of gross domestic product. However, unemployment is an estimated 40 percent.

AIDS has taken a toll on the economy; more than 37 percent of the population is infected with HIV. The government has taken a pioneering regional role in combating the pandemic, offering free antiretroviral drugs and introducing routine HIV testing in all public health facilities. The latter policy has led to objections from civil libertarians, who are concerned that Botswana are not adequately informed before being tested and that their privacy rights are open to abuse.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Botswana is an electoral democracy. The 63-seat National Assembly, elected for five years, chooses the president to serve a concurrent five-year term; despite being elected indirectly, the executive enjoys significant power. The courts confirm the Assembly's choice when the winning party receives more than half of the seats in Parliament. Of the Assembly's 63 members, 57 are directly elected, 4 are appointed by the majority party, and 2—the president and attorney general—are ex-officio members.

The 15-member House of Chiefs, which primarily serves as an advisory body to the National Assembly and the government, represents the country's eight major Setswana-speaking tribes and some smaller ones. Groups outside the eight majority tribes tend to be marginalized from the political process; under the Territories Act, land in ethnic territory is distributed under the jurisdiction of majority groups. In 2004, a draft constitutional amendment providing for the election of 20 representatives from eight minority groups was introduced in Parliament (where it remained at year's end). A lack of representation in the House of Chiefs has allowed the imposition of Tswana patriarchal customary law on minority groups, which often have different rules for inheritance, marriage, and succession.

The BDP has dominated politics in Botswana since independence; neither its majority in the National Assembly nor its control of the presidency has ever faced a serious challenge. Opposition parties—namely the Botswana Congress Party and the Botswana National Front—have accused the government of effectively institutionalizing the BDP's dominant status. Nevertheless, the Independent Election Commission, created in 1996, has helped consolidate Botswana's reputation for fairness in voting. President Festus Mogae has said that he will not serve a full five-year term and plans to hand over the presidency in 2008—a year before the next elections—to his appointed vice president, Seretse Ian Khama.

The government passed a bill in 1994 that set up an anticorruption body with special powers for investigation, arrest, and search and seizure; the resulting conviction rate has been more than 80 percent. Botswana was ranked 37 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index, and has had the best rank among African countries for several years running.

A free and vigorous press thrives in cities and towns, and political debate is open and lively. Several independent newspapers and magazines are published in the capital. However, the government dominates the broadcast media, which reach far more residents than the print media, and provides inadequate access to the opposition and government critics. In addition, the government sometimes censors or otherwise restricts news sources or stories that it finds undesirable. In September 2006, press freedom advocates and opposition political parties condemned a government warning to state-owned media to exercise "maximum patriotic solidarity, collective responsibility, [and] allegiance to country and nation" in reporting about the CKGR dispute.

The private Gaborone Broadcasting Corporation television system and two private radio stations have limited reach, although Botswana easily receives broadcasts from neighboring South Africa. In August 2006, the government presented Parliament with a draft version of the Botswana Broadcasting Bill. It includes plans to establish a new community broadcasting sector—though the number of licenses available to community radio and television stations was not specified—as well as

a public entity to monitor the quality and objectivity of state-owned media. The government does not restrict internet access, though such access is almost absent outside cities. Botswana does not have a freedom of information law, and critics accuse the government of excessive secrecy.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed, although all religious organizations must register with the government.

Academic freedom is generally respected. However, in February 2005, Mogae employed the National Security Act of 1986 to declare Australian-born academic Kenneth Good a "prohibited immigrant" and deport him from Botswana. Good had criticized the government, saying it was run by a small elite and was manipulative of state media. In June 2006, Good challenged his deportation in a formal complaint to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in the Gambia. In January 2006, the government reintroduced school fees for students at public secondary schools after 20 years of free public education, citing falling tax revenues and increased educational costs. Opposition parties, teachers' unions, and other civil society organizations objected to the move, arguing that the fees would deter parents from sending their children—particularly female children—to secondary schools.

The government generally respects rights to freedom of assembly and association, which are guaranteed by the constitution. NGOs, including human rights groups, operate openly without government harassment. However, in September 2005, police used rubber bullets to prevent a San demonstration from entering the CJGR. At least 21 people were arrested, including San leader Roy Sesana. The government contended that police resorted to force after being attacked by the demonstrators.

While independent labor unions are permitted, workers' rights to strike and bargain collectively are restricted.

The courts are generally considered to be fair and free of direct political interference, although the legal system is affected by staffing shortages and a large backlog of cases. Trials are usually public, and those accused of the most serious violent crimes are provided with public defenders. Civil cases, however, are sometimes tried in customary courts, where defendants have no legal counsel. Trials held under the National Security Act may be conducted in secret.

Authorities have been reported to occasionally use beatings and abuse to obtain evidence and elicit confessions. Botswana has been criticized by rights groups for continuing to use corporal and capital punishment. Prisons are overcrowded and suffer from poor health conditions, but the government has been making moves to address the problem by building new facilities and providing prisoners with access to HIV/AIDS testing.

Discrimination against ethnic minorities is a problem. Since 1985, authorities have relocated about 5,000 San to settlements outside the CKGR. Almost all of those remaining—530 people—left in 2002 when the government cut off water, food, health, and social services. In October 2005, Survival International claimed that the government had forced another 35 San out of the reserve at gunpoint, but the government argued that the 35 wanted to leave and guns were not used. In general, officials deny that the government forced the San to move. They insist that the San were adequately compensated in money and cattle and are provided decent education and health facilities in the new settlements. The authorities also have rejected asser-

tions by critics that the government wanted to protect diamond reserves in the region from potential claims by the San, who had lived there for 30,000 years. In December 2006, a three-judge panel of the high court in Lobatse ruled 2-to-1 that the San had been wrongly evicted from the CKGR and that the government must allow their return. The San tend to be marginalized educationally and do not enjoy the same employment opportunities as more privileged groups.

Illegal immigrants from Zimbabwe and Zambia are the targets of increasing xenophobia and are accused—sometimes legitimately—of criminal activity. These immigrants are subject to exploitation in the labor market. Botswana is building an electric fence along its border with Zimbabwe, ostensibly to control foot-and-mouth disease, but popularly supported as a means of barring illegal immigration. The government has restricted the entry of San-rights organizations, including the First People of the Kalahari group, from entering the CKGR.

Women enjoy the same rights as men under the constitution, but customary laws limit their property rights. Women married under traditional laws are deemed legal minors. Progress in improving women's rights has been slow. However, in December 2004, the government enacted the Abolition of Marital Powers Act, establishing equal control of marriage estates and equal custody of children, removing restrictive domicile rules, and setting the minimum marriage age at 18. In November 2006, the Botswana Defense Forces began recruiting female soldiers for the first time since its founding in 1977. Domestic violence is rampant; in 2005 and 2006, a spate of so-called passion killings—murders of women by a boyfriend or husband—made gender-related violence a major issue in Botswana. Nevertheless, law enforcement officers rarely intervene in domestic affairs, especially in rural areas. Trafficking in women and children for purposes of prostitution and labor is a problem. The law prohibits homosexuality.

↓ Brazil

Population: 186,800,000
Capital: Brasilia

Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Trend Arrow: Brazil received a downward trend arrow for increased political corruption, including the involvement of the governing party in many of the country's most serious corruption scandals.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview: President Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva won a second four-year term in a runoff election on October 29. He defeated Geraldo Alckmin of the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) with over 60 percent of the vote. Da Silva had been expected to win outright in the first round of voting on October 1, aided by his popular "Bolsa Familia" income-support program, an increase in the minimum wage, and a stable economy. However, a last-minute scandal and worsening political corruption gave Alckmin a boost. Lula's finance minister was forced to resign in March 2006 due to corruption allegations, and the current Congress is widely noted as one of the most corrupt in history, with a reported one in seven legislators a suspect in some crime involving corruption, embezzlement, or violence. The tensions resulting from a mudslinging campaign that fed on racial and class divisions are likely to complicate da Silva's ability to implement needed economic reforms in his second term.

After gaining independence from Portugal in 1822, Brazil retained a monarchical system until a republic was established in 1889. Democratic governance has been interrupted by long periods of authoritarian rule, most recently under the military regime that was in control from 1964 to 1985, after which elected civilian rule was reestablished. Democracy in Brazil continues to take root, with peaceful transitions between democratically elected administrations. However, civilian rule has been marked by economic booms and busts and bouts of hyperinflation, as well as frequent corruption scandals. One scandal eventually led the Congress in 1992 to impeach President Fernando Collor de Mello, who had been elected in 1989.

In early 1994, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a market-oriented, centrist finance minister in the interim government that followed Collor de Mello's resignation, forged a three-party, center-right coalition around his Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB). Cardoso won the presidency in October of that year, and in 1995 he initiated the highly successful *real plan*—a currency-stabilization program that included fiscal reform, privatization of state enterprises, and a new currency pegged to the U.S.

dollar. He also ushered in a new era of dialogue with international human rights and good-governance groups. His popular tenure in office allowed him to secure a constitutional amendment permitting presidential reelection. In 1998, Cardoso handily won a second term in a rematch against his 1994 opponent, former labor leader and political prisoner Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva, of the left-leaning Workers' Party (PT).

Da Silva ran for president again in 2002, attacking the effects of globalization on the poor and the government's economic record, which included \$260 billion in foreign debt and stubborn unemployment levels that defied the country's steady economic growth. However, he also abandoned his party's previous anti-free market positions and its willingness to default on Brazil's debt obligations. This less radical stance succeeded; da Silva received more votes than any presidential candidate in Brazilian history, beating Jose Serra, a center-left former PSDB health minister, 61 percent to 39 percent.

Amid high expectations as Brazil's first leftist leader, da Silva began his presidential term in January 2003 by promising orthodox economic policies and meaningful social programs. With a mandate for change tempered by his coalition's lack of a congressional majority, da Silva defied expectations by controlling inflation through fiscal discipline and strict monetary policies, which in turn boosted investor confidence and resulted in a \$30 billion line of credit from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He also maintained cordial relations with the United States despite his independent foreign policy, and quickly established himself as one of the world's foremost voices for developing nations. In March 2005, in a move that signaled Brazil's economic recovery, including record trade and budget surpluses, the government announced that it did not need to renew a standby credit agreement with the IMF. Da Silva maintained his commitment to social welfare programs, initiating "Bolsa Familia," a cash-transfer program providing 11 million low-income families with a monthly \$40 stipend, as well as "ProUni," a fund providing scholarships for private colleges to low-income students. Lula has also continued Brazil's internationally recognized public health campaign that over the last decade has stabilized the country's HIV/AIDS epidemic affecting an estimated 600,000 Brazilians.

Beginning in 2004, evidence of pervasive government corruption was uncovered, and successive corruption scandals continue to consume the legislative agenda and taint the da Silva administration as well as Brazil's global image. The top two executives of the Brazilian Central Bank were accused of tax evasion and fraud in 2004, a claim that forced the second-ranking official to resign. The taint of corruption expanded to include da Silva's health minister and his vice president. In 2005, high-ranking members of da Silva's party were snarled in accusations that they had offered legislators millions of dollars in bribes, paid for party campaigns across the country with illegally obtained funds, and were engaged in kickback schemes involving public works. Finally, 2006 featured the so-called mensalao ("monthly stipend") vote-buying scandal, witness intimidation and corruption allegations that forced the resignation of Finance Minister Antonio Palocci in March, and the revelation of a widespread corruption scheme involving government purchases of ambulances at inflated prices. The ambulance scandal allegedly involved 70 congressmen, dubbed the "sanguessugas" ("bloodsuckers") by the press. The task of combating Brazil's pervasive corruption is complicated by weak party loyalty and legal loopholes that allow those who resign from any public office to later seek reelection.

A heightened level of violence in 2006 was viewed by many Brazilians as part and parcel of the corruption in the political system, since graft severely limited the government's ability to address difficult problems like rampant street crime, urban sprawl, and rural lawlessness. Drug- and gang-related violence in several major Brazilian cities, most notably Rio de Janeiro, was fueled by the high volume of cocaine and its cheaper derivatives that was consumed locally. Beginning on May 12, Sao Paulo's principal criminal gang orchestrated five days of violence from within the prison system that hit Sao Paulo as well as nearby towns. The crime wave, which included burned buses, bank robberies, and prison rebellions, resulted in the deaths of 138 people.

In the run-up to the October 1, 2006, general elections, a last-minute scandal involving a foiled plot by PT operatives to smear a leading opposition politician led to an upsurge of anger against the da Silva administration, forcing the president into a second round of voting. However, he was reelected with a comfortable margin in the October 29 runoff, principally as a result of his popularity among working-class Brazilians. Da Silva won 77 percent of the vote in the Northeast, his birthplace and home to darker-skinned, poorer Brazilians who benefited from the government's cash-transfer program. In contrast, his opponent, the PSDB's Geraldo Alckmin, beat da Silva 53 percent to 47 percent in the more prosperous and educated southern region. In spite of the fact that the outgoing legislature was widely seen as the most corrupt in history, the PT did not suffer electoral losses in Congress. In the October elections, the party gained 2 seats in the 513-seat lower house, giving it a new total of 83. Interestingly, former president Fernando Collor de Mello, who was forced to resign in 1992 due to corruption charges and banned from any office for eight years, won a Senate seat representing the poor, sugar-producing state of Alagoas.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Brazil is an electoral democracy. The October 2006 national elections were free and fair. The current constitution, which went into effect in 1985 and was heavily amended in 1988, provides for a president, to be elected for four years, and a bicameral National Congress. The Senate's 81 members serve eight-year terms, with a portion coming up for election every four years, and the 513-member Chamber of Deputies is elected for four years. A constitutional amendment adopted in 1997 permits presidential reelection, which supporters said would enhance presidential accountability.

In the wake of the 2006 elections, the four largest Brazilian political parties, comprising 70 percent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies and over half of the Senate seats, are the centrist Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB), the leftist PT, the center-right Liberal Front Party (PFL), and the center-left PSDB. Fourteen other parties are also represented in Congress.

Despite a constitutional right of access to public information, Brazil does not have specific laws to regulate and guarantee the transparency provided for in the constitution. Corruption remains a serious problem in Brazil, which was ranked 70 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. Brazil's system of "presidential coalitionism," in which the president must create majorities from a fragmented Congress, serves to worsen corruption, as bribery is one of the few ways to garner political support. Political corruption cases that began in 2004 continued through 2006, with a scandal erupting in September involv-

ing PT party workers paying \$800 million for a dossier smearing Jose Serra, the PSDB candidate for governor of the state of Sao Paulo.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression. The press is privately owned, but foreigners can acquire only a 30 percent share of a media company and are restricted in their ability to influence editorial decisions or management selection. There are dozens of daily newspapers and numerous other publications throughout the country. The print media have played a central role in exposing official corruption. Journalists uncovered the 2005 cash-for-votes scheme in Congress that forced the resignation of several PT officials. At the same time, reporters, especially those who focus on organized crime, corruption, or impunity issues, are frequently the targets of threats, assaults, and occasionally even killings. The government does not impose restrictions on the use of the internet, although federal and state police have begun to monitor it to detect online recruitment by sex traffickers and scrutinize the activities of hate groups.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. The government does not restrict academic freedom. The rights of freedom of association and assembly are generally respected, as is the right to strike. Industrial labor unions are well organized. Although they are politically connected, unions in Brazil tend to be more free of political party control than those in most other Latin American countries. Labor-related issues are adjudicated in a system of special labor courts.

Few Brazilians have not been affected by violent crime, and in 2006, the country's criminal justice system still appeared on the verge of collapse due to its inability to effectively reign in crime, even as the police conducted military-style raids against drug traffickers in the hills of Rio de Janeiro. The climate of lawlessness is reinforced by a largely independent but weak judiciary, which is overburdened, plagued by chronic corruption, and virtually powerless in the face of organized crime. Because the judiciary uses its independence above all to resist change and stop outside investigations of judicial corruption, there has been less progress on judicial reform in Brazil than in any other large country of the region. In addition, judges regularly employ legal formalisms to overturn government modernization efforts, including those aimed at privatizing state-owned industries and reforming the ineffective and expensive public welfare system.

Brazil has one of the highest homicide rates in the world and the world's highest death rate by firearms. The latest homicide statistics from 2005 show that the city of Rio de Janeiro and outlying areas have a homicide rate of 62 per 100,000 residents annually (compared to the homicide rate in the United States for that year which was 5.6 per 100,000 residents). Police say that most violent crime in the country, perhaps as much as 70 to 80 percent, including most of the 37,000 annual murders, is directly or indirectly related to the illegal drug trade. An estimated 200,000 Brazilians are employed in the illegal narcotics trade, with at least 5,000 heavily armed gang members working for various drug-trafficking groups in Rio de Janeiro alone. Since 1994, the federal government has deployed the army to quell police strikes and bring order to Rio de Janeiro's 400 slums, most of which are ruled by gangs in league or in competition with corrupt police and local politicians.

Brazil's police are among the world's most violent and corrupt. Torture is used systematically to extract confessions from prisoners, and extrajudicial killings are

portrayed as shootouts with dangerous criminals. Death squads, often composed of off-duty state police, terrorize shantytown dwellers and intimidate human rights activists attempting to investigate abuses. After the May 2006 riots, allegations emerged that many of the deaths were in fact summary executions by the police and that several victims were innocent bystanders. In the rare instances when police officers are indicted for such abuses, convictions are not obtained; typically such indictments are dismissed for "lack of evidence."

The prison system in Brazil is anarchic, overcrowded, and largely unfit for human habitation. Human rights groups charge that torture and other inhumane treatment common to most of the country's detention centers turn petty thieves into hardened criminals. Some 200,000 people are incarcerated in Brazil, nearly half of them in Sao Paulo.

Racial discrimination, long officially denied as a problem in Brazil, began to receive both recognition and remediation from President Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva during his first term. Blacks in Brazil earn less than 50 percent of the average earnings of other citizens, and they suffer from the highest homicide, poverty, and illiteracy rates. In a precedent-setting series of actions, da Silva upon taking office named four Afro-Brazilians to his cabinet, appointed the country's first Afro-Brazilian Supreme Court justice, and pressed for the adoption of a Racial Equality Statute to redeem his pledge that Afro-Brazilians would make up at least one-third of federal employees within five years. A racial quota law, currently under consideration in Congress, would institute a system of racial preferences for the civil service, universities, and the private sector. While supporters of the bill argue that racial quotas are needed to create social unity, critics maintain that the quotas would only heighten racial tensions while failing to effectively address the inequality problem.

Large landowners control nearly 60 percent of the country's arable land, while the poorest 30 percent of the population share less than 2 percent. In rural areas, land invasions are organized by the grassroots Landless Workers' Movement (MST), which claims that the invaded lands are unused or illegally held. However, many of the occupied properties are legally owned by others. The courts have increasingly supported the eviction of such squatters, and some owners have resisted the invasions with force. The MST is not formally affiliated with the PT, but has enjoyed some PT support.

Although Brazil abolished slavery in 1888, in 2004 the government acknowledged that at least 25,000 Brazilians work under "conditions analogous to slavery," with other estimates putting that figure as high as 50,000. Landowners who enslave workers face two to eight years in prison, in addition to fines. However, fines are minimal, and few if any of the modern-day slaveholders ever spend time in jail.

Violence against Brazil's estimated 400,000 indigenous people mirrors generalized rural lawlessness. A decree issued in 1996 by then-president Fernando Henrique Cardoso opened Indian land to greater pressure from predatory miners and loggers. In some remote areas, Colombian drug traffickers have used Indians to transport narcotics. In September 2003, the new head of Brazil's Indian agency promised that the government was serious about demarcating wide swaths of ancestral lands as the first step in converting the land into indigenous reserves. To date, 12.5 percent of Brazil's territory has been set aside for Brazil's indigenous populations; however, the vast majority of the reserves are located in remote areas not inhabited by the

beneficiary population. The result has been violent land wars between Indians and ranchers, companies, and farmers, which contributed to a 10-year high in indigenous murder rates in 2006. Suicide is common among Indian youths.

In June 2001, a decree granted same-sex partners the same rights as married couples with respect to pensions, social security benefits, and taxation.

In August 2001, Congress approved a legal code that for the first time in the country's history made women equal to men under the law. In January 2003, the same code took effect, formally replacing a 1916 text that contained myriad discriminatory provisions concerning social behavior in government, in business, and at home; the new code gave women the same rights in marriage as men. Nevertheless, violence against women and children is a common problem, and protective laws are rarely enforced. Forced prostitution of children is widespread. Child labor is also prevalent—an estimated 12.2 percent of children between 5 and 12 years of age had to work in 2005, up from 11.8 percent in 2004—and laws against it are rarely enforced. Brazil is a source for victims of both domestic and international trafficking of human beings, the majority of whom are women and girls.

Brunei

Population: 400,000

Capital: Bandar Seri Begawan

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7.5NF	7.5NF	7.5NF	7.5NF	7.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF

Overview:

Concern about the country's dwindling oil and natural gas reserves continued to shape a range of policies in 2006, including planned elections for 15 seats in a reformed Legislative Council, though a date had still not been set. The citizenship status of permanent residents of Brunei who could prove their contribution to the national economy was reconsidered, even as the government clamped down on illegal workers. In the country's highest-profile corruption case, contempt proceedings against Prince Jefri Bolkiah were dropped in February, but he would still have to transfer substantial assets to the Brunei Investment Agency.

Now composed of two tiny enclaves on the northern coast of Borneo, Brunei is an oil-rich, hereditary sultanate that became a British protectorate in 1888. The 1959 constitution vested full executive powers in the sultan while providing for five advisory councils, including a Legislative Council. In 1962, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin

annulled legislative election results after the leftist Brunei People's Party (BPP), which sought to end the monarchy, won all 10 elected seats in the 21-member council. The BPP mounted an insurgency in response, which was crushed by British troops. Omar subsequently declared a state of emergency, which has remained in force ever since. His son, Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, continued his father's absolute rule and became, when Omar abdicated the throne in 1967, the 29th sultan in a dynasty that has spanned six centuries. The British granted Brunei full independence in 1984.

In September 2004, Hassanal reconvened Brunei's Legislative Council, which had been suspended since 1984, in an effort to "engage the citizens." Consisting of the sultan's relatives and those with proven loyalty to the monarch, the Council passed a constitutional amendment to expand the chamber to 45 seats with 15 elected positions, as well as a law allowing its members to express their opinions freely—so long as they were neither subversive nor in opposition to the sultan.

Hassanal in September 2005 convened a new Legislative Council, including five indirectly elected members representing village councils. Plans for the 45-person legislature with 15 popularly elected slots remained on the table in 2006, but elections had still not been scheduled by year's end. The sultan's family and appointees continue to hold all state power, with the Internal Security Act maintaining virtually untrammelled powers for the sultan himself.

Thanks to oil and natural gas exports, Brunei's per capita income is far greater than that of other developing countries and is growing at one of the highest rates in Asia. Oil and gas currently account for 90 percent of state revenues, and allow the government to provide Bruneians with education, health care, and subsidized housing and rice, without charging an income tax. The government is also the country's largest employer, with most of the population on its payrolls. At the sultan's lavish 60th birthday celebration in July 2006—part of his policy of promoting loyalty to the monarchy—he announced that all civil servants and members of the security forces would receive an accelerated, incremental pay raise for the first time in 22 years. His discouragement of price hikes and emphasis on saving for the future and diversifying the economy reflected the sultan's concern about the country's dwindling oil and gas reserves, which were expected to bottom out within the next 10 to 20 years. Brunei joined the Asian Development Bank in April 2006 and over the year made significant efforts to develop Islamic banking—a system of investment practices designed to adhere to Islamic rules on usury and other matters—and promote the private sector. Tentative political liberalization plans regarding the Legislative Council are largely considered preparation for the time when oil reserves run out and the government can no longer provide Bruneians with such extensive benefits. Recent government efforts to distance the national identity from radical Islam and attract foreign investment also appear to stem from these concerns.

Brunei's reputation as a moderate Islamic nation in the region has facilitated the participation of Bruneian troops in peacekeeping missions in the postconflict Indonesian province of Aceh and in the southern Philippines. In addition, at an Organization of the Islamic Conference meeting in August 2006, Brunei agreed to contribute 100 troops to the UN Interim Force in Lebanon.

The country's ongoing dispute with Malaysia over contested oil- and gas-rich sites off the northern Borneo coast acquired new urgency in March 2004 with the

discovery of deepwater oil deposits at Gumusut, near the disputed territory. No concrete proposals for a solution have yet emerged, and the quarrel continues as both sides seek to expand their limited oil reserves.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Brunei is not an electoral democracy. The sultan wields broad powers under a state of emergency that has been in effect since 1962, and no direct legislative elections have been held since then. Lacking a more open political system, citizens often convey concerns to their leaders through government-vetted, elected village chiefs who meet periodically with top government officials via the Mukim and Village Consultative Committee, for which the sultan implemented new regulations in May 2006. Extensive benefits and high incomes appear to compensate citizens for these political restrictions, and there is little effort to defy prohibitions on political activity. The sultan promotes a combination of Islamic values, local Malay culture, and allegiance to the hereditary monarchy through a national ideology called "Malay Muslim Monarchy," which he expects those he bestows with titles to uphold. The government portrays disobedience to Islamic law and Malay Muslim Monarchy values as treason or *haram* (sin).

One of the world's wealthiest men and longest-reigning absolute monarchs, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah has made only superficial reform efforts in the past. The displays of citizen engagement and plans to move toward a partly elected Legislative Council seem designed mainly to encourage broader international involvement in Brunei's economy and have done little to change the political system thus far. The unicameral Legislative Council has no political standing independent of the sultan.

Nevertheless, continued discussion of a 45-member legislature with 15 popularly elected members, as a result of increased concern about dwindling oil reserves, appears to have generated some, if still extremely limited, political activity. Members of the Brunei National Solidarity Party (BNSP), an offshoot of one of two parties banned in 1988, met in January 2006 to discuss the party's administration and agenda. The National Development Party (NDP), headed by former political prisoner, exile, and insurgent leader Awang Muhammad Yasin Affendy bin Abdul Rahman, was permitted to register in 2005, although with a pledge to work as a partner with the government and an oath of loyalty to the sultan. The NDP nominated 28 members to its central executive committee and held its first congress, again with a focus on electing officials, in April 2006. In October, an NDP delegation reported on the congress and submitted a manifesto to the Royal Brunei Police Force as required by the 2005 Societies Order. Both the BNSP and NDP condemned the recent publication of Danish cartoons of the prophet Muhammad early in 2006. Otherwise, these parties and the country's third legal political party, the Brunei People's Awareness Party (PAKAR), remained largely inactive. Parties in Brunei generally focus more on social than political issues because of the extensive restrictions placed on political life.

Early in the year, the government warned civil servants and members of the armed forces against attending political meetings or being seen to participate in politics. Delegates at a Legislative Council meeting held in the spring were allowed to question government ministers on the national budget, and they requested a raise in

civil-service salaries. Although the government rejected the request at the meeting, the sultan subsequently issued a raise at his birthday festivities in July.

The year 2006 featured major developments in the country's highest-profile corruption scandal, which originated in 2000, when the sultan's brother and former finance minister, Prince Jefri Bolkiah, was charged with misappropriating public oil revenues that were intended for profitable investments to provide for the population once the country's oil ran out. In February 2006, the Brunei Investment Agency (BIA) dropped contempt proceedings in London courts that had been brought against the prince in 2004 for failing to disclose assets as part of his 2000 settlement. The BIA rejected reports in the British press describing the decision as an "embarrassing setback" for the monarchy, claimed that the prince had in fact revealed information about his accounts as required, and continued to press for further disclosure and the transfer of his assets. The Brunei high court ruled in March 2006 that the 2000 settlement remained enforceable and that Jefri would be required to transfer billions of dollars in assets to the BIA. The prince lost a subsequent appeal in May, marking a small victory for the rule of law in a country where the vast wealth of the sultan and his family lends itself easily to profligacy among officials. The corruption trial of former minister of development Haji Ismail, the first minister to ever be charged with a crime other than Prince Jefri, began in February 2006 and continued throughout the year, and an investigation led by Brunei's Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) resulted in the conviction of a former imam for expropriating a charitable donation in August.

The country claims to have launched a three-pronged, zero-tolerance policy on corruption. Noting the country's need to attract foreign investment, the new head of the ACB announced in September his hope to see Brunei rank as the "least corrupt country in the world" on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index; the group did not include Brunei in its 2006 survey. In an attempt to present Brunei as a regional leader in combating corruption, the ACB in July had hosted a two-day Meeting on Multilateral Cooperation in Combating and Preventing Corruption, attended by officials from across the region. The ACB also collaborated with the Ministry of Education to launch a Corruption Prevention Education Program in Brunei's schools early in the year; the program's approach tied anticorruption goals to the high ethical standards of the national Malay Muslim Monarchy ideology. In a move supported by Brunei's primary natural gas liquefier and a group of Brunei Shell companies (owned in equal shares by the Brunei Government and the Royal Dutch/Shell group of companies), anticorruption textbooks were presented to schools in the Tutong District in January.

Journalists in Brunei face considerable restrictions. Legislation passed in 2001 allows officials to shut down newspapers without cause and to fine and jail journalists who write or publish articles deemed "false and malicious." The national sedition law was amended in 2005, strengthening prohibitions on criticizing the sultan or the national ideology. The largest daily, the *Borneo Bulletin*, practices self-censorship, though it does publish letters to the editor that criticize government policies. A smaller, Malay-language newspaper and several Chinese-language newspapers are also published. Brunei's only television station is state run, but residents can also receive Malaysian broadcasts and satellite channels, which deliver international news. The country's internet practice code stipulates that content must not be subversive

or encourage illegitimate reform efforts; the government stepped up efforts to monitor internet use in 2006, calling on internet cafes to install firewalls to prevent users from viewing immoral content.

The Shafeite sect of Islam, Brunei's official religion, permeates all levels of society. The constitution allows for the practice of other religions, but religious freedom for non-Muslims is restricted. Proselytizing and the importation of religious teaching materials and scriptures by other faiths is prohibited, while Muslim religious authorities regularly organize *dakwah* (proselytizing) activities and offer financial incentives, homes, and mosques for converts. The government requires all residents to carry identity cards stating their religion. Visitors are asked to state their religion upon arrival in the country, although many do not comply. Marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims is not permitted. Muslims require permission from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to convert to other faiths, and official and societal pressure make it nearly impossible to do so. Christianity, to which some indigenous people do convert, is considered the greatest threat to Islam and is consequently the most common target of censorship. Radical Islam is also feared, however, especially because of the government's interest in attracting foreign investment. The Islamist Al-Arqam movement is banned, as is the Baha'i faith. The country's various groups coexist peacefully, however, and the sultan attended a Chinese New Year celebration in February 2006.

The study of Islam, Malay Muslim Monarchy ideology, and the Jawi (Arabic script used for writing the Malay language) are mandatory in all schools, including Christian schools; the teaching of all other religions is prohibited. As part of a landmark cabinet reshuffle in July 2005 that was intended to help attract foreign investment, the sultan replaced Education Minister Abdul Aziz, an architect of the country's Islamist state ideology who had been crucial to the sultan's promotion of Islamic conservatism in the 1990s. The Ministry of Religious Education, which regained control over religious education in January 2006, four years after it was placed under the authority of the Ministry of Education, held seminars and workshops on religious education in February that were reportedly attended by more than 2,000 people. The government remains committed to promoting conservative social behavior.

Freedom of assembly is restricted under emergency laws that have been in effect since 1962. Most nongovernmental organizations are locally based professional or business groups and must receive permission to operate under the Companies Act. The January 2005 Societies Order, which replaced the Societies Act, requires all organizations to register as well as to name all members, and can be refused by the Registrar of Societies or Commissioner of Police for any reason. All trade unions must be registered with the government. Brunei's three trade unions are all in the oil sector, but represent less than 5 percent of that industry's workforce. Strikes are illegal, and collective bargaining is not recognized.

The constitution does not specifically provide for an independent judiciary, but the courts generally appear to act independently. Brunei's legal system is based on English common law, plus legislation enacted by the sultan. The local magistrates' courts try most cases, while more serious cases are reserved for the high court, for which British judges are appointed. Sharia (Islamic law) takes precedence in areas including divorce, inheritance, and some sex crimes. Sharia does not currently apply

to non-Muslims, though Brunei is considering a merger of the common law and Islamic legal systems.

In 2006, religious enforcement officers raided homes, arresting and detaining numerous *khalwat* offenders—those suspected of violating the Islamic prohibition on the close proximity of a Muslim with a member of the opposite sex other than a spouse or close relative. Authorities continued to detain suspected antigovernment activists under Brunei's Internal Security Act, which permits detention without trial for renewable two-year periods, despite the lack of significant overt threats to the government since the 1960s. In July 2006, three detainees were released after serving their sentences and taking an oath of loyalty to the sultan.

According to the U.S. State Department 2006 human rights report, prison conditions in Brunei generally met international standards, and a new Children and Young Person's Order passed in March will establish juvenile courts as part of the country's legal system, with authority for dealing with child offenders.

Most citizens enjoy reasonable personal autonomy, but many "stateless" people, mostly ethnic Chinese, have not traditionally been afforded citizenship or the rights and benefits thereof. In May 2006, the government agreed to reconsider the citizenship status of permanent residents of Brunei, particularly those who could prove their economic contributions and male foreign nationals married to Bruneian women. According to the minister of home affairs, the motivation was to encourage more investment and the participation of skilled workers in the national economy. Also that year, however, the authorities cracked down on illegal workers, and the local media regularly reported immigration raids, in which those who overstayed their visas were jailed, caned, or whipped in some cases. A Malaysian man was hanged for possession of methamphetamine, an illegal substance, in February.

In accordance with Islamic law, women are treated as unequal to men in areas such as divorce, but the number of women entering the workforce has increased substantially over the past several years. According to the Bruneian press, about 59 percent of women are economically active, and women own more than half of all small and medium-sized enterprises. Women in government-run institutions must wear the *tudong* (a traditional head covering); many educational institutions also pressure non-Muslim students to wear it as part of a uniform. Princess Hajah Masna, ambassador-at-large at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, promoted gender equality at a regional gathering in Tokyo in June 2006. The meeting issued a joint communique stressing equal partnerships between women and men.

Bulgaria

Population: 7,700,000
Capital: Sofia

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	1,3F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview: Georgi Parvanov was reelected president in October 2006 in what was viewed as a free and fair vote. The European Commission issued a generally favorable report the same month, prompting the European Union to grant Bulgaria membership as of January 1, 2007.

Bulgaria gained autonomy within the Ottoman Empire in 1878 and full independence in 1908. It joined the German-led Central Powers in World War I, losing some territory as a result. Having initially sided with Germany again in World War II, Bulgaria's government fell to a Communist-led coup when Soviet forces invaded in 1944, and the monarchy was abolished shortly after the war. From 1954 to 1989, Communist leader Todor Zhivkov ruled the country. His 35 years in power ended when the broader political changes sweeping the region inspired a massive prodemocracy rally in Sofia.

In the immediate post-Communist period, the main political parties in the country were the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) and the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). The BSP dominated the legislature from 1989 to 1997, and the UDF was in power from 1997 to 2001. The UDF was credited with significant success in privatizing and restructuring most of the old state-run economy as well as winning an invitation for European Union (EU) membership talks, which began in 2000.

In 2001, Bulgaria's former child king, Simeon II, returned from exile and formed the National Movement for Simeon II (NDSV). Promising quicker integration into Europe, Simeon attracted a large segment of the electorate. In the 2001 National Assembly elections, the NDSV won 120 of the 240 seats, the UDF took 51, and the Coalition for Bulgaria (which included the BSP) won 48. The NDSV formed a governing coalition with the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), which had won 21 seats, with Simeon as prime minister. By 2003, however, there were signs that his popularity was beginning to wane.

The government lost its majority in mid-2004 when 13 NDSV members of the Assembly formed their own faction. Their New Time party joined the ruling coalition in February 2005, but lack of transparency in the government's privatization of the state-owned tobacco company magnified divisions between the parties.

By 2005, Simeon's government had lost popular support owing to economic difficulties and widespread corruption. A controversial government plan to boost turnout in that year's parliamentary elections included a lottery in which voters could win prizes ranging from cellular telephones to a new car. Nevertheless, turnout in June was the lowest in Bulgaria's post-Communist history. With 32 percent of the vote, the BSP captured 82 seats. The NDSV placed second (53 seats), followed by the MRF (34 seats). The nationalist Ataka (Attack) party, running for the first time, took 9 percent of the vote (21 seats). After two months of negotiations, the three largest parties formed a ruling coalition, with BSP leader Sergei Stanishev as prime minister.

The presidential election was held in October 2006. The incumbent, Georgi Parvanov, won a second term against Volen Siderov, leader of Ataka, with an impressive 75 percent of the vote, marking the first time in Bulgaria's history that an incumbent was popularly reelected as president. The election was deemed free and fair by international and domestic observers. The campaigning period, which started in September, was relatively low key and did not receive much media coverage or attention among the electorate. The voter turnout was approximately 42 percent.

Following a favorable October 2006 report by the European Commission, the EU decided to grant Bulgaria official membership the same month, scheduled to come into effect on January 1, 2007. However, while noting the continuous efforts by the Bulgarian government to fulfill all membership criteria, the commission expressed concern about the state of the judiciary and the continued presence of serious corruption.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Bulgaria is an electoral democracy. The unicameral National Assembly, composed of 240 members, is elected every four years. Georgi Parvanov of the BSP was first elected to a five-year term as president in November 2001 and then re-elected in October 2006. The president serves as head of state; however, presidential powers are very limited. The Assembly chooses the prime minister, who serves as head of government.

The constitution forbids political groups that act against national integrity, call for ethnic or religious hostility, or create secret military structures. The June 2005 parliamentary elections included 22 parties (as opposed to 51 in 2001), but were dominated by the center-right NDSV, the left-wing BSP (which has moved away from its Communist past), and the centrist Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF). Muslims in Bulgaria, most of them ethnic Turks, are almost exclusively represented by the MRF. Several parties in the 2005 elections represented the Romany (Gypsy) minority.

Corruption is a serious concern in Bulgaria. Under pressure from the EU, the government has stepped up efforts to combat the problem. In December 2005, a new code of ethics was adopted, requiring financial disclosures for government officials and stipulating rules to prevent conflict of interest. In March 2006, constitutional amendments were passed to provide for criminal liability among lawmakers and allow their immunity to be lifted under certain conditions. However, despite these measures, very few high-level officials were prosecuted in 2006. Bulgaria was ranked 57 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Bulgarian media have evolved considerably since the end of Communist rule, but political interference and economic pressures sometimes lead to self-censorship. Although Bulgarian National Television, Bulgarian National Radio, and the country's state-owned news bureau, the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, are often very critical of the government's actions, ineffective legislation leaves the state-owned media vulnerable to government influence. Local media organizations report that politicized intimidation from local authorities and organized crime groups are the biggest obstacles to press freedom. In April 2006, unidentified assailants detonated a bomb at the home of a Nova Television journalist, Vasil Ivanov, causing extensive damage but no injuries. Ivanov had also received threats several months before the attack and had police protection for a period of time. The government does not place any restrictions on internet access.

Freedom of religion is constitutionally guaranteed; however, members of minority religions continue to report occasional instances of harassment and discrimination. The government has in recent years made it difficult for "nontraditional" religious groups—those outside the Orthodox Christian, Roman Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish communities—to obtain registration permits for their activities. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church has been divided since 1992 between those who support Patriarch Maksim, appointed by the Bulgarian Communist Party in 1971, and the minority supporting Metropolitan Inokentii, who was canonically elected. The Bulgarian government favors the former, and it further institutionalized this preference through the 2002 Confessions Act—essentially a law on religion that makes Patriarch Maksim the only representative of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and withdraws the right of Metropolitan Inokentii's priests to preach. The Council of Europe and others have criticized the act for restricting freedom of religion. The country's Jewish and Muslim populations were subjected to racist provocations in the media during the 2005 parliamentary and 2006 presidential elections by the nationalist party Ataka. However, according to the Jewish organization Shalom, these attacks had a limited impact on the overall level of tolerance in society.

The government does not restrict academic freedom.

The constitution provides for the freedoms of assembly and association, and the authorities generally respect these rights. The government prohibits the formation of groups that propagate ethnic, religious, or racial hatred, or that seek to achieve their goals through the use of violence. In previous years, there have been reports that the government has denied ethnic Macedonians and certain other groups the right to hold public gatherings. In 2005, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Bulgaria had violated the rights of its citizens by preventing the Macedonian group, Ilinden, from holding peaceful public gatherings. Consequently, in 2006, the authorities allowed Ilinden to hold a public rally. Trade union rights are in place, but the laws are insufficient to prevent employers from discriminating against union members.

The complicated judicial system is enshrined in the constitution, inhibiting reform. Bulgaria is in its fifth year of a judicial reform strategy that has produced some results, but further changes are needed. A law designed to reform Bulgaria's legal aid administration took effect in January 2006, guaranteeing higher standards of free legal assistance for defendants. In another positive development, the budget for the judiciary increased 18 percent in 2006. However, new provisions on the recruitment

of magistrates have not been implemented, and a new Civil Procedure Code had not yet been adopted. Corruption within the judiciary remains a problem.

The number of complaints of torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement officers continued to decline in 2006, although the practice has not ended altogether. Mistreatment by police is less common partly as a result of human rights training. Although prison conditions are often inadequate, in May 2006 the European Commission noted moderate improvements in living conditions in certain detention facilities.

The situation for minorities has improved in recent years, but the Roma in particular continue to face discrimination in employment, health care, education, and housing. In March 2006, the government adopted the National Program for Improvement of the Living Conditions of Roma and allocated 630 million euros for the next 10 years. Initiatives aimed at keeping Romany children in school seem to be yielding some success, but much still needs to be done to provide the Roma with equal access to health care and employment opportunities.

A national plan to provide equal opportunities for men and women was adopted in December 2004, but funding is insufficient. Women remain underrepresented in political life, making up about 20 percent of National Assembly members. Domestic violence is an ongoing concern in Bulgaria. The country is a source of human-trafficking victims, and internal trafficking is increasing. Romany children are disproportionately affected by the practice.

Burkina Faso

Population: 13,600,000

Capital: Ouagadougou

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5,4PF	5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	5,4PF	5,3PF	5,3PF

Overview:

After President Blaise Compaore's reelection in November 2005, his Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP) party won more than two-thirds of local council seats in Burkina Faso's first municipal elections in April 2006. In August, an appeals court confirmed the dismissal of charges against the sole suspect in the 1998 murder of internationally recognized journalist Norbert Zongo. The court's decision to end the protracted struggle to resolve the case prompted domestic and international criticism of Burkina Faso's judiciary. In late December, a clash between the police and the army left five dead in the capital.

After gaining independence from France in 1960, Burkina Faso suffered a succession of army coups. In 1987, Blaise Compaore, an army captain, mounted a coup against members of a junta that had seized power four years earlier. The populist, charismatic President Thomas Sankara and 13 of his closest associates were murdered, and many more Sankara supporters were executed two years later.

The promulgation of a new constitution in 1991 paved the way for a multiparty system, but widespread violence and an opposition boycott discredited the December 1991 presidential election, which Compaore won by default. He was returned to office for a second seven-year term in November 1998 with nearly 88 percent of the vote.

The December 1998 assassination of Norbert Zongo, a journalist investigating the death of an employee of Compaore's brother, prompted the formation of a loose coalition of opposition parties, human rights organizations, civic groups, and media representatives whose public protests drew domestic and international attention to the government's weak commitment to accountable and transparent democracy. An independent investigative body concluded in 1999 that Zongo's death was linked to his journalistic work and named six members of the Presidential Guard Regiment as serious suspects in the murder, though only one, Marcel Kafondo, was formally charged for the crime.

Political reforms introduced in the wake of Zongo's death included the creation of an independent electoral commission, the establishment of a single-ballot voting system, the introduction of public financing for parties presenting candidates, and the creation of a third vice presidential position within the National Assembly for the designated opposition leader. These measures contributed to the success of the 2002 National Assembly elections, the first to be conducted without a major opposition boycott. The ruling Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP) party won 57 of the 111 seats, compared with 101 during the 1997 polls. Opposition parties fared better than they had in any previous elections, capturing the remainder of the seats.

A 2000 constitutional amendment had shortened future presidential terms from seven to five years, and a 2001 amendment limited presidents to two terms in office. However, the ruling CDP maintained that the latter change could not be enforced retroactively and nominated Compaore for a third term in 2005. A total of 12 candidates contested that year's election, which Compaore won with more than 80 percent of the vote. Voter turnout was less than 60 percent.

Municipal elections took place in April 2006, resulting in the first-time election of local governments for 350 newly created urban and rural municipalities, the final step in a decentralization process begun in the mid-1990s. The CDP won nearly two-thirds of the local council seats. Voter turnout was estimated at less than 50 percent.

In August 2006, the protracted effort to solve the Zongo murder case and bring the perpetrators to justice ended when an appeals court confirmed the July 2006 decision by an investigating judge to dismiss charges against Kafondo and his unknown accomplices (referred to in the case as "X") for lack of evidence. Zongo's outraged supporters decried the ruling and claimed that the government never intended the judicial investigation to find the killers. Thousands of people participated in a rally in Ouagadougou in December 2007 to mark Zongo's death and demand an end to impunity.

Fighting between police forces and army elements in Ouagadougou killed five

people in late December. Sparked by the killing of an army soldier by the police, hundreds of prisoners fled police headquarters under military bombardment, and the military later claimed that their actions went beyond retaliation to include grievances over living conditions and retirement packages.

Burkina Faso's relations with neighboring Cote d'Ivoire, where thousands of Burkinabe and other West African migrant workers have been entangled in an ethno-religious conflict over land and resources, have been strained since the conflict began in 2002. Though the government consistently denies allegations that it supports Ivorian rebels, Burkina Faso is the main market for cocoa, coffee, and cotton from rebel-controlled territory, and rebel leaders regularly visit Ouagadougou. Compaore has sought to play a mediating role in Togo's political crisis and in 2006 brokered an agreement between the government and opposition political parties as a first step toward the creation of a transitional government and the organization of elections.

Burkina Faso has in the past been cited in reports by the New York-based Human Rights Watch, the U.S. State Department, the United Nations, and others as a transshipment point for the region's illicit trade in small arms and diamonds. However, this trade appears to have declined since the removal from power of former Liberian president Charles Taylor in 2003.

The country is one of the poorest in the world. More than 80 percent of the population relies on subsistence agriculture, and the economy is highly vulnerable to drought, flooding, and fluctuations in international commodity prices. War in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire has forced landlocked Burkina Faso to use more costly trade routes through the ports of Ghana, Togo, and Benin. The influx of more than 350,000 ethnic Burkinabe from Cote d'Ivoire has strained the country's weak infrastructure, though no additional returning migrants registered in 2006.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Burkina Faso is not an electoral democracy. The ruling party continues to dominate the country's politics, and although election observers judged the November 2005 presidential election to be generally credible, they noted the widespread and unfair use of government resources on behalf of the incumbent's campaign. Observers judged the 2006 municipal elections to be generally free as well, but likewise noted the unfair advantage of ruling party candidates with access to far greater resources than opposition party rivals. According to the constitution, President Blaise Compaore is serving his final term in office; a 2000 amendment shortened the presidential term from seven to five years, meaning he is scheduled to step down in 2010.

The 111 members of the unicameral National Assembly serve five-year terms, and the next legislative elections are scheduled for 2007. The legislature is independent, but susceptible to influence from the executive branch. Opposition parties represented in the National Assembly have failed to coalesce around issues of shared concern, despite their gains in the 2002 elections. The National Assembly's minority leader supported Compaore's candidacy in the 2005 presidential election.

There are more than 100 political parties in Burkina Faso. Coalition building among them is difficult, as politicians tend to address differences by creating new parties driven by the personal rivalries and ambitions of their leaders. Many parties are characterized by ambiguous political ideologies and platforms of limited substance.

Despite a number of public and private anticorruption initiatives, corruption is a

growing problem in Burkina Faso, particularly in the award of public contracts. The judiciary has come under increased scrutiny for its failure to pursue or adequately prosecute corruption cases. Corruption within the police and the customs service is widespread. The *Reseau National de Lutte Anti-Corruption* (REN-LAC), a nationwide anticorruption network of more than 30 civic organizations, is particularly active in raising awareness and pressing for reform. Burkina Faso was ranked 79 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The country has a relatively free press, though many media outlets practice self-censorship. Freedom of speech is protected by the constitution and generally respected in practice. At least 50 private radio stations, a private television station, and numerous independent newspapers and magazines function with little governmental interference, though all private and public media are under the supervision of the Ministry of Information. There is unrestricted internet access.

Burkina Faso is a secular state, and religious freedom is respected. The government does not restrict academic freedom. Political debate is tolerated, and many groups and individuals openly criticize the government and its policies.

Freedom of assembly is generally upheld, though demonstrations are sometimes suppressed or banned. Many nongovernmental organizations, including human rights groups that have reported detailed accounts of abuses by security forces, operate openly and freely. Though only a minority of workers belong to labor unions, the groups engage in collective bargaining and freely stage strikes and demonstrations.

The dismissal of the charges in the Norbert Zongo murder case prompted widespread criticism of Burkina Faso's judicial system, which is subject to executive interference in politically sensitive cases. Judicial proceedings are hampered by a shortage of resources and citizens' lack of understanding of their rights. Burkina Faso's weak judicial system and the recourse to traditional courts in rural areas limit the protection of property rights.

The military and the police act with impunity, and command and control of the armed forces is limited. Police often ignore prescribed limits on detention, search, and seizure, and on occasion have used excessive force that resulted in death. Prison conditions are harsh, and include overcrowding, poor diet, and minimal medical attention.

Incidents of discrimination against the country's various ethnic groups occur but do not appear to be widespread. Disabled persons, homosexuals, and those with HIV/AIDS experience routine discrimination. Burkina Faso's HIV infection rate is currently 2 percent.

There are no restrictions on travel, residency, or employment, though security forces routinely perform identity checks on travelers and often levy informal road taxes. Membership in the ruling party is advantageous for businesspeople and traders bidding on public contracts. The return of more than 350,000 migrant workers from Cote d'Ivoire has increased competition for jobs and scarce land resources, leading to charges of discrimination. Children, particularly in rural areas, are regularly exploited as farm and domestic workers.

Constitutional and legal protections for women's rights are poorly understood and enforced. Discrimination against women in education, employment, and prop-

erty and family rights is commonplace, especially in rural areas. Though the law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, children, especially young girls, are sometimes forced to engage in domestic labor outside their homes without any legal status or formal remuneration. Female genital mutilation is widespread, though the government reports that the practice has decreased by nearly 50 percent since legislation made it a crime in 1996. Abortion is prohibited, with exceptions to preserve the life of the mother or in cases involving rape, incest, or fetal impairment. Burkina Faso is a transit point for the trafficking of women and children, but the government cooperates with international organizations and donor countries to limit these practices.

📌 Burma (Myanmar)

Population: 51,000,000

Capital: Rangoon

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free



Trend Arrow: Burma received a downward trend arrow due to the largest offensive against the ethnic Karen population in a decade and the displacement of thousands of Karen as a result of the attacks.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview:

Although the National Convention, tasked with drafting a new constitution as an ostensible first step toward democracy, was reconvened by the military regime in October 2006, it was boycotted by the main opposition parties and took place amid a renewed crackdown on opposition groups. Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) party, remained under house arrest in 2006, and the activities of the NLD were severely curtailed. Meanwhile, a wide range of human rights violations against political activists, journalists, civil society actors, and members of ethnic and religious minority groups continued unabated throughout the year. The military pressed ahead with its offensive against ethnic Karen rebels, displacing thousands of villagers and prompting numerous reports of human rights abuses. The campaign, the largest against the Karen since 1997, had been launched in November 2005.

After occupation by the Japanese during World War II, Burma achieved independence from Great Britain in 1948. The military has ruled since 1962, when the army overthrew an elected government that had been buffeted by an economic cri-

sis and a raft of ethnic insurgencies. During the next 26 years, General Ne Win's military rule helped impoverish what had been one of Southeast Asia's wealthiest countries.

The present junta, led by General Than Shwe, dramatically asserted its power in 1988, when the army opened fire on peaceful, student-led, prodemocracy protesters, killing an estimated 3,000 people. In the aftermath, a younger generation of army commanders created the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to rule the country. However, the SLORC refused to cede power after it was defeated in a landslide election by the National League for Democracy (NLD) in 1990. The junta jailed dozens of members of the NLD, which had won 392 of the 485 parliamentary seats in Burma's first free elections in three decades.

Than Shwe and several other generals who headed the junta refashioned the SLORC into the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in 1997. The generals appeared to be trying to improve the junta's international image, attract foreign investment, and encourage an end to U.S.-led sanctions linked to the regime's grim human rights record. In late 2000, encouraged by the efforts of UN special envoy Razali Ismail, the government began holding talks with NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi, which led to an easing of restrictions on the party by mid-2002. Suu Kyi was released from house arrest and allowed to make several political trips outside the capital, and the NLD was permitted to reopen a number of its branch offices.

Suu Kyi's growing popularity and her revitalization of the NLD during the first half of 2003 apparently rattled hard-liners within the regime. On May 30, a deadly ambush on an NLD convoy by SPDC supporters left an unknown number of people killed or injured. Suu Kyi and dozens of other NLD officials and supporters were detained following the attack, NLD offices were again shut down, and universities and schools were temporarily closed in a bid to suppress wider unrest. Since then, authorities have maintained their focus on containing the popularity of the NLD. Suu Kyi was released from prison in September 2003 but remains under house arrest, as do other senior party leaders. Periodic arrests and detentions of political activists and other perceived threats to the regime, including journalists and students, remain the norm.

In August 2003, the junta announced that the National Convention, which had the responsibility of drafting principles for a new constitution but had not met since 1996, would be reconvened in May 2004 as part of a new "road map to democracy." However, the convention was boycotted by the main political parties, including the NLD and the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), which did not want to take part under conditions of extreme political repression. The proceedings themselves were heavily restricted in terms of format and operations, as authorities had handpicked most of the delegates and limited the scope of permissible debate from the outset. The convention was adjourned in July 2004. Although it was reconvened in February 2005 for a six-week session, it was again boycotted by the NLD and SNLD. In a similarly restricted atmosphere, delegates agreed to draft principles that enshrined the military's role in government, reserving 25 percent of seats in any future parliament for the military. The convention met again in October 2006, with the opposition parties maintaining their boycott. The body met as the government renewed efforts to repress its critics; in the week leading up to the gathering, six prodemocracy activists were detained.

Relations between the SPDC and numerous ethnic rebel groups significantly

worsened during 2006. The government had verbally agreed to an informal ceasefire with the Karen National Union (KNU) in late 2003, but skirmishes between the two sides continued, and in November 2005 the army launched its largest offensive in Karen State since 1997, sending approximately 5,000 troops into KNU-controlled areas. Thousands of villagers were displaced as a result of the offensive, and Burmese military personnel have been accused of numerous abuses, such as looting and burning homes, using villagers as slave laborers, and planting antipersonnel mines in civilian areas. Karen leaders met with government officials in October 2006 to attempt to negotiate a ceasefire, but attacks continued through the end of the year. Meanwhile, there have been numerous reports of abuses against the Chin minority group, and in September, the army stepped up its offensive against ethnic Shan rebel groups in eastern Burma.

This increased violence may be the result of an October 2004 government purge in which Khin Nyunt, the prime minister and head of military intelligence, was removed from office and placed under house arrest. A relative moderate, he had advocated limited dialogue with both the NLD and Burma's armed ethnic factions, and had spearheaded several recent cease-fire agreements. His replacement by hard-liner Lieutenant General Soe Win, who has been accused of masterminding the May 2003 attack on Suu Kyi as she rode in her motorcade, suggests that the junta will continue to resist all pressure to reform.

Since the 2004 purge, there have been persistent rumors of tension within the junta's senior leadership, and several reshuffles of both administrative and military personnel were conducted in 2006. Also that year, authorities officially shifted the country's capital 600 km (370 miles) inland, to a new site called Nay Pyi Taw, near the town of Pinyinmana. However, foreign embassies remained in Rangoon. The junta continued to accuse opposition groups of involvement in May 2005 bombings in Rangoon, and in April 2006 the government designated four exiled political groups as terrorist organizations. Among the groups listed was the National League for Democracy-Liberated Area, which was loosely affiliated with the NLD. The junta also adopted an increasingly threatening stance toward the NLD itself, stating in April 2006 that it had enough evidence tying the NLD to terrorist groups to justify dissolving the party. The continued crackdown on opposition groups, coupled with the new offensive in Karen State, led to increased international focus on Burma in 2006. In September, the UN Security Council added Burma to its permanent agenda, with many members arguing that internal repression and the flourishing drug trade made the country a threat to international security. The United States has stated its intention to submit a draft resolution on Burma, calling for the release of political prisoners and an end to human rights abuses perpetrated by the army. The resolution was pending at the end of 2006.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Burma is not an electoral democracy, and continues to be governed by one of the world's most repressive regimes. The SPDC rules by decree; controls all executive, legislative, and judicial powers; suppresses nearly all basic rights; and commits human rights abuses with impunity. Military officers hold most cabinet positions, and active or retired officers hold most top posts in all ministries, as well as key positions in the private sector.

Since rejecting the results of the 1990 elections and preventing the elected parliament from convening, the junta has all but paralyzed the victorious NLD party. Authorities have jailed many NLD leaders, pressured thousands of party members and officials to resign, closed party offices, harassed members' families, and periodically detained hundreds of NLD supporters at a time to block planned party meetings. After being allowed somewhat greater freedom in 2002, the NLD was subjected to another crackdown in 2003, which has for the most part continued to date. Although the party's main office was allowed to reopen in April 2004, its branch offices remain closed, and several key party leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi, remain under house arrest. In the run-up to the National Convention session held in October 2006, opposition party leaders and members of prodemocracy youth groups faced heightened surveillance, intimidation, and arrest as they attempted to engage in peaceful political activities.

Besides the NLD, there are more than 20 ethnic political parties that remain suppressed by the junta. Of the 28 ethnic parties that participated in the 2004 session of the National Convention, 13 called for greater local autonomy, according to Amnesty International. In February 2005, at least 10 ethnic Shan politicians were arrested, including the senior leaders of the SNLD party, and in November that year, nine were sentenced to lengthy prison terms and transferred to undisclosed locations. At least three NLD party leaders were arrested in 2006, and several student and youth members were also imprisoned.

In a system that lacks both transparency and accountability, official corruption is rampant at both the national and local levels. Burma was ranked 160 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The junta sharply restricts press freedom, and either owns or tightly controls all daily newspapers and broadcast media. It subjects private periodicals to prepublication censorship and also restricts the importation of foreign news periodicals. Under new censorship rules that came into effect in July 2005, media are ostensibly allowed to offer criticism of government projects as long as the criticism is deemed "constructive," and are allowed to report on natural disasters and poverty as long as the reports do not adversely affect the national interest. In February 2006, four individuals involved in the publication of a book of poems critical of the government were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 7 to 19 years. Two photojournalists who photographed buildings in the new capital were imprisoned in March. The Burma Media Association reported in February that the government had launched a campaign to track down and imprison people who gave information to the international media. Several journalists, businesspeople, and civil servants have reportedly been interrogated in relation to the program. While some people have access to international shortwave radio or satellite television, the Committee to Protect Journalists notes that those caught accessing foreign broadcasts can face jail time. The internet, which operates in a limited fashion in the cities, is tightly regulated and censored.

Ordinary Burmese can worship with some freedom. However, the junta shows a preference for Theravada Buddhism, discriminating against non-Buddhists in the upper levels of the public sector and coercively promoting Buddhism in some ethnic-minority areas. The regime has also tried to control the Buddhist clergy by placing monastic orders under a state-run committee, monitoring monasteries, and sub-

jecting clergy to special restrictions on speech and association. A number of monks remain imprisoned for their prodemocracy and human rights work. Violence and discrimination against the Muslim minority continues to be a problem; recent incidents include a deadly flare-up in Arakan State in January 2005, in which two Muslims were killed in violence between Muslims and Buddhist monks. Ethnic Chin, who are predominantly Christian, continue to be persecuted for their beliefs. A report released by three human rights groups in March 2006 documented several instances of forced labor and sexual violence against the minority. There were also several reported cases of intimidation and harassment of Christians in Rangoon, where they are barred from attending church and forced to register with local authorities.

Academic freedom is severely limited. Teachers are subject to restrictions on freedom of expression and publication, and are held accountable for the political activities of their students. Since the 1988 student prodemocracy demonstrations, the junta has sporadically closed universities, limiting higher education opportunities for a generation of young Burmese. Most campuses have been relocated to relatively isolated areas as a way to disperse the student population. According to Amnesty International, teachers have recently been imprisoned for talking about or possessing books on historical political figures, and the licenses of private tutors have been withdrawn on political grounds.

Freedom of association and assembly is restricted. An ordinance prohibits unauthorized outdoor gatherings of more than five people, and authorities regularly use force to break up peaceful demonstrations and prevent prodemocracy activists from organizing events or meetings. Since the May 2003 crackdown, an increasing number of people have been detained for attempting to exercise their rights to freedom of association and expression. However, some public sector employees, as well as other ordinary citizens, are induced to join the junta's mass mobilization organization, the Union Solidarity and Development Association. Domestic human rights organizations are unable to function independently, and the regime generally dismisses critical scrutiny of its human rights record by international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In February 2006, the government released new guidelines that further restricted NGOs, leading Medecins Sans Frontieres and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue to cease activities in Burma. The International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) has also recently been barred from carrying out prison visits.

Independent trade unions, collective bargaining, and strikes are illegal, and several labor activists are serving long prison terms for their political and labor activities. The regime continues to use forced labor despite formally banning the practice in October 2000. The International Labor Organization and other sources report that soldiers routinely force civilians, including women and children, to work without pay under harsh conditions. Laborers are commandeered to construct roads, clear minefields, porter for the army, or work on military-backed commercial ventures. The practice appears to be most widespread in states populated by ethnic minorities. In the past year, the government reportedly began using prisoners as forced laborers for government projects.

The judiciary is not independent. Judges are appointed or approved by the junta and adjudicate cases according to the junta's decrees. Administrative detention laws allow people to be held without charge, trial, or access to legal counsel for up to five years if the SPDC feels that they have threatened the state's security or sovereignty.

Some basic due process rights are reportedly observed in ordinary criminal cases, but not in political cases, according to the U.S. State Department's 2006 human rights report. Pervasive corruption, the misuse of overly broad laws, and the manipulation of the courts for political ends continue to deprive citizens of their legal rights.

Detailed reports issued by Amnesty International have raised a number of concerns about the administration of justice, highlighting laws and practices regarding detention, torture, trial, and conditions of imprisonment. Political prisoners are frequently held incommunicado in pretrial detention, facilitating the use of torture and other forms of coercion, and are denied access to family members, legal counsel, and medical care. The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) reported that six political prisoners died in custody in 2006. Prisons are often overcrowded, and in 2006 the ICRC was barred from conducting visits to prison facilities.

The junta has periodically released some of those arrested in the aftermath of the May 2003 violence. In the month after General Khin Nyunt's October 2004 removal, thousands of prisoners were released, including several dozen who were being held on political charges. However, according to AAPP, more than 1,000 political prisoners remain incarcerated at the end of 2006, including 78 people detained in the past year. Most prisoners are held under broadly drawn laws that criminalize a range of peaceful activities, such as distributing prodemocracy pamphlets or reporting on human rights violations. The frequently used Decree 5/96, issued in 1996, authorizes prison terms of up to 20 years for aiding activities "which adversely affect the national interest." After the October 2004 purge, jails were also filled with suspected allies of Khin Nyunt; several thousand were arrested, and beginning in November of that year, a number were sentenced to lengthy prison terms.

The UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva condemns the regime each year for committing grave human rights abuses. Annual resolutions commonly highlight a systematic pattern of extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions; arrests, incommunicado detention, and "disappearances"; rape, torture, inhumane treatment, and forced labor, including the use of children; forced relocation; and the denial of freedom of assembly, association, expression, religion, and movement. Police and security forces that commit such abuses operate in a climate of impunity, as such incidents are not commonly investigated and prosecutions are rare.

Some of the worst human rights abuses take place in the seven states populated by ethnic minorities, who comprise approximately 35 percent of Burma's overall population. In these border states, the *tatmadaw*, or Burmese armed forces, kill, beat, rape, and arbitrarily detain civilians. According to a July 2006 report released by the Women's League of Chinland, Burmese soldiers are promised 100,000 kyat (US\$16,000) for marrying Chin women as part of a strategy of "Burmanization." As described in an Amnesty International report released in September 2005, soldiers also routinely destroy property and seize livestock, cash, property, food, and other goods from villagers. The junta has committed particularly serious abuses against the Muslim Rohingya minority in northern Rakhine State. A 2006 British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) news report noted that the vast majority of Rohingya are denied citizenship and face severe restrictions on their freedom of movement, their right to own land, and their ability to marry. In addition, they are regularly subjected to arbitrary taxation and other forms of extortion, as well as forced eviction and land confiscation, at the hands of Burmese security forces. More than 250,000 Rohingya remain in

neighboring Bangladesh, where they fled in the 1990s to escape extrajudicial execution, rape, forced labor, and other abuses.

The junta continues to face low-grade insurgencies waged by the KNU and at least five other ethnic rebel armies. In November 2005, the army stepped up its attacks in Karen State, leading to a prolonged offensive that lasted throughout 2006. Several reports have accused the Burmese military of targeting civilians and destroying fields and food supplies. Approximately 16,000 Karen have been displaced as a result of the attacks. Seventeen rebel groups, however, have reached cease-fire deals with the junta since 1989, under which they have been granted effective administrative authority in the areas under their control and are able to retain their own militias. While army abuses are the most widespread, some rebel groups forcibly conscript civilians, commit extrajudicial killing and rape, and use women and children as porters, according to the U.S. State Department's 2006 human rights report. Child soldiers are used frequently in the army, and the practice of recruiting them has increased in recent years, according to a 2006 report by the Human Rights Education Institute of Burma.

Tens of thousands of ethnic minorities in Shan, Karenni, Karen, and Mon states remain in squalid and ill-equipped relocation centers set up by the military. The army has forcibly moved the villagers to the sites since the mid-1990s as part of its counterinsurgency operations. Press reports indicate that at least one million people have been internally displaced by these and other tactics.

In addition, according to Refugees International, several million Burmese have fled to neighboring countries, including Thailand, India, and Bangladesh. Thailand continues to host at least 145,000 Karen, Mon, and Karenni in refugee camps near the Burmese border, as well as hundreds of thousands more who have not been granted refugee status. In March 2005, a renewed offensive by the regime, aided by the United Wa State Army, an ethnic force allied with the government, that targeted the rebel Shan State Army led to intensified abuses against and the displacement of thousands of civilians in Shan State.

Authorities in 2006 continued to infringe on citizens' privacy rights by arbitrarily searching homes, intercepting mail, and monitoring telephone conversations. Laws criminalize the possession and use of unregistered electronic devices, including telephones, fax machines, computers, modems, and software.

Burmese women have traditionally enjoyed high social and economic status, but domestic violence is a growing concern, and women remain underrepresented in the government and civil service. A September 2004 report by the Women's League of Burma detailed an ongoing nationwide pattern of sexual violence, including rape, sexual slavery, and forced marriage, against women by SPDC military personnel and other authorities. Criminal gangs have in recent years trafficked thousands of women and girls, many from ethnic minority groups, to Thailand and other destinations for prostitution, according to reports by Human Rights Watch and other organizations.

Burundi

Population: 7,800,000

Capital: Bujumbura

Political Rights: 4*

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: Burundi's political rights rating declined from 3 to 4 due to the government and ruling party's increased repression of the opposition.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	7,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	5,5PF	5,5PF	3,5PF	4,5PF

Overview:

The minority Tutsi ethnic group governed this small African country for most of the period since independence from Belgium in 1962. The military, judiciary, educational system, business sector, and news media have also traditionally been dominated by the Tutsi. Violence between them and the majority Hutu has broken out repeatedly since independence. A 1992 constitution introduced multiparty politics, but the 1993 assassination of the newly elected Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye of the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU) party, resulted in sustained and widespread carnage.

Ndadaye's murder fatally weakened FRODEBU's hold on power. Negotiations on power sharing took place over the succeeding months, as ethnic violence continued to rack the country. Ndadaye's successor was killed in 1994, along with Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, when their plane was apparently shot down as it approached Kigali airport in Rwanda. This event triggered the Rwandan genocide and intensified the violence in Burundi.

Under a 1994 power-sharing arrangement between FRODEBU and the mainly Tutsi-led Unity for National Progress (UPRONA) party, Hutu politician Sylvestre Ntibantunganya served as Burundi's new president until his ouster in a 1996 military coup led by former president Pierre Buyoya, a Tutsi whom Ndadaye had defeated in the 1993 election. Peace and political stability within the country continued to be elusive, as armed insurgents sporadically staged attacks and government security forces pursued an often ruthless campaign of intimidation. The search for peace eventually led to an agreement to allow increased authority for the Parliament, which had a FRODEBU majority, and the beginning of negotiations in Arusha, Tanzania, in 1998.

In 2000, the negotiations, mediated by former South African president Nelson Mandela, resulted in an agreement in principle by most parties on a future democratic political solution to the conflict. Nineteen organized groups from across the political spectrum agreed to recommendations on the nature of the conflict, reforms for the nation's governing institutions, security issues, and economic restructuring

and development. The specific form of the political institutions through which power would be shared and the reform of the military proved to be especially sensitive issues. In October 2001, the National Assembly adopted a transitional constitution, and a transitional government was installed the next month, with Buyoya temporarily remaining chief of state and FRODEBU's Domitien Ndayizeye as vice president. The failure of key elements of two Hutu rebel groups, the Forces for the Defense of Democracy (FDD) and the National Liberation Forces (FNL), to participate in the transition resulted in both continued negotiations and violence.

By the end of 2002, most of the factions had agreed to stop the fighting and participate in transitional arrangements leading to national elections, initially scheduled for late 2004. In April 2003, Buyoya stepped down and was replaced as president by Ndayizeye. In October of that year, the FDD reached an agreement with the government. Progress continued in 2004, with an August agreement on the shape of new democratic institutions designed to balance the interests of the Hutu and Tutsi populations, and on the holding of elections. Demobilization of former combatants continued, and some refugees returned, especially from Tanzania. However, sporadic fighting also continued near the capital, Bujumbura.

In 2005, Burundi achieved a major milestone by holding the first local and national elections since 1993, in June and July, respectively. These resulted in a fundamental political realignment, as the largely Hutu former guerrilla movement, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), emerged as the country's largest political force, eclipsing the traditionally dominant parties and taking 59 out of 100 seats in the National Assembly, the lower house of Parliament. FRODEBU took 24 seats, and UPRONA won 10 seats. Parliament subsequently chose Pierre Nkurunziza as president, handing him 151 of the 162 votes cast. Domestic and international observers generally regarded the local and national legislative elections as legitimate and reflective of the people's will.

In August 2006, the FNL agreed to lay down its arms and participate in the political process. The country was rocked by political instability, however, as eight prominent politicians and army officers, including former president Ndayizeye, and former vice president Alphonse Marie Kadege, of the opposition UPRONA party, were arrested in late July and early August in connection with an alleged coup plot. Critics claimed the supposed plot was a fabrication. Vice president Alice Nzomukunda, of the ruling CNDD resigned in September to protest the arrests as well as credible allegations of government fraud. In addition, the ruling CNDD party leadership showed increasing signs of intolerance toward opposition and independent viewpoints, and began to heavily criticize the independent press.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Burundi is an electoral democracy. In 2005, citizens were able to change their government democratically. Restrictions on political parties were lifted, and parties and civic organizations function with greater freedom than previously. Burundi currently has representative institutions at the local, municipal, and national levels in the legislative and executive branches of government.

While the lower house of the Parliament—the 100-seat National Assembly—is directly elected for a five-year term, locally elected officials choose the Senate, also for five years. Each of Burundi's 17 provinces chooses two senators—one Tutsi

and one Hutu. Carefully crafted constitutional arrangements require the National Assembly to be 60 percent Hutu and 40 percent Tutsi, with three additional deputies from the Twa ethnic minority, who also are allocated three senators. In both houses a minimum of 30 percent of the legislators must be women. Former presidents also hold Senate seats; apart from this provision, there are no rules to increase the size of either chamber by adding nonelected members.

Governments must include all parties that have won at least 5 percent of the votes cast in parliamentary elections. Both houses of Parliament elect the president to a five-year term. The president appoints two vice presidents, one Tutsi and one Hutu, and they must be approved separately by a two-thirds majority in the lower and upper houses of Parliament. CNDD-FDD members currently hold 13 out of 20 cabinet positions, and 7 of the cabinet ministers are women.

There are more than two dozen active political parties, ranging from those that champion radical Tutsi positions to those that hold extremist Hutu positions. Most are small in terms of membership. Many Tutsis have now joined formerly Hutu-dominated parties. Five political parties are represented in the current government. In addition to FDD, UPRONA, and FRODEBU, there are also ministers from two small Tutsi-oriented parties, PARENA and the MRC.

Some government revenues and expenditures have not been regularly listed on the budget, which has contributed to corruption problems. Faced with mounting criticism over graft, in September 2006 President Pierre Nkurunziza demoted his finance minister, who had come under suspicion for his role in the allegedly improper sale of the presidential plane in July. As a result, the World Bank has postponed the release of \$35 million to support economic reforms. Burundi was ranked 130 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech is legally guaranteed and exists in practice, with some limitations. For example, the media have been subject to self-censorship and periodic government censorship. In recent years, the media have presented a wider range of political perspectives, and the opposition press does function, though sporadically. Radio is the main source of information for many Burundians. The government runs the sole television station and the only radio station with national coverage, as well as the only newspaper that publishes regularly. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World Service, Radio France Internationale, and the Voice of America are available on FM in the capital, Bujumbura. Several private radio stations exist, but they generally have limited broadcast range. In September 2006, the CNDD chairman made a widely publicized speech in which he attacked Burundi's independent media. Since then, tensions between the CNDD-FDD and the country's independently owned radio stations have increased. In November, for example, authorities detained the head of a private radio station over broadcast information deemed to threaten state and public security.

Print runs of most newspapers are small, and readership is limited by low literacy levels. Access to the Internet remains limited to urban areas.

Freedom of religion is generally observed. For many years the ongoing civil strife and the Tutsis' social and institutional dominance impeded academic freedom by limiting educational opportunities for Hutus, although there are indications that this may be changing under the CNDD government.

The constitution provides for freedoms of assembly and association, although

past transitional governments occasionally restricted this right in practice. There is modest but important civil society activity with a focus on the protection of human rights. Constitutional protections for organized labor are in place, and the right to strike is protected by the labor code. The Organization of Free Unions of Burundi has been independent since the rise of the multiparty system in 1992. Most union members are civil servants and have bargained collectively with the government. In April 2006, nurses staged a three-week strike over wages.

The judicial system is seriously burdened by a lack of resources and training, and by corruption. Given Burundi's recent history, there are far more pending cases than can easily be handled by the current judiciary, and many of them are politically sensitive. Many crimes go unreported. Conditions in prisons continue to be poor and at times life-threatening. Despite extensive negotiations and discussions regarding the establishment of some form of broad-based truth commission to address past human rights violations, no such body has yet been created. In October 2006, the bar association threatened to go on strike over the arrest of one of its members for complicity in the alleged coup plot.

Amnesty International and other national and international human rights organizations have previously criticized the practices of the security services in Burundi and report that those opposed to the CNDD-FDD are particularly at risk of torture. In August 2006, the UN representative in Burundi expressed concern for those detained in relation to the alleged coup plot, urging the Burundian authorities to respect the human rights of its citizens, particularly with regard to torture. The Burundian League of Human Rights (Ligue Iteka), family members of those detained, and the minister in charge of human rights confirmed in August that several of those arrested had been tortured.

The government's release since January 2006 of some 3,000 detainees linked to the 10-year civil war has increased the urgency of establishing mechanisms to try them and others still in custody. The detainees, many of whom were charged with violent crimes, were released after they were categorized as political prisoners by a government commission created under the 2000 Arusha Accords governing the transitional postwar period. According to Burundian officials, those released have been granted "provisional immunity" but will eventually be held accountable for any alleged crimes by a yet-to-be-created special court or truth and reconciliation commission.

As part of the peace agreement, the composition of the national security forces must have an equal ethnic balance. The process of integrating former guerillas into the armed forces continued in 2006.

With the improvement in the political environment, many of Burundi's internally displaced and refugee populations began returning home in 2006. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees predicted that close to 100,000 refugees would return in 2007. Especially in the first half of 2006, before the FNL agreed to disarm, Burundians continued to be subjected to arbitrary violence, whether by the government or guerillas. Most of the abuses occurred in the provinces of Bujumbura Rural and Bubanza, the main areas of FNL activity.

An annual per capita gross domestic product of \$700 ranks Burundi among the poorest countries in the world. About 93 percent of the workforce is engaged in agricultural production, and 68 percent of the population lives below the poverty line according to 2002 data in the CIA's 2006 *World Factbook*. According to statistics published by the Central Bank in Bujumbura, most economic indicators sharply

declined with the advent of widespread insecurity in 1993. Access to basic social and health services has been severely diminished. According to two leading human rights organizations, Burundian state hospitals routinely detain patients who are unable to pay their hospital bills. The patients can be detained for weeks or even months in horrific conditions.

Women have limited opportunities for advancement in the economic and political spheres, especially in rural areas. As part of the current negotiated political agreement, the parties agreed that 30 percent of parliament members would be women. Only 5 percent of eligible females are enrolled in secondary school. Widespread sexual violence against women continues to occur, according to Amnesty International.

Cambodia

Population: 14,100,000

Capital: Phnom Penh

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF

Overview: Prime Minister Hun Sen intensified suppression of all criticism. A new law that strips legislators of immunity and the law's consequent criminal defamation suits are now used to silence opponents, democracy activists, and journalists. Sam Rainsy, the opposition leader, was given a royal pardon, and he returned to Cambodia after recanting his allegation against Hun Sen. A special tribunal to try top Khmer Rouge leaders is expected to begin in early 2007.

Cambodia won independence from France in 1953. King Norodom Sihanouk ruled until he was ousted by the U.S.-backed Lon Nol regime in the early 1970s. The Chinese-supported Khmer Rouge seized power in 1975. An estimated 250,000 to two million of Cambodia's population of seven million died of disease, overwork, starvation, or execution under the Khmer Rouge before Vietnam toppled the regime and installed a Communist one in 1979. Fighting continued in the 1980s between the Hanoi-backed government and the allied armies of Sihanouk, the Khmer Rouge, and other political contenders. The 1991 Paris Peace Accords brought an end to warfare, but the Khmer Rouge waged a low-grade insurgency until its disintegration in the late 1990s.

Politics has been dominated by Prime Minister Hun Sen and his Cambodian People's Party (CPP) through their use of the military, courts, and parliamentary tactics to remove and outmaneuver any opposition. In 1997, Hun Sen used his control

of the security forces to coerce the royalist party, known as Funcinpec after its French acronym, to share power even though Funcinpec won the largest number of seats in the first parliamentary election in 1993. Hun Sen later ousted the leader of Funcinpec in a bloody coup in 1997.

In the 2003 parliamentary elections—marred by government restrictions on opposition access to the media and reports of widespread vote buying, violence, and voter intimidation by the CCP—the CPP nevertheless failed to obtain the two-thirds majority required to form a government. A coalition government with Funcinpec was negotiated but quickly broke down. A new CCP-Funcinpec coalition was formed in September 2004, that allowed for the resumption of government and the receipt of foreign assistance, which accounts for half of the government's budget.

With Funcinpec in the coalition, Hun Sen and the CCP turned to quieting opposition leader Sam Rainsy and his party. To stop Rainsy's attacks on government corruption and abuses, the National Assembly stripped him and fellow Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) legislators Chea Poch and Cheam Channy of their parliamentary immunity in February 2005, through adding restrictions on immunity for lawmakers to a bill that grants pensions and perks to members of Parliament. Motivated by personal gain, CCP and Funcinpec Assembly members passed the law. Channy was quickly arrested and convicted by a military tribunal on charges of organized crime and fraud and sentenced to seven years in prison. Rainsy was charged with defaming Funcinpec leader Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen; he was found guilty in absentia after Rainsy and Poch fled Cambodia to escape arrest. Leading human rights activists were also imprisoned for defaming Hun Sen.

Pressure from international donors persuaded Hun Sen to release the jailed human rights activists less than a year after they were sentenced. Hun Sen also negotiated with Rainsy for a settlement: Rainsy would receive a royal pardon in exchange for promising to recant his allegations and issue a public apology to Hun Sen. Rainsy agreed to the terms and fulfilled them, returning to Cambodia in February 2006, after a year overseas in self-exile. Channy also received a royal pardon and was released from prison. The new alliance with Rainsy and the constitutional amendment, proposed by the SRP and adopted by the National Assembly in March, strengthened Hun Sen and the CCP's grip on power. Hun Sen then turned to attack Ranariddh, who had accused the government of inefficiency and corruption, and Funcinpec, his coalition partner. The prime minister accused several members of Funcinpec of nepotism and extramarital affairs and used the CCP-dominated National Assembly to pass an anti-adultery law in September that carries a maximum sentence of one year in prison for those convicted. Possibly to avoid a scandal that could have ruined his political future, Ranariddh, who has attended many public functions accompanied by a female dancer rather than his wife and been accused of financial mismanagement in major development projects, suddenly left Cambodia in March and did not return until August. The persistent volatility of Cambodian politics makes it difficult to predict the political alignments likely to emerge in the next general election, in November 2008.

Weak governance, widespread poverty, and corruption are a few of the major factors contributing to the World Bank's designation of Cambodia as a fragile state. To pressure the government to impose real reform, the World Bank suspended \$64 million in loan transfers to Cambodia in May 2006 when serious abuses and irregularities in the management of World Bank funds for seven projects surfaced. The

World Bank also asked Cambodia to repay \$7 million in aid money. A UN envoy warned of the government's increasing totalitarian tendencies and the country's deteriorating human rights conditions, while the UN Commissioner for Human Rights urged judicial reform. Meanwhile, international organizations refused to monitor the country's first Senate elections in June 2006 because the process was deemed undemocratic, only members of the Parliament (the majority of whom are CCP members) and 11,000 commune councilors (nearly 8,000 of which are CCP members elected in the February 2002 commune election marked by government intimidation and extensive vote buying) were eligible to vote in this Senate race. The fact that CCP candidates would take the majority of Senate seats—43 out of 57—was a foregone conclusion.

In October, the National Assembly's passage of a new law requiring military conscription for all men between 18 and 30 years of age raised international concern following years of efforts and millions of dollars to demobilize the army and remove guns and weapons from society. The government claims conscription is important for security reasons, but critics charge that it is a crude government attempt to provide employment for a rapidly growing population that includes including 300,000 young men who enter that age bracket every year.

The other major story in 2006 is the establishment of a special tribunal to try surviving leaders of the Khmer Rouge. Parliament approved a plan to establish a special tribunal in Phnom Penh with help from the United Nations in 2004, but a lack of funds—an estimated \$57 million to sustain the tribunal for three years—has largely kept the plan from moving forward. With necessary funds now secured, the first trials are slated to begin in early 2007 with 17 Cambodian and 13 foreign experts chosen to sit on the tribunal. Of these 30 men and women, 14 will serve as judges and 2 as prosecutors, and 14 will be held in reserve. Under a 2001 Cambodian law, no Khmer Rouge leader is exempt from prosecution, including those, such as Ieng Sary, a foreign minister under the Khmer Rouge who received a royal pardon for genocide but not other crimes. There is an increasing urgency to begin trials as the top Khmer Rouge leaders are aging and dying—Pol Pot, the mastermind, died in 1998 and his successor Ta Mok died in June 2006. Paining millions of Cambodians who lost family under the genocidal regime, Khmer Rouge leaders still live freely, including Nuon Chea, Pol Pot's chief lieutenant; Khieu Samphan, head of state from 1976 to 1979; and Ieng Sary.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Cambodia is not an electoral democracy. Cambodia is a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral Parliament consisting of a National Assembly and a Senate. The current constitution was promulgated in 1993 by the king, who also serves as head of state. Citing ill health, King Norodom Sihanouk, now 84 years old, abdicated in 2004 and was succeeded by his son, Prince Norodom Sihamoni. The new king inherited the throne with no political experience and after living abroad for much of his life. The monarchy remains highly revered by the people and is a symbol of national unity for the nation, but Sihamoni's influence as compared to his father's thus far remains unclear.

The government, consisting of the prime minister and a council of ministers, must be approved by a two-thirds vote of confidence by the National Assembly, which has 123 seats. Assembly members are elected by popular vote to serve five-

year terms. The Senate has 61 members, 2 of whom are appointed by the king, 2 elected by the National Assembly, and 57 chosen by functional constituencies. Senate members serve five-year terms.

Prime Minister Hun Sen and the CPP dominate national and local politics with their control of the security forces, officials at all levels of government, and the state-owned media. In addition to using the military and police to harass the opposition and suppress the media, the government uses defamation suits to imprison opposition politicians. Parliament members are now also denied immunity from libel. There are two other major political parties. The first is the eponymous Sam Rainsy Party, formerly the main opposition party and now the coalition party of the CCP. The second is the Funcinpec Party, or royalist party, under the long-standing leadership of Prince Ranadrih until his resignation in 2006, which has at various times been in partnership with and opposition to the ruling CCP.

Corruption is a very serious problem. Cambodia was ranked 151 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. A World Bank report released in August 2006 cited that "unofficial payments" are "frequent, mostly, or always required" for business transactions. The International Monetary Fund also concluded that corruption and bureaucratic red tape significantly hinder economic growth.

The government does not fully respect freedom of speech. Many newspapers and private television and radio stations operate in the country, including several owned and operated by the ruling and opposition parties, and there are no restrictions on privately owned satellite dishes receiving foreign broadcasts. However, the government exercises tight control of local broadcast media, which provide the primary source of information for most Cambodians. By comparison, newspapers reach only about 10 percent of the population; therefore, while print journalists are somewhat freer to criticize governmental policies and senior officials, their reach is quite limited. In the past two years, the government has nevertheless used defamation suits to harass journalists and indefinitely detain and imprison them. The Internet is fairly free of government control, but high cost and lack of connectivity outside the capital and a few major cities limit access. While mobile telephones have gained widespread use among urban populations, Hun Sen banned the use of videos on mobile phones in May 2006, citing concerns about the spread of pornography.

The majority of Cambodians are Theravada Buddhists who can generally practice their faith freely, but discrimination against ethnic Cham Muslims is widespread. The government generally respects academic freedom, although criticism of the state is not well tolerated.

Freedoms of association and assembly are respected by the government to a certain degree because of pressure and scrutiny by international donors. Many civil society groups operate in Cambodia, work on a broad spectrum of issues, and receive funding from overseas donors. Nongovernmental human rights groups investigate and publicize abuses and carry out training and other activities. Public gatherings, protests, and marches occur and are rarely violent, although the government occasionally uses loyal thugs and uniformed police to intimidate participants.

Cambodia has a few independent unions. Factory workers frequently stage strikes in Phnom Penh to protest low wages, forced overtime, and poor and dangerous working conditions. However, with limited resources and experience, unions have

limited influence in negotiations with management. Union leaders have also reported harassment and physical threats.

The judiciary is not independent and is marred by inefficiency and corruption. There is a severe shortage of lawyers, and judges are poorly trained and underpaid. Abuse by law enforcement officers, including illegal detention and the torture of suspects, is common. Delays in the judicial process and corruption allow many suspects to escape prosecution, which leads to impunity for some government officials and members of their families who commit crimes. Jails are seriously overcrowded, and inmates often lack sufficient food, water, and health care. Police, soldiers, and government officials are widely believed to tolerate, or be involved in, gunrunning, drug trafficking, prostitution rings, and money laundering.

Discrimination against ethnic Cham Muslims is widespread. The Chams have come under new suspicion from the Khmer majority in the wake of Islamic terrorist attacks in Southeast Asia and elsewhere. Rumors that the Chams are plotting to secede and reestablish the Cham kingdom of Champa have further aggravated relations with the Khmer majority. Extreme poverty and the lack of government assistance have compelled many within the Cham community to seek help from overseas donors—many of whom are advocates of orthodox forms of Islam. People of Vietnamese heritage in Cambodia face various forms of discrimination and harassment by the state and society.

The constitution guarantees the right to freedom of travel and movement. The government generally respects this, but there have been reports of the government restricting travel for opposition politicians, particularly during political campaigns before elections.

With the courts largely unable to enforce property rights and the land registration system in shambles, the wealthy and powerful elite have forced tens of thousands off their land. Residents have been evicted by force and their homes demolished by government order without due process to determine ownership or compensation. The land grab has intensified in urban areas where real estate prices are rising. In one instance, 6,000 persons were left homeless. In rural areas, too, land grabs for commercial plantations have forced many people off the land, and some are beginning to organize to defend their rights.

Women suffer widespread economic and social discrimination. Rape and domestic violence are common, and women and girls are trafficked inside and outside of Cambodia for prostitution. The sex trade has fueled the spread of HIV/AIDS. The latest available data reports 130,000 infected adults and 16,000 deaths out of a population of 14 million for 2005, giving Cambodia among the highest infection and death rates in Asia.

Cameroon

Population: 17,300,000

Capital: Yaounde

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7.5NF	7.5NF	7.6NF	7.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF

Overview: President Paul Biya, who is serving his fifth consecutive term in office, made only limited progress on his pledge to combat widespread corruption, though Cameroon met prescribed economic targets to qualify for significant debt relief in 2006. Nigeria complied with the International Court of Justice ruling on the Bakassi Peninsula by withdrawing its troops and turning administrative control of the northern part of the peninsula over to Cameroon in August 2006. Since the handover, the Nigerian government has alleged harassment of Nigerian residents by Cameroon military forces.

Previously a German colony, Cameroon was seized during World War I and divided between Britain and France. Distinct Anglophone and Francophone areas were reunited at independence in 1961. During the three decades that followed, Cameroon was ruled under a repressive one-party system.

Prime Minister Paul Biya succeeded Ahmadou Ahidjo as president in 1982. In 1996, the constitution extended the presidential term to seven years and allowed Biya to run for a fourth term in 1997. He won with 93 percent of the vote, though numerous irregularities and a boycott by the three major opposition parties compromised the credibility of the election.

The ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) dominated legislative and municipal elections in 2002 that lacked transparency, despite the creation of the National Observatory of Elections to oversee their conduct. In the June 2002 parliamentary elections, the ruling CPDM increased the number of its seats in the 180-member National Assembly from 116 to 149. The main opposition party, the Anglophone-led Social Democratic Front (SDF), won 22 seats, down from the 43 it had held previously. The Supreme Court ordered a rerun of municipal elections in six constituencies where massive fraud was proven in 2002. Observers claimed that subsequent voting in June 2004 was equally flawed, with the ruling CPDM winning the same five seats.

Biya won the presidential elections in October 2004 with 75 percent of the vote. The two opposition candidates charged fraud and appealed unsuccessfully to the Supreme Court for the election to be annulled. Although turnout approached 80

percent, only 4.6 million of the estimated 8 million Cameroonians eligible to vote were registered. Many others attempted to cast ballots but were turned away because their names did not appear on the voter rolls. Cameroon does not have an independent electoral commission.

UN-brokered talks between Nigeria and Cameroon in 2006 resulted in Nigeria's agreement to hand over sovereignty of the disputed oil-rich Bakassi peninsula in accordance with a 2002 International Court of Justice ruling in Cameroon's favor. Nigeria completed the withdrawal of its troops and formally transferred control of the northern part of the peninsula to Cameroon in August 2006. The rest of the peninsula will remain under Nigerian civil administration until 2008, in line with the court's ruling. Most of the estimated 150,000 to 300,000 predominately Nigerian inhabitants who were given the option of resettling in Nigeria or remaining under Cameroonian authority chose to stay. Since the handover, some Nigerian residents have alleged harassment and intimidation by Cameroon's security forces, including demands for payment of back taxes, seizure of property, and beatings. Nigerian government complaints led to the creation of a special mixed committee to investigate the charges.

Biya's long years in power have encouraged high levels of corruption and cronyism. His bloated administration counts more than 60 government ministries. Key positions in the government and military are generally held by members of Biya's Bulu-Beti ethnic group.

Cameroon is overwhelmingly poor with a mainly agricultural economy. Petroleum products comprise half of all exports, though oil production has declined since 1986. Since joining the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2005, Cameroon's national oil company has begun publishing production, sales, and revenue data.

The government launched a new anticorruption drive in January 2006, two weeks after firing two magistrates accused of graft. Cameroon met economic targets set by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in 2006, which enabled the country to qualify for significant debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Cameroon is not an electoral democracy. Rampant voter intimidation, manipulation, and fraud have marked both presidential and legislative elections. Cameroon's centralized government is dominated by a strong presidency. The president is not required to consult the National Assembly, and the judiciary is subordinate to the Ministry of Justice. The Supreme Court may review the constitutionality of a law only at the president's request. President Paul Biya's current seven-year term will end in 2011. International observers reported that the 2004 presidential poll lacked credibility but reflected the will of the voting population.

The unicameral National Assembly has 180 seats, 149 of which are held by the ruling CPDM. Members are elected by direct popular vote to serve five-year terms, although the president has the authority to either lengthen or shorten the term of the legislature. Legislative elections last held in 2002 were characterized by significant irregularities, and the next elections are scheduled for 2007. Cameroon's constitution calls for an upper chamber for the legislature, to be called a Senate, but it has yet to be established. A mandated Constitutional Court exists in name only.

There are more than 180 recognized political parties in Cameroon, although Biya's CPDM and the Anglophone-led SDF are dominant and the hundreds of smaller political and civic organizations have little effect on public policy or government decisionmaking processes. The Anglophone-Francophone linguistic distinction constitutes the country's most potent political division. At least one Anglophone group, the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), advocates secession from the country.

Cameroon was ranked 138 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's (TI) 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. According to TI, government corruption is rife within the judiciary, police, customs service, and educational sector.

There are no legal guarantees on free speech in Cameroon, though there are dozens of private radio stations and several hundred independent newspapers that publish on an irregular basis. The government tightly controls both broadcast and print media, and tough criminal libel laws have in the past, though not recently, been used to silence regime critics. In 2006, an editor of a privately owned weekly was detained by military security for several days and only released after drafting a letter apologizing to President Biya and the defense minister for reporting on detailed corruption and mismanagement in the armed forces. Self-censorship among broadcast and print journalists is common, partly in response to instances of security forces arresting, detaining, physically abusing, threatening, and otherwise harassing journalists. The government has not attempted to restrict or monitor internet communication, however.

Freedom of religion is generally respected. Although there are no legal restrictions on academic freedom, state security informants reportedly operate on university campuses, and many professors fear that participation in opposition political parties could harm their careers.

Security forces regularly restrict freedom of assembly and limit freedom of association by members of nongovernmental organizations and political parties, often through the use of violence. Meetings of members of the banned SNSC are routinely disrupted. Trade union formation is permitted, but is subject to numerous restrictions. Workers have the right to strike but only after arbitration, and the government maintains the right to overturn final decisions made in this process.

The courts are highly subject to political influence and corruption. The executive branch controls the judiciary and appoints provincial and local administrators. Military tribunals may exercise jurisdiction over civilians in cases involving civil unrest or organized armed violence. Various intelligence agencies operate with impunity, and opposition activists are often held without charge or disappear while in custody. Indefinite pretrial detention under extremely harsh conditions is permitted either after a warrant is issued or in order to "combat banditry." Torture and ill-treatment of prisoners and detainees are routine, and inmates routinely die in prison. Amnesty International called for an investigation into reports that dozens of extrajudicial executions were carried out in 2002 as part of an anticrime campaign. Despite repeated requests, the Cameroonian government has never granted entry to Amnesty International's representatives. In the north, traditional chiefs known as *lamibee* control their own private militias, courts, and prisons, which are used against the regime's political opponents.

Cameroon's population consists of nearly 200 ethnic groups. The Beti and Bula ethnic groups dominate the civil service and state-run businesses. Slavery reportedly persists in parts of the north, and discrimination exists against indigenous groups and ethnic minorities, particularly the Baka.

Approximately one-fourth of Cameroonians are Anglophone. Anglophone groups claim systemic discrimination, though some Francophone groups complain of similar treatment. The SCNC sent a formal request to the UN Human Rights Council in December 2006, asking the UN to investigate violations in Anglophone parts of the country.

Security forces routinely impede domestic travel, extracting bribes at checkpoints and roadblocks. Refugee and immigrant populations complain that they are singled out for harassment.

Discrimination against women is widespread. Women are often denied inheritance and landownership rights, even when these are codified, and many other laws contain unequal, gender-based provisions and penalties. Violence against women is common. Cameroon is a transit center and market for child labor and traffickers. Abortion is prohibited, except in cases of rape or to preserve the life of the mother. Homosexuality is culturally taboo and illegal, but emerged as a subject of public debate in 2006 after various media outlets published allegations of homosexual behavior against members of the government and other prominent figures.

Canada

Population: 32,600,000

Capital: Ottawa

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

After years in power, the Liberal Party found itself in opposition following a Conservative triumph in the January 2006 elections. The year was also marked by the arrest of a group charged with planning major terrorist actions against key Canadian targets, continued controversy over the application of counterterrorism policies, and renewed questions about the future status of Quebec in a unified Canada.

Colonized by French and British settlers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Canada came under the control of the British Crown under the terms of the Treaty of Paris in 1763. After granting home rule in 1867, Britain retained a theoretic-

cal right to overrule the Canadian Parliament until 1982, when Canadians established complete control over their own constitution.

The June 2004 legislative elections dealt a setback to the Liberal Party, which failed to retain a majority and was compelled to depend on support from smaller parties, in particular the New Democratic Party (NDP), a social democrat-oriented party with ties to organized labor. A major factor in the Liberals' electoral setback was a scandal, the origins of which date to the mid-1990s, involving kickbacks to Liberal Party officials by advertising firms in the province of Quebec in exchange for contracts to do work for a national unity campaign.

New elections were called after the minority government of Prime Minister Paul Martin fell to a no-confidence vote in November 2005. Martin, a Liberal, was seriously weakened by the release of a report that blamed high-ranking members of the Liberal Party, including former prime minister Jean Chretien, for the scandal that had cost the Liberals their parliamentary majority the previous year. At the time of Parliament's dissolution, the Liberals held 133 seats in the House of Commons, followed by the Conservatives with 98, the Bloc Quebecois, a separatist-oriented party with 53, and the NDP with 18.

In the January 2006 parliamentary elections, the Conservatives emerged as the country's leading party, with 124 seats in the House of Commons. This was well short of a majority, however, so the party was forced to rule as a minority government. The Liberals finished second, with 103 seats, followed by the Bloc Quebecois, with 51, and the NDP, with 29. Under the leadership of Stephen Harper, who became prime minister, the Conservatives ran a campaign that emphasized tax reductions, health-care improvements, anticorruption efforts, and closer ties with the United States.

Since the attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, Canada has implemented a series of measures to combat international terrorism, including stopping the transfer of funds to foreign terrorist groups and a comprehensive bilateral agreement with the United States on improving cross-border security. Several anti-terrorism measures have drawn criticism on civil liberties grounds, including the 2004 Security of Information Act and two provisions of an omnibus antiterrorism bill that allow police to make preventive arrests of those suspected of planning a terrorist act and require suspects to testify before a judge, even if they have not been formally accused of a crime.

In June 2006, a group of 12 men and 5 youths were arrested and charged with planning a major terrorist operation in the country. According to authorities, the plans included storming Parliament, beheading the prime minister, and possibly bombing the Toronto Stock Exchange and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. All the suspects were Muslims, and most were Canadian citizens. Authorities said the suspects had acquired material to make explosives and were inspired by al-Qaeda, the international terrorist network.

At the same time, several aspects of Canada's antiterrorism policy came under renewed legal pressure. In one development, a judge ruled that a provision of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2001 requiring authorities to prove that terrorism offenses are motivated by political, religious, or ideological motives was in violation of the country's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In another decision, a court struck down provisions of the country's secrecy law. That case stemmed from efforts by the

authorities to discover the source of leaked government information used by a journalist, whose home and office were raided in 2003 by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The leaks in question had involved Maher Arar, a dual citizen of Canada and Syria, who had been detained by U.S. authorities in 2002 while transiting the United States—based on information provided by Canadian authorities—and was deported to Syria, where he claims to have been tortured. Arar was cleared of any terrorist links by a formal inquiry, and a letter of protest was sent to the United States for its role in the case. Some believe that the judge's decision will have the broader effect of strengthening protections to the principle of confidentiality of journalists' sources.

In a related issue, political leaders voiced some criticism over the participation of Canadian troops in the NATO forces fighting against a resurgent Taliban militia in Afghanistan. There were a number of Canadian casualties in 2006, and opinion polls showed declining public support for the country's involvement in the struggle. The NDP, the most left-leaning of the country's major parties, has taken a strong stance in favor of withdrawing troops from Afghanistan. The government, however, has reiterated its intention to continue participation in the NATO effort.

Prime Minister Harper reopened the debate over the status of Quebec when he declared that the predominantly French-speaking province should be recognized as a nation "within a unified Canada." Quebec has had a tenuous relationship with the federal government, and the provincial Parti Quebecois has in the past pressed for withdrawal from Canada. While independence has been rejected by Quebec voters in several referendums, the margins were narrow. Quebec provincial politics has in recent years been dominated by a federalist-oriented Liberal Party.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Canada is an electoral democracy. The country is governed by a prime minister, cabinet, and Parliament, which consists of an elected 308-member House of Commons and an appointed 105-member Senate. Elections for the lower house are held at least every five years, and senators may serve until age 75. The British monarch remains nominal head of state, represented by a ceremonial governor-general appointed by the prime minister. As a result of government canvassing, Canada has nearly 100 percent-effective voter registration. Prisoners have the right to vote in federal elections, as do citizens who have lived abroad for fewer than five years.

Civil liberties have been protected since 1982 by the federal Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but have been limited by the constitutional "notwithstanding" clause, which permits provincial governments to exempt themselves by applying individual provisions within their jurisdictions. Quebec has used the clause to retain its provincial language law, which restricts the use of languages other than French on signs. The provincial governments exercise significant autonomy.

In 2004, the Supreme Court issued a decision validating legislation that places a limit on the amount lobbying groups can spend on advertisements that support or oppose political candidates, a measure designed to prevent corruption. The kick-back scandal aside, Canada is regarded as a society with a low level of official corruption and was ranked 14 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The media are generally free, although they exercise self-censorship in areas such as violence on television. Limitations on freedom of expression range from

unevenly enforced "hate laws" and restrictions on pornography to rules on reporting. Some civil libertarians have expressed concern over an amendment to the criminal code that gives judges wide latitude in determining what constitutes hate speech in material that appears on the internet.

Religious expression is free and diverse. Academic freedom is respected.

Freedom of assembly is respected, and many political and quasi-political organizations function freely. Trade unions and business associations enjoy high levels of membership and are free and well organized.

The judiciary is independent. Recently, there have been complaints that the judiciary has become overly activist and issued decisions that effectively usurp the powers of the legislature. Canada's criminal law is based on British common law and is uniform throughout the country. Civil law is also based on the British system, except in Quebec, where it is based on the French civil code.

Canada maintains relatively liberal immigration policies. However, concern has mounted over the possible entry into Canada of immigrants involved in terrorist missions. The 2002 Immigration and Refugee Protection Act seeks to continue the tradition of liberal immigration by providing additional protection for refugees while making it more difficult for potential terrorists, people involved in organized crime, and war criminals to enter the country. Recently, human rights organizations have charged that Canada has deported immigrants to countries that practice torture. The Canadian government contends that in such cases, assurances have been made by the receiving country that the deported individual will not be subjected to torture. At the same time, controversy has arisen over Canada's policies of multiculturalism in education, law, and social life. This emerged during a debate in Ontario province over whether to allow Sharia law to apply in certain cases involving Muslim citizens. Some officials have also raised questions about Canada's policy of allowing immigrants to maintain dual citizenship. About 10 percent of foreign-born Canadians hold passports from another country, leading some to charge that for some immigrants, Canadian citizenship is primarily a safety net, while they maintain principal loyalty to their country of origin.

Canada has taken important steps to protect the rights of native groups, although some contend that indigenous peoples remain subject to discrimination. Indigenous groups continue to lag badly on practically every social indicator, including those for education, health, and unemployment. During 2006, a dispute erupted over claims by Indian groups to land being commercially developed in Caledonia, a town 50 miles from Toronto. Activists from the Six Nations occupied the land, set up barricades, and blocked traffic. After several clashes, the provincial government bought the property and began negotiations with the Six Nations.

Canada became one of the few countries in the world to have legalized same-sex marriage in 2005. Several provinces had authorized the practice before the federal legislation was enacted.

Canada boasts a generous welfare system that supplements the largely open, competitive economy.

Women's rights are protected in law and practice. Women have made major gains in the economy and have strong representation in such professions as medicine and law. However, women's rights advocates report high rates of violence against women in indigenous communities.

Cape Verde

Population: 500,000

Capital: Praia

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: Presidential and legislative elections, considered free and fair by the international community, were held in early 2006. The incumbent African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV) won both, ensuring a legislative majority and a new five-year mandate for President Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires. The country enjoyed a boost in its international image in June when NATO conducted training exercises in the archipelago. At the urging of the European Union, the government announced in September that it would pass new restrictions on entry for people from other West African nations in an effort to curb illegal immigration to Europe.

After achieving independence from Portugal in 1975, Cape Verde was governed for 16 years under Marxist, one-party rule by the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, now the PAICV. In 1991, in the country's first democratic elections after becoming the first former Portuguese colony in Africa to abandon Marxist political and economic systems, the Movement for Democracy (MPD) won a landslide victory. In 1995, the MPD was returned to power with 59 percent of the vote. Antonio Mascarenhas Monteiro's mandate ended in 2001, after he had served two terms as president.

Cape Verde had a spectacularly close presidential election in 2001. In the second round of voting, opposition candidate Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires defeated ruling party contender Carlos Alberto Wahnnon de Carvalho Veiga by 12 votes in an election that overturned a decade of rule by the MPD. Despite the closeness of the election, trust remained in the country's institutions, and the results were accepted.

In local elections held in March 2004, the PAICV faced a serious challenge from the opposition MPD, which defeated the ruling party in several of its traditional strongholds. The MPD's president, Agostinho Lopes, claimed that there had been irregularities in the voters' rolls of some polling stations, though international observers concluded that the elections had been free and fair.

In legislative elections in January 2006, the PAICV won a majority of the 72 seats in the National Assembly, taking 41 as compared to the MPD's 29. The Democratic and Independent Cape Verdean Union, a smaller opposition party, won the remaining two seats. Pires of the PAICV won a new five-year mandate in the presidential

election that followed in February, with 51.2 percent of the vote. His closest rival, Veiga, who had run against him in 2001 only to be defeated by a dozen votes, claimed that the results were fraudulent, though election monitors from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) deemed them free and fair.

Following the elections, the government announced that it would prioritize economic growth and competitiveness. Cape Verde is one of Africa's smallest and poorest countries, and it suffers from unemployment rates of roughly 50 percent. Foreign aid and remittances by Cape Verdean expatriates provide a large portion of national income. Only 11 percent of the archipelago's land is arable. However, in 2006, the International Monetary Fund, which had reported in 2005 that economic growth levels were increasing, agreed to include Cape Verde in a new program aimed at improving fiscal discipline and overseas investment. Cape Verde also benefited from international aid during the year. In January, the European Commission granted Cape Verde 12.5 million euros (US\$15.8 million) for poverty alleviation, and in June, the World Bank approved a credit of US\$10 million to support growth and fight poverty. It was the second in a planned series of three credits.

For several weeks in June 2006, NATO held training exercises in Cape Verde, which provided an opportunity for local officials to boost the country's international image and draw attention to its credentials as a stable bulwark in a strategic region between Africa and Western Europe. While Defense Minister Cristina Fontes stated that the exercises could be a step toward developing a cooperative partnership with NATO similar to those enjoyed by several North African nations, this possibility was downplayed by NATO officials.

Large numbers of migrants from other African countries continued to dock on the islands of Cape Verde seeking further transit to Europe. In September, reportedly at the urging of the European Union, Prime Minister Jose Maria Pereira Neves announced that Cape Verde would enact new restrictions on the entry of people from mainland West Africa, despite an agreement under ECOWAS granting free movement to people and goods within the 15-country territory. The Associated Press reported that Spain was planning to send Coast Guard ships to help Cape Verde patrol its waters.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Cape Verde is an electoral democracy. The president and members of the 72-seat National Assembly are elected by universal suffrage for five-year terms. International observers considered the 2006 presidential and legislative elections to be free and fair. The opposition candidate for president, Carlos Alberto Wahnnon de Carvalho Veiga, charged that the presidential results were tainted by fraud; however, the results were upheld in the courts and generally accepted by the people.

The left-leaning African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde, or PAICV, has dominated Cape Verde for much of its postindependence history. The main opposition party is the centrist Movement for Democracy (MPD). The only other party to hold seats in Parliament is the much smaller Democratic and Independent Cape Verdean Union.

In an October 2006 op-ed, Prime Minister Neves claimed that Cape Verde had "zero" corruption. While the actual toll of corruption is difficult to gauge, the country has repeatedly been singled out by donor nations and international organiza-

tions for good governance. The U.S. government gave the country a vote of confidence in 2005 by agreeing to provide \$110 million in aid from the Millennium Challenge Account, based on a positive evaluation of its good governance and anti-corruption initiatives. In October 2006, the World Bank praised Cape Verde, along with a handful of other African countries, for having "lifted significant percentages of [its] citizens above the poverty line." The government has made efforts to fight corruption and has acknowledged corruption in the customs department. It has adopted laws and regulations to combat corruption, which is a criminally punishable offense. Cape Verde was not ranked in the 2006 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index

Freedoms of expression and of the press are guaranteed and generally respected in practice. While government authorization is needed to publish newspapers and other publications, there were no reports of licenses denied or revoked in 2006. There is a small but robust independent press, with six independent radio broadcasters and one state-run radio broadcaster, in addition to one state-run television station and two foreign-owned stations. Criticism of the government by state-run media is limited by self-censorship resulting from citizens' fear of demotion or dismissal. The Cape Verdean Association of Journalists said in May 2005 that press freedom was improving in the country. Citizens enjoy liberal access to the Internet, and local media have increased their online presence in recent years, which has resulted in a wider reach for the independent press.

Religious freedom is respected in practice, and the constitution requires the separation of church and state. However, the vast majority of Cape Verdeans belong to the Roman Catholic Church, whose followers enjoy a somewhat privileged status. Academic freedom is respected.

Freedom of assembly and association are guaranteed and respected in practice. Human rights groups, including the National Commission on the Rights of Man and the Ze Moniz Association for Solidarity and Development, operate freely. The constitution also protects the right to unionize, and workers may form and join unions without restriction. Although collective bargaining is permitted, it occurs rarely. According to a U.S. State Department report released in early 2006, the government sometimes limits the right to strike by reserving the right to name a list of "minimum services" unionized workers must continue to provide. According to the report, attempts to convene an independent body to rule on the validity of such requirements have so far been fruitless.

The judiciary is independent, although understaffed and inefficient, and cases are frequently delayed. In recent years, attacks on members of the judiciary, including the attorney general, have been reported, and some magistrates have requested personal protection. Drug traffickers were suspected of being behind some of the attacks, in which prominent businesspeople have also been targeted. In the past there have been reports that police beat persons in custody or detention, though there was no prominent incident in 2006. Although the government investigated the allegations, no legal action was taken against the alleged perpetrators. Prison conditions are poor and characterized by overcrowding. In December 2005, a riot broke out in a prison near Praia when prisoners' relatives were asked to stagger their visits during the Christmas holidays because of overcrowding. One person was reported dead in the riot.

Ethnic divisions are not a problem in Cape Verde, although tensions occasionally flare between the authorities and West African immigrants.

Three new women were elected to Parliament in the January elections, bringing the postelection total of women legislators to 11. However, discrimination against women persists despite legal prohibitions against gender discrimination as well as provisions for social and economic equality. In August 2006 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women released a report praising Cape Verde's progress since independence in women's education and advances made by women in the judicial and diplomatic fields. Yet, the report concluded that the government needed to expand the role of women in politics and strengthen its data-collection capabilities in order to better monitor women's status in society.

At the encouragement of the government and civil society, more women are reporting criminal offenses such as spousal abuse or rape. The government amended the penal code in 2004 to include sex crimes and verbal and mental abuse against women and children as punishable acts. The government is a signatory to the African Protocol on the Rights of Women, which came into force in November 2005. The protocol seeks to set international legal precedents for women's rights, such as the criminalization of female genital mutilation and the prohibition of abuse of women in advertising and pornography.

Central African Republic

Population: 4,300,000

Capital: Bangui

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,5PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	7,5NF	6,5NF	5,4PF	5,4PF

Overview: Security and humanitarian conditions worsened in the northwest region of the Central African Republic (CAR), where rebel groups, bandits, and government forces battle each other and indiscriminately target citizens. President Francois Bozize ruled by presidential decree from January to March 2006, ostensibly to address corruption, poor governance, and civil service reform.

The Central African Republic (CAR) gained independence from France in 1960, after a period of brutal colonial exploitation. Colonel Jean-Bedel Bokassa seized power from President David Dacko in a 1966 coup. Bokassa exercised absolute power, and on December 4, 1976, the republic became a monarchy with the proclamation of the

president as Emperor Bokassa I. His increasingly bizarre personal dictatorship was marked by numerous human rights atrocities. With the backing of French forces, former president Dacko led a coup against Bokassa in 1979. Dacko was in turn deposed by General Andre Kolingba in 1981.

Mounting political pressure led Kolingba in 1991 to introduce a multiparty system through the creation of a national commission tasked initially with rewriting the constitution. Ange-Felix Patasse, leader of the Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People (MLPC), won a second-round victory in rescheduled elections in October 1993. Salary arrears, labor unrest, and unequal treatment of military officers from different ethnic groups led to three mutinies against the Patasse government in 1996 and 1997. French forces quelled the disturbances, and an African peacekeeping force occupied the capital, Bangui, until 1998, when it was relieved by a UN peacekeeping mission.

Patasse was reelected to a six-year term in September 1999. Although international observers judged the 1999 vote to be free, there were reports of irregularities. Kolingba and other candidates claimed fraud.

UN peacekeepers withdrew in February 2000 and were replaced by a UN peacebuilding office. In May 2001, Kolingba led a failed coup attempt.

In the country's fourth coup since independence, General Francois Bozize deposed Patasse in March 2003 after six months of fighting between government troops and renegade soldiers loyal to Bozize. Patasse fled into exile in Togo, where Bozize's regime sought his arrest on corruption charges. Following the coup, Bozize created a National Transitional Council with delegates from the country's 16 provinces, as well as from all political, social, religious, and professional associations in the country. Bozize issued a general amnesty for the participants in the 2001 failed coup and lifted a 2002 death sentence imposed in absentia upon Kolingba.

An independent electoral commission was created to oversee elections in 2005, and a new constitution was drafted with the participation of a broad cross-section of the population. Voter turnout for a December 2004 constitutional referendum reached 77 percent, with 90 percent approving the new constitution.

Although marked by delays and disputes over eligibility requirements, the first round of presidential and parliamentary elections was held in March 2005. Despite earlier claims that he would not run for president, Bozize ran as an independent candidate with the backing of the National Convergence Kwa Na Kwa, a grouping of smaller parties, military officials, and political leaders. Kolingba also ran, while former prime minister Martin Ziguele took up the banner of Patasse's MLPC. Bozize won with 65 percent of the vote in a runoff against Ziguele. Kwa Na Kwa obtained 42 of 105 parliamentary seats in the National Assembly, while the MLPC won 11. Several of the smaller parties and independent candidates who won seats subsequently joined Kwa Na Kwa to assert majority control over the legislature.

From January to March 2006, Bozize ruled by presidential decree with the approval of the National Assembly, ostensibly to fight corruption and money laundering in government, and to implement civil service reform. Though criticized by civil society groups, Bozize used his powers to meet recurrent economic challenges by, for example, raising prices on basic commodities in order to address months of civil service salary arrears.

Security and humanitarian conditions in the CAR worsened in 2006, particularly

in the northwestern part of the country, where rebels seeking to overthrow the Bozize government, mercenaries from Chad and Sudan, bandits, and CAR security forces battled each other and indiscriminately targeted civilians. Between 150,000 and 200,000 citizens were displaced by conflict over the year. Thousands of citizens shelter precariously in the bush, while many others have sought refuge in neighboring countries. Military operations during the year by the regular army and troops of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) to secure the north have been largely ineffective. The French government announced in July 2006 that it would increase military aid to assist the government in restoring peace and stability to the region.

Despite abundant natural resources including diamonds, gold, uranium, and timber, the CAR is one of the least developed countries in the world, and approximately 80 percent of the population depends on subsistence agriculture to survive. Two decades of conflict led to economic and social collapse. The government began in late 2005 to address the arrears that had accumulated after years of nonpayment of civil service salaries, but the country's limited tax base cannot meet government expenditures. The economy suffered further in 2006 from declining security conditions and political turmoil, while population displacement has had a negative effect on agricultural yields. The International Monetary Fund approved \$10.2 million in emergency postconflict assistance to support reform efforts in January 2006, and other donors have since increased aid flows.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The CAR is an electoral democracy. Approximately 300 international and domestic election monitors observed and reported favorably on the voting-day process for presidential and parliamentary polls in March 2005. An independent electoral commission comprised of 10 representatives of political parties, 10 from civil society, and 10 from the transitional government oversaw the election. President Francois Bozize won a six-year term, while representatives from seven parties and 34 independent candidates won five-year terms in the unicameral, 109-member National Assembly. The president has wide powers, and the executive branch of government predominates over the legislative and judicial branches. The president is limited to two elected terms in office.

Though Kwa Na Kwa is the country's dominant political force, other political parties operate freely, including former president Ange-Felix Patasse's MLPC and the party of General Andre Kolingba, the Central African Democratic Assembly.

Corruption is a serious problem in the CAR. The country is the world's fifth-largest producer of diamonds, but approximately half of its diamond exports are smuggled out of the country privately. Some steps have been taken toward reform, and in September 2005, the government began cooperating with Transparency International to gather information on the scope of corruption in the country. Three government ministers were fired in 2006 for fraud in the payment of civil service salaries. The CAR ranks at 130 out of 163 countries in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government generally respects the right to free speech, but many journalists practice self-censorship. Legislation adopted in late 2004 eliminated prison sentences in slander or libel cases, but journalists still face prison terms for inciting

persons to hatred or violence. In late 2005, the government announced penalties for articles in the broadcast or print media deemed disrespectful of women. Broadcast media are dominated by the state, though private radio stations carrying mostly music- or religion-oriented programming exist. Private newspapers carry articles critical of the government, but have limited impact because of the cost and the country's low literacy rates. Security considerations prevent journalists from traveling beyond the capital or reporting on conditions in the volatile northwest. There are no restrictions on internet access.

Religious freedom is generally respected. Many university faculty members and students are politically active, and they are able to express their views without fear of reprisal.

The government generally respects the freedoms of assembly and association, and several hundred human rights and other civic organizations operate unhindered. The largest single employer is the government, and government employee trade unions are active. In December 2005, police sealed the headquarters of the largest trade union and prevented striking civil servants from holding a rally, though the labor minister subsequently acknowledged that the police had acted illegally in violating workers' rights. In 2006, human rights organizations, religious groups, trade unions, and women's and youth groups participated in peaceful protests against growing violence, especially in the northwest, and continued poor governance.

Corruption, political interference, and lack of training hinder the efficiency and impartiality of judicial institutions. Judges are appointed by the president, and judicial proceedings are prone to executive influence. Limitations on searches and detention are often ignored. Although the penal code prohibits torture and specifies sanctions for those found guilty of physical abuse, police brutality is a serious problem. Conditions for prisoners, including many long-term, pretrial detainees, are sometimes life-threatening and aggravated by dilapidated facilities. The military, including members of the Presidential Guard, and armed groups committed serious human rights violations during 2006, particularly in northwestern parts of the country.

Members of northern ethnic groups, especially Bozize's Baya ethnic group, predominate within the military and at increasing levels of government to the exclusion of other groups. Discrimination against indigenous ethnic groups, such as the Aka, persists.

Instability in the country outside of Bangui restricts the movement of citizens, as well as the protection of property.

Constitutional guarantees for women's rights are not enforced, especially in rural areas. Violence against women is common, and the incidence of rape has increased in conflict areas. Female genital mutilation is still practiced, but has been illegal since 1996 and is reportedly diminishing. Abortion is prohibited. The law does not prohibit trafficking in persons, and there have been reports in previous years that orphaned children were trafficked for the purposes of domestic servitude or for work in commercial enterprises.

Chad

Population: 10,000,000

Capital: N'Djamena

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 6*

Status: Not Free



Ratings Change: Chad's civil liberties rating declined from 5 to 6 due to increased insecurity in the eastern part of the country as a result of the crisis in neighboring Sudan's Darfur region.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6.5NF	6.4NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.6NF

Overview: Chad's 2006 presidential election was marked by rebel attacks on the capital, an opposition boycott, and low voter turnout. Skirmishes between government forces and rebel groups continued throughout the year, and the government declared a state of emergency in November 2006. The World Bank suspended, but later restored, aid during the year after the government abrogated an agreement to set aside oil profits for future generations. Chad broke off relations with Sudan in 2006 over allegations of support for Chadian dissidents, but restored ties in an uneasy truce following an agreement between the two countries to expel rebel groups operating in each other's territory. Meanwhile, the eastern part of Chad saw increased insecurity as a result of the crisis in Sudan's Darfur region.

Civil war and rebellions have been commonplace in Chad since independence from France in 1960. In 1989, Idriss Deby, a leading military commander, launched an insurgency from Sudan against Hissene Habre, whose one-party regime had been in power since 1981. Habre's dictatorship was marked by widespread atrocities against individuals and ethnic groups perceived as threats to the regime. With support from Libya and no opposition from French troops stationed in Chad, Deby overthrew Habre in 1990.

Elections were held in 1996, despite threats posed by ongoing rebel insurgencies. Deby won in the second round, and his Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) party won 63 of 125 seats in the following year's legislative elections. International observers noted serious irregularities in both elections.

In 2001, Deby was reelected president with more than 67 percent of the vote. Alleging widespread fraud, the six opposition candidates called for the results to be annulled and were briefly arrested. The government subsequently banned gatherings of more than 20 people, although political protests continued.

The number of parliamentary seats was increased to 155 in 2000, and the

ruling MPS won another majority with 110 seats in the 2002 legislative elections. An allied party won 12 seats, with smaller parties and independent candidates taking the remainder. Several opposition parties boycotted the polls.

In 2005, a constitutional amendment eliminating presidential term limits passed in a referendum with approximately 71 percent of the vote. There were reports of widespread irregularities in the voter registration process, and the government muzzled independent media outlets during the campaign period.

The National Assembly voted in 2006 to extend its term in office through 2007, ostensibly because of the high cost of organizing presidential and legislative polls concurrently.

Tensions rose markedly before the May 2006 presidential election, to include several assassination attempts against Deby. A number of senior military and political figures defected from Deby's government to join various dissident groups active in the eastern part of the country, several of whom launched attacks on the capital on the eve of the election. The polls were held as scheduled, despite a boycott by major opposition groups and widespread calls from both domestic groups and members of the international community for the election's postponement. Deby was declared the winner with more than 60 percent of the vote.

According to UN estimates, Chad is host to a growing refugee population that numbered over 300,000 in December 2006. Sudanese fleeing the Darfur conflict comprise the majority, though rising numbers are Chadians displaced by internal conflict and increased lawlessness in eastern Chad, as well as refugees from the Central African Republic. Chad broke diplomatic relations with Sudan in April 2006 over allegations of increased Sudanese support for Chadian rebel activity, including attacks on the capital. Relations were restored in August 2006 after the signing of an agreement between the two countries to begin expelling rebel groups from their territories. By the end of 2006, however, relations between the two countries had deteriorated amid reports of continuing Sudanese support for Chadian rebels.

With French military support, Chadian military forces launched a renewed assault against rebel forces in September. Heavy fighting between government and rebel forces in November and December led many international humanitarian organizations to withdraw staff from the region. In response to growing insecurity, the government declared a six-month state of emergency in November 2006 for most of the eastern part of the country, as well as the capital, N'Djamena. In December, private newspapers suspended publication, and several radio stations altered programming to protest state censorship under the state of emergency.

Despite its mineral wealth, which includes millions of dollars in oil revenues earned since 2004, Chad is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. In return for World Bank financing of loans to cover its stake in the oil industry, Chad promised to spend 80 percent of its oil revenue on development projects, and to set aside 10 percent of revenues for future generations. Since late 2005, however, the government has sought to exert greater control over oil revenues. In January 2006, the World Bank suspended loans to the country following the government's announcement that it would scrap the 2004 agreement to preserve funds for future generations. Negotiations between the bank and the government led to a new agreement in July 2006, with Chad agreeing to devote 70 percent of its budget to poverty reduction programs.

In response to an international arrest warrant issued in Belgium in 2005 charging Habre with crimes against humanity committed during his 1982-1990 dictatorship, the African Union ruled in 2006 that he could be prosecuted in Senegal, where he lives in exile.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Chad is not an electoral democracy; the country has never experienced a free and fair transfer of power through elections.

The electoral commission is dominated by representatives from the government and parties of the ruling coalition. The passage by referendum of a constitutional amendment abolishing term limits for the president further eroded democratic rights in 2005. The country's main opposition groups boycotted the 2006 presidential election, though international observers, most of whom were invited by the government, declared the election credible. Voter turnout figures were widely disputed and, according to some accounts, may have been as low as 10 percent.

The 155 members of the unicameral National Assembly are elected for four-year terms, though a majority of members voted in 2006 to extend their current term to 2007. The president is elected for a five-year term.

Approximately 70 political parties exist legally, though a number of these were created by the government to divide the opposition. With the exception of the ruling MPS, their influence is limited. Despite infighting and rivalry among members of Idriss Deby's northeastern Zaghawa ethnic group, Zaghawa control over Chad's political and economic levers is a source of ongoing resentment among the more than 200 other ethnic groups in the country.

Corruption is rampant among members of Deby's inner circle. Weaknesses in revenue management and oversight mechanisms facilitate the diversion of the country's oil revenues from national development for both personal gain and to fund growing military expenditures. The government's decision in late 2005 to amend provisions of the oil law in order to assert greater direct control over revenues has increased opportunities for graft. Chad was ranked 156 out of 163 in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is increasingly limited in Chad, and even independent journalists practice self-censorship. There are a number of private newspapers that circulate in the capital and carry articles critical of the government, but these have limited impact on the overwhelmingly illiterate population. Radio is the principal means of communication, and broadcast media are controlled by the state. The High Council of Communications, Chad's media regulatory body, exerts control over the content of most radio broadcasts and limits private outlets through high licensing fees. Radio Brakos, a small independent station, has been repeatedly closed by the government. The manager, an Iranian expatriate who has lived in Chad for several decades, was arrested and imprisoned in April 2006 after calling for the postponement of the presidential election, but was released the following month. Journalists attempting to cover events in eastern Chad do so at great personal risk, and several have been abducted by rebel or government forces. There are no restrictions on internet access, though the government reportedly monitors e-mail communications.

Though Chad's constitution provides for a secular state, religion is a divisive force in society. A disproportionately large number of senior government officials

are Muslims, and some policies favor Islam in practice, such as the sponsorship of annual *hajj* trips to Mecca by members of the government. Islamic congregations are viewed as having preferential status, particularly when requesting official approval to conduct certain activities. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Despite harassment and occasional physical intimidation, Chadian human rights groups operate openly and publish findings critical of the government. The worsening security situation in N'Djamena and parts of eastern and southern Chad has made it increasingly difficult for members of these groups to travel and carry out many of their activities, however. The right to organize and to strike is generally respected. Striking civil servants were successful in 2006 in their attempts to negotiate a wage increase with the government.

The rule of law and the judicial system remain weak, with courts heavily influenced by the executive. Civilian authorities do not maintain effective control of the security forces, which routinely ignore constitutional protections regarding search, seizure, and detention. Human rights groups credibly charge Chadian security forces and rebel groups with killing and torturing with impunity. Overcrowding, disease, and malnutrition make prison conditions life-threatening, and many inmates spend years in prison without being charged.

Interethnic clashes are common between the Nilotic and Bantu Christian farmers, who inhabit the country's south, and the Arab Saharan peoples who occupy the deserts of northern Chad. Turmoil resulting from ethnic and religious differences is exacerbated by clan rivalries and external interference along the insecure borders. Discrimination against Chadians who are not members of the Zaghawa ethnic group or its allies is common. Tens of thousands of Chadians have fled the country to escape politically inspired violence and general insecurity caused by banditry. Conflict along the border with Sudan, increased efforts by rebel groups to topple Deby's government, and growing lawlessness in N'Djamena and elsewhere have made life increasingly insecure for a growing segment of Chad's population.

The government restricts the movement of citizens within the country, a practice that increased in 2006 as a result of conflict and insecurity. There were reports during 2006 of forced military conscription to combat the growing insurgency and conflict with the Sudanese janjaweed along the Darfur border.

Widespread discrimination and violence against women exists. Female genital mutilation is illegal but routinely practiced by a number of ethnic groups. Abortion is prohibited, with exceptions to preserve the physical health of the mother or in case of fetal impairment. Prostitution, also illegal, is a growing problem in the southern oil-producing region.

Chile

Population: 16,400,000

Capital: Santiago

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,2F	3,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: Former defense and health minister Michelle Bachelet, of the center-left Concertacion coalition, was elected as Chile's first female president on January 15, 2006. She is the first president to enjoy a majority in both houses of Congress since the country returned to civilian rule in 1990. Her administration was shaken in May and June by massive student demonstrations demanding increased public investment in the education system, a greater expectation given record-high copper prices. As the price of copper increased by 83 percent from its 2005 to 2006 average, the Chilean government as well as the country's mining companies enjoyed billions of dollars of additional revenue.

The Republic of Chile was founded after independence from Spain in 1818. Democratic rule predominated in the twentieth century until the 1973 overthrow of President Salvador Allende by the military led by General Augusto Pinochet. An estimated 3,000 people were killed or "disappeared" during his regime. The 1980 constitution provided for a plebiscite in which voters could reject another presidential term for Pinochet. In the 1988 vote, 55 percent of voters rejected eight more years of military rule, and competitive presidential and legislative elections were scheduled for the following year.

In 1989, Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin, the candidate of the center-left Concertacion (Coalition for Parties of Democracy), was elected president, and the Concertacion won a majority in the Chamber of Deputies. In the December 1993 elections, Eduardo Frei, a businessman and the son of a former president, carried the Concertacion candidacy to an easy victory. Frei promised to establish full civilian control over the military, but he found he lacked the votes in Congress, as the 48-seat Senate included a senator-for-life position for Pinochet and nine designated senators mandated by the 1980 constitution. Frei was also forced to retreat on his call for full accountability for rights violations that had occurred under military rule.

In the first step in what would become a years-long effort to hold Pinochet responsible for the atrocities committed during the dirty war, in 1998 the former president was detained in London under an extradition order from Spain.

In the December 1999 presidential election, Ricardo Lagos, a moderate socialist,

defeated center-right Alliance coalition candidate Joaquín Lavín, a former adviser to Pinochet. Lagos's strong popularity was temporarily challenged by ongoing unemployment, price increases, and charges of government corruption in late 2000. Though Lagos remained popular throughout his tenure, political corruption scandals dominated the headlines in 2003 in Chile, which had been viewed as a regional leader in clean government and transparency. Incidents of influence peddling, insider trading, and kickbacks resulted in the head of the central bank and two cabinet members—one a presidential confidant—leaving their jobs. In response to the corruption scandals, Lagos forged a working alliance with the opposition's strongest party to push for reforms to eliminate official corruption.

The December 2005 presidential campaign offered the ruling coalition an opportunity to showcase its economic stewardship, represented by massive public works projects sprouting up around the country. Michelle Bachelet, who was Lagos's health and defense minister, benefited from her association with a government that presided over one of Latin America's most impressive economic booms. With campaign promises to tackle inequality while maintaining economic discipline, Bachelet was elected president in the required second-round runoff on January 15, 2006, in which she comfortably defeated Sebastián Piñera of the Alianza coalition by 53.5 to 46.5 percent. Because of Concertación's strong performance in the 2005 elections and a reform that eliminated the institution of unelected senators, she became the first president to enjoy majorities in both houses of Congress: the Concertación holds 65 of the 120 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 20 of the 38 seats in the Senate through 2010.

High expectations for Bachelet's administration contributed to six weeks of massive student demonstrations in May and June 2006; an estimated 600,000 students called for improvements in the country's education system and reforms in the regulations that they claimed hurt poor families. The World Economic Forum's 2006-2007 Global Competitiveness Report ranked Chile 27th among world nations in economic competitiveness—far ahead of the rest of Latin America. However, it ranks 76^h in this same report for the quality of its overall education system, below many other countries with similar income levels. In response to the strike, Bachelet reshuffled her cabinet and set up a comprehensive national advisory committee to advise on education reform. Copper miners as well as thousands of health care workers and teachers conducted similar protests in September 2006 demanding pay raises, marking another claim on the dividend from the copper boom.

Chile's economy benefited in 2006 from a record-high price of copper, which accounts for 45 percent of exports. While maintaining her commitment to fiscal discipline, Bachelet announced plans to use part of the billions in proceeds to invest in health, housing, and education. Specifically, she committed to a one-time grant of \$35 to each of 1.2 million low-income families (a small yet symbolically important amount), the construction of new hospitals and nursery schools, and the financing of student scholarships for poor students.

The long-running case against Pinochet came to a close with the former dictator's death in December 2006, just a few months after prior decisions were reversed. Recent developments in the case include a 2004 indictment for tax evasion after the discovery that Pinochet had hidden more than \$27 million in foreign accounts and subsequent revelation that the money had come from drugs and arms

dealing. After Pinochet's arrest in London and voluntary return to Chile, efforts to try the general on human rights charges were dropped three times as the Supreme Court ruled him unfit to undergo trial for health reasons. However, he remained under indictment in two outstanding human rights cases—one involving kidnapping and torture at a detention center where political dissidents, including Bachelet and her mother, had once been held. Reversing prior decisions, in September 2006, the Supreme Court stripped him of his immunity for this case. Before he could be tried again, however, Pinochet died in Chile on December 10, 2006.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Chile is an electoral democracy. Elections are considered free and fair, although low registration rates among young voters are a cause for concern. In 2004, a report from the Chilean Youth Institute said that the registry of young Chileans in the country's electoral rolls dropped by 50 percent between 1997 and 2003. A presidential candidate is required by law to win a majority of 50 percent plus one to avoid a runoff contest.

In 2005, the Senate finally passed reforms that repealed the last vestiges of Pinochet's legacy, moving to abolish authoritarian curbs on the legislative branch and agreeing to restore the president's right to remove the commanders in chief of the country's armed services. The reform package included the abolition of the Senate's 9 appointed seats, which included 4 representatives of the armed forces as well as lifetime positions for former presidents. It also reduced the presidential term of office from six years to four. The bicameral National Congress consists of the 38-seat Senate, whose members serve eight-year terms (one-half elected every four years), and the 120-seat Chamber of Deputies, whose members serve four-year terms.

Major parties and political groupings in Chile are split into three parts: the center-left Concertacion coalition formed in 1989 (comprising the Partido Demócrata Cristiano [PDC], the Partido Socialista [PS], the Partido por la Democracia [PPD], and the Partido Radical Social Demócrata [PRSD] parties; the center-right Alianza coalition formed in 1999 (comprising the Union Demócrata Independiente [UDI] and Renovación Nacional [RN] parties); and the Communist Party.

In response to public outcry over the political corruption scandals, Congress passed laws in 2003 to prevent political patronage in high-level civil service jobs, increase government workers' salaries to reduce their susceptibility to bribes, create public funding for political campaigns, and require the names of private campaign contributors to be listed publicly. These reforms have led to results on the ground. Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index ranks Chile as Latin America's least corrupt country at 20 out of a total of 163 countries worldwide.

Guarantees of free speech are generally respected, and the media generally operate without constraint. A political consensus exists to amend some current statutes, striking down certain crimes contained in the criminal code such as insulting public officials. These remain on the books as the result of a protracted legislative process. Chile has no law guaranteeing access to public information. There are no government restrictions on the internet.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. Religious homogeneity—the country is predominantly Catholic—makes this practice easier. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

The right to assemble peacefully is largely respected, and the constitution guarantees the right of association, which the government has also generally respected. Protests and demonstrations are common, and range from demands for improved education to increased salaries. Workers may form unions without prior authorization as well as join existing unions. Approximately 12 percent of Chile's 5.7 million workers belong to unions.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respects this provision in practice. Most sitting judges come from the career judiciary, and all judges are appointed for life. The constitution provides for the right to legal counsel, but indigent defendants, who account for the majority of the cases in the Santiago region, have not always received effective legal representation.

Chile has two national police forces: a uniformed force, the Carabineros, one of Latin America's best law enforcement institutions with a history of popular support and respect; and a smaller, plainclothes investigations force. However, in recent years, the Carabineros have been the subject of complaints about the use of excessive force against demonstrators. In response, in June 2006 the government dismissed a Special Forces commander and his deputy whose unit was implicated in police brutality during the student protests. Prisons are overcrowded and antiquated, with facilities nationally running at about 163 percent of capacity.

In 1990, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was formed to investigate rights violations committed under military rule. Its report implicated the military and secret police leadership in the death or forcible disappearance of 2,279 people between September 1973 and March 1990. Chilean courts convicted several former military officers of heinous crimes, ruling that a 1978 amnesty decree set down by the Pinochet government was inapplicable to cases of enforced disappearance, which, the courts have held, is an ongoing crime.

The army, the military branch most implicated in rights crimes, has extended limited cooperation to judicial investigations. In mid-2003, President Ricardo Lagos announced a series of measures relating to the criminal prosecution of former members of the military—including transfer of human rights cases currently under review in military tribunals to the jurisdiction of the civilian court system—and to reparations for victims of past rights crimes. President Bachelet has continued this push to prosecute Pinochet-era crimes by clearly invalidating the 1978 amnesty law for all murder and torture charges. While human rights groups in Chile applaud the effort, some conservatives feel the move will result in tensions and divisions as opposed to national reconciliation.

Native American groups in the country's southern region are increasingly vocal about their rights to ancestral lands that the government and private industry seek to develop. The last census conducted in 2002 recorded approximately 692,000 people who identified themselves as of indigenous origin, or 4.6 percent of Chile's total population. Lagos attempted to fulfill a campaign promise that the "Indian question" would receive priority attention by promoting the constitutional recognition of indigenous people in Chile. While, in January 2006, a bill supporting such a constitutional amendment could not be passed in the Chamber of Deputies because of the lack of the quorum needed for a vote, Bachelet has publicly called upon the Congress to support the measure.

Violence against women and children remains a problem, while discrimination

toward women is showing improvement. In 2004, Congress passed a law that legalized divorce; as one of the most conservative countries in Latin America, Chile had been one of only a handful of countries in the world to prohibit divorce.

Throughout 2006, Bachelet vowed to work against continued discrimination against women, including higher medical insurance premiums during women's child-bearing years and lower salaries than men for comparable work. She initially fulfilled a campaign promise by appointing women to half her cabinet seats and helped institute a new labor code for the public sector adopted in the summer of 2006 that removes a candidate's gender from job applications and mandates job training during regular working hours.

China

Population: 1,311,400,000

Capital: Beijing

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview:

In response to China's pressing socioeconomic problems, the leadership team of President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao in 2006 continued to promote policies aimed at building a "harmonious society," balancing economic growth with the provision of public goods such as social welfare and environmental protection. However, concerns over social stability also led to a strengthening of restrictions on the country's media and the detention of human rights activists, civil rights lawyers, and others the authorities viewed as posing a challenge to the regime.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took power in mainland China in 1949 after defeating the nationalist Kuomintang forces in the Chinese Civil War. Aiming to strengthen his own position and hasten China's socialist transformation, Communist leader Mao Zedong oversaw devastating mass-mobilization campaigns, such as the Great Leap Forward (1958-61) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), which resulted in millions of deaths and politicized nearly every aspect of daily life. Following Mao's death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping emerged as China's paramount leader. Over the next two decades, Deng maintained the CCP's absolute rule in the political sphere while guiding China's transition from a largely agrarian economy to a rapidly urbanizing, export-driven market economy.

The CCP signaled its intent to maintain political stability at all costs with the

1989 massacre of prodemocracy protesters who had gathered in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Following the crackdown, the party tapped Jiang Zemin to replace the relatively moderate Zhao Ziyang as general secretary of the party. Jiang was named state president in 1993 and became widely recognized as China's top leader following Deng's death in 1997.

Jiang continued the Dengist policies of rapid economic growth, recognizing that regime legitimacy now rested largely on the CCP's ability to boost living standards. However, concerned that devolution of power to the provinces and market liberalization had gone too far, creating local protectionism, corruption, and growing inequalities, the party began to reassert control in the 1990s. The recentralization of the tax system as well as the reorganization of China's vast bureaucracy improved Beijing's macroeconomic steering capacity.

At the CCP's sixteenth party congress in November 2002, Hu Jintao was named to replace Jiang as party general secretary. He was widely recognized as China's supreme leader after Jiang stood down as head of the military in September 2004. Wen Jiabao replaced Zhu Rongji as prime minister in March 2003, taking over the day-to-day management of the economy.

Pressing socioeconomic problems have emerged in the course of China's modernization, including a rising income gap, unemployment, the lack of a social safety net, environmental degradation, and corruption. The problems are seen by the CCP as the sources of a recent rise in social unrest and as a threat to its ruling status. In response, Hu and Wen have promoted policies aimed at building a "harmonious society." The Eleventh Five-Year Program (2006-10), issued in March 2006, signaled a shift in China's economic development model from the pursuit of gross domestic product (GDP) growth to a balancing of growth with the provision of public goods such as health care, pensions, unemployment benefits, and education as well as environmental protection.

Under the new program, one of the government's top priorities is to establish a "new socialist countryside," boosting central government spending on rural areas and abolishing the centuries-old agricultural tax on farmers in an effort to stem the widening income gap. In addition, new regulations call for the protection of internal-migrant workers' rights, including timely wage payments, education for migrants' children, and access to social-welfare services.

The Hu-Wen leadership team has also made fighting corruption a key priority. The latest anticorruption campaign featured the downfall of a number of high-ranking officials, most notably Politburo member and mayor of Shanghai Chen Liangyu, who was removed from his post in September 2006 and is under investigation for his role in the misappropriation of monies from the Shanghai social security pension fund.

As part of the effort to improve governance, the government in October 2005 had issued a White Paper on "building political democracy in China." The document outlined plans to build a so-called participatory democracy that combined authoritarian CCP leadership with an expansion of popular participation in the political process and administration of the state through the rule of law, while rejecting political reforms that would challenge the CCP's monopoly on power.

Preoccupation with political stability, however, also prompted the Chinese government to further restrict political rights and repress critics of the regime in 2006, with a number of high-profile detentions and arrests of dissidents, journalists, and

lawyers. Restrictions on communication were tightened that year, new rules aimed at limiting media coverage of judicial proceedings were issued in September, and a draft emergency management law is under review that if enacted would prevent Chinese and foreign journalists from reporting on "emergencies" without government approval. Regulations authorizing China's official news agency, Xinhua, to censor and regulate the content of foreign news agencies' reports were widely criticized by the international community. The utility of village elections for reducing local corruption continues to be compromised by alleged violence initiated by local party leaders, including attacks on foreign journalists attempting to cover news stories. Violence broke out in Shunde, Guangdong province, in November 2006, after corrupt local officials who refused to relinquish their power even after being defeated in a village election hired thugs to attack the newly elected officials and their supporters.

China continues to be active on the international stage, improving relations with countries that can help satisfy its growing need for energy and natural resources. Trade agreements were signed during Russian president Vladimir Putin's visit to China in March 2006, as well as on Hu's trips to Saudi Arabia and several African nations in April. Hu also visited the United States in April, and U.S. officials urged China to act as a "responsible stakeholder" in world affairs; as a permanent, veto-wielding member of the UN Security Council and a major regional and global economic power, China could play a pivotal role in the resolution of such U.S. priorities as the Iranian and North Korean nuclear disputes. There was a slight warming in Sino-Japanese relations, with Shinzo Abe in October 2006 paying the first visit to China by a Japanese prime minister in five years.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

China is not an electoral democracy. Although economic activity is increasingly independent of state control, Chinese citizens cannot democratically change top leaders or publicly express opposition to government policy. As stipulated in the Chinese constitution, the CCP possesses a monopoly on political power. Party members hold almost all top national and local governmental, internal security, and military posts. A 3,000-member National People's Congress (NPC) is, in principle, the Chinese parliament, empowered to elect the president for a five-year term and confirm the president's nominee for prime minister. Its members are elected to five-year terms by provincial legislatures. While it has shown signs of independence, no longer automatically approving legislation put before it, in practice the NPC remains subordinate to the CCP Politburo and its nine-person standing committee. Opposition groups, such as the China Democracy Party, are actively suppressed. The only competitive elections are at the village level and for urban residency councils. Citizens can also vote for local People's Congress representatives at the county level and below. However, these elections are largely dominated by the CCP.

The Chinese state closely monitors political activity and uses opaque national security regulations to justify detainment of those who are politically active without party approval. Groups considered to pose a threat to the regime are suppressed and persecuted.

Corruption remains a severe problem in China. In 2006, 40,041 government employees were investigated for corruption and dereliction of duty, with a total of 825

officials above the country level sentenced by the courts, of which nine were at provincial or ministerial level; 9,582 investigations into commercial bribery involving government employees were initiated. Beijing vice mayor Liu Zhihua, Anhui vice governor He Minxu, and Shanghai mayor Chen Liangyu were all dismissed from office in 2006. The crackdown has had limited impact at the local level, however, where personal connections among party, government, and business leaders perpetuates the problem. China was ranked 70 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Under the constitution, Chinese citizens enjoy the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and demonstration. Although freedom of expression continues to expand in the private realm, freedom of speech on topics deemed politically sensitive by the CCP remains severely limited. The tightly controlled media are barred from criticizing senior leaders or their policies. Journalists who do not adhere to party dictates on news content are harassed, fired, or jailed. In 2006, Singapore *Straits Times* reporter Ching Cheong, *New York Times* researcher Zhao Yan, and *Bijie Daily* reporter Li Yuanlong were imprisoned. In addition, a number of 2005 regulations—requiring publishers to refrain from reprinting books of questionable political correctness and allowing the confiscation of banned books; restricting popular access to foreign films and television programs; and encouraging the media to engage in self-censorship—were put into effect in 2006. A draft Emergency Management Law issued in July 2006 contained provisions for imposing heavy fines on Chinese and foreign journalists who report on natural disasters, accidents, health hazards, and social disturbances without government approval. New regulations in September 2006 gave Xinhua, China's official news agency, the authority to censor and regulate the content produced by foreign news agencies serving mainland subscribers, and the power to revoke agencies' licenses to operate, drawing widespread criticism from press freedom advocates and foreign governments.

The government continues to crack down on the internet and monitor personal communications. China regularly blocks websites it deems politically threatening and detains those responsible for posting objectionable content; cyber-dissident Zan Aizong was arrested in August 2006. Foreign internet companies continue to cooperate with the Chinese government on censorship enforcement. In 2005, the U.S.-based firm Yahoo! provided information leading to the conviction of Hunan journalist Shi Tao, who was accused of leaking state secrets. Following the closure of over a quarter of China's 573,755 websites in July 2005, after their operators failed to register at the Ministry of Information Industry, 7 more popular websites were shut down in July 2006, including "Century China" and the online chat forum of *Life Week* magazine. The government continues to strengthen regulations aimed at enhancing control over the internet and restricting internet news sites, web logs, and cellular telephone text-messaging, which is also subject to monitoring by the government. International radio and television broadcasts, including Voice of America and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), are still jammed.

Though constitutionally recognized, religious freedom is accorded little respect in China. All religious groups are required to register with the government, and while officially sanctioned groups are tolerated, members of unauthorized religious groups, such as Falun Gong, are harassed, detained, and imprisoned. Some 50 members of an "underground" Christian church in the Zhejiang province were arrested in July

2006, and their church building was demolished. In areas like the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, home to the predominantly Muslim Uighur ethnic group, the government has used the pretext of counterterrorism to crack down on Islamic organizations, labeling them religious extremists. Restrictions on Muslims' religious activity, teaching, and places of worship in Xinjiang are "implemented forcefully," according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 Country Report on Human Rights Practices.

Academic freedom is restricted on sensitive political issues. Universities and research institutions must support official CCP ideology, and many scholars practice self-censorship in the interest of personal safety. Academics risk losing their positions if they publicly criticize the party or state policy.

Freedom of assembly is severely restricted in China. Nongovernmental organizations are required to register with the government and follow strict regulatory guidelines, with the constitution specifically prohibiting activities that undermine "party leadership" or go against the "interests of the state."

Chinese workers are not allowed to form independent labor unions. The only union permitted is the government-controlled All China Federation of Trade Unions. Independent labor leaders are harassed, detained, and jailed for their efforts. Collective bargaining is legal in all industries but seldom occurs in practice. Despite the fact that workers lack the legal right to strike, there has been a growing wave of strikes over layoffs, dangerous working conditions, unpaid wages, and benefits. The reaction of local officials varies, with most offering partial concessions to workers while detaining strike leaders.

Although labor laws exist, they are poorly enforced. Employers frequently ignore minimum wage requirements and fail to implement required health and safety measures. Highly publicized mining accidents, which claimed 5,286 lives in the first 11 months of 2006, prompted the government to publicize its concerns with improving worker safety.

The party controls the judiciary. The CCP directs verdicts and sentences, particularly in politically sensitive cases. Despite advances in criminal procedure reforms, trials—which are often mere sentencing hearings—are frequently closed; in practice, few criminal defendants have access to counsel. Although regulations issued in July 2006 were aimed at addressing the problem, the authorities continue to use torture to coerce confessions that are frequently admitted as evidence. Police conduct searches without warrants and at times monitor telephone conversations and other personal communications to use as evidence against suspected dissidents. Many political prisoners and ordinary criminal defendants are deprived of trials altogether, detained instead by bureaucratic fiat in "reeducation through labor" camps. Endemic corruption further exacerbates the lack of due process in the judicial system. Judicial conditions are worst in capital punishment cases; 65 crimes carry the death penalty, and perpetrators are often executed immediately on conviction or failure of appeal. In October 2006, new legislation was announced requiring all death penalties handed down by lower courts be reviewed by the Supreme People's Court.

Though in most cases security forces are under direct civilian control, misuse of authority remains frequent, and human rights violations are widespread. Cases of extrajudicial and politically motivated murder, torture, beating, and arbitrary arrest continue to be reported. In August 2006, human rights activist Chen Guangcheng

was jailed for four years and his conviction upheld in a rare retrial in December 2006; AIDS activist Hu Jia was detained in September and has been held under house arrest since November; and anticorruption crusader Guo Feixiong was arrested in October. Lawyers who are overly vocal in defending the rights of their clients are frequently harassed or detained. Civil rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng was arrested in October 2006, although in December 2006, he received a lighter sentence than was expected: three years with a five-year suspension.

The Ministry of Public Security reported that the number of "mass incidents" fell by a fifth in the first 10 months of 2006 to 17,900; however, "mass incidents" are more narrowly defined than "public order disturbances," of which 87,000 were reported in 2005, up from 74,000 in 2004. One of the major sources of discontent in both rural and urban areas is the confiscation of land without adequate compensation, often involving collusion between local government and developers eager to profit from China's rapid urbanization. The authorities continue to frequently employ excessive force to quell such disturbances. Numerous people were injured and a teenage girl was killed in clashes between villagers and police in Panlong, Guangdong province, in January 2006.

Although antidiscrimination laws exist, religious groups, minorities, the disabled, and people with HIV/AIDS face severe discrimination in mainstream society. Concerns over social stability, and the need to control China's "floating population" of some 140 million internal-migrant workers, have prompted the government to experiment with reform of the household registration, or *hukou*, system, to allow for greater mobility. However, restrictions remain on changing one's employer or residence, and with quotas on the number of temporary residence permits issued in urban areas, many migrants remain outside the system, unable to gain full access to social services like health care and education, and subject to exploitation.

China's population control policy remains in place. Couples may have no more than one child, although there are a number of exceptions, and the policy is less stringently enforced in rural areas. The Population and Family Planning Law requires couples who have unapproved children to pay extra fees, and gives preferential treatment to couples who abide by birth limits. Compulsory abortion or sterilization by local officials enforcing family-planning regulations still occurs, but is illegal and far less common than in the past.

Serious human rights violations against women and girls continue. The one-child policy and cultural preference for boys over girls, including sex-selective abortion, has led to a shortage of females, creating a market for human trafficking. A Chinese survey conducted by the All-China Women's Federation found that violence against women remains a significant problem, with 30 percent of families reporting incidents of domestic abuse in 2004.

Colombia

Population: 46,800,000

Capital: Bogota

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview: Legislative elections on March 12 resulted in allies of President Alvaro Uribe gaining control of both houses of Congress. Uribe subsequently was reelected by a large margin to an unprecedented second term on May 28. His success was mostly credited to general improvements in urban security, but was also seen as the result of solid economic management. The process of demobilization of the country's far-right paramilitaries neared completion, even as significant questions about the fairness and feasibility of the demobilization remained. A serious scandal materialized after concrete evidence showing links between paramilitaries and politicians surfaced late in the year.

Following independence from Spain in 1819, the former Gran Colombia broke up into the present-day states of Venezuela, Ecuador, and the Republic of Colombia. The 1904 secession of Panama, engineered by the United States, left Colombia with its present boundaries. From 1948 to 1953, a civil war between Liberals and Conservatives known as "La Violencia," resulted in some 200,000 deaths. From 1958 to 1974, the two parties alternated the presidency under the terms of a pact (the National Front) into which they had entered in 1957 to end the civil war. Colombia subsequently has been marked by the corrupt politics of the Liberal and Conservative parties, as well as by left-wing guerrilla insurgencies, right-wing paramilitary violence, the emergence of vicious drug cartels, and human rights violations committed by all sides.

In the June 21, 1998, election, Conservative candidate Andres Pastrana won the presidency and, in an effort to consolidate the peace process, arranged for the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas to regroup and peacefully occupy a so-called demilitarized zone consisting of five southern districts, from which the military was withdrawn. The move, which had been strongly resisted by the military, gave the guerrillas de facto control over an area of 51,000 square kilometers.

Although Pastrana achieved some success in severing ties between the armed forces and right-wing death squads known as the United Self-Defenses of Colombia (AUC), the peace bid ultimately failed. In 2001, it became clear that the FARC's "de-

militarized zone" was actually used by the guerrillas as a sanctuary for coordinating military operations, as a rest area for insurgents, and as a base for criminal activities such as drug trafficking and the hiding of hostages.

In the May 2002 presidential elections, war-weary Colombians gave Alvaro Uribe, a hard-line former provincial governor who ran independently of the country's two dominant parties, an unprecedented first-round victory. The target of multiple assassination attempts by leftist guerrillas, Uribe had run on a platform of no concessions to the insurgents and the implacable use of the military to eliminate them.

Soon after inauguration Uribe decreed a state of emergency, stepped up anti-guerrilla efforts in urban areas, and created special combat zones in 27 municipalities in which the military was allowed to restrict civilian movement and conduct searches without a warrant. He also established a so-called war tax to finance thousands of additional troops and tightened restrictions on the foreign press. In addition, Uribe dramatically increased the number of Colombian drug traffickers extradited to the United States.

In 2003, the country continued to be wracked by massacres, drug trafficking, and the highest rate of kidnapping in the Western Hemisphere. Uribe won high marks for his hands-on, take-charge style, tireless work ethic, communications skills, and personal courage in traveling to the country's most violent regions. Critics, however, faulted him for his authoritarian bent and apparent lack of concern for human rights issues. In addition, Uribe created a firestorm of protest when he proposed granting paramilitaries an amnesty that would entail reduced prison sentences or the payment of reparations in lieu of jail time for leaders found guilty of atrocities.

Meanwhile, Colombia's highest tribunal dealt Uribe a surprise political setback, stripping him of emergency powers he had assumed in 2002. The decision by the Constitutional Court, which signaled its willingness to intervene if Uribe tried to overstep his powers, annulled the militarized zones Uribe had created and took away his ability to issue special decrees. The government also suffered the defeat of referendum proposals supported by Uribe to freeze government spending in order to provide more funds to wage war against the guerrillas, fight corruption, and streamline a top-heavy political structure. Finally, in November more than 850 members of the AUC laid down their arms and were allowed to return to civilian life. Human rights groups charged that the move made a mockery of justice as paramilitaries had been implicated in many of the country's worst massacres.

In 2004, Uribe announced the \$7 billion Colombia Phase II plan to combat terrorism and international crime, strengthen public institutions, and promote social and economic reactivation. He also retreated from his earlier promises to maintain a hard-line approach with right-wing paramilitaries as their demobilization began haltingly and new revelations of paramilitary infiltration of state institutions surfaced. Uribe's attempt to bring the AUC into the political arena and to bargain with them generated protests from human rights groups and the United States, which receives 90 percent of its cocaine from Colombia. Washington noted that more than a dozen chiefs of the AUC, blacklisted as a terrorist organization, were also wanted in the United States for narcotics-related crimes. However, by the end of 2004, nearly 3,000 combatants from five separate AUC paramilitary blocs were demobilized.

At the same time, leftist guerrillas appeared to be on the run in several areas of the country, largely ceding control of major cities to the paramilitaries. However, the

FARC appeared determined to hold out on the battlefield in remote areas, using the narcotics trade and extortion for financial support. Meanwhile, although better equipped and trained than previously, the country's military continued to rely on mostly peasant conscripts and lacked the manpower and equipment needed to carry out its mission. Furthermore, military success was rarely complemented by extensive efforts to improve social conditions in areas previously out of the state's reach.

Throughout 2005 and 2006, debate continued over the demobilization of the paramilitaries. Human rights groups claimed that the Justice and Peace Law adopted in June 2005 would not lead to genuine demobilization or lasting peace. They maintained that the law's provisions neither sufficiently mandated the permanent dismantling of the paramilitary organizations, nor allowed for a sufficient time frame—60 days was the maximum allowed—for their many crimes to be investigated by Colombia's overtaxed judiciary. In addition, fighters were under no obligation to make a full confession about their past or to collaborate with government forces. The government countered that the law does not encourage impunity—combatants are required to spend between five and eight years in prison—nor does it apply to drug-related offenses. In May 2006, the Constitutional Court, agreeing in part with critics, judged that certain elements of the law were unconstitutional. The government consequently adjusted the program, though it is still not fully aligned with the Court's judgment.

By late 2006, more than 30,000 paramilitaries had participated in the demobilization process and been removed from the conflict. However, much concern remained about weighty issues, including the reinsertion of former paramilitaries into civilian life, the resources available for investigations, the amount of reparations to be paid to victims, and the potential for other groups, including the FARC and neo-paramilitaries, to occupy territory vacated by demobilized combatants. The large number of demobilized paramilitaries also led observers to suspect that many drug traffickers had taken advantage of the process in order to receive lenient treatment. AUC leaders warned that the paramilitaries would rearm if the government did not uphold its promises concerning extradition and other issues. Meanwhile, advocates for Colombia's internally displaced population of 3.6 million insisted that land taken over by paramilitaries be returned to its former owners, often poor and marginalized Afro-Colombians.

The government and the FARC continued to engage in widespread fighting in early 2006. As the March 12 legislative election neared, the FARC carried out several serious attacks on civilians and local-level politicians. In addition, in several departments of heavy paramilitary influence, candidates not aligned with the militias were intimidated and killed. Attention was also focused on the political influence of the now-demobilized paramilitaries, which have long boasted of their clout. Several pro-Uribe parties purged from their lists candidates who were suspected of being mouthpieces for the paramilitaries, though some of these candidates were elected on the lists of smaller parties that were allowed into Uribe's coalition.

In the run-up to the May 28 presidential election, Uribe's reelection prospects were bolstered by a growing economy, falling unemployment, and, most importantly, the greater presence of more professional security forces around the country. After a campaign marked by lackluster debate, Uribe was reelected with 62 percent of the vote, fully 40 points ahead of his closest rival, Carlos Gaviria of the Alternative Demo-

cratic Pole (PDA). However, Uribe's coalition quickly began to fall victim to factional infighting, and progress on various priority economic reforms was stymied.

Despite a decline in massacres as well as overall deaths, a number of scandals hit the military and shook morale. Army soldiers were charged in the killing of 10 elite antidrug police in May, which caused the United States to consider withholding a small portion of Colombian military aid. Soldiers were also accused of killing civilians and dressing them as guerrillas in order to inflate battle statistics, while an investigation was opened into several incidents in Bogota that were allegedly staged so that soldiers could collect reward money. The Uribe government was blamed in part for applying pressure on the military to show results. Several rounds of peace talks were held with the leftist National Liberation Army (ELN), but little concrete progress was made.

Tentative discussions between the government and the FARC over a possible exchange of prisoners and hostages came to an end in October 2006, when the guerrillas launched another offensive, including a series of bomb attacks and an assault that killed 17 police in Cauca department. In late December, Uribe authorized three European negotiators to renew their efforts to arrange such an exchange, but the FARC refused to talk unless the government withdrew its troops from two areas in the south.

A series of revelations concerning links between politicians and paramilitaries rocked the country in November and December. The most incriminating piece of evidence to emerge was a document from 2001, signed by over 40 (then) legislators, in which they pledged to work with the paramilitaries to achieve shared goals. By year's end, more than a dozen congressmen and functionaries, as well as several high-level local officials, were arrested or formally under investigation, with more developments expected as demobilized paramilitary leaders began to give testimony regarding their crimes.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Colombia is an electoral democracy. Though there was violence prior to the 2006 legislative elections, the 2006 presidential contest was relatively peaceful, partly as the result of the deployment of 220,000 soldiers and police, and partly because the FARC and ELN refrained from large-scale attempts at disruption.

The Congress is comprised of a Senate and Chamber of Deputies, with members chosen in a simultaneous election for all seats in both houses. Both senators and deputies serve four-year terms. The Senate consists of 83 members, 2 chosen by indigenous communities and 81 by the rest of the nation at large, through a system of proportional representation with a 2 percent threshold; of these 81 seats, 3 are reserved for "political minorities." The Chamber of Deputies consists of 166 members, elected by proportional representation by district. Each of the 32 departments, plus the Capital District (Bogota), is a district; the number of seats assigned to each district depends on population. President Uribe's reelection came after a drawn-out campaign to change the constitution to allow a president a second four-year term.

The year 2006 witnessed a historic shift in party politics as the traditional Liberal-Conservative duopoly broke down and Congress realigned along left-right lines that roughly coincided with anti- and pro-Uribe forces. The shift was partly the result of 2003 reforms that were designed to open the system and contain the problem

of party fragmentation, while also evening the playing field with regard to campaign financing and media access. Political party cohesion remains a problematic area in Colombian politics, as patronage dominates allegiances. Corruption affects virtually all aspects of public life. In 2006, corruption allegations centered on the military, leaving grave questions about the depth of drug trafficker influence. In October, the contents of a computer belonging to paramilitary leader "Jorge 40" revealed a web of financial connections with politicians, as well as records of murder and money laundering. Colombia was ranked 59 out of 169 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression. However, crime and conflict make it difficult for journalists to freely conduct their work. More than 120 journalists have been murdered since the mid-1990s, many for reporting on drug trafficking and corruption; most of the cases remain unsolved. Attacks on journalists have declined in recent years, but three were killed in 2006, and increases in aggression and threats against journalists were registered. Self-censorship is common. The Uribe administration has on multiple occasions questioned the patriotism of journalists and accused them of bias against his government. The government does not limit or block access to the internet or censor websites. Media ownership is concentrated in the hands of wealthy families and large national conglomerates.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. It also does not restrict academic freedom, although threats and harassment have caused many professors and students to adopt lower profiles and avoid discussing controversial topics, with some academics opting for voluntary exile. Paramilitary groups and guerrillas maintain a presence on many university campuses in order to generate political support and to undermine their adversaries through both violent and nonviolent means.

Constitutional rights regarding freedom of assembly and association are restricted in practice by politically motivated and drug-related violence and by the government's inability to guarantee the security of its citizens. Human rights workers in Colombia are frequently murdered by the military or by rightist paramilitary forces. Uribe has called rights workers "terrorist sympathizers" and cowards and claimed that many members of Colombian nonofficial human rights organizations are "spokespeople for terrorism." In 2006, there was an increase in threats directed against workers and human rights defenders from nongovernmental organizations, causing a number to flee the country out of fear for their lives.

The murder of trade union activists has made Colombia the most dangerous country in the world for organized labor; only about 6 percent of the country's workforce is unionized, one of the lowest percentages in Latin America. More than 2,500 trade union activists and leaders have been killed in little more than a decade. Although the number of reported killings has declined under Uribe, reported deaths jumped from 43 in 2005 to 58 in 2006. Labor leaders are frequently targeted for attack by paramilitary groups, guerrillas, narcotics traffickers, and other rival unions.

The justice system remains compromised by corruption and extortion. Colombia's civil law system (investigation by judges, written testimony given *in camera*, judicially rendered verdicts) is being phased out in favor of procedures traditionally associated with the Anglo-American adversarial common law system: investigation and charging assigned to a prosecutorial corps independent of the

judiciary, oral testimony in open court, and verdicts rendered by lay juries. The Constitutional Court has, on several occasions, demonstrated independence from the executive. Colombia's prisons are crowded, and prison murders and riots are frequent.

The civilian-led Ministry of Defense is responsible for internal security and oversees both the armed forces and the national police, between which there is a fierce rivalry. Since Uribe took office, defense expenditures and the size of the army and the police have increased substantially. Civilian management of the armed forces, however, is limited; cadres of army informants and collaborators have been organized, and a separate army of peasant soldiers, led by professional soldiers, was recruited and trained, all without civilian oversight.

Right-wing paramilitaries (current and former) and left-wing guerrillas, some of whom protect narcotics-production facilities and drug traffickers, systematically violate human rights. FARC guerrillas also regularly extort payments from hundreds of businesspeople and use hostages as human shields as they seek to escape from pursuit by the security forces. Another problem concerns "social cleansing," or the liquidation of drug addicts, street children, and other marginal citizens by vigilante groups often linked to the police. Torture is carried out by rebels, paramilitaries, and, to a lesser extent, state forces. Impunity is rampant, and most violent crimes are never solved.

There are approximately 80 distinct ethnic groups among Colombia's more than 800,000 indigenous inhabitants; these people live on more than 50 million acres granted to them by the government, often located in resource-rich, strategic regions fought over by the armed groups. Despite seeking to remain neutral in the armed conflict, indigenous peoples are frequently the targets of forced recruitment by the guerrillas and selective assassination by the paramilitary forces. In May 2006, on World Indigenous Day, five members of the displaced A'wa tribe were gunned down by suspected right-wing forces.

Homosexuals are actively discriminated against, but in a controversial decision, the Senate voted in October 2006 to make homosexual couples eligible for various benefits. Child labor is a serious problem in Colombia, as is the problem of child recruitment into the armed groups. An estimated 14,000 minors act as combatants for the FARC and paramilitaries, and female child-soldiers were reported to be subjected to sexual abuse. Child-soldiers attempting to leave without permission are executed by firing squad. Sexual harassment, violence against women, and the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation remain serious problems. Amnesty International has reported that soldiers, leftist rebels, and rightist paramilitaries treat women as "trophy of war" and that the crimes committed by the paramilitaries—the main offenders—include rape, mutilation, and murder. Police estimate that as many as 50,000 Colombians, including many underage boys and girls, have been forced into prostitution, mainly in the Netherlands, Japan, and Spain.

Colombia has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. There is an active abortion rights movement that has challenged the restrictive content of national law on the basis of these treaties, and in 2006, the Constitutional Court voted to allow abortion in cases of rape or incest or where the mother's life would be endangered by childbirth.

Comoros

Population: 700,000

Capital: Moroni

Political Rights: 3*

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: Comoros's political rights rating improved from 4 to 3 due to the holding of legitimate presidential elections and a decline in military influence over political choices.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5,4PF	5,4PF	6,4PF	6,4PF	6,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	3,4PF

Overview:

In May 2006, a moderate Islamist preacher and businessman, Ahmad Abdallah Sambi, captured the Comoran presidency with 58 percent of the vote in an election deemed by observers to reflect the will of the people. Sambi pledged to implement policies focusing on improving the economy of the islands, one of the poorest countries in the world. The nation continues to suffer from serious tensions between its three main constituent islands.

The Union of the Comoros comprises three islands: Grande Comore, Anjouan, and Moheli. Mayotte Island, the fourth island of the Comorian archipelago, voted to remain a French overseas territory in a 1974 referendum and today enjoys a far higher, French-subsidized standard of living than do the other islands. Comorans are among the world's poorest people. The country relies heavily on foreign aid and earns a small amount through exports of vanilla, ylang-ylang, and cloves.

Two mercenary invasions and at least 18 other coups and attempted coups have shaken the Comoros since its independence from France in 1975. In 1990, in the country's first contested elections, Supreme Court justice Said Mohamed Djohar won a six-year term as president. French soldiers reversed a 1995 attempted coup by elements of the Comoros security forces, who were aided by foreign mercenaries. Mohamed Taki Abdoukarim was elected president in 1996 in internationally monitored elections that were considered free and fair; he secured more than 60 percent of the vote in a runoff election. Tadjidine Ben Said Massonde became the interim ruler when Taki died suddenly in November 1998.

Anjouan voted for self-determination in a 1997 referendum, repulsed an attempted military takeover by the central government, and then experienced widespread violence as rival separatist groups took up arms against one another. Separatists on Moheli also declared independence. The federal government is located in Grande Comore, but even there tensions exist between the federal and regional governments.

Efforts to end the separatist crisis began with the 1999 Antananarivo agreement. Anjouan's refusal to sign the agreement led to unrest on Grande Comore and a subsequent coup by Assoumani Azali, then a colonel in the armed forces. A reconciliation agreement, known as the Fomboni Declaration, was signed in 2000 between the Azali government and Anjouan separatists. A national referendum was approved in December 2001 for a new constitution that gave greater autonomy to the three islands of Comoros within the framework of a confederation and provided for a rotating executive presidency among the islands every four years.

In 2002, while elections for the president of each of the three islands that make up the new federation appeared to have been largely free and fair, the poll for the executive leader of the federation was not. Azali, who won the executive presidency, was the only candidate, as his two opponents, claiming fraud, had dropped out of the race. Lengthy negotiations occurred over minimum conditions for holding postponed legislative elections. In September 2002, an agreement was reached that would result in legislative polls, which were subsequently postponed until 2004. Key terms of the accord had the central government maintaining control over the country's army, while the police were to be administered by the local presidents. Another key compromise was the decision to set up a provisional customs council to facilitate the fair distribution of revenue among the three islands.

Despite concerns that the government would attempt to rig the April 2004 legislative elections, Comoran and international observers assessed them as legitimate. Azali's government suffered a serious setback: candidates supporting the three autonomous islands, which have traditionally sought greater autonomy from central rule, emerged victorious after obtaining 41 out of the 55 contested seats, while backers of Azali won only 12. Following the elections, the various opposition and government authorities sought to manage their differences, and relative calm has prevailed. In 2005, deputies from the parliamentary opposition forced the withdrawal of a draft law that would have allowed Azali to avoid the constitutional provision requiring the federal presidency to rotate between the islands and enabled him to run for a second four-year term.

In May 2006, Ahmad Abdallah Sambu, a moderate Islamist preacher and businessman, won the Comoran presidency with 58 percent; observers said the election reflected the will of the people. Sambu earned early plaudits by ending a teachers' strike that had paralyzed middle and high schools for two months. However, he raised concerns by canceling a World Bank-approved contract to manage the port of the capital of Moroni. His relationship with Iran was also closely watched by Western countries as Sambu, nicknamed "the Ayatollah," had studied in Iran and was suspected of pro-Iranian sympathies. Tensions remained on the division of powers between the central government and the autonomous islands. Late in 2006, for example, authorities on Anjouan temporarily closed the airport to prevent the arrival of a military delegation from Grande Comore. Sambu pledged to focus on improving the economy of the islands through increased investment and took steps to limit corruption and government spending.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Comoros is an electoral democracy. Since 1996, Comorans have voted freely in several parliamentary and presidential elections, and the 2006 presidential election was widely

praised as free of significant irregularities. Under the archipelago's constitution, adopted in 2001, the federal presidency rotates every four years among the elected presidents of the three islands in the Union. Of the 33 deputies in the unicameral federal Assembly of the Union, 15 are selected by the individual islands' local assemblies and 18 by universal suffrage; deputies serve for five years. The Assembly is currently dominated by deputies elected in opposition to then-president Assoumani Azali. Some parties include the Movement for the Comoros, the Camp of the Autonomous Islands, and the Convention for the Renewal of the Comoros.

A 2004 Comoros government budget audit conducted by an external accounting firm revealed numerous irregularities by the government of the Comoros Union and the autonomous islands of Anjouan and Moheli and the Central Bank. The audit noted a failure of these governments to divide up receipts according to a previously agreed-upon formula. The audit also noted a serious underreporting of customs duties. In previous years, there were complaints of corruption among the security forces and of unpaid salaries for teachers and other government workers. President Ahmad Abdallah Sambi has pledged that his earnings and those of his ministers will be made public. Comoros was not ranked by Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and of the press; however, the government partially limits press freedom. For example, in 2006 paramilitary police detained the editor of an independent newspaper after he published a story critical of the military. Several private newspapers at times critical of the government are published in the capital, but they appear only sporadically because of limited resources. All are believed to exercise extensive self-censorship. Two state-run radio stations broadcast, and about 20 regional radio stations and five local private television stations operate without overt government interference. In 2005, the government briefly banned Radio Dzialandze Mutsamudu (RDM), a popular, privately owned station based in Mutsamudu, capital of Anjouan. Sambi authorized the restoration of a private radio station transmitter that had been confiscated by the authorities during the presidential election campaign. Internet access is extremely limited.

Islam is the official state religion. Non-Muslims are legally permitted to practice, but there were reports of restrictions, detentions, and harassment. Proselytizing for any religion except Islam was illegal. In 2006, four men were sentenced to three months in prison for "evangelizing Muslims."

Academic freedom is generally respected.

The government generally respects the rights of freedom of assembly and association. The former is explicitly recognized in the constitution, while the latter is not. However, at times security forces respond to demonstrations with disproportionate force. In September 2005, police violently dispersed demonstrators during protests over rising fuel prices; one person was reported killed and 16 wounded. No actions were taken against the police in the wake of this incident. A few human rights and other nongovernmental organizations exist. In June, the National Assembly passed a law establishing a human rights commission, but this had not yet convened by the end of the year. Unions have the right to bargain collectively and strike, but collective bargaining is rare in the country's small formal business sector.

The Comorian legal system is based both on Sharia (Islamic law) and on parts of the French legal code, and is subject to influence by the executive and other elites.

Most minor disputes are settled by village elders or a civilian court of first instance. After considerable delays, and under domestic pressure, in 2005 Azali approved laws reforming the organization of the judiciary. These laws transferred some courts to the jurisdiction of the autonomous islands, leaving only the Supreme Court under the authority of the central government. A complex and overlapping system of official security forces exists. Harsh prison conditions are marked by severe overcrowding and the lack of adequate sanitation facilities, medical attention, and proper diet. In September 2006, five senior judges who had been appointed by Azali were suspended from their functions after they freed several former high-ranking Azali government officials who had been accused of corruption.

As a result of the islands' poor economic condition, many Comorans, especially from Anjouan, illegally emigrate to Mayotte. In 2005, the Anjouan-based Observatory for Clandestine Emigration (OCI) estimated that in the past five years, around 500 people have drowned trying to make the 100-mile crossing to Mayotte.

Women possess constitutional protections. In practice, however, they enjoy little political or economic power and have far fewer opportunities for education or salaried employment than men do, especially in more rural areas. The Sambi government includes just one woman minister. Women are generally not discriminated against regarding inheritance and property rights. Economic hardship has forced growing numbers of young girls into domestic servitude; they receive room and board, but little or no pay.

Congo, Democratic Republic of (Kinshasa)

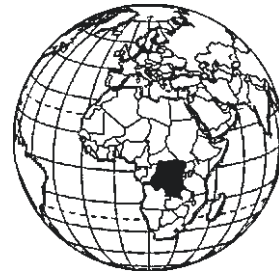
Population: 62,700,000

Capital: Kinshasa

Political Rights: 5*

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free



Ratings Change: Congo (Kinshasa's) political rights rating improved from 6 to 5 due to the holding of successful presidential and legislative elections in 2006, the country's first in more than 40 years.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	5,6NF

Overview:

Transitional presidential and legislative elections, the first democratic polls in more than 40 years, were held on July 30 with logistical support and oversight from the United

Nations. Transitional president Joseph Kabila defeated Jean-Pierre Bemba in an October 29 runoff election for the presidency. Sporadic violence bracketed the July 30 elections and occurred again on October 29, though voting was peaceful in most parts of the country. Despite the relatively successful elections, the stability of the democratic transition and the power of elected representatives other than the president remained uncertain. Government forces and rival militia groups committed serious human rights violations during the year, particularly in the eastern part of the country, despite the presence of the world's largest peacekeeping contingent, the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC).

As the Congo Free State and then the Belgian Congo, the vast area of Central Africa that is now the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was exploited in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with a brutality that was extreme even by colonial standards. The country became an arena for Cold War rivalries upon independence in 1960, and remained so after Colonel Joseph Mobutu seized power with CIA backing in 1965. Mobutu changed the name of Congo to Zaire in 1971, changed his own name to Mobutu Sese Seko, and assumed dictatorial powers. Western governments largely ignored Mobutu's excesses, which included corruption on a scale that made him one of the world's richest men and left his countrymen among the world's poorest people.

Domestic agitation and international pressure for democratization following the end of the Cold War forced Mobutu to open up the political process in 1990. A Sovereign National Conference in 1992 elected Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo as its chairman and Etienne Tshisekedi, leader of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), as prime minister. In response, Mobutu created a rival government with its own prime minister, which led to political standoff. In a compromise that marginalized Tshisekedi, the two governments merged in 1994, with Mobutu as head of state and Kengo Wa Dondo as prime minister. Presidential and legislative elections were scheduled repeatedly over the next two years, but never took place.

The 1994 genocide in neighboring Rwanda provided the impetus for Mobutu's fall from power. Rwanda and Uganda tapped into popular hatred for Mobutu and turned their pursuit of members of the ethnic Hutu Interahamwe—the Rwandan militia responsible for much of the killing of ethnic Tutsis, many of whom had fled Rwanda for eastern Zaire—into an advance on Kinshasa. Rwandan troops entered the country in October 1996, accompanied by representatives of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL), a coalition led by former rebel leader Laurent-Desire Kabila. With the goal of forcibly ousting Mobutu, the Rwandan and AFDL forces continued their military campaign and reached Kinshasa in May 1997; Mobutu fled to Morocco and died soon thereafter. Kabila quickly consolidated power, declaring himself president and renaming the country the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Relations between Kabila and his backers in Rwanda and Uganda deteriorated quickly. After he ordered all foreign troops to leave the DRC in 1998, Rwandan-supported Congolese military factions took up arms. Rwandan troops flew to Bas-Congo with the intent of marching on Kinshasa to replace Kabila's regime with the newly formed Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), and were stopped only by the intervention of Angolan, Namibian, and Zimbabwean troops on behalf of the DRC gov-

ernment. Uganda later backed the formation of a rival rebel group, the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC). Together, Uganda and the MLC established control over the northern third of the DRC, while the RCD established control over much of the eastern Kivu region. The war eventually drew forces from Angola, Chad, Namibia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe on the side of Kabila; and Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda on the side of the rebels.

Military stalemate and international pressure led to the signing of the Lusaka Peace Agreement in 1999. The accord called for a ceasefire, the deployment of UN peacekeepers, the withdrawal of foreign troops, and the launch of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue to form a transitional government. Kabila drew increasing international criticism for hindering progress toward the pact's implementation by blocking the deployment of UN troops and suppressing internal political activity. He was assassinated in January 2001, and his son Joseph took power.

Joseph Kabila revived the peace process, and lengthy negotiations ended with the signing of the Sun City Peace Agreement in December 2002. The agreement led to the creation of a broad-based transitional government that included former leaders of rebel groups, opposition representatives, and supporters of Kabila, who were grouped under the People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD). A timetable for democratic elections was established, but delays led to repeated extensions of the transition schedule. Groups not represented in transitional institutions, notably the UDPS, claimed that the delay was politically motivated rather than the result of technical problems. UDPS calls for mass demonstrations, however, did not result in a major escalation of tensions. Despite isolated incidents of violence and a UDPS call for a boycott, a massive voter registration drive—conducted at more than 9,000 voter registration centers for an estimated 28 million eligible voters—was largely successful. The UDPS upheld its decision to boycott and did not participate in the 2006 elections.

Voters approved a new constitution in December 2005 that included the imposition of presidential term limits, an increase in the number of provinces from 10 to 26, and a reduction in the minimum age for the president from 35 to 33, a move widely seen as an accommodation for the 33-year-old Kabila. The new constitution also limited presidential powers and gave the country's regions more autonomy.

Presidential and legislative elections, the first democratic polls since independence, were held on July 30, 2006. Despite daunting logistical challenges, the elections were largely peaceful, and turnout was over 70 percent. Kabila's PPRD gained the largest number of seats in the National Assembly, but did not win a majority. In a field of 33 presidential candidates, Kabila won about 45 percent of the vote, leading to a second round against his closest challenger, former MLC leader and transitional vice president Jean-Pierre Bemba. Before the final vote tally of the first round was announced in late August, violence lasting several days erupted between armed supporters of the two candidates. The second round was held on October 29, and voting was generally peaceful. Irregularities were noted in both rounds, but many of the problems resulted from the country's logistical challenges and the low education levels of both polling officials and voters.

Kabila was declared the winner of the second round with 58 percent of the vote to Bemba's 42 percent. Bemba contested but ultimately accepted the result. Bemba's decision to lead the opposition and to run for a Senate seat in the January 2007 Sen-

ate elections represented a significant step toward the consolidation of peace and improved governance in the DRC.

Despite the relatively successful elections, the country's transition to a democratic system remained uncertain. Great power was vested in the presidency, and it was not clear that the newly elected legislature or provincial assemblies would be able to play a meaningful role in governance. Furthermore, the DRC still relied heavily on the United Nations for security and aid during electoral processes, and the UN peacekeeping mandate is expected to be extended for several years to come.

The presence of armed groups in the eastern part of the country, where the bulk of the DRC's vast mineral wealth is located, is a continuing source of instability, despite the ongoing disarmament of the main rebel groups and the integration of former combatants into the newly restructured DRC Armed Forces (FARDC). In the Ituri region, three of the main rebel groups agreed to begin joining the FARDC in 2006, bringing hope of long-term peace and allowing citizens in the region to vote in that year's elections without fear of reprisal. Renewed fighting between the army and rebel forces allied with General Laurent Nkunda broke out in December 2006, and was only quelled with MONUC intervention.

A UN panel investigating the plunder of natural resources confirmed in 2003 that competition to control the DRC's vast diamond and other mineral wealth persists through proxy militias controlled by neighboring countries and government officials. Though the transitional government has since gained greater control over the mining sector, widespread corruption and smuggling continue. The International Court of Justice concluded public hearings and began deliberations in 2005 on separate cases brought by the DRC government against Rwanda and Uganda for alleged human rights violations and other breaches of international law during the civil conflict.

An estimated 4 million citizens have died since the conflict began. Humanitarian groups estimate that 1,000 people continue to die each day from hunger, disease, and other causes related to instability. The majority of Congolese are subsistence farmers. Salaries continue to go unpaid, and critical social services are nonexistent. The DRC, one of the most debt-laden countries in the world, was granted access to the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative in 2003. The International Monetary Fund announced an additional \$41 million in aid in September 2005. The World Bank is supporting efforts to restructure the DRC's large parastatal sector, including its principal mining company, and to rehabilitate the country's collapsed infrastructure, including the Inga Dam hydroelectric system. The UN and partner agencies estimated in December 2006 that US\$687 million would be needed to deliver essential relief and humanitarian aid to vulnerable segments of the population in 2007.

The DRC hosts the largest UN peacekeeping force in the world, known as the UN Organization Mission in the DRC (MONUC), with roughly 17,000 soldiers. MONUC forces have played a critical role in protecting transitional government institutions, supporting the electoral process, and intervening to stop violence. They were bolstered by some 1,500 troops from the European Union during the 2006 electoral period. Despite its contributions, the UN force has faced persistent allegations that some peacekeepers have sexually abused Congolese women and girls, though there were fewer allegations in 2006 than in previous years.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The DRC is not an electoral democracy. However, citizens participated in a landmark constitutional referendum in 2005 and returned to the polls twice in 2006 to elect a president, a National Assembly, and members of provincial assemblies. Despite irregularities, the 2006 election was considered credible by international observers. Under the new constitution, the president is elected to a five-year term, renewable once. The president nominates a prime minister from the leading party or coalition in the 500-seat National Assembly, the lower house of the bicameral legislature, whose members are popularly elected to serve five-year terms. The upper house, the 108-seat Senate, is elected by the provincial assemblies for five-year terms. Senate elections were scheduled for January 2007. Under a new decentralized form of government, elected governors will oversee the provincial parliamentary structures.

The newly elected National Assembly convened for the first time on September 22, 2006. After negotiations with some of the smaller parties, President Joseph Kabila's coalition, the Alliance for the Presidential Majority (AMP), obtained a majority with 270 of the 500 seats.

There are approximately 247 registered political parties in the DRC, including those representing former rebel groups. Of this number, no more than a dozen have broad representation. Many parties formed coalitions in advance of the July 2006 elections. In June, 186 registered political parties signed a code of conduct outlining principles for participating in the electoral process. Neither the UDPS nor Kabila's PPRD signed the code, however.

Corruption is rampant throughout the country, particularly in the mining sector. In 2005-2006, between 60 and 80 percent of customs revenue was estimated to have been embezzled, a quarter of the national budget was not properly accounted for, and more than \$3 million was stolen from the army payroll. Despite some measures taken to limit high-level graft, not a single Congolese official was convicted on corruption charges during the transitional period. The government took some measures to limit corruption during 2006, including the approval of a new investment code and a new mining code, as well as the establishment of a new commercial court to attract and protect foreign investment. The National Assembly's Lutundula Commission released a report in 2006 that implicated a number of senior officials in corruption, some of whom were dismissed from their positions. The DRC was ranked 156 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and expression is limited in practice, though both the transitional and new constitutions guarantee it. Despite some statutory protections, independent journalists are frequently threatened, arrested, attacked, and even killed. Journalistic standards are low, and partisanship is common. There are approximately 119 radio stations, 52 television stations, and 176 newspapers and magazines in the country, most of them operating in Kinshasa and owned by the major politicians or their close associates. The transitional government used criminal libel laws to suppress criticism of political leaders, of President Kabila in particular, and to limit press freedom during 2006.

The press contributed to political tensions during 2006, as many media outlets aired personal attacks against candidates and even resorted to ethnically biased hate commentary during the campaign period. The High Authority of Media (HAM), a government watchdog tasked with implementing the DRC's various press laws as

well as a code of conduct for media during the elections, penalized several outlets for inappropriate programming and hate speech. The HAM called repeatedly for broadcast media to provide equal time to presidential candidates and for the state-run media to avoid political bias. In August, 40 broadcast and print media outlets in Kinshasa signed an agreement to abstain from defamation and hate speech during the second round of the elections. One of the few nationwide radio networks, Radio Okapi, is run by the Swiss-based Hironnelle Foundation and the United Nations, and worked to provide voter and civic education as well as accurate news. Although the government does not restrict access to the internet, it is only those in larger cities where internet cafes have proliferated, or the much smaller population with the means to afford computers and connection costs, who actually enjoy internet access.

The DRC's constitution provides for freedom of religion, and this right is generally respected in practice, although religious groups must register with the government to be recognized. Academic freedom is restricted in practice, as fears of government harassment often lead university professors to engage in self-censorship.

Rights to freedom of assembly and association allowed by law are sometimes limited in practice under the pretext of maintaining public order, and groups holding public events must inform local authorities in advance. Political campaigning in advance of the 2006 elections was generally unhindered, though some political parties and their leaders were harassed by security forces. Labor unions, though legal, are limited to urban areas and have largely been inactive as a result of the collapse of the country's formal economy. Some unions are affiliated with political parties, and labor leaders and activists have faced harassment.

Despite guarantees of independence, in practice the judiciary remains subject to corruption and manipulation by both official and nonstate actors. Civilian and military justice personnel were deployed to provincial centers—including Gbadolite, Goma, Kisangani, Lodja, and Lubumbashi—with MONUC assistance in 2005, but the judicial system lacks both trained personnel and resources. Prison conditions are often abysmal, and long periods of pretrial detention are common.

Civilian authorities do not maintain effective control of the security forces, though progress has been made since the successful conduct of the 2006 general elections. Members of the forces are poorly trained and paid, and regularly commit serious human rights abuses. The integration of former rebels into the nascent FARDC resulted in competing chains of command and conflicts between nominally integrated factions, many of which answered to former commanders and political leaders rather than formal superiors, though some improvements toward fully integrated control have been made. Efforts by the international community to train a professional and neutral police force that would assume responsibility for the security of transitional officials has met with limited success. According to international security experts, the integrated police trained by Angola, whose government was an ally of Laurent-Desire Kabila during the civil war, may be aligned to the president Joseph Kabila now. According to some estimates, Kabila's presidential guard still numbers around 14,000 men. As a result, transitional vice presidents and leaders of former rebel groups were reluctant in the run-up to the election to reduce the size of their own security contingents. During 2006, weapons and ammunition imports regularly evaded the oversight process set up to monitor and ensure their receipt through official channels.

Societal discrimination based on ethnicity is practiced widely among the

country's 200 ethnic groups, and particularly against the various indigenous Pygmy tribes and the Congolese Banyamulenge Tutsis.

Although the law provides for freedom of movement, roadblocks manned by aggressive security forces regularly restrict travel in many parts of the country. Security personnel routinely demand bribes and, in some areas, travel authorization orders from employers or government officials. When traveling internally, foreigners must regularly submit to immigration controls. Movement is severely restricted in parts of the country where armed groups are active.

Members of armed groups and security forces have seized private property and destroyed homes in the DRC's conflict zones, though these practices declined during 2006.

Despite constitutional guarantees, women face discrimination in nearly every aspect of their lives, especially in rural areas, where there is little government presence. The law requires a married woman to obtain her husband's permission before engaging in routine legal transactions, such as selling or renting property, opening a bank account, accepting employment, or applying for a passport. Violence against women, including rape and sexual slavery, has soared since the onset of armed conflict in 1996. Abortion is prohibited. The Save the Children Fund has ranked the DRC among the world's five worst conflict zones in which to be a woman or child.

Congo, Republic of (Brazzaville)

Population: 3,700,000

Capital: Brazzaville

Political Rights: 6*

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Status Change: Congo (Brazzaville's) political rights rating declined from 5 to 6, and its status from Partly Free to Not Free, due to decreased openness and transparency in government.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7.5NF	7.5NF	6.5NF	6.4PF	5.4PF	6.4PF	5.4PF	5.4PF	5.5PF	6.5NF

Overview:

Despite limited progress on improving transparency in the oil sector, Congo qualified conditionally for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative in 2006. A coalition of opposition political groups pressed the government to create an independent electoral commission in advance of scheduled parliamentary elections in 2007. Stepped-up efforts began during the year to confiscate illicit weapons and demobilize former rebel and progovernment fighters.

A decade after Congo's independence from France, a 1970 coup established a Marxist state in the country. In 1979, General Denis Sassou-Nguesso seized power and maintained one-party rule as head of the Congolese Labor Party (PCT). Domestic and international pressure led to the convening of a national conference and multiparty elections in 1992. Former prime minister Pascal Lissouba won a clear victory over Bernard Kolelas in a second-round presidential runoff. Sassou-Nguesso ran third in the first round.

Disputes over the 1993 legislative polls led to armed conflict between rival militia groups that continued sporadically for several years until Sassou-Nguesso, with military support from Angola and political backing from France, overthrew Lissouba in October 1997. Lissouba fled into exile following the coup and was convicted in absentia in 2001 on treason and corruption charges and sentenced to 30 years hard labor. Kolelas—who served as mayor of Brazzaville from 1993 to 1996 and founded the Ninja militia from members of his political party, the Congolese Movement for Democracy and Integral Development—was sentenced to death in absentia in May 2000 for war crimes and crimes against humanity. At Sassou-Nguesso's request, the National Assembly granted Kolelas amnesty in December 2005, even though his return for the funeral of his wife in October of that year had sparked armed clashes between Ninja rebels and government troops in Brazzaville.

A new constitution adopted by national referendum in January 2002 provided for the return to a multiparty system. The March 2002 presidential poll was marred by irregularities, though international observers hailed their peaceful conduct. Sassou-Nguesso won with 89.4 percent of the vote when his main challenger, former president of the National Assembly Andre Milongo, claimed that the poll was rigged and dropped out of the race. Lissouba and Kolelas were barred from running for office and remained in exile. Fifteen political parties won seats in the 2002 legislative elections, though an alliance of seven parties known as the Democratic and Patriotic Forces (FDP) led by Sassou-Nguesso's PCT controls approximately 90 percent of them. Balloting for eight seats in the Pool region was postponed in 2002—and again in 2005—because of continuing instability. A coalition of 21 political opposition groups formed in 2006 and called on the government to create a new independent electoral commission to administer parliamentary elections scheduled for 2007 as well as presidential elections in 2009. The new coalition criticized the current commission, established in 2005, for its lack of independence and threatened to boycott the election if their request was not met. The government countered with a defense of the current commission and did not take action.

Civil war in the Pool region between 1998 and 2002 ended in 2003 with the signing of a ceasefire agreement between the government and Ninja rebels, but the massive displacement of civilians and destruction of the region's infrastructure have stymied recovery and stabilization efforts. In September 2006, the World Bank-funded National Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration Bureau extended to new regions of the country its program to demobilize the estimated 30,000 former fighters from both rebel- and government-supported groups, alongside a parallel effort to retrieve the thousands of illicit weapons believed still to be in circulation.

In July 2004, Congo was suspended from the diamond industry's Kimberly Process—a joint initiative of governments, civic groups, and the private sector to limit the unregulated sale of rough diamonds as a source of funding for conflict—after

identified discrepancies between production and exports raised concerns that Congo was a transshipment point for illicit diamonds from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and other neighboring countries. In response, Congo announced that it had halted all diamond exports, and in 2005, the country invited scientists from France's Office of Research Studies on Geological Resources to assess diamond output and trade controls. According to human rights groups, Congo continues to serve as a conduit for illicit diamond smuggling.

Congo is one of Africa's major producers of oil, which accounts for more than 60 percent of Congo's gross domestic product and approximately 95 percent of export earnings. The government began publishing audited information about oil revenues in 2003 and joined the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2004. Reports of widespread corruption in the oil industry persist, however, and progress on EITI has been limited and to some extent overshadowed by issues raised by civic groups and the international financial institutions regarding the lack of transparency in the oil sector. The government repeatedly detained and harassed two prominent anticorruption activists in 2006. An eight-month trial of the two resulted in convictions in late 2006 on charges of forgery and breaching the public interest, and the two activists are appealing the decision. International supporters of the activists' NGO denied the two had engaged in any mismanagement of funds and helped to fund their legal defense.

Despite the Congo's natural wealth, 70 percent of its citizens live in poverty. Decades of instability destroyed infrastructure and worsened humanitarian conditions for many isolated parts of the heavily forested country. The country ranked 142 of 177 on the 2005 UN Human Development Index.

Congo received conditional approval for debt relief under the World Bank's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative in 2006, though the Bank noted that the government must improve governance and financial transparency to qualify for irrevocable debt relief.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) is not an electoral democracy. Competitive multiparty elections were held for the first time in 1992 and 1993. Presidential and legislative elections held in 2002 were not deemed fair, in part because of irregularities and the absence of an independent electoral commission. An amended constitution, promulgated in 2002, limits the elected president to two seven-year terms. The next presidential election will be held in 2009. The bicameral parliament comprises a 66-seat Senate and 137-seat National Assembly; members of both houses are elected by popular vote for five-year terms. The next legislative election will be held in 2007.

The lifting of the ban on political parties in 1992 saw the creation of personality-driven and ethnically based parties that currently number more than 200. The political opposition is weak and fragmented, and the National Assembly is dominated by the FDP coalition. Opposition demands for legal reform led the government to overhaul the 1901 colonial-era law on contracts of association that governed political parties, and a new political party law on the creation, financing, and legal status of political parties was promulgated in 2006.

Corruption in Congo's extractive industries is a continuing problem. Congo was ranked 142 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Cor-

ruption Perceptions Index. According to the IMF, and the World Bank, the government maintains inadequate internal controls and accounting systems. Through access to the state-owned oil company that markets the country's share of crude oil, government officials routinely siphon off the bulk of oil revenues into private overseas accounts. Corruption persists outside the oil sector as well, and officials regularly demand bribes to provide government services.

Freedom of speech and of the press is protected by the constitution. Speech that incites ethnic hatred, violence, or civil war is illegal in practice, and the government's respect for press freedom is limited, despite the abolition of censorship and introduction of sharply reduced penalties for defamation in 2000. The government monopolizes the broadcast media, which reaches a much larger audience than print publications. About 10 private newspapers appear weekly in Brazzaville and often publish articles and editorials critical of the government, though the director of one publication was arrested and charged in April 2006 with defamation, insulting the head of state, and "propagating false news." Detained overnight, the director was slated to stand trial in May, but the trial was later postponed. There are no restrictions on internet access.

Religious and academic freedoms are guaranteed and respected.

Freedoms of assembly and association are generally respected in practice, although public demonstrations are rare. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely, though two prominent Congolese activists working on behalf of the Publish What You Pay Coalition, which advocates for greater transparency in the oil industry, were intimidated and detained by the government in 2006. Workers' rights to join trade unions and to strike are legally protected, and collective bargaining is practiced freely. Most workers in the formal business sector, including the oil sector, are union members, and unions have made efforts to organize informal sectors, such as those of agriculture and retail trade.

Congo's weak judiciary has a backlog of cases and is subject to corruption and political influence. In rural areas, traditional courts retain broad jurisdiction, especially in civil matters. Prison conditions are life-threatening, with reports of beatings, overcrowding, and other ill-treatment. Women and men, as well as juveniles and adults, are incarcerated together, and rape is common.

The government does not fully control all members or units of the country's overlapping and poorly coordinated security forces, which include the police, gendarmerie, and military. Members of these forces act with impunity in committing human rights abuses, and there were reports during the year that security forces killed people during apprehension and in police custody.

Ethnic discrimination persists. Members of President Denis Sassou-Nguesso's northern ethnic group and related clans hold many key posts in government. Pygmy groups suffer discrimination, and many are effectively held in lifetime servitude through customary ties to ethnic Bantu "patrons." According to local human rights groups, rape of Pygmy women by Bantu men is widespread. Members of virtually all ethnic groups discriminate in hiring practices against members of other groups, and urban neighborhoods tend to be segregated.

Harassment by military personnel and militia groups inhibits travel, though such practices have declined. The Congo's overburdened and underresourced judicial system offers limited protection for business and property rights.

Despite constitutional safeguards, legal and societal discrimination against women is extensive. Access to education and employment, especially in the countryside, is limited, and civil codes and traditional practices regarding family and marriage formalize women's inferior status; for example, adultery is illegal for women but not for men. Under traditional or common-law marriages, widows are often not able to inherit any portion of their spouse's estates. Excessive bride prices make divorce extremely difficult for women who cannot reimburse the large sums. Violence against women is reportedly widespread. Abortion is prohibited.

Costa Rica

Population: 4,300,000

Capital: San José

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

The debate over Costa Rica's free trade agreement with the United States and other countries in the region, known as DR-CAFTA, dominated the 2006 presidential election and continued to cause social unrest. Former president Oscar Arias reclaimed his old post in the election, and his new administration faced the divisions over DR-CAFTA as well as worsening living conditions for the poorest segments of the population. Meanwhile, the legislature in August passed a bill granting law enforcement agencies greater powers to curb illegal immigration, reflecting growing concern about the large numbers of undocumented Nicaraguan workers in the country.

Costa Rica achieved independence from Spain in 1821 but belonged to larger political formations in the region until it gained full sovereignty in 1838. In 1948, Jose "Pepe" Figueres launched a 40-day civil war to restore power to the rightful winner of that year's presidential election, which the incumbent had sought to invalidate. Figueres also successfully pushed to disband Costa Rica's military, and in 1949 the country adopted a new constitution that ultimately strengthened democratic rule. Figueres later served as president for two separate terms under the banner of the National Liberation Party (PLN). Since 1948, power has passed back and forth multiple times between the PLN and Costa Rica's other major party, the Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC). The PUSC's Abel Pacheco was the winning candidate in the 2002 elections; Miguel Angel Rodriguez, also of the PUSC, had preceded him. How-

ever, in February 2006 the PLN regained the presidency for the first time since 1998 as Nobel Peace Prize laureate and former president Oscar Arias was reelected, while the PUSC lost all its presence and tradition after former president Miguel Angel Rodriguez was prosecuted and sentenced on corruption charges. In the closest presidential election in Costa Rican history, Arias defeated Citizens' Action Party candidate Otton Solis by a mere 1.12 percentage points. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal's final count gave Arias 40.92 percent of the vote, with Solis trailing behind with 39.80 percent in an election that was generally considered free and fair. Otto Guevara of the Libertarian Movement Party received 8 percent of the vote, and Ricardo Toledo of the Social Christian Unity Party received 3 percent.

As a result of the 2006 elections, the 57-member Legislative Assembly became more politically divided than at any other time in the nation's history. The PLN won 25 seats, the Citizen's Action Party (PAC) won 17, the PUSC won 5, and other small parties won the remaining 4 seats.

The Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) with the United States continues to be a dominant political issue in Costa Rica in 2006 and 2007, prompting anti-free trade demonstrations and strikes by opponents. The country is the only signatory to DR-CAFTA that has yet to ratify it, and opposition to the free trade agreement played a major role in the year's elections. Arias, who had pledged to move forward with the treaty, was able to defeat DR-CAFTA opponent Otton Solis with a lead of 18,167 votes. Critics of the trade agreement claimed that it was not in the best interests of the nation and could hurt vulnerable portions of the population, such as farmers and indigenous groups. In January 2006, the Commission of International Affairs, a committee of the Legislative Assembly, had voted nearly unanimously to deny indigenous communities the right to be consulted as part of the trade negotiations.

Another issue that played a large role in the elections was the proposed introduction of tax reforms that would target wealthy Costa Ricans to help pay for infrastructure projects, rising costs of living accompanied by falling wages, government corruption, and deteriorating public security.

Alias's approval rating fell after he took office, according to polls conducted in August by CID-Gallup for the daily newspaper *La Republica*. Although 44 percent of those polled thought that Alias's work during his first 100 days in office had been positive, 16 percent thought that it was poor or very poor. Some critics complained that Arias devoted more time to international diplomacy than he did to domestic issues, and said he had failed to engage in a meaningful dialogue with DR-CAFTA's many opponents.

One of the most controversial aspects of the DR-CAFTA debate to emerge in 2006 was the treaty's connection to the fabrication of weapons on Costa Rican territory. In August 2006, Arias signed a decree from the Ministry of Health that included norms and regulations for commercial and industrial activities, including the production of weapons and enrichment of radioactive materials. Opponents of DR-CAFTA claimed that Arias was paving the way for the production of weapons on Costa Rican territory connected to U.S. weapons manufacturer Raytheon, which is poised to begin operations in Costa Rica following the ratification of the trade agreement. The revelation in October that representatives of the Raytheon Company in Costa Rica had made donations to Alias's presidential campaign, raised questions

about his motives in promoting the free trade agreement. In October 2006, Arias signed into law a ban on arms manufacturing, including in duty-free industrial zones. The law also limited the number of weapons a person could own and prohibited the sale of guns to minors.

While quality of life in Costa Rica is relatively high for the region, Arias also faced the challenge of combating poverty among the country's most vulnerable residents. While gross per capita income has improved over the last five years, incomes have declined within the bottom fifth of the population. Income and education levels are also lower for the large numbers of Nicaraguan migrants living in Costa Rica. Efforts to promote economic growth have been hampered by the country's high debt and high inflation. Since 2001, Costa Rica's rank in the UN Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index has consistently worsened, and it placed 48 out of 177 countries surveyed in the 2006 index. According to UNDP, 2.2 percent of Costa Ricans, or about 86,000 people, live on less than \$1 a day, while 7.2 percent, or about 322,000 people, live on less than \$2 a day. Costa Rica's falling rating was for the most part due to increasing income inequality, as well as a decrease in per capita gross domestic product since 2005.

Poor economic conditions have caused Costa Ricans to reconsider their immigration policies. At least 500,000 Nicaraguan immigrants live in the country without proper documentation and in violation of Costa Rican immigration laws, a situation that has caused some alarm given the country's overall population of just 4.3 million. In August 2006, the Costa Rican legislature enacted a new immigration law that critics argue will violate the civil rights of immigrants. It permits security forces to raid any home, business, or vehicle where they suspect the presence of undocumented immigrants, and allows police to detain apprehended immigrants indefinitely. There have also been reports of abuse and extortion by the Border Guard.

Violence linked to drug gangs and narcotics traffickers continues to be of concern in Costa Rica. However, the country is not as dangerous as many of its neighbors.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Costa Rica is an electoral democracy. The president and members of the 57-seat, unicameral Legislative Assembly are elected for four-year terms and were banned from seeking a second but not subsequent term until the Supreme Court overturned the rule in 2003. Legislative elections were held in February 2006 and were considered free and fair. The National Liberation Party currently holds 25 seats in the Legislative Assembly, the Citizens' Action Party 17, the Libertarian Movement 6, and the Social Christian Unity Party 5, with the remaining 4 seats divided between other small parties. There are 22 women in the Legislative Assembly, including seven legislative committee chairwomen, one black member, and no indigenous members.

The Costa Rican presidency has long been plagued by corruption, and every president since 1990 has been accused of corruption after leaving office. In December 2005, Costa Rica reopened an investigation of foreign donations to former president Abel Pacheco's 2002 presidential campaign. He was accused of accepting illegal contributions—\$100,000 from the French telecommunications firm Alcatel, which was seeking government contracts, and \$500,000 from a Taiwanese businessman—in addition to allegedly receiving kickbacks from other foreign firms. Former president Miguel Angel Rodriguez (1998-2002) was accused of taking illegal financing

from Taiwan's government during his election campaign, and of accepting a bribe of \$1.4 million from Alcatel. Rodriguez was placed in house arrest from 2004 to 2005 on corruption charges and is awaiting sentence. Former president Jose Maria Figueres of the PLN (1994-1998) has allegedly admitted to accepting \$900,000 in "consulting fees" from Alcatel after being in office. Figueres remained in Switzerland at the end of 2006 despite a standing request by the Legislative Assembly for his return to Costa Rica for questioning. Former president Rafael Angel Calderon of the PUSC (1990-1994) was accused of taking an \$800,000 kickback from the Finnish firm Instrumentarium. Calderon remained under investigation at the end of 2006. Costa Rica was ranked 55 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The oldest democracy in Latin America, Costa Rica has a press freedom law that is the oldest in Central America, dating to 1835. The press, radio, and television are generally free from state interference. Ninety percent of the population is literate, and there are six privately owned dailies. Both public and commercial television and radio stations are available, including at least four private television stations and more than 100 private radio stations. The government is reviewing its libel and defamation laws after the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, based in Costa Rica, struck down a 1999 defamation conviction against Costa Rica's leading daily *La Nacion* in 2004. In general, libel and defamation laws are antiquated and carry excessive penalties. In June, the World Press Freedom Committee sent a letter to President Arias requesting that he change laws jailing journalists for convictions of slander. Costa Rica had not modified its libel and defamation laws in compliance with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruling at the end of 2006. The media have freely reported on the various corruption scandals that have buffeted the Costa Rican political scene. Internet access is unrestricted.

Freedom of religion is recognized, and there is complete academic freedom.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association as well as the right to form civic organizations. Numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are active in all parts of society and throughout the country. Labor can organize freely. Labor actions, ranging from local to nationwide protests, take place frequently with a minimum of governmental restraint. Nevertheless, employers often ignore minimum-wage and social-security laws, and the resulting fines are insignificant.

The judicial branch is independent, with members elected by the legislature. The legal system includes a Supreme Court, courts of appeal, and district courts. A specialized chamber of the Supreme Court (known as Sala Cuarta) can rule on the constitutionality of laws and chooses an independent national election commission. There are often substantial delays in the judicial process, including long pretrial detention.

In 1995 several entities, including the Border Guard, the Rural Guard, and the Civil Guard, were merged into a single "public force" under the Ministry of Public Security. The 1949 constitution bans the formation of a national army. Security has emerged as an important issue in the minds of many Costa Ricans, and a UNDP survey reveals that more than 19 percent of Costa Ricans believe that security is the number one problem facing the country. Indeed, the UNDP reports that 38.7 percent of Costa Rican households have been affected by some form of violence, including domestic violence, child abuse, and homicides and assaults as a result of organized

crime. According to the same UNDP survey, 77 percent of citizens, including more than 80 percent of Costa Rican women, perceive the country to be unsafe.

Prisons are notoriously overcrowded and offer inadequate medical services, although the government has made efforts to reduce overcrowding. Four members of public security forces were convicted in 2005 of beating a suspect, and one former police officer was found guilty of beating a suspect in 2006. The ombudsman's office received 20 complaints of police misconduct in 2006, 19 of which remained under investigation by year's end.

Indigenous rights are not a government priority, and it is estimated by NGOs that about 73 percent of the country's 70,000 indigenous persons live in remote areas with little access to health and education services, electricity, or potable water. The Costa Rican Ministry of Housing estimates that only 27 percent of indigenous people live in homes that are considered to be in good condition. Costa Ricans of African descent have also faced racial and economic discrimination.

Women still face discrimination in the economic realm, and only about a third of the economically active population is female. The majority of female employment is in the informal sector, where women on average earn 50 percent less than men. According to a study cited by Inforpress Centroamericana, Costa Rica is ranked 128 out of 144 countries rated for gender equality in the workplace.

Violence against women and children is a major problem. In 2006, the autonomous National Institute for Women provided legal and psychological services for more than 5,000 women and lodging in shelters for more than 200 battered women and 465 children. According to the United Nations Development Fund for Women, Costa Rica had a higher proportion of female homicide victims between 1999 and 2004 than neighboring countries such as El Salvador and Guatemala.

An increasing number of sex tourists visit Costa Rica as a negative offshoot of the country's successful tourism industry. A law criminalizing sex with minors was passed in 1999 in an attempt to crack down on the problem. However, NGOs such as ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) criticized Costa Rica in 2005 as one of the top world destinations for those seeking underage sex partners. The Costa Rican government recently cooperated with the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to set up a sting operation at a travel agency. The result was the conviction in 2005 of 11 U.S. citizens who had sought underage sex partners in Costa Rica. It is estimated that more than 3,000 Costa Rican children are victims of sexual exploitation. Costa Rica is also a transit and destination country for trafficked persons. In 2005, the Judicial Investigative Police created a new unit dedicated to combating trafficking in persons, but while hundreds of investigations were initiated, few have resulted in successful prosecutions.

Cote d'Ivoire

Population: 19,700,000
 Capital: Yamoussoukro (official); Abidjan (de facto)

Political Rights: 7*
 Civil Liberties: 6
 Status: Not Free



Ratings Change: Cote d'Ivoire's political rights rating declined from 6 to 7 because the legislature continued to function without a mandate as a result of President Gbagbo's further postponement of presidential elections.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6.4NF	6.4NF	6.4NF	6.5PF	5.4PF	6.6NF	6.5NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	7.6NF

Overview: Cote d'Ivoire remained split between the government-controlled south and the rebel-held north in 2006. Persistent deadlock between the two sides over disarmament and voter registration issues caused the further postponement of the presidential election, which had already been delayed from October 2005. Legislative elections, initially set for December 2005, were also postponed, leaving the legislature without a mandate. Separately, a Dutch-based company in August 2006 dumped toxic waste in Abidjan, leading to the resignation of President Laurent Gbagbo's cabinet.

Cote d'Ivoire gained independence from France in 1960, and President Felix Houphouet-Boigny ruled until his death in 1993. Henri Konan Bedie, then the speaker of the National Assembly, assumed power and won a fraudulent election in 1995 with 95 percent of the vote. Alassane Ouattara, the opposition's most formidable candidate, was barred from the contest, demonstrations were banned, and the media were intimidated.

General Robert Guei seized power in December 1999 and stood for a presidential election in October 2000. When initial results showed he was losing to Laurent Gbagbo, Guei sacked the electoral commission, detained its officers, and declared himself the winner. Tens of thousands of people took to the streets in a popular uprising that toppled Guei from power. Clashes followed between supporters of Gbagbo's Ivorian Popular Front (FPI), who claimed electoral victory, and Ouattara's Rally of Republicans (RDR), who called for new elections. Supported by security forces, Gbagbo refused to call new polls. The political violence, in which hundreds of civilians died, led to a deepening division between the largely Muslim north and mainly Christian south, although the conflict was not strictly rooted in a north-south, Muslim-Christian divide. Gbagbo was eventually declared the winner of the election, with 59 percent of the ballots, compared with 33 percent for Guei.

The FPI won 96 seats in the December 2000 legislative elections, while 4 went to

the Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire and 5 to the RDR. Smaller parties and independents took 24 seats, and 2 seats in Ouattara's district went unfilled.

Civil war erupted in September 2002 when some 700 soldiers attempted to stage a coup by simultaneously attacking a number of cities throughout the country. Under unknown circumstances, government forces killed Guei in Abidjan on the first day of fighting. Clashes intensified between forces loyal to the government and the disgruntled soldiers who formed an insurgency group called the Patriotic Movement of Cote d'Ivoire (MPCI). The MPCI quickly seized the northern part of the country and called for Gbagbo to step down. Other groups in the west, angered by the killing of Guei, echoed the calls for Gbagbo's resignation. By December 2002, these groups had united to form the New Forces led by Guillaume Soro.

Gbagbo's government and the New Forces in January 2003 signed a ceasefire brokered by France that called for a broad-based coalition government to rule until elections were held. However, that accord broke down. Following the deaths of nine French peacekeepers in a government bombing campaign against the New Forces movement in November 2004, France destroyed the Ivorian air force and—with the backing of the African Union (AU)—persuaded the UN Security Council to impose a strict arms embargo on the country. Some 4,000 French and 6,000 UN peacekeepers are monitoring the ceasefire line across the middle of the country.

South African president Thabo Mbeki in April 2005 brokered a new peace accord that set presidential and legislative elections for October and December of that year, respectively, but disarmament and preparations for the polls were not completed in time. As a result, the AU extended Gbagbo's term in office for another year and called for a new prime minister with a mandate to disarm the warring parties and prepare for the upcoming elections. Mbeki and other AU mediators appointed economist Charles Konan Banny to the post. An International Working Group (IWG) was established under the auspices of the African Union to oversee the peace process.

In response to a UN statement that the National Assembly's mandate did not extend beyond 2005, angry members of progovernment militia groups, including the Young Patriots, began targeting UN forces and outposts near the Liberian border in January 2006, driving UN troops to relocate. Violence swelled over the next few days when Young Patriot members took over the state-run media outlets and mobilized thousands of Ivoirians who burned tires, blocked roads, and intensified attacks against UN representatives throughout the country.

Despite moderate political improvements early in the year, when leading members of the major coalitions met numerous times to discuss prospects for peace, the likelihood of a presidential election being held by October 2006—the end of Gbagbo's extended mandate—became increasingly dim as the year progressed. As a prerequisite for the election, both sides initially agreed to disarm and accepted a timetable for registering voters. In July, public hearings for the identification of voters who had formerly been disenfranchised began in both the north and the south. However, in Abidjan much of the progress was blocked by Young Patriot forces that erected street barricades and intimidated potential registrants. Such tactics resulted in the killing of six potential applicants in the southern city of Divo. By August, Gbagbo effectively terminated the voter registration process when he announced that the mobile courts handing out identity papers did not have the authority to do so and that any voter with such papers would be refused the right to vote on elec-

tion day. In the same month, disarmament was also suspended indefinitely after nearly 1,000 progovernment soldiers registered but failed to hand in enough weapons.

By September, it was apparent that the election would not take place in October; the African Union and the IWG proposed that the voting be further deferred and that control of the armed forces be transferred to the prime minister. In early November, the UN Security Council passed a resolution supporting this proposal, giving Banny all necessary authority to implement the peace plan. Gbagbo has since refused to relinquish power calling the resolution's requirement for strengthening the prime minister's mandate "an attack on the sovereignty of my country." Gbagbo has also called for the removal of French and UN troops from the country and the dissolution of the IWG, arguing that the UN-led peace process had failed completely. No formal compromise has yet been reached, and the future of the peace process remains uncertain. This impasse between the prime minister and the president has led to a number of antigovernment protests and demonstrations throughout the country, a few of which have turned violent.

Separately, in late August 2006, the Netherlands-based company Trafigura Beheer B.V. dumped some 400 tons of petrochemical waste containing hydrogen sulphide, a toxic substance, in and around Abidjan after other, safer means of disposal were deemed too expensive. The action contravened the 1989 Basel Convention, which, among other things, was designed to protect poorer countries from hazardous waste disposal. The toxic dump in Cote d'Ivoire resulted in seven confirmed deaths, over 80,000 people seeking medical treatment, and the arrest of a number of officials, including two French employees of the Dutch company. In addition, the cabinet of the prime minister resigned in protest immediately following the incident; although, in practice this move was purely symbolic as Prime Minister Banny reappointed most of his cabinet members a few weeks later, with the exception of the ministers of transport and the environment. In the course of the government's investigation into the affair, a number of high-ranking officials were also suspended, including the general manager of the Abidjan port and the head of customs, both of whom had been victims of mob attacks in Abidjan following the dumping. In late November, in an apparent demonstration of his continued power over Banny, Gbagbo ordered the reinstatement of these, and other, civil servants in connection with the toxic waste scandal; the general manager of the Abidjan port, one of the men reinstated, allegedly has close ties to Gbagbo himself and is a primary financier of the militant Young Patriot group.

Cote d'Ivoire is by far the world's leading producer of cocoa, and the country was once a beacon of stability and economic progress in West Africa. However, the civil war has ravaged the economy. The country retains strong political, economic, and military ties to France, which has maintained a military garrison near Abidjan for years, mainly to protect French nationals who live in Cote d'Ivoire. Many French, however, fled after the war erupted.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Cote d'Ivoire is not an electoral democracy. The 1995 presidential election was neither free nor fair and was boycotted by all the major opposition parties. Voting in the October 2000 presidential election appeared to be carried out fairly, but only 5 of 19 potential

candidates were allowed to contest the vote. President Laurent Gbagbo's FPI won an overwhelming number of seats in the December 2000 legislative elections.

The constitution provides for the election of a president by popular vote every five years. However, a date for the next presidential election—already postponed by more than a year—has not been set. The president traditionally appoints the prime minister; however, Charles Konan Banny, the current prime minister, was appointed by African Union mediators during the course of peace negotiations at the end of 2005. The 225 members of the unicameral National Assembly are elected in single district and multidistrict elections by direct popular vote to serve five-year terms. The legislature's latest electoral mandate expired at the end of 2005.

Major political parties include the ruling FPI, the Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire-African Democratic Rally, and the RDR.

Corruption is a serious problem in Cote d'Ivoire. Profits from cocoa, cotton, and weapons, as well as informal taxes, have made resolving the Ivorian conflict a less attractive option for many in power, including members of the military and rebel forces. Corruption did not noticeably improve in 2006. Cote d'Ivoire was ranked 151 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Despite constitutional protections for press freedom, it is generally not respected in practice and deteriorated slightly in 2006. State-owned newspapers and the state-run broadcasting system are for the most part unreservedly progovernment. Several private radio stations and a cable television service operate, but only the state broadcasting system reaches a national audience. In the north, the circulation of newspapers printed in Abidjan is heavily restricted and local radio and television stations remain under the tight control of the rebel authorities. Despite the reconciliation process, most Ivorian media remain partisan and provocative.

Journalists in 2006 continued to face harassment and threats. In January, to bolster support for attacks on the United Nations, progovernment Young Patriot forces took control of the state-owned radio and television stations and broadcast messages that drew thousands of demonstrators onto the streets. During the occupation of the media outlets, which was aided by security personnel and a number of senior broadcast officials, demonstrators threatened to kill or rape journalists who were unwilling to cooperate. Many other journalists were harassed, attacked, and threatened amid the wider violence that month, particularly in Abidjan. In November, Gbagbo moved the state-run media closer toward complete government control when he fired the director general of the national state-run television station, Ivorian Radio Television (RTI), and replaced him with Brou Amessan, who had served as the government's news anchor during the Young Patriot's takeover of the station. This move came during a period of heightened tension between Gbagbo and his prime minister after RTI aired one of the prime minister's press releases that condemned Gbagbo's order to reinstate the previously dismissed civil servants accused of involvement in the toxic waste dump scandal.

In December 2004, the National Assembly passed a new law removing criminal penalties for press offenses, such as defamation and publishing false information, and replaced them with stiff fines. This legislative change was applied in September 2006, when a private daily, *Le Jour Plus*, was fined \$29,000 by an Abidjan court for publishing an article accusing the president's wife of involvement in the toxic waste

incident. In an otherwise disappointing environment for the media, international press coverage in Cote d'Ivoire improved in May 2006 when the National Council for Broadcast Communication allowed Radio France Internationale (RFI) to resume FM transmission after suspending it in July 2005 for being "unbalanced." Internet access, though used infrequently, is unrestricted by the government.

Religious freedom is guaranteed but is not respected in practice. The government openly favors Christianity, and Muslims, who predominate in the rebel-held north, have been targeted as a result of the civil war. However, direct attacks on Muslims have decreased in recent years. Efforts by religious and civil society groups have helped ease tensions between Christians and Muslims.

The government, which owns most of the educational facilities in the country, inhibits academic freedom by requiring authorization for all political meetings held on college campuses. According to the UN news organization IRIN, the progovernment Student Federation of Cote d'Ivoire (FESCI) operating on the University of Abidjan campus, regularly intimidates students through the use of strong-arm tactics including physical violence, sexual harassment, and occasionally even rape in its efforts to control political thought, student and staff activities, and campus commerce. In July 2005, when a rival student union attempted to hold a meeting on campus the FESCI attacked their members and temporarily closed the campus.

The constitution protects the right to freely assemble and demonstrate; however, this right is often denied in practice. In recent years, a number of opposition demonstrations have been violently dispersed by progovernment forces leaving many dead. However, in 2006, while progovernment law enforcers actively continued to suppress opposition activity, a number of peaceful antigovernment demonstrations were successfully staged, notably in response to Gbagbo's decision to reappoint the civil servants accused of involvement in the toxic waste dump scandal. Human rights groups generally operate freely in Cote d'Ivoire, although rights defenders sometimes face death threats and harassment. Labor union formation and membership are legally protected, although only a small percentage of the workforce is organized. Workers have the right to bargain collectively.

Cote d'Ivoire does not have an independent judiciary. Judges are political appointees without tenure and are highly susceptible to external interference. In many rural areas, traditional courts still prevail, especially in the handling of minor matters and family law. In the rebel-held north, no functioning judiciary exists, a situation that leads to frequent arbitrary arrests and the imposition of prison sentences with no legal foundation. Security forces generally operate with impunity, and prison conditions are harsh.

Human rights groups have accused officials of deliberately encouraging a culture of violent xenophobia in Cote d'Ivoire, whose economy has long attracted workers from neighboring countries. Conflict between newer immigrants and longer term residents has contributed significantly to deepening and complicating the country's current political crisis. More than one-quarter of the country's population is estimated to consist of expatriates from other African countries. For decades, immigrants from Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Guinea have provided cheap labor for local landowners, which helped turn Cote d'Ivoire into the world's leading cocoa producer. However, competition over land rights, economic decline, and the civil war have inflamed ethnic tensions, particularly in the western region.

Freedom of movement is curtailed throughout the country, but especially between the south and the rebel-held north. In response to the attacks on UN forces in January 2006, the UN Security Council imposed financial and travel sanctions for 12 months on two prominent members of the Young Patriots responsible for the attacks, including the group's leader Charles Ble Goude. In the same resolution, the Security Council imposed identical sanctions on Martin Kouakou Fofie, a commander of the New Forces in the north, for the perpetration of human rights violations, including the recruitment of child soldiers and sexual abuse, by forces under his command.

Child labor and child trafficking are problems, although Cote d'Ivoire has made efforts to stem both practices. Tens of thousands of West African children are believed to be working on Ivorian plantations under hazardous conditions.

Women suffer widespread discrimination, despite official encouragement for respect for their constitutional rights. Equal pay for equal work is offered in the small formal business sector, but women have few chances to obtain, or advance in, wage employment. In rural areas that rely on subsistence agriculture, education and job opportunities for women are even more scarce. Female genital mutilation is still practiced, although it has been a crime since 1998. Violence against women is reportedly common. Human Rights Watch has reported that both the government and rebels have been responsible for sexual violence against women and girls that is rooted in ethnic discrimination and a climate of impunity.

↑ Croatia

Population: 4,400,000

Capital: Zagreb

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Trend Arrow: Croatia received an upward arrow due to the introduction of the definition of hate crimes in the Criminal Code.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview: In 2006, the government undertook a series of reforms necessary for Croatia to achieve full membership in the European Union (EU). The reforms included establishing an independent and professionalized electoral commission, abolishing the prison sentence for libel, and introducing the definition of hate crimes into the criminal code. In December 2005, the top Croatian war crimes suspect, Ante Gotovina, was arrested in Spain and transferred to The Hague.

As part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Croatia held its first multiparty elections in 1990, electing Franjo Tudjman, a former Communist general turned nationalist politician, as president in May 1990. Tudjman's Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) ruled Croatia from 1990 to 1999. As rival nationalisms competed with each other in Croatia during 1990 and 1991, Croatia's Serb population in the region known as Krajina declared independence from Croatia, even as Croatia itself was declaring its independence from the former Yugoslavia. The result was a de facto partition of the country between 1991 and 1995. In May and August 1995, a majority of the Serb population of Croatia either fled or was forcibly expelled from Krajina during Croatian military offensives to establish control over the contested territory.

Tudjman died on December 11, 1999, and in the subsequent extraordinary presidential elections in January 2000, Stjepan Mesic, running as a joint candidate of the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), the Croatian People's Party, the Liberal Party, and the Istrian Democratic Assembly, was elected president. In legislative elections that also took place in January 2000, a center-left coalition wrested control of Parliament from the HDZ. The leader of the SDP (the former League of Communists of Croatia—now the Social Democratic Party of Croatia), Ivica Racan, was named prime minister.

In the latest parliamentary elections held on November 23, 2003, the HDZ, together with its new leader, Dr. Ivo Sanader, gained 66 seats. The HDZ became the strongest party in the new 152-member Parliament, ending three years of a relatively weak SDP-led coalition government. Because of international objections to the formation of a coalition majority government with extreme right-wing nationalist parties, Sanader decided to lead a minority government with the support of the HSS, the Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS), the Croatian Pensioner Party (HSU), and representatives of Croatia's Italian minority.

The HDZ's return to power was viewed with caution because of the party's history of engaging in nationalist demagoguery, its meddling in neighboring Bosnia-Herzegovina, and its poor record in dealing with Croatia's ethnic minorities. However, under Sanader's leadership, the party has arguably evolved into a standard European Christian-democratic party purged of extremists, although some of its more controversial figures from the past remain in influential positions. The Sanader-led government has been working actively to facilitate the return of refugees to their homes, repair war-damaged houses, and improve minority rights in order to meet the conditions for the European Union (EU) accession.

Croatia held presidential elections over two rounds in January 2005. Mesic, the incumbent, won with 66 percent of the vote against Jadranka Kosor, the HDZ candidate and deputy prime minister.

In October 2005, the EU opened the first stage of membership talks with Croatia after establishing that Croatia was fully cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The top Croatian war crimes suspect, Ante Gotovina, was arrested in Spain in December 2005. Since then, the Croatian government has paid for Gotovina's legal defense and has contributed to the fund supporting the defense of other Croatian war crimes suspects currently in The Hague. In efforts to harmonize its laws with those of the EU, the government introduced a new anticorruption program in March 2006, adopted a law establishing a professionalized and independent electoral commission, and abolished the prison sentence for

libel. Moreover, Croatia included a definition of hate crimes in its criminal code and became the first country in the region to institute police training aimed to combat hate crimes.

Croatia's relationship with Serbia continued to improve in 2006. In June, Serbian president Boris Tadic visited Croatia, and in July, the leadership of the two countries commemorated the birth of Nikola Tesla, a celebrated scientist of both Serbian and Croatian heritage. The two countries provisionally instituted visa-free travel and are moving to make the practice permanent. However, issues involving the return of refugees, particularly as related to property restitution and Croatia's claim for compensation for war damage, remain unresolved.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Croatia is an electoral democracy. Since 2000, there have been two peaceful transfers of power in the country. The parliamentary elections of November 2003 were contested by a record 34 candidates competing for each of the 152 seats in the unicameral Assembly. Members of the Assembly are elected to four-year terms. Although the elections were generally free and fair, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe expressed concern over the short time frame available for election administration, the lack of accessibility for out-of-country voters (particularly for refugees in Serbia and Montenegro and in Bosnia and Herzegovina), and the lack of transparency in campaign financing.

The president of Croatia is the head of state and is elected by popular vote for a five-year term, with a maximum of two terms. The prime minister is appointed by the president, but the appointment must be approved by the Parliament. Both the January 2005 presidential elections and the local elections in May 2005 were assessed as generally free and fair, although problems were recorded with diaspora voting in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Corruption remains a problem in Croatia. As in other parts of the Balkans, a nexus of official security institutions and "legitimate" businesspeople is often at the center of many corruption cases. In March, a new anticorruption program was adopted, drawing special attention to the traditionally corrupt institutions including the judiciary, health services, and public administration, though its implementation has been prolonged. Moreover, the government strengthened the authority of the Office for the Prevention of Corruption and Organized Crime. Croatia was ranked 69 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Croatia's constitution guarantees freedom of expression and the press. Freedom of the media is generally respected, although more reform of government media regulations is needed. The most important media outlet, HRT (Croatian Radio and Television), is still under substantial political control, despite long-running efforts to transform it into a European-style, public service broadcaster. In June, the parliament passed an amendment to the criminal code that removes prison sentences for libel.

The issue of war crimes remains a sensitive topic, and journalists face pressure and intimidation if their reporting challenges the virtue of the Croatian role in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. In December 2005, members of Parliament engaged in a heated debate over a popular weekly show on the state television, *Latinica*, which expressed a critical view of the late president Franjo Tudjman in one of its

episodes. The debate led to a temporary dismissal of the show's anchor, Denis Laitin, and Parliament's refusal to approve the state television's annual report. Laitin was reappointed only after an intense public campaign and outcries from the international community. Moreover, in December 2006 two HRT journalists were temporarily suspended for publicly broadcasting a speech from the early 1990s in which President Mesic appeared to speak favorably about Croatia's fascist past. Following the incident, Mesic publicly condemned the journalists' suspension. The ICTY's 2005 and 2006 indictments of journalists who had revealed the names of protected witnesses provoked a debate on journalistic ethics and the balance between media freedom and the respect for the rule of law. Access to the internet is unrestricted.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution. However, members of the Serbian Orthodox Church continue to report incidents of intimidation and vandalism. For example, derogatory graffiti appeared on the walls of the Orthodox Church in Zadar. Moreover, the St. George church near Knin was vandalized twice in 2006. There were no reports of restrictions on academic freedom.

The constitution provides for freedom of association and assembly. A wide variety of both international and domestic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate in Croatia, and there were no reported instances of governmental harassment of NGOs during the year. The constitution allows workers to form and join trade unions, and they do so freely. Approximately 64 percent of the workforce is unionized.

Croatia's judicial system suffers from numerous problems, most notably inefficiency. A large number of judicial vacancies and a shortage of experienced judges have led to a huge backlog of cases. However, the backlog has decreased from estimated at 1.6 million in 2005 to 1.2 million in 2006. Excessive trial length and a lack of enforcement of judicial decisions, especially in cases relating to the repossession of property owned by Serbs, also plague the system. Further, impartiality of the local courts remains a problem, and although progress was noted in 2006, ethnicity continues to be a factor in determining against whom war crimes charges are being filed and the severity of sentencing. Prison conditions in Croatia do not fully meet international standards. According to the 2006 Ombudsman's report, overcrowding and poor medical care are the main problems. Moreover, there are reports that police treat ethnic minorities more harshly than they do ethnic Croatians.

Respect for minority rights has improved in Croatia in the post-Tudjman period, but various forms of harassment and discrimination still persist. A 2006 European Commission report notes that there is gross underrepresentation of Serbs in local and regional governments, state administration, and judicial bodies. The local authorities sometimes refuse to hire qualified Serbs even when no Croats apply for a position. Further, Serbs who attempt to return to their prewar property are frequently harassed by the local population. For example, in July 2006, the houses of three Serb returnees in Biljane Donje, a village in Northern Dalmatia, were vandalized. The police reacted quickly and arrested four men from the neighboring village. In 2006, the government put some effort into increasing interaction between Serb and Croat children, particularly in the areas affected by the war, who are currently attending school in different shifts.

The Roma population in Croatia faces significant social and economic obstacles, as well as widespread discrimination. In March 2005, the government adopted a special

action plan aimed to improve the conditions for Roma in employment, health, housing, and education. However, most Roma are excluded from mainstream society, and only 18 percent of those older than 15 were employed in 2006.

The constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender. Domestic violence against women is believed to be widespread and underreported. In July 2003, the Assembly passed the Law on Gender Equality, intended to further empower women in the workplace and public life. Women currently make up 33 of the 152 members of Parliament, and there are 4 women in the 15-member cabinet. Trafficking in women for the purposes of prostitution continues to be a problem. Croatia is considered to be primarily a transit country for most trafficked women sent to Western Europe.

Cuba

Population: 11,300,000

Capital: Havana

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview:

In 2006, President Fidel Castro passed power, on a provisional basis, to his brother, Raul, who is head of the armed forces. This decision was made when serious internal bleeding forced the Cuban leader to undergo emergency surgery, which was followed by a slow convalescence. The transfer of authority, which occurred shortly before Fidel Castro's 80th birthday on August 13, marked the first time that the elder Castro has relinquished control since the 1959 Cuban revolution. The 75-year old Raul Castro initially kept a low profile, but gradually began to assume a more prominent role. Although most Cubans were initially stunned by the news, routine life continued without disruption. Levels of government repression remained constant throughout this transition period. Tensions between Cuba and the United States remained high, while Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez met frequently with the ailing Castro and vowed his support for the Cuban Revolution.

Cuba achieved independence from Spain in 1898 as a result of the Spanish-American War. The Republic of Cuba was established in 1902, but remained under U.S. tutelage as a result of the Platt Amendment until 1934. In 1959, the U.S.-supported dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, who had ruled Cuba for 18 of the previous 25 years, was ousted by Fidel Castro's July 26th Movement. Castro declared his affiliation with communism shortly thereafter, and the island has been a one-party state ever since.

Following the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of some \$5 billion in annual Soviet subsidies, Castro opened some sectors of the island's economy to direct foreign investment. The legalization of the U.S. dollar in Cuba in 1993 created a new source of inequality, as access to dollars from remittances or through the tourist industry engendered a new moneyed class, while the majority continued to live on peso wages averaging less than \$10 a month.

The Castro government remains highly repressive of political dissent. Although Cuba's cycle of repression has ebbed and flowed over the past decade, the desire to neutralize organized political dissent remains a regime priority. In February 1999, the government introduced tough legislation against sedition, with a maximum prison sentence of 20 years. It stipulated penalties for unauthorized contacts with the United States and the import or supply of "subversive" materials, including texts on democracy and documents from news agencies and journalists. The Cuban government has recently undertaken a series of campaigns to undermine the reputations of leading opposition figures by portraying them as agents of the United States.

In 2002, the Varela Project, a referendum initiative seeking broad changes in the four-decades-old socialist system, won significant international recognition. Former U.S. president Jimmy Carter praised the project on Cuban television during his visit to the island, and its leader, Oswaldo Paya of the Christian Liberation Movement, later received the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. In May, project organizers submitted more than 11,000 signatures to the National Assembly demanding that a referendum be held in which Cubans could vote for fundamental reforms such as freedom of expression, the right to own private businesses, and electoral reform. However, the proposal was rejected by the constitutional committee of the National Assembly, and the Cuban government instead held a counterreferendum in which 8.2 million people supposedly declared the socialist system to be "untouchable."

In March 2003, the government initiated a crackdown against the prodemocracy opposition. Seventy-five people, including 27 independent journalists, 14 independent librarians, and more than 40 signature collectors for the Varela Project, were sentenced to an average of 20 years in prison following one-day trials held in April. (At the end of 2004, 61 of the activists who were arrested remained in prison; 14 won conditional release for health-related reasons, and two subsequently left Cuba.) In 2005, Cuba's "Ladies in White," a group of wives who hold weekly public demonstrations for the release of their husbands imprisoned in 2003, won the Sakharov Prize, following in the footsteps of Paya.

In May 2004, U.S. president George W. Bush announced that the United States would intensify pressure on the Cuban regime by increasing broadcasts designed to break through the island's information blockade, by aiding dissidents, and by limiting the amount of money Cuban Americans could take with them on family visits or send through remittances. In 2005, the U.S. State Department appointed a "transition coordinator" to oversee efforts to destabilize the Castro government and usher in democratic change. In February 2006, the U.S. diplomatic mission in Cuba set up a billboard to broadcast messages to the Cuban people, but the Cuban government responded by erecting 138 black flags in front of the building that commemorated "victims of imperialism." In July, the U.S. government released an updated version of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, chaired by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez. The commission set

aside \$80 million for the Cuba Fund for a Democratic Future to fund assistance to opposition groups within Cuba, but many dissidents complained that the program was counterproductive.

On July 31, Fidel Castro, president since 1959, passed power to his younger brother, Raul, the head of the armed forces, on a provisional basis. Serious internal bleeding, which forced Fidel to undergo emergency surgery, prompted the decision, and his surgery was followed by a slow convalescence. The transfer of authority, which occurred shortly before Fidel's 80th birthday on August 13, marked the first time that the elder Castro had relinquished control since the 1959 Cuban revolution. In addition to Raul Castro, six Cuban ministers were named to manage the responsibilities for health, education, energy, and finance. The 75-year old Raul subsequently kept a low profile, while other top officials, including Vice President Carlos Lage, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, and National Assembly president Ricardo Alarcon took on more prominent roles. Cuban authorities declared the state of Fidel's health to be a state secret, but later released several videotapes of him meeting with foreign dignitaries while dressed in pajamas in his hospital bed. Although most Cubans were initially stunned by the news, routine life continued without disruption. Increased security measures were evident in the streets of Havana and other major cities in the days following the announcement of the transfer of power, including the deployment of military personnel to prevent possible public disruptions.

Castro's illness sparked spontaneous celebrations in Miami, Florida, where the Cuban exile community in the United States believed that Castro's long-awaited demise was close at hand. The U.S. government took a cautious approach and reaffirmed that the long-standing U.S. embargo would remain in place until Cuba undertook free and fair elections. U.S.-Cuban relations remained tense and were characterized by periodic skirmishes. In September, the United States called for Cuba to hold a referendum to allow the Cuban people to vote on Raul's ascension, but the island's government rejected this proposal.

Cuba continued to strengthen its alliance with Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez during the year. Trade between the two countries neared \$3 billion, with Venezuela exporting nearly 100,000 barrels of oil per day on preferential financing terms. Cuba and Venezuela continued to deepen several joint programs, including Operation Miracle, which provided eye surgeries for poor Latin Americans; the state-sponsored news channel Telesur; and a regional oil pact known as PetroCaribe. The December 2005 election of President Evo Morales in Bolivia had allowed Cuba to expand its international partnerships, including the economic and social pact known as the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). Both Venezuela and Bolivia pledged to help defend Cuba against potential U.S. intervention.

In September, Cuba hosted the 14th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, a 118-member group of developing countries. Fifty-six heads of state attended, including the leaders of Pakistan, India, Iran, and Malaysia. However, the presidents of several major Latin American countries—including Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Peru—chose not to attend. Cuba continued to diversify its international partnerships. China emerged as Cuba's second largest trading partner with nearly \$1 billion in trade in 2005. Major Chinese investments were made in the island's nickel industry, as well as in tourism, transportation, and telecommunications. The Cuban government defended Iran's right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

European countries like the Czech Republic criticized Cuba for suppression of civil liberties, but European investment in Cuba remained strong.

Although the Cuban economy remained troubled, it appeared to be rebounding from the severe economic crisis of the 1990s. Fidel Castro claimed a growth rate of 12.5 percent in 2006, while outside analysts estimated a more modest 5 percent increase. During the year, foreign companies continued exploring Cuba's offshore energy reserves, which the U.S. Geological Survey estimated could hold 4.6 billion barrels of oil and 9.8 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Cuba parceled its offshore territory into 59 exploration blocks, 16 of which were claimed by companies from Canada, Spain, Norway, India, and China. The Cuban government also expressed interest in revitalizing its sugar industry, which underwent a major downsizing in 2002 and yielded a record-low harvest of 1.3 million tons in 2006. Fidel Castro announced an "energy revolution" in January to end the problem of blackouts, and later raised the monthly minimum wage to 225 pesos (about \$10) a month.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Cuba is not an electoral democracy. President Fidel Castro and, more recently, his brother Raul Castro dominate the political system. The country is a one-party state with the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) controlling all governmental entities from the national to the local level. Communist structures were institutionalized by the 1976 constitution installed at the first congress of the PCC. The constitution provides for the National Assembly, which designates the Council of State. It is that body that in turn appoints the Council of Ministers in consultation with its president, who serves as head of state and chief of government. However, Castro is responsible for every appointment and controls every lever of power in Cuba in his various roles as president of the Council of Ministers, chairman of the Council of State, commander in chief of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), and first secretary of the PCC. The most recent PCC congress took place in 1997, and no date has been set for the next meeting.

In October 2002, some 8 million Cubans voted in tightly controlled municipal elections. On January 19, 2003, an election was held for the Cuban National Assembly, with just 609 candidates—all supported by the regime—vying for 609 seats.

All political organizing outside the PCC is illegal. Political dissent, spoken or written, is a punishable offense, and those so punished frequently receive years of imprisonment for seemingly minor infractions. Continuing a trend from 2003, in 2006 the Cuban government harassed dissidents, including using arbitrary sweeps and temporary detentions of suspected dissidents. The regime also called on its neighbor-watch groups, known as "Committees in Defense of the Revolution," to strengthen vigilance against "anti-social behavior," a government euphemism for opposition activity. Several dissident leaders claimed to suffer "acts of repudiation" by state-sponsored groups that attempt to intimidate and harass government opponents.

Official corruption remains a serious problem, with a "culture of illegality" shrouding the mixture of private and state-controlled economic activities allowed on the island. In late 2003, Juan Jose Vega, the president of Cubanacan, a state-run enterprise controlling more than \$600 million in foreign investment in Cuba's tourism industry, was dismissed on charges of corruption. In 2006, a leading government official, Juan Carlos Robinson, was dismissed from the Politburo and sentenced to 12

years in prison for corruption charges. Cuba was ranked 66 out of 163 countries surveyed in the Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of the press remains tightly curtailed, and the media in Cuba remain controlled by the state and the Communist Party. The independent press is considered illegal by the state and is the object of a targeted campaign of intimidation by the government, which uses Ministry of Interior agents to infiltrate and report on the independent media. Independent journalists, particularly those associated with a dozen small news agencies established outside state control, have been subjected to continued repression, including jail terms of hard labor and assaults by state security agents. Foreign news agencies may only hire local reporters through government offices, limiting employment opportunities for independent journalists.

In 2004,²² independent journalists arrested in March 2003 remained imprisoned in degrading conditions, which included physical and psychological abuse; acts of harassment and intimidation were also directed against their families. In April, two journalists held without trial since March 2002 were finally tried by a court in Ciego de Avila on charges of insulting Castro and the police and creating public disorder; one received a three-year prison sentence and the other a sentence of three and a half years.

Access to the internet remained tightly controlled. It is illegal for Cubans to connect to the internet in their homes. State-owned internet cafes exist in major cities, but web sites are closely monitored, and access costs are inaccessible for most Cubans. Only select state employees are permitted access to e-mail at their workplaces as well as to an intranet system that limits access to websites that the government deems inappropriate.

In 1991, Roman Catholics and other believers were granted permission to join the Communist Party, and the constitutional reference to official atheism was dropped the following year. In 1998, Pope John Paul II visited Cuba and called for greater religious freedom; his visit was followed by a temporary lessening of restrictions on religious worship. However, according to the Cuban Conference on Catholic Bishops, official obstacles to religious freedom remain as restrictive as before the Pope's visit. According to the U.S. State Department's 2006 International Religious Freedom Report, Cuba remains one of four countries that continues to employ authoritarian actions to control religious belief and expression. Security agents frequently spy on worshippers, the government continues to block construction of new churches, the number of new foreign priests is limited, and most new denominations are refused recognition. Churches are not allowed to conduct educational initiatives, and church-based publications are subject to the control and censorship of the governmental Office of Religious Affairs. An estimated 70 percent of all Cubans on the island practice some form of Afro-Cuban religion.

The government restricts academic freedom. Teaching materials for courses such as mathematics or literature must contain ideological content. Affiliation with official Communist Party structures is generally needed to gain access to educational institutions, and students' report cards carry information regarding their parents' involvement with the Communist Party. In 2003, state security forces raided 22 independent libraries and sent 14 librarians to jail with terms of up to 26 years. Many of the targeted individuals were charged with working with the United States to subvert the Cuban government, thereby committing national security violations and

aiding a foreign power. Several political prisoners have subsequently been released for health reasons, but they are subject to re-arrest at any time.

Limited rights of assembly and association are permitted under the constitution; however, as is the case with all other constitutional rights, these are subject to the stipulation that they may not be "exercised against the existence and objectives of the Socialist State." The unauthorized assembly of more than three persons, including those for private religious services in private homes, is punishable by law with up to three months in prison and a fine. This prohibition is selectively enforced and is often used as a legal pretext to imprison human rights advocates.

Workers do not have the right to bargain collectively or to strike. Members of independent labor unions, which the government considers illegal, are often harassed or dismissed from their jobs and subsequently barred from future employment. The government has also been reducing opportunities for private economic activity; a trend toward revoking self-employment licenses continued, and privately run farmers' markets also came under increased scrutiny, a further intensification of the movement toward increased state control of the economy.

The executive branch controls the judiciary. In practice, the Council of State, of which Castro is chairman, serves as a de facto judiciary and controls both the courts and the judicial process as a whole.

According to a domestic monitoring group, the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation, there are more than 300 prisoners of conscience in Cuba, most held in cells with common criminals and many convicted on vague charges such as "disseminating enemy propaganda" or "dangerousness." Members of groups that exist apart from the state are labeled "counterrevolutionary criminals" and are subject to systematic repression, including arrest; beatings while in custody; loss of work, educational opportunities, and health care; and intimidation by uniformed or plainclothes state security agents. Dissidents reported being subject to even tighter surveillance following Fidel Castro's illness, as the government mobilized to thwart any potential public disruptions.

Since 1991, the United Nations has voted annually to assign a special investigator on human rights to Cuba, but the Cuban government has refused to cooperate. Cuba also does not allow the International Red Cross or other humanitarian organizations access to its prisons. Cuba's prison population is disproportionately black.

Many Afro-Cubans have only limited access to the dollar-earning sectors of the economy, such as tourism and employment by joint ventures.

Freedom of movement and the right to choose one's residence and place of employment are severely restricted. Attempting to leave the island without permission is a punishable offense. Intercity migration or relocation is also restricted and requires permission from the local Committee for the Defense of the Revolution and other local authorities. In the post-Soviet era, only state enterprises can enter into economic agreements with foreigners as minority partners; regular citizens cannot participate. However, PCC membership is still required to obtain good jobs, serviceable housing, and real access to social services, including medical care and educational opportunities. In 2004, a Ministry of Labor decree halted the issuance of all new licenses for 40 categories of self-employment that were legalized in 1993. Roughly 150,000 Cubans are self-employed, representing approximately 2 percent of the workforce. The government systematically violates international salary standards,

terms of contract, and other labor codes for workers employed on the island by foreign-owned firms.

About 40 percent of all women work, and they are well represented in most professions. However, violence against women is a problem, as is child prostitution.

Cyprus

Population: 1,000,000

Capital: Nicosia

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: Parliamentary elections held in May 2006 delivered support to parties that had rejected the UN peace plan for reunification with the disputed northern part of the island. No significant progress was made on the peace process during the year.

Annexed by Britain in 1914, Cyprus gained independence in 1960, after a 10-year guerrilla campaign by partisans demanding union with Greece. In July 1974, Greek Cypriot National Guard members, backed by the military junta in power in Greece, staged an unsuccessful coup aimed at such unification. Five days later, Turkey invaded northern Cyprus, seized control of 37 percent of the island, and expelled 200,000 Greeks from the north. Today, the Greek and Turkish communities are almost completely separated in the south and north, respectively.

A buffer zone, called the "Green Line," has divided Cyprus since 1974. The capital, Nicosia, is similarly divided. Tensions between the two populations have plagued the island since independence. UN resolutions stipulate that Cyprus is a single country in which the northern third is illegally occupied. In 1983, Turkish-controlled Cyprus declared its independence, a move recognized only by Turkey.

After a new government was elected in November 2002, Turkey's stance on reunification became much more supportive, as Turkey's own chances of European Union (EU) membership had been linked to a resolution of the island's division. Significant pressure from the EU and the United States, as well as UN intervention, also helped to move the two sides closer to a settlement. A new pro-unification government was elected in northern Cyprus in December 2003.

However, the latest and most promising round of reunification negotiations, led by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, collapsed in 2004 after no consensus

was reached. As was previously agreed, Annan himself proposed a plan that was put to a vote in simultaneous, separate referendums in northern and southern Cyprus in April 2004. Greek Cypriots, who previously had been more enthusiastic with respect to reunification, had reservations about the plan, especially concerning security and international guarantees that the Turkish side would comply. Ultimately, 76 percent of Greek Cypriots voted against the plan in a countrywide referendum, while 65 percent of Turkish Cypriots voted in favor. With the island still divided, only Greek Cyprus joined the EU as planned in May 2004. Membership had been a bargaining tool for the EU with Cyprus, and without it, a new reunification plan has been more difficult to achieve. Talks held between the Greek and Turkish leaders in 2006 made little progress on reunification.

At first, the overwhelming approval of the Turkish Cypriots for reunification sparked international efforts to reward them by ending their isolation. However, the Greek Cypriots oppose the most far-reaching proposals, such as direct trade between the north and the rest of the world. Their veto in EU decisions has made EU openings to the north less likely. Meanwhile, trade has increased between the two sides, and travel between the two sides is much freer.

In parliamentary elections held in the south on May 21, 2006, a record 487 candidates from nine parties contested the 56 seats. The Democratic Party (DIKO) won 11 seats, while the Democratic Rally (DISY) and Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL) each took 18 seats; three other parties captured the remaining 9 seats. The 2004 referendum and the prospects for reunification became major campaign issues, and the results were considered a signal of support for rejection of the UN plan by President Tassos Papadopoulos of DIKO; the United Democrats, which had supported the UN plan, did not win a single seat.

Accusations surfaced in fall 2006 that President Papadopoulos, who was elected president in 2003, had accepted an illegal campaign donation during that year, through a third party, from a foreign corporation; Papadopoulos denied foul play.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Cyprus is an electoral democracy. Suffrage is universal, and elections are free and fair. The 1960 constitution established an ethnically representative system designed to protect the interests of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots; the Greek Cypriots maintain that the constitution still applies to the entire island today. There is a clear separation of powers between the executive and legislature through a presidential system.

The unicameral House of Representatives has 80 seats filled through proportional representation, 24 of which are reserved for the Turkish Cypriot community; however, the Turkish Cypriot representatives withdrew in 1964 and have not been replaced to date. Instead, the Turkish Cypriots maintain their own Parliament in the northern part of the island. Representatives serve five-year terms. Voting is compulsory, although there is no penalty for those who do not vote. Spending limits for political campaigns are widely flouted. The president is elected by popular vote to serve a 5-year term. The country's major political parties are DIKO, AKEL, and DIS.

Following a ruling against Cyprus by the European Court of Human Rights in 2004, a new law allows Turkish Cypriots living in the south to vote and run for office in Greek Cypriot elections. About 270 Turkish Cypriots registered this year, and one ran for office. A campaign is currently under way to pressure the government to

allow Turkish Cypriots from the north to vote in Greek Cypriot elections as well. Turkish Cypriots cannot run for president, as the constitution states that a Greek Cypriot should hold that post and a Turkish Cypriot should be vice president. The Maronites (Catholics of Lebanese descent), Armenians, and Latins (Catholics of European descent) elect special nonvoting representatives.

Corruption is not a significant problem in Cyprus. A 2004 anticorruption law instituted compulsory asset declarations by state officials, although compliance with the law is questionable. The auditor-general has reported serious financial mismanagement in government departments. Cyprus was ranked 37 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected. A vibrant independent press frequently criticizes authorities. Several private television and radio stations in the Greek Cypriot community, including a new channel added in 2006, compete effectively with government-controlled stations. In February, in the run-up to the legislative elections, the political opposition accused the state broadcaster of favoring the government. Although Turkish Cypriot journalists can enter the south, Turkish journalists based in the north often report difficulties crossing the border. Access to the internet is unrestricted.

Freedom of religion is provided for by the constitution and is protected in practice. Nearly all the inhabitants of Greek-controlled Cyprus are Greek Orthodox Christians. Cypriots registered with the church were eligible to vote in 2006 for special representatives in the first phase of an election for the leader of the Orthodox Church. The vote was marred by claims of voting irregularities. State schools use textbooks containing negative language against Turkish Cypriots and Turkey.

Freedoms of association and assembly are respected. Nongovernmental organizations, including human rights groups, operate without government interference. Workers have the right to strike and to form trade unions without employer authorization.

The independent judiciary operates according to the British tradition, upholding the presumption of innocence and the right to due process. Standard procedure calls for trial before a judge, but requests for trial by jury are regularly granted. Prison overcrowding is often highlighted by domestic and international human rights groups; the government admits the problem but maintains that it is improving. Police and prison brutality has also been alleged, including targeted beatings of minorities; a new bureau to investigate complaints against the police was established in April, but it has not been able to address all complaints because of a lack of resources. In a high-profile case, two 27-year-old men were beaten by plainclothes police in December 2005 after they were allegedly suspected of drug dealing. The incident was caught on private video and released to the public. The trial of the 11 officers accused, who have all pleaded not guilty, is set for February 2007.

A 1975 agreement between the Greek and Turkish sides of the island governs treatment of minorities. Turkish Cypriots are now entitled to Republic of Cyprus passports, and thousands have obtained them. In practice, Turkish Cypriots in the south have reported difficulty obtaining identity cards and other documents, as well as harassment and discrimination. The Roma (Gypsy) population has encountered widespread prejudice and disadvantages, including in their treatment by the government.

Since Cypriot accession to the EU in 2004, all citizens can move freely throughout the island.

The status of property abandoned by those moving to either side of the Green Line beginning in 1974 is one of the major points of contention in reunification negotiations. Under changes in the law in the north, Greek Cypriots can appeal to a new property commission for property under dispute. A 1991 law states that property left by "Turkish Cypriots" belongs to the state.

Sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as violence against women, including domestic abuse, are problems. Although the Cypriot police set up a Human Trafficking Prevention Bureau, Cyprus remains a transit and destination country, and the U.S. government put Cyprus back on its trafficking "watch list" in 2006.

Czech Republic

Population: 10,300,000

Capital: Prague

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: Following the 2006 parliamentary elections, neither of the two largest parties on the center-left and center-right were able to form a majority coalition including any of the smaller political parties. The deadlock lasted from June until the end of the year with no permanent government formed.

Czechoslovakia was created in 1918 following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Soviet troops helped establish the Communist People's Party of Czechoslovakia in 1948, and the country was renamed the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in 1960. In 1968, Soviet tanks crushed the so-called Prague Spring, a period of halting political liberalization led by reformist leader Alexander Dubcek.

In December 1989, a series of anti-Communist peaceful public demonstrations led by dissident Vaclav Havel and the Civic Forum resulted in the resignation of the Czechoslovak government in what became known as the Velvet Revolution. The country's first post-Communist elections were held the following year. In 1992, a new constitution and Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms were adopted, and the country began an ambitious program of political and economic reform under Finance Minister Vaclav Klaus. A leading figure in the ruling center-right Civic Democratic Party (ODS), Klaus became prime minister the same year. In 1993, the state dissolved peacefully into the Czech and Slovak Republics and Havel became president of the new Czech Republic. In 1997, Klaus resigned amid allegations of corruption in the ODS.

Close parliamentary elections in 1998 brought about Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD) control of the government, although the ODS managed to negotiate control of key government positions. This "opposition agreement" between the CSSD and the ODS limited meaningful political competition and brought about several years of political gridlock. The next parliamentary election to the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) was held in June 2002, and a by-election to the Senate (upper house) took place in November 2002. The CSSD secured the most votes, and Vladimir Spidla, the party's chairman, became the new prime minister. Klaus won the February 2003 presidential poll.

In May 2004, the Czech Republic joined the European Union (EU), fulfilling one of the government's most important goals. EU accession had required years of work to reach strict EU standards, such as the creation of a stable market economy, a consolidated democracy, a cleaner environment, and laws protecting minority rights. Czechs took pride in "returning" to Europe's mainstream after the Communist era. In the country's first elections for the European Parliament, in June 2004, the government was soundly defeated: the CSSD secured just 9 percent of the vote, while the unreformed Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM) captured 20 percent. Prime Minister Spidla, who was humiliated by the results, stepped down in favor of Stanislav Gross, also of the CSSD; Gross formed a new government that included the same parties as the previous one: the CSSD, the Christian and Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-CSL), and a free-market liberal party, Freedom Union-Democratic Union (US-DEU).

The CSSD was further weakened in 2005 when it was revealed that Gross had purchased an apartment that was thought to have been more expensive than he could afford on his government salary; Gross then failed to adequately explain how he had secured a loan for the purchase. Allegations of corruption and complaints from the opposition led to the collapse of the three-party governing coalition in April. Jiri Paroubek replaced Gross as prime minister, and the CSSD re-formed a coalition government with its partners: the KDU-CSL and the US-DEU. The coalition held a bare majority, 101 seats of 200, in the lower house of parliament.

The June 2-3, 2006, parliamentary election continued the country's tradition of political turmoil. On the left, the CSSD and the KSCM captured 100 seats (74 and 26). The other three parties winning seats—the ODS, the KDU-CSL, and the Greens—also won 100 (81, 13, and 6, respectively). Months of negotiation failed to produce a workable government, as no party was willing to work with the KSCM, which refuses to apologize for the repression of the Communist era. No combination of large and small parties proved feasible; a short-lived government of the ODS, KDU-CSL, and Greens failed a confidence vote in October after serving only one month. The two largest parties—the ODS and CSSD—were unable to agree on a grand coalition due to both personal and political differences. The ODS leader, Mirek Topolánek, remains caretaker prime minister. The ODS easily won local and Senate elections in late October, strengthening its public position and possibly creating a way out of the impasse. Meanwhile, the Czech economy performed surprisingly robustly in 2006 given the political stalemate.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The Czech Republic is an electoral democracy. Since the Velvet Revolution in 1989, the Czech Republic has enjoyed

free and fair elections. The Chamber of Deputies (lower house of parliament) has 200 members who are elected for four-year terms by proportional representation, and the Senate (upper house) has 81 members, elected for six-year terms, with one-third of the senators replaced every two years. The president, elected by the National Assembly, a joint session of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, for a five-year term (with a maximum of two subsequent terms), appoints judges, the prime minister, and other cabinet members, but has few other formal powers. The prime minister relies on support from a majority of members of the Chamber of Deputies to govern.

The three largest political parties are the center-left CSSD; the center-right, free-market ODS; and the Communist KSCM. In 2006 parliamentary elections, two other parties passed the 5 percent threshold required to enter the Chamber of Deputies: the KDU-CSL and, for the first time, the Greens.

The Czech Republic continues to confront remnants of the Soviet legacy, including significant corruption that affects many sectors of Czech society. The Czech Republic was ranked 46 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. Corruption is frequently exposed in the press, which has led to high-level government resignations.

Freedom of expression is respected in the Czech Republic, although the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, a document that forms part of the Czech constitution, prohibits threats against individual rights, state and public security, public health, and morality. The country's print and electronic media are largely in private hands. In 2000, the Law on Free Access to Information took effect, and Parliament amended broadcasting laws to meet EU standards. In 2001, the legislature adopted a bill designed to limit political influence over Czech Television (CT), the state broadcaster. Passage of the legislation helped to end a standoff at CT between journalists and management, in which a government-appointed director was seen as excessively close to the prime minister. Under this law, nongovernmental groups, rather than politicians, nominate candidates for the CT's governing council, the body that controls the selection of CT's director. In 2005, the Constitutional Court helped protect investigative journalism by ruling that journalists cannot be compelled to reveal their sources. Internet access is unrestricted.

The government generally respects freedom of religion. A 2002 law that provides for the registration and regulation of churches, including pay for clergy, has been criticized by the Roman Catholic Church as unduly restrictive of its activities. In 2003, the Church won a judgment against a government decision to deny registration to a Church-run medical center. In 2006, Muslim authorities petitioned for permission and financing for activities including providing religious instruction in schools and performing marriages. Academic freedom is widely respected in the Czech Republic.

Czech citizens may assemble peacefully, form associations, and petition the government. However, civic organizations are not as well developed as in other parts of Central Europe. Trade unions and professional associations function freely. Judges, prosecutors, and members of the armed forces and police may not strike. In 2003, the government's proposed fiscal-reform measures generated considerable opposition from the country's trade unions, including a major one-day strike in September by the teacher's union, in which more than 70,000 teachers reportedly took part.

The Czech Republic's independent judiciary consists of a Supreme Court, a Supreme Administrative Court, and high, regional, and district courts. There is also a Constitutional Court. Since a 2002 visit by Council of Europe authorities resulted in criticisms of ill-treatment by police and shortcomings in detention facilities, Czech authorities have issued new guidelines to police and wardens, including improved short-term detention facilities.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms gives minorities the right to help resolve matters pertaining to their group. A 1999 law restored citizenship to many residents, including Roma (Gypsies), who continue to experience discrimination. In 2001, Parliament approved legislation for the protection of ethnic minority rights, including the creation of a governmental minority council. Promoting denial of the Holocaust and inciting religious hatred are illegal. In 2005, the government proposed symbolic compensation for some of the ethnic Germans who were expelled from Czechoslovakia at the end of World War II, though this proposal is controversial and has resulted in no actual material compensation.

Property ownership, choice of residence, and fair wages are legally protected, and citizens generally enjoy all of these rights.

Gender discrimination is legally prohibited. However, sexual harassment in the workplace appears to be fairly common, and women are underrepresented in the highest levels of government and business. Trafficking of women and girls for prostitution remains a problem. The government has taken steps in recent years to strengthen the reporting of and punishment for cases of domestic violence.

Denmark

Population: 5,400,000

Capital: Copenhagen

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In 2006, despite an apology by the Copenhagen daily *Jyllands-Posten*, controversy continued surrounding 12 cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad published by the paper in 2005. In May, two reporters were indicted for the 2004 publication of intelligence reports questioning the existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. Hundreds of youths were arrested during protests in Copenhagen's Nørrebro district. Nationwide protests over budget cuts temporarily paralyzed the educational system in October.

Denmark has been a monarchy since the fourteenth century. Since the country's first democratic constitution was written in 1849, the monarchy has been largely ceremonial. During World War II, Germany's occupation of the country was met with little resistance. In 1949, Denmark abandoned its traditional neutrality and joined NATO, and in 1973, it joined the European Economic Community (EEC), the forerunner to the European Union (EU).

Post-World War II Danish politics have been dominated by the Social Democratic Party. However, in the November 2001 elections, a right-wing coalition led by Anders Fogh Rasmussen's Liberal Party won control of the government on a platform that focused on reducing immigration and lowering taxes. The coalition, which also included the Conservative People's Party, was supported by the anti-immigrant and euroskeptic Danish People's Party.

Denmark has had a conflicted relationship with the EU. When the Maastricht Treaty was written in 1992, extending the EU's competence into justice, foreign, and monetary policy, Denmark's voters rejected the treaty in a referendum. Since then, Denmark has opted out of participation in these areas. In 2000, it rejected the use of the euro as the country's single currency. In 2003, the EU drafted a constitutional treaty, and polls indicate that the Danish population is slowly moving in favor of participation in EU defense and judicial cooperation. In June 2005, due to uncertainty raised by negative French and Dutch referendum results, Denmark postponed plans for its own national referendum on the EU constitution, which remained suspended throughout 2006.

In parliamentary elections in February 2005, the Liberal Party won 29 percent of the vote and 52 seats, gaining a second term in office. The Liberals continued their coalition with the Conservative People's Party, which won 10 percent of the vote and 18 seats. The coalition is supported externally by the Danish People's Party, which won 24 seats, two more than in the 2001 elections. The opposition Social Democratic Party took almost 26 percent of the vote and 47 seats.

In February 2006, the conservative Copenhagen daily *Jyllands-Posten* apologized for offense caused by its 2005 publication of 12 cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed. The cartoons sparked a furor in Denmark's Muslim community. Physical depictions of Mohammed are considered blasphemous by most Muslims, and one of the cartoons featured Mohammed wearing a turban in the form of a bomb. Freedom of speech was challenged again in October 2006, when two Danish television channels aired a video showing far-right Danish activists drawing cartoons of Mohammed. Prime Minister Rasmussen denounced the cartoons in an effort to prevent the reignition of protests and boycotts of Danish goods by Muslims abroad.

In 2006, Danish authorities' previous efforts to ban the international Islamist organization Hizb ut-Tahrir were abandoned. However, in August, Hizb ut-Tahrir spokesman Fadi Ahmad Abdel Latif was convicted for threatening the life of Prime Minister Rasmussen as well as for threatening Jews and urging Muslims to assassinate leaders who prevent militants from traveling to Iraq to join the insurgency there. Some hope that the conviction will reignite efforts to ban the radical group.

An ongoing dispute with Canada over territorial ownership of Hans Island resurfaced in August 2006, when Canada's Indian and Northern Affairs Department granted a Canadian geologist permission to conduct research there. The tiny island,

which sits between Canada's Ellesmere Island and Greenland (a semiautonomous Danish region), has been a disputed territory between the two countries for more than 30 years.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Denmark is an electoral democracy. The current Danish constitution, which established a single-chamber parliament (the Folketing), was adopted in 1953. Denmark is a constitutional monarchy, in which the monarch, currently Queen Margrethe II, has mostly ceremonial duties. The Parliament's 179 representatives are elected at least once every four years by a system of modified proportional representation. The leader of the majority party or coalition is usually chosen to be prime minister by the monarch.

Danish governments are most often minority administrations, governing with the aid of one or more supporting parties. Since 1909, no single party has held a majority of seats, a history that has helped create a tradition of interparty compromise. In elections in February 2005, which were deemed free and fair, the center-right coalition led by Prime Minister Rasmussen won a second term. In March 2006, a Social Democratic councilor in the city of Herning was dismissed from his membership on the council when it was revealed that he supported the Sri Lankan rebel group known as the Tamil Tigers. The decision was reportedly due to a regulation banning participation in other political organizations.

The semiautonomous territories of Greenland and the Faeroe Islands each have two representatives in the Folketing. They also have their own elected home-rule governments, which have power over almost all areas of governance.

Levels of corruption in Denmark are very low. Denmark was ranked 4 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and the media reflect a wide variety of political opinions and are frequently critical of the government. The state finances radio and television broadcasting, but state-owned television companies have independent editorial boards. Independent radio stations are permitted, but tightly regulated. In May, the Committee to Protect Journalists reported that criminal charges had been brought against two Danish reporters and their editor for leaking state secrets. Journalists Michael Bjerre and Jesper Larsen and Editor in Chief Niels Lunde of the Copenhagen daily *Berlingske Tidende* published intelligence reports in 2004 questioning the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and revealing that Rasmussen ignored Danish intelligence in favor of supporting the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. It was the first time in Danish history that reporters have been indicted for leaking state secrets. All three men were acquitted in December.

Freedom of worship is guaranteed to all. However, the Evangelical Lutheran Church is subsidized by the government as the official state religion. The faith is taught in public schools, although students may withdraw from religious classes with parental consent. At present, about half of all schoolchildren in Denmark are exempted from the catechism taught in public schools.

Academic freedom is guaranteed for all. However, the nation's schools and day-care centers were temporarily shut down in October when upwards of 50,000 people went on strike to protest government budget cuts to education.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association. Civil soci-

ety is vibrant, and workers are free to organize. The labor market is mainly regulated by agreements between employers' and employees' organizations, and approximately 77 percent of workers are members of trade unions. During a series of protests against the closing of a youth collective in Copenhagen's Nørrebro district, 263 people were arrested in September, 90 in November, and 300 in December. The Ungdom-shuset youth center had housed youths since 1982 and was turned over to its new owners, Faderhuset Christian Group, at year's end.

The judiciary is independent, and citizens enjoy full due-process rights. The court system consists of 100 local courts, 2 high courts, and the 15-member Supreme Court, with judges appointed by the monarch on government recommendation. Prisons generally meet international standards. Police brutality was not an issue during the year.

Discrimination is prohibited under the law. However, Denmark introduced what it has described as one of Europe's strictest immigration laws in May 2002. The law was influenced by the anti-immigrant Danish People's Party; since elections in November 2001, the Liberal-Conservative government has relied on the support of that party for a parliamentary majority. The immigration law restricts the ability of a Dane to bring a foreign spouse into the country, as it requires both partners to be aged 24 or older. The law also requires the Dane to pass a solvency test to prove that he or she has not drawn social security for at least a year and to post a bond of almost \$10,000. A reunified family's husband and wife must both prove "close ties to Denmark." Many Copenhagen-based Danes with foreign spouses have consequently chosen to live in the nearby southern Swedish city of Malmö and commute back to Copenhagen for work. The law primarily affects Denmark's Muslim immigrant community, which has increasingly complained of social and economic discrimination and burgeoning anti-immigrant sentiment in the country. In 2006, strict review procedures were implemented for Chinese nationals seeking to enter Denmark on business visas after widespread misuse was revealed.

The tightening of immigration laws has led to a considerable drop in asylum seekers entering the country. In 2006, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that Denmark received its lowest number of asylum seekers since 1983. The country has also closed 47 asylum centers since the introduction of the new immigration law. In June 2006, the government secured reforms including tighter unemployment rules aimed at promoting job-seeking for immigrants in order to integrate them into the workforce.

There are no quotas for the representation of women in Parliament. During the February 2005 parliamentary elections, about 37 percent of the seats were filled by women. Women enjoy equal rights in Denmark and represent half of the Danish labor force. However, disparities were reported in 2006 in the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Denmark is a destination and transit point for women and children trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In 2003, the government enacted legislation that defines and criminalizes such trafficking. In 2004, the government began working regularly with nongovernmental organizations in their trafficking-prevention campaigns. After the assault of a gay man in the Faroe Islands in September, lawmakers voted to add sexual orientation to the antidiscrimination law.

Djibouti

Population: 800,000

Capital: Djibouti

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5.6NF	5.6NF	4.6PF	4.5PF	4.5PF	4.5PF	5.5PF	5.5PF	5.5PF	5.5PF

Overview:

In 2006, Djibouti continued to benefit from its strategic location at the mouth of the Red Sea and strong support for U.S.-led antiterrorism efforts. However, an ongoing drought in eastern Africa seriously affected Djibouti's pastoral population. Poverty is widespread, with more than 40 percent of the population, estimated at 800,000, living below the national poverty line, according to the UN Population Fund.

Djibouti was known as the French Territory of the Afars and Issas before gaining independence from France in 1977. Djibouti's people are deeply divided along ethnic and clan lines, with the majority Issa (Somali) and minority Afar peoples traditionally falling into opposing political camps. The Issa make up about 60 percent of the population and the Afar about 35 percent. Ethnic conflict broke out in 1991, with Afar rebels of the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD) launching a three-year guerrilla war against Issa domination. In 1994, the largest FRUD faction agreed to end its insurgency in exchange for inclusion in the government and electoral reforms. However, sporadic attacks by a radical wing of the group continued.

President Hassan Gouled Aptidon controlled a one-party system until 1992, when a new constitution adopted by referendum authorized four political parties. In 1993, Gouled won a fourth six-year term in Djibouti's first contested presidential election. Both the opposition and international observers considered the poll fraudulent. In the 1997 legislative elections, which were also considered unfair, the ruling People's Progress Assembly (RPP), in coalition with the legalized arm of the FRUD at the time, won all 65 legislative seats.

Gouled stepped down in 1999 after 22 years in power, opening the way for the country's first change in presidential leadership. The RPP's Ismael Omar Guelleh won the presidential poll that year with 74 percent of the vote, while Moussa Ahmed Idriss, of the Unified Djiboutian Opposition (ODU), received 26 percent. Guelleh, who is Gouled's nephew and a former head of state security, had long been considered the de facto head of government and the president's probable successor. For the first time since elections began in 1992, no group boycotted the vote, which was regarded as generally fair.

In 2001, the government and the radical wing of the FRUD followed up a peace agreement they had signed in 2000 with a more extensive accord. Like the previous agreement, it was aimed at putting an end to the ethnic Afar insurgency that began a decade earlier. In the 2003 parliamentary elections, a progovernment bloc of four parties under the umbrella Union for the Presidential Majority (UMP) ran against the opposition Union for a Democratic Alternative (UAD) bloc of four parties. The ruling UMP captured all 65 seats despite the UAD receiving 37 percent of the vote. Voter turnout was a low 48 percent.

In April 2005, Guelleh won reelection and a second six-year term. The only challenger had withdrawn, citing an inability to campaign effectively as a result of government control of the media and repression of the opposition's activities. The country's human rights league called the official turnout of 79 percent "highly unlikely." According to the *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, a number of opposition supporters were arrested. Meanwhile, in 2006 the government maintained its effective control over the country's media. Regional and municipal elections in March were characterized by a very high rate of abstention.

As president, Guelleh has used Djibouti's strategic importance to generate international support and development assistance. Djibouti has allowed foreign armed forces, particularly those of the United States, access to its port and airport facilities. Since 2004, approximately 2,000 U.S. Army and Special Forces troops have been stationed in Djibouti to assist U.S. antiterrorism operations in the region. A similar number of French troops have also been stationed there. Guelleh has stood out from other Arab League leaders by endorsing actions taken by the United States and its allies to combat terrorism. In March 2006, the United States and Djibouti renewed their agreement on U.S. use of military facilities in the country—the only such arrangement in sub-Saharan Africa.

Although its strategic location at the mouth of the Red Sea has long proved to be an important asset, Djibouti has virtually no industry and few natural resources. The country is heavily dependent on foreign assistance to support its balance of payments and to finance development projects. An unemployment rate of approximately 50 percent continues to be a major problem; the estimated number of Djiboutians living in extreme poverty is also about 50 percent. The port and transport sector accounts for one-third of gross domestic product (GDP). Ethiopia is an important economic partner, with links to approximately 85 percent of the goods moving through the port of Djibouti. However, the continuing conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea and continued instability in Somalia have disturbed normal external channels of commerce.

Two-thirds of the inhabitants live in the capital city, the remainder being mostly nomadic herders. Scant rainfall limits crop production to fruits and vegetables, and most food must be imported. The country experienced its fourth consecutive year of drought conditions in 2006, with 150,000 people at risk of starvation. In August, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network of the U.S. Agency for International Development issued a warning for Djibouti.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Djibouti is not an electoral democracy. The trappings of representative government and electoral processes have little relevance to the real distribution and exercise of power. The

ruling party has traditionally used the advantage of state resources to maintain itself in power.

The unicameral Parliament, the National Assembly, has 65 members directly elected for a five-year term. In the 2003 legislative elections, opposition parties were significantly disadvantaged by electoral rules and by the government's abuse of the tools of incumbency, including the administrative apparatus. In addition, although the ruling UMP coalition won just 62 percent of the vote, the election law stipulates that the majority victor in each of the country's five electoral constituencies (in this election, the UMP) be awarded all seats in that district. While the opposition UAD alleged widespread voter fraud, its case was rejected by the Constitutional Council, the country's highest authority on constitutional law. The political opposition has suffered from significant divisions and had previously been unable to achieve any successes in elections that were controlled by the government.

Political parties are required to register with the government. The UAD coalition is composed of the Union of Justice and Democracy (UJD), the Republican Alliance for Democracy (ARD), and the Djibouti Development Party (PDD). Some opposition leaders engage in self-censorship and refrain from organizing popular demonstrations and other party activities so as to avoid a government crackdown. This reluctance explains, in part, the lack of competition in the 2005 presidential election.

Efforts to curb the country's rampant corruption have met with little success. According to the Heritage Foundation 2006 Index of Economic Freedom, the government has dragged its feet on implementing reforms under the International Monetary Fund program, which included a new investment code, tax and banking changes, and fiscal transparency measures. The leadership also remains reluctant to streamline the bloated civil service. Djibouti was not ranked in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Despite constitutionally mandated protections, freedom of speech is not guaranteed. The government owns the principal newspaper, *La Nation*, as well as Radiodiffusion-Television de Djibouti (RTD), which operates the national radio and television broadcasters. Journalists generally avoid covering sensitive issues, including human rights, the army, the FRUD, relations with Ethiopia, and French financial aid. The editor in chief of the newspaper *Le Renouveau* has frequently been jailed by the authorities. FM relays of the BBC and Radio France Internationale are on the air in Djibouti. A local FM relay carries Voice of America broadcasts to East Africa and the Arabian peninsula. There is only limited internet access.

Islam is the official state religion, and most of the population is Muslim. Freedom of worship is respected, although the government discourages proselytizing. While academic freedom is generally respected, education choices are limited and Djibouti has no university.

Freedoms of assembly and association are nominally protected under the constitution, but the government has demonstrated little tolerance for political protests. The Ministry of the Interior requires permits for peaceful assembly and monitors opposition activities. Political candidates and union leaders have complained of harassment by the authorities. Local human rights groups do not operate freely. However, women's groups and some other nongovernmental organizations are able to work without much interference.

Workers may join unions and strike, but the government routinely obstructs

the free operation of unions and has in the past reorganized labor unions. In late 2005, at least one member of the truck drivers' union was killed and several others were seriously injured by police during a demonstration. Two Djibouti Trade Union officials were arrested in March 2006 on the day after they returned from Israel, where they had been attending a training course run by that country's Histradut labor federation. The officials were accused of engaging in "secret contacts with a foreign power" and perpetrating an "affront to the President of the Republic." In April, an international labor union delegation sent to investigate the situation was expelled from Djibouti. The judicial system, which includes lower courts, an appeals court, and a Supreme Court, is based on the French civil code, although Sharia (Islamic law) prevails in family matters. The courts cannot be considered independent of the government. The Supreme Court may overrule decisions of the lower courts, and magistrates are appointed for life terms. The Constitutional Council is charged with ensuring the constitutionality of laws and protecting the individual, but in practice its rulings do not always uphold civil and human rights. Security forces often arrest Djiboutians without a proper decree from a judicial magistrate, in violation of constitutional requirements.

The authorities in 2006 continued to harass individuals, detain them arbitrarily, and intimidate members of groups that were viewed as opposed to the government. Security forces at times have beaten and physically abused prisoners and detainees. Prison conditions remained harsh, and overcrowding was a serious problem, with reports of beatings and torture. No action was taken against security personnel who used excessive force to disperse demonstrations in previous years.

The majority Somali Issas have long controlled the military, civil and security services, as well as the ruling party. The Afari people, Yemeni Arabs and non-Issa Somalis suffer from social and economic discrimination.

Although women in Djibouti enjoy a higher public status than in many other Muslim countries, progress on women's rights and family planning has been hampered by a number of obstacles, many of them stemming from poverty. Few women hold senior government positions; a record number of seven women were elected to parliament in January 2003. Education of girls still lags behind that of boys, and because of the high unemployment rate, job opportunities are better for male applicants. Despite equality under civil law, women suffer serious discrimination under customary practices in inheritance and other property matters, in divorce, and regarding the right to travel. Female genital mutilation is widespread, and legislation forbidding mutilation of young girls is not enforced; women's groups are engaged in efforts to curb the practice.

Dominica

Population: 100,000
 Capital: Roseau

Political Rights: 1
 Civil Liberties: 1
 Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
 (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: In 2006, the Dominica Labor Party of Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit remained the country's dominant political force while opposition parties experienced leadership shake-ups. The growing tourism and construction industries fueled an economic expansion that reversed recent trends of decline.

Dominica has been internally self-governing since 1967 and became a republic within the Commonwealth in 1978, when it achieved independence from Britain. The centrist Dominica Labour Party (DLP) swept to victory for the first time in 20 years in the January 2000 parliamentary elections, winning 10 of the 21 elected seats and forming a coalition with the right-wing Dominica Freedom Party (DFP). DLP leader Roosevelt "Rosie" Douglas was named prime minister, but died of a heart attack in October 2000. Douglas was replaced by Pierre Charles, his communications and works minister. On January 6, 2004, Charles, 49, collapsed and died of heart failure. He was succeeded by Roosevelt Skerrit, also of the DLP, who had been serving as education and youth affairs minister.

Skerrit's government inherited tremendous financial troubles, compounded by a loss of his party's popular support due to the implementation of austerity measures; increased global competition hit the agriculturally based economy especially hard and the imposition of an International Monetary Fund (IMF) stabilization and adjustment program proved highly unpopular. The program obliged the government to reduce its workforce of more than 4,000 people, and remaining employees faced an overall 5 percent cut in wages. In addition, the population as a whole was affected by an increase in the sales tax, from 3 percent to 7.5 percent. Despite those difficulties, in April 2004, the DLP won a by-election by a landslide, confirming public support for the government. In addition, on April 10, China promised \$122 million in aid in return for Dominica's revocation of its recognition of Taiwan.

Skerrit and the DLP handily triumphed in the 2005 elections, winning 12 Parliament seats; the results ensured a DLP majority even without the support of the DFP. Former prime minister Edison James, leader of the opposition United Workers Party (UWP), initially accepted his second successive electoral defeat, but later claimed that five of the DLP seats were obtained through fraud. Other political parties at-

tempted to reposition themselves to become more competitive. In 2006, members of the DFP demanded and won the resignation of their leader, Charles Savarin. In addition, the former leader of the DLP, Dr. William "Para" Riviere, announced the formation of a new party, the People's Democratic Movement, which would plan to compete in the 2010 general elections.

In 2006, Dominica deepened its ties with Venezuela by signing an accord to receive 1,000 barrels per day of discounted oil shipments, part of a regional oil pact known as PetroCaribe. The island also strengthened its bilateral trade with China, which rose to more than \$45 million by August, an increase by one-third over the same period in 2005. Meanwhile, Dominica's economy experienced a construction and tourism boom that offset the recent downturn in the agricultural sector.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Dominica is an electoral democracy. The government is headed by a prime minister, and the unicameral House of Assembly consists of 30 members serving five-year terms. Twenty-one members are elected, and nine senators are appointed—five by the prime minister and four by the opposition leader. The president is elected by the House of Assembly for a five-year term; the prime minister is appointed by the president. Currently, President Nicholas Liverpool serves as chief of state, while Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit manages the daily affairs of the government.

The three major political parties are the DLP, which is currently in power; the UWP; and the once-robust DFP, which ruled from 1980 to 1995, but no longer has a seat in Parliament and voted to remove its leader in 2006.

According to the 2006 U.S. State Department Human Rights Report, corruption is a moderate problem in Dominica. It was ranked 53 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. In June 2006, the government created a national policy on crime prevention and control in order to help maintain the country's position as a low-crime island.

The press is free, and there is no censorship or government intrusion. Four private newspapers and an equal number of political party journals publish without interference. Although the main radio station is state owned, there is also an independent station. Citizens have unimpeded access to cable television and regional radio broadcasts, as well as to the internet.

Freedom of religion is recognized. While a majority of the population is Roman Catholic, some Protestant churches have been established. Academic freedom is respected.

Advocacy groups are free to operate and include the Association of Disabled People, the Dominican National Council of Women, and a women and children's self-help organization. Workers have the right to organize, strike, and bargain collectively. Though unions are independent of the government and laws prohibit antiunion discrimination by employers, less than 10 percent of the workforce is unionized.

The judiciary is independent, and the rule of law is enhanced by the courts' subordination to the interisland Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court. However, the judicial system is understaffed, leading to a large backlog of cases. The only prison on Dominica, Stock Farm Prison in Roseau, is overcrowded and has sanitation problems. It has a capacity of less than 200 inmates, but the population swelled to 316 by March 2006, delaying efforts to create separate housing for juvenile offenders. In

the fall of 2005, the government had announced plans to build a separate youth detention center, with expanded treatment for drug addiction and mental illness among convicted minors. Prison visits by independent human rights monitors are permitted. In September 2005, police and prison officials stopped an attempted jailbreak at Stock Farm Prison, but four inmates escaped. In May 2006, Dominica signed a prisoner transfer agreement with Britain that would allow convicted criminals to serve out their sentences in their countries of origin.

The Commonwealth of Dominica Police Force (CDPF) became responsible for security after the Dominica Defense Force (DDF) was disbanded in 1981. The DDF had been implicated in an attempted coup by supporters of former prime minister Patrick John, who was convicted in 1986 for his role and given a 12-year prison sentence. He was released by executive order in 1990, became active in the trade union movement, and lost as a DLP candidate in the 1995 election.

Occasional instances of excessive use of force by police are among the few reported human rights complaints. In 1997, the commissioner and deputy commissioner of police were forced to retire as a result of recommendations by a commission of inquiry that investigated allegations of mismanagement, corruption, and police brutality. Under new leadership, the police created the Internal Affairs Department late that year to investigate public complaints against the police and to provide officers with counseling. There were continuing allegations of corruption relating to document falsification. Narcotics traffickers use the country as a transshipment point.

There is little open discrimination against women, but domestic violence cases remain routine. The Protection against Domestic Violence Act allows abused persons, usually women, to appear before a judge and request a protective order without seeking legal counsel. There are no laws mandating equal pay for equal work for men and women in private sector jobs. Inheritance laws do not fully recognize women's rights. When a husband dies without a will, the wife cannot inherit their property, though she may continue to inhabit their home.

Dominican Republic

Population: 9,000,000
Capital: Santo Domingo

Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3.3PF	2.3F	2.3F	2.2F	2.2F	2.2F	3.2F	2.2F	2.2F	2.2F

Overview: In 2006, the Dominican Liberation Party of President Leonel Fernandez won majorities in both the upper and

lower houses of Congress. That electoral victory validated the president's successful handling of the economy, which had posted a 9 percent growth rate the previous year. Building on his political gains, Fernandez in August named 13 judges to head a commission of experts charged with reforming the country's constitution.

After achieving independence from Spain in 1821 and from Haiti in 1844, the Dominican Republic endured recurrent domestic conflict. The assassination of General Rafael Trujillo in 1961 ended 30 years of dictatorship, but a 1963 military coup led to civil war and U.S. intervention. In 1966, under a new constitution, civilian rule was restored with the election of conservative president Joaquin Balaguer.

In the May 2000 presidential election, term-limited President Leonel Fernandez of the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) was replaced by Rafael Hipolito Mejia Dominguez, a former agriculture minister and a Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) outsider. Mejia struck a chord among citizens who felt left out of the country's economic prosperity, including the fifth of the population living below the poverty level. Mejia won 49.9 percent of the vote, compared with 24.9 percent for ruling party candidate Danilo Medina and 24.6 percent for Balaguer, who was running for his eighth term in office. In the May 2002 legislative elections, the PRD captured the largest number of seats in both houses of the National Congress.

In May 2003, the largest bank scandal in the history of the Dominican Republic exploded onto the political landscape when the powerful Banco Intercontinental collapsed amid accusations of a \$2.2 billion fraud. The scandal was estimated to have cost the Dominican Republic the equivalent of 15 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP). The government bailout of the bank—which primarily benefited the 1 percent of the bank's customers holding nearly 80 percent of its deposits—was widely perceived by Dominicans as an extension of the bank's corrupt practices. Officials of the defunct institution had paid millions of dollars to generals, government officials, and political figures over the years.

According to the Central Bank, the country's GDP fell from \$21.7 billion in 2002 to \$16.8 billion in 2003. Following the collapse of Banco Intercontinental, the government entered into urgent talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for help with the crisis. Opposition to the proposed deal with the IMF and to increased prices for fuel and other basic necessities, combined with continued electricity blackouts, led to months of protests in which at least 13 people were killed. Police allegedly caused many of the deaths by using excessive force. The bank scandal also temporarily undercut Mejia's lobbying campaign to have the Dominican Republic included in a free-trade pact that the United States negotiated with five Central American countries.

Fernandez, whose previous term in office, from 1996 to 2000, had featured the most substantial economic growth in the country's recent history, returned to the presidency during the country's worst economic crisis in decades. He retook the post from Mejia in a generally free and fair election held in May 2004. Fernandez won 57.1 percent of the vote, compared with Mejia's 33.7 percent. Because Fernandez won more than 50 percent of the vote, a second round was unnecessary.

In an effort to diffuse tensions in the run-up to the poll, the Central Election Board had opened the electoral registry to inspection by all political parties and to observers from the Organization of American States (OAS) before sending copies

on to the voting districts. Some 6,000 citizen volunteers and hundreds of OAS observers helped to keep the election free and fair. The contest also marked the first time that Dominicans living abroad—mainly in the United States and Spain—were able to vote by absentee ballot, though bureaucratic problems resulted in low registration levels among expatriates.

Inaugurated in August 2004, Fernandez faced the huge task of combating a ballooning \$6 billion foreign debt, a 16 percent unemployment rate, annual inflation of some 32 percent and a decrepit and indebted energy sector that left much of the country without electricity for as many as 20 hours a day. Within a short period, however, annual inflation had been brought into the single digits, and macroeconomic stability had improved dramatically, with the Dominican economy posting a 9 percent growth rate in 2005. In return for IMF financing, the government agreed to cut subsidies on gas and electricity, while reducing the bloated government payroll. In July 2005, the U.S. Congress ratified the regional free-trade agreement, DR-CAFTA, which included Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic.

In May 2006, Fernandez's successful handling of the economy yielded strong political benefits when his PLD won a majority of seats in both the upper and lower houses of Congress. In the Senate, it won 22 seats while the opposition PRD won only six. In the chamber of deputies, the PLD won 96 seats, the PRD won 60 seats, and 22 seats went to the Social Christian Reformist Party (PRSC). The OAS observation mission declared the elections to be free and fair. Backed with a solid parliamentary majority, Fernandez moved to place constitutional reform at the top of the national agenda. In August 2006, he named 13 judges to head a commission of experts that would formulate and review reform proposals, which could include allowing Dominicans residing abroad to run for elected office. Supreme Court president Jorge Subero Isa responded to the president's moves by declaring that the Dominican Republic's problems could be better addressed by encouraging greater respect for the rule of law across all sectors. However, he did not explicitly object to the constitutional reform agenda.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The Dominican Republic is an electoral democracy. The 2004 presidential election and the 2006 legislative elections were determined to have been free and fair. The constitution provides for a president and a Congress, both elected to four-year terms. The bicameral National Congress consists of the 32-member Senate and the 150-member Chamber of Deputies; a 1998 census had led to the expansion of the Chamber of Deputies from 120 to 150 members.

At the end of 2001, the Dominican legislature approved a package of constitutional and electoral changes that allowed presidents to serve two consecutive terms and reduced, from 50 percent to 45 percent, the minimum vote required to win presidential elections in the first round. The reforms also established the direct election of the president, eliminating an electoral college system in which representative sectors chose the president on the basis of popular votes. In 2006, President Leonel Fernandez established a new commission to review the prospects for additional constitutional reforms.

The Dominican Republic has three major political parties: the Dominican Libera-

tion Party (PLD), which won the presidency in 2004 and took both chambers of Congress in 2006; the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD), now the main opposition; and the Social Christian Reformist Party (PRSC), which holds a small minority of seats in Congress.

Official corruption remains a serious problem. Fernandez, whose first term in office was marred by a scandal involving the disappearance of \$100 million in government funds, made fighting corruption a central theme of his 2004 election campaign. In his inaugural address, he pledged austerity for his government and promised large cuts in the borrowing, hiring, and heavy spending that had characterized the administration of outgoing President Rafael Hipolito Mejia Dominguez. While Fernandez made progress toward fulfilling those pledges in the first year of his new term, polls conducted in 2005 showed that a large majority of Dominicans were unsatisfied with his handling of corruption. The Dominican Republic was ranked 99 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. In February 2006, Fernandez announced the implementation of new anticorruption legislation that will increase oversight for the public contracting of goods, services, and government projects.

The law provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the government generally respects those rights. There are five national daily newspapers, and a large number of local publications. The state-owned Radio Television Dominicana operates radio and television services. Private owners operate more than 300 AM and FM radio stations, and more than 40 television stations, most of them small, regional broadcasters. In March 2005, Fernandez signed a ruling providing the mechanisms to implement a freedom of information law passed in 2004. Despite an advanced telecommunications infrastructure, the Dominican Republic lacks widespread access to the internet outside of large urban areas, though internet access is otherwise unrestricted.

Constitutional guarantees regarding religious and academic freedom are generally observed. The government also upholds the right to organize civic groups and political parties. Civil society organizations in the Dominican Republic are some of the best organized and most effective in Latin America. Labor unions are similarly well organized. Although legally permitted to strike, they are often subjected to government crackdowns. In 2003, at least seven people were killed and more than 500 arrested during a violent general strike over the government's economic policies in the midst of that year's economic crisis. Another general strike in January 2004 resulted in the deaths of three demonstrators at the hands of security forces; protesters employed violent means as well. Peasant unions are occasionally targeted by armed groups working for large landowners.

The judiciary, headed by the Supreme Court, is politicized and riddled with corruption, and the legal system offers little recourse to those without money or influence. However, reforms implemented in recent years, including measures aimed at promoting greater efficiency and due process, show some promise of increasing citizen access to justice through the courts. In the fall of 2004, a new Criminal Procedures Code that gives suspects additional protections took effect. Later the same year, a new Code for Minors was inaugurated; it provides for more protection and stiffer penalties in cases of sexual or commercial exploitation. In June 2006, the high commissioner for human rights, Porfirio Rojas, submitted a draft bill to the Senate

that would allow the death penalty for those found guilty of murder or rape and raise the maximum prison sentence for homicide from 30 to 65 years.

Extrajudicial killings by police remain a problem, though the government has begun to refer cases of military and police abuse to civilian courts, instead of nontransparent police or military tribunals. Police salaries are low, and there is a high level of corruption throughout the country's law enforcement institutions. Prisons suffer from severe overcrowding, poor health and sanitary conditions, and routine violence that results in a significant number of deaths. The 2004 Criminal Procedures Code limited detention without charges to 48 hours, but it has not been applied retroactively and, in March 2005, a riot at a badly overcrowded detention center in the city of Higuey resulted in a fire that killed at least 134 inmates. In 2006, the Directorate of Prisons reported that the police and military held approximately 13,500 prisoners and detainees in facilities intended to hold only 9,000. As of September 2006, only 37 percent of detainees in prison had been convicted, while another 57 percent were awaiting trial, but in some prisons the percentage of individuals held in pretrial detention approached 90 percent. However, new initiatives launched by President Fernandez's democratic security plan began to take effect, including a crackdown on illegal weapons and tougher policing measures, and the overall security situation improved as the rate of homicides and other violent crimes declined.

The Dominican Republic is a major transit hub for South American drugs, mostly cocaine, headed to the United States. Local, Puerto Rican, and Colombian drug smugglers use the country as both a command-and-control center and a transshipment point. The government estimates that some 20 percent of the drugs entering the country remain there as "payment in kind." This phenomenon has contributed to increasing drug abuse and street crime.

The migration of Haitians—some legally but the vast majority without legal documents—to the Dominican Republic in search of economic opportunity has long been a source of tension between the two countries. Some of the illegal migration is assisted by the authorities, who profit from it. Human rights groups report that children born of Haitian parents in the Dominican Republic, generally denied registration as citizens, are frequently among the thousands of people deported each year as illegal aliens. In 2005, the Dominican government stepped up forced repatriations of Haitian migrants, including 4,000 people in May and another 1,000 people in August. In 2006, Dominican authorities announced that Haitians working on sugar plantations would be given labor contracts that ensure a minimum wage and basic labor rights, provided that they return to Haiti at the end of harvest season.

Violence and discrimination against women remains a serious problem, as do trafficking in women and girls, child prostitution, and child abuse. Women's reproductive rights do not extend to abortion, which remains illegal but is widely practiced. An estimated 100,000 Dominican women work overseas as prostitutes, many on other Caribbean islands or in the United States.

East Timor

Population: 1,000,000

Capital: Dili

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 4*

Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: East Timor's civil liberties rating declined from 3 to 4 due to the extent to which the violence exhibited by rioters and security forces threatened press freedom and the livelihoods of Dili residents as well as significant setbacks in the rule of law, including police complicity in the May violence and an enduring culture of impunity for abuse on the part of security forces.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
--	--	6,4PF	6,3PF	5,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,4PF

Overview: East Timor descended into crisis in 2006 with the outbreak of widespread rioting and violent clashes in the capital in April and May, prompted by the sacking of 600 defense force (FDTL) troops in mid-March as well as frustration over rampant corruption and high levels of unemployment. Clashes with the police resulted in numerous deaths and displaced 150,000 people, necessitating the deployment of Australian-led foreign troops to restore security. Tensions persisted when allegations emerged in June that Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri had formed a hit squad to kill off his political opponents. The unrest led President Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao to declare emergency powers, and brought a significant decline in freedom of the press and demonstration as well as further setbacks in the rule of law. A high-pressure political standoff followed between the president and prime minister, ultimately forcing Alkatiri to step down in late June. Nobel Prize winner and former foreign affairs minister Jose Ramos Horta was appointed as the new prime minister in July, and the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste was established in August to help consolidate stability and national reconciliation, especially in preparation for the May 2007 general elections. With the final report of the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation (CAVR) published in February, President Gusmao continued to prioritize reconciliation with Indonesia over achieving justice for past abuses. The degree to which those found responsible for this year's violence are held accountable for their actions will help determine whether the country's culture of impunity is reversed or further entrenched.

The Portuguese colonized East Timor in the sixteenth century but did little to develop the territory. After Portugal abruptly abandoned it in 1975, the leftist Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin) and the right-wing Demo-

cratic Union of Timor (UDT) fought for control. The conflict prompted the staunchly anti-Communist regime of Indonesia's General Suharto to covertly support right-wing groups in East Timor, and then to invade when Fretilin issued a declaration of independence in November 1975. East Timor was formally incorporated as Indonesia's twenty-sixth province in 1976.

Over the next two decades, Fretilin's armed wing, Falintil, waged a low-grade insurgency against the Indonesian army (TNI), which ruled East Timor. As Indonesian forces consolidated control, they committed widespread human rights abuses. Civil conflict and famine may have killed up to 180,000 Timorese during Indonesian rule.

International pressure on Indonesia began to mount following the 1991 Dili massacre, in which TNI soldiers killed more than 200 participants in a funeral march and were captured on film by foreign journalists. In August 1999, 78.5 percent of the East Timorese electorate voted for independence in a referendum approved by Suharto's successor, B. J. Habibie. TNI elements and their integrationist allies in East Timor responded with a scorched-earth policy that killed roughly 1,000 civilians, drove more than 250,000 others into Indonesian West Timor, and destroyed approximately 80 percent of East Timor's buildings and infrastructure before an Australian-led multinational force was brought in to restore order.

In October 1999, the UN Security Council authorized the UN Transitional Authority for East Timor (UNTAET) to provide security, oversee reconstruction, and prepare for independence. The country elected an 88-member Constituent Assembly to draft a constitution in August 2001. Fretilin won 57 percent of the national vote in a peaceful election contested by 16 political parties, just short of the two-thirds majority required to give it absolute control. In April 2002, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao (formerly Jose Alexandre Gusmao) won the presidency with 87 percent of a direct popular vote. Independence, officially granted in May 2002, ushered in a semipresidential system characterized by a power struggle rooted in divides dating to the 1970s. Gusmao, former head of Falintil and chairman of Fretilin until 1988, when he broke from the party to form a wider resistance coalition, began conveying discontent in 2002 with Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri and the Fretilin Party's governance. He was increasingly echoed by the East Timorese people in light of heightened unemployment and corruption. Fretilin nevertheless won the country's first local elections by a wide margin in late 2004 and 2005, as the result of stronger local party machinery.

At independence, UNTAET was replaced by the UN Mission in Support of East Timor (UNMISSET), which was responsible for security, economic recovery, reconstruction, and capacity building. UNMISSET officially transferred responsibility for external defense and internal security to East Timor in May 2004, but its mandate was extended until May 2005, with sharply reduced personnel levels. UNMISSET withdrew in May 2005, but was replaced by the UN Office in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL).

In 2006, the four-year-old country descended into violence. An Australian-led contingent of 2,200 foreign troops was deployed to ensure security after deep-seated political divisions culminated in the eruption of widespread clashes in the capital, threatening civil war, in April and May. The unrest began in March, when 600 members (or roughly one-third) of the East Timor Defense Force (FDTL) were dismissed for striking in protest of poor working conditions, low pay, and claims of ethnic discrimination by officers from the east (the *Lorosae*) against those from the west (the

Loromonu). General frustration with the government's failure to alleviate poverty, unemployment, and corruption combined with objections to the government's response to the new turmoil in the defense force, encouraging numerous East Timorese to take up arms and join gangs. A weak opposition did not provide an effective alternative voice. In late May, FDTL soldiers killed 10 unarmed police officers under UN protection; ongoing clashes with the police (many of whom had worked for the old Indonesian administration) killed more than 25 people and displaced 150,000 Dili residents, nearly one-half of whom remained in refugee camps on the outskirts of the city through November.

The antigovernment protests prompted the president, whose authority is fairly limited under normal circumstances, to assume emergency powers in May. Still revered as a national hero for his role in the resistance, Gusmao maintained public support, while Alkatiri and the Fretilin administration were widely discredited by the violent series of events. A month-long political standoff between the two political figures ensued, with the president supporting the fired soldiers and endorsing public calls for Alkatiri's resignation, based in part on allegations that he had armed a hit squad to kill his political opponents. Gusmao threatened to resign himself if Alkatiri did not, while Alkatiri maintained his innocence and claimed that the country's widespread violence was the result of a coup attempt. When Alkatiri finally stepped down in late June, Gusmao chose Nobel Prize winner and former foreign affairs minister Jose Ramos Horta (who had recently quit the cabinet in response to Fretilin's continued support for Alkatiri) to serve as the country's prime minister until legislative and presidential elections are held in 2007.

In August, detained rebel leader Major Alfredo Reinado led a mass escape of 56 prisoners from Dili's main jail. The state of emergency was nevertheless suspended the same month with the establishment of the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), charged with facilitating stability, a culture of democratic governance, and political dialogue aimed at national reconciliation. UNOTIL, scheduled to expire in May 2006, had been extended by the UN Security Council for another month until a special UN envoy was appointed; the envoy's assessments yielded UNMIT. Primarily designed to meet the country's immediate need for security support, the new mission was also a response to Gusmao's calls in January for UN assistance in preparing for the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections, and to charges by several observers and East Timorese politicians that UN "short-termism" was to blame for recent events.

Turmoil resumed in October, when the United Nations published the findings of its Special Commission of Inquiry for East Timor, which had investigated the allegations against Alkatiri and the causes of national unrest. The report blamed Alkatiri for the outbreak of violence and for failing to prevent the transfer of weapons. It also implicated the former interior and defense ministers as well as army and police commanders in weapons distribution, and faulted the government for not being more proactive in resolving problems between the country's military and police forces. Violent riots reflecting east-west tensions—driven more by economic competition and unsettled land disputes than ethnic differences, according to some analysts—resumed almost immediately after the findings were released. The mutilated torsos of two men thought to be from the eastern Bacao and Los Palos districts were found in the capital. Rival youth groups attacked each other as well as foreign

peacekeepers. UNMIT recommended that Australian troops be replaced with UN police officers.

While East Timor has made significant progress in reconstructing schools and health centers destroyed in postreferendum violence and building its civil service since 2002, it remains the poorest country in Southeast Asia, with a contracting gross domestic product and about 40 percent of the population living under the poverty line, particularly in rural areas. According to a UN Development Program report published in March 2006, the country's offshore oil and gas revenues would allow it to do much better, if only the government executed its budget effectively and distributed funds nationally rather than primarily devoting income to the capital. The humanitarian crisis and economic strain of April and May prompted the United Nations to launch an appeal in June for emergency aid, to provide food and assistance to victims of the conflict, and especially the tens of thousands of displaced persons. While the country's population remains small, at about one million, it has increased rapidly since independence; at 7.8 children per woman, East Timor has the highest fertility rate in the world.

Oil and gas reserves are predicted to become even more of a revenue earner now that East Timor and Australia have finally reached agreement in the January 2006 Greater Sunrise deal over long-disputed ownership rights and maritime boundaries in the Timor Sea. East Timor agreed not to contest current maritime boundaries for the next 50 years in exchange for a 50-50 split in revenues from the resulting offshore energy project. Relations with Indonesia, however, have been somewhat more tenuous since the February 2006 final report of the independent Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) estimated the minimum number of conflict-related deaths during the occupation to be 102,800 and recommended that the Indonesian government send a delegation to acknowledge past abuses, comply with any future justice initiatives, and financially contribute to reparations. Driven in part by its intentions to become a full member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), in which Indonesia is a key player, as soon as it can afford to, the government of East Timor has prioritized reconciliation with the Indonesian government over retribution for past abuses.

Rights groups such as Amnesty International have warned that a weak response to the recent atrocities, comparable to the muted response to the postreferendum killings of 1999, could contribute to a cycle of impunity in the country.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: East Timor is an electoral democracy. While the directly elected president is a largely symbolic figure, with formal powers limited to the right to veto legislation and make certain appointments, President Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao played a central role in running the country following his assumption of emergency powers in May 2006. While the constitution does not grant the president the right to dismiss the prime minister, Gusmao's pressure on Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri to resign was undoubtedly a crucial factor in his ultimate decision to do so. Moreover, amid opposition calls for Parliament to be dissolved altogether, it was Gusmao's choice among four candidates put forward by Fretilin, the ruling party of the unicameral National Parliament, which made Jose Ramos Horta the new prime minister in July. Presidential and legislative elections remain scheduled for April-May 2007, in line with the constitution's

five-year term limit for both branches. The balloting will be the country's first direct legislative elections under the constitution since the Fretilin-dominated Constituent Assembly automatically became the Parliament after writing the charter in 2002.

From December 2004 to September 2005, local elections, having been postponed in 2004, took place in all 13 districts, with turnout rates ranging from 80 to 90 percent; the polls were widely considered to be free and fair. The few anomalies that did occur were largely attributed to inexperience.

The Democratic Party (PD) and the Social Democratic Party (SDT), which each won slightly more than 8 percent of the vote in the August 2001 elections to the Constituent Assembly, form the nucleus of a parliamentary opposition that comprises around 25 of the body's 88 members. Opposition parties won just one out of 31 contested regions in the 2004-05 elections, and Fretilin remains the clearly dominant party. However, the extent to which 2006 events have discredited the party and Alkatiri, who was nevertheless overwhelmingly reelected as its leader during the party congress in May, suggests that the 2007 elections could reduce Fretilin's strength. While there is no credible evidence to support Alkatiri's claim that the year's violence was actually an opposition attempt to stage a coup, some observers have pointed to opposition party efforts to use the riots to undermine confidence in the government ahead of the elections.

In 2005, the World Bank identified corruption as one of the greatest challenges to East Timor, particularly as it affects the allocation of oil revenues. National officials have disputed such assessments, but corruption proved a clear catalyst for the antigovernment protests in May. Included for the first time in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index in 2006, East Timor ranked 111 out of 163.

A deteriorating security situation for journalists has brought a significant decline in freedom of expression. Arrests of and threats and attacks against journalists spiked during the antigovernment riots of April, May, and June 2006. Alkatiri's supporters were suspected of targeting independent news media. Fearing reprisal for the publication of critical reports in late May, most employees of the *Timor Post*, the country's leading independent daily, went into hiding; this newspaper as well as another daily, the *Suara Timor Lorosae*, were suspended for several days following the reports. An estimated 40 antigovernment militants attacked the Radio e Televisao de Timor-Leste (RTTL), the public broadcasting service, in late June; some staff members were targeted and roughly 20 lost their homes as a result of the violence, causing journalists to join the ranks of the conflict's internally displaced persons. The International Federation of Journalists condemned the extent to which the violence undermined the media's ability to cover the country's social and political crisis.

Meanwhile, national debate erupted in early 2006 over a revised penal code that criminalizes defamation and allows for fines and jail terms of up to three years for anyone who publishes comments seen as harmful to an official's reputation. Another revision doubles the term of imprisonment when defamation is committed through the media. The new code follows increased government efforts to crack down on journalists over the last three years as reporting has grown more critical. The prime minister signed an executive decree approving the new code in December 2005, alarming several international and domestic press-freedom watchdog groups, which subsequently lobbied President Gusmao to veto the legislation right up to the date it was scheduled to come into effect in mid-February. Gusmao sent the law

back to the Ministry of Justice for consideration on February 17, where it has remained since. The criminal defamation provisions of the Indonesian penal code apply until a new East Timorese penal code is promulgated.

East Timor is a secular state, but the Roman Catholic Church plays a central role; 98 percent of the population is Roman Catholic. Church rules prohibit persons living under religious vows from holding political office; some politically active priests and nuns have been barred from government office. There are no significant threats to religious freedom or clashes among the country's different groups. However, tensions developed between Alkatiri, a practicing Muslim of Yemeni descent, and the Catholic Church following the government's February 2005 decision to make religious education an unfunded after-school elective rather than a compulsory part of the curriculum. The decision prompted the largest public protests since independence, ultimately reversing the decision and prompting the establishment of a consultative body comprised of government and religious organization members. Academic freedom is generally respected.

Freedoms of association and assembly are guaranteed by the constitution, yet the Law on Freedom, Assembly and Demonstration, passed by the Parliament in December 2004, regulates political gatherings and prohibits demonstrations with the aim of "questioning constitutional order" or disparaging the reputations of the head of state and other government officials. The law requires that demonstrations and public protests be authorized in advance. Many of the police reportedly sided with the rebel soldiers when they rioted in March 2006; the riots were brutally put down by forces loyal to the prime minister. June public protests in the capital calling for Alkatiri's resignation were securely guarded by foreign peacekeepers and remained peaceful.

East Timor has a labor code based on the International Labor Organization's standards. The law permits workers to form and join worker organizations without prior authorization. However, attempts to unionize workers generally have been slowed by inexperience and a lack of organizing skills.

The country suffers broadly from the lack of rule of law and a prevailing culture of impunity. The legal system is fragile, with only two functioning courthouses, and the rights to due process and an expeditious, fair trial are often restricted or denied, largely because of a lack of resources and trained personnel. The prosecutor general's issuance of an arrest warrant for former interior minister Rogerio Lobato, who was accused of collaborating with Alkatiri in arming civilians, was considered a sign of the judicial system's independence.

Neither the police (PNTL) nor the military (FDLT) are perceived to have the trust of the population or the capacity to provide adequate security and order. Moreover, neither is regarded as politically neutral, since the FDLT falls under President Gusmao's control, while the PNTL reported to Fretilin's Lobato; the police force was relieved of its duties in May when some factions became involved in the violence. An unclear division of labor between the two security forces exacerbates friction between them. The problem is compounded by the fact that many members of the police force previously worked for the Indonesian authorities, while many ex-Falintil members were absorbed into the country's new military. Most of the FDLT troops sacked in mid-March were former resistance fighters. These divisive loyalties and pasts culminated in late May 2006, when FDLT soldiers killed 10 unarmed police officers under UN protection. A Human Rights Watch report, released in April,

detailed the prevalence of torture and mistreatment by the police as well as the failure of the main internal police oversight body (PEDU) to hold police officers accountable for abuse. The UN police force (UNPOL) assumed control of national policing in September. The Police Supplemental Agreement, signed in December, officially grants the United Nations full responsibility for policing and provides for UNMIT's role in reforming and rebuilding the PNTL.

Several analysts and international human rights groups connect the country's currently dire security situation with the tradition of impunity established by the failure to achieve justice for past abuses. Like other postconflict societies, East Timor faces the challenge of balancing justice with reconciliation—in this case with a neighbor whose favor is essential to the poverty-stricken nation's economic growth. The United Nations has mandated efforts to prosecute human rights violations, such as the Human Rights Court on East Timor (the so-called Ad Hoc court) and the Serious Crimes Unit, but each failed to prosecute senior Indonesian officials. After convicting 85 defendants out of the 391 indicted, the tribunal and prosecutorial process was halted altogether in May 2005. A July 2005 report by the Commission of Experts, established by the UN secretary general to investigate the violence of 1999, was not seriously considered by the Security Council. The Commission on Truth and Friendship, a body comprised of 10 Indonesian and East Timorese officials without the power to prosecute, first met in August 2005.

Despite initial hesitation, Gusmao agreed to the February 2006 publication of the final report of the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation (CAVR), established by UNTAET in 2001 to investigate human rights violations committed between April 1974 and October 1999 and facilitate community reconciliation. The report attributed a majority of some 18,600 unlawful killings to the Indonesian security forces and another 84,200 deaths to hunger and illness, bringing the total number of conflict-related deaths during Indonesia's occupation to 102,800. In the interest of strengthening ties with Indonesia, Gusmao rejected the commission's recommendations, including that Indonesia send a delegation to acknowledge past violations, comply with future efforts to achieve justice for past abuse, and pay reparations. In June, Amnesty International called on the United Nations to ensure that the findings of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the April-May 2006 violence are matched with efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice. The group warned that a lack of punishment would further fuel the culture of impunity, which was later cited by the commission itself as a key cause of the country's descent into chaos.

Women enjoy equal rights under East Timor's constitution, yet women's participation in government is much lower than that of men. Domestic violence remains a persistent problem, and the country's weak legal system coupled with the prevalence of customary law at the local level means that abuse is rarely prosecuted. With the assistance of the UN Population Fund, new domestic violence legislation to protect women and children has been drafted and submitted to the Parliament, and an Office for the Promotion of Equality (formerly the Gender Affairs Unit) has been established within the prime minister's office. Drawing further public attention to the deeply rooted nature of the problem, the final report of the CAVR found that rape as well as sexual slavery and violence were used by the Indonesian military during the occupation, particularly before and after the 1999 referendum, as tools to splinter the resistance.

Ecuador

Population: 13,300,000

Capital: Quito

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,3PF	2,3F	2,3F	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview: Large-scale antigovernment protests early in the year led to the declaration of a state of emergency in several provinces. The protests contributed to the May cancellation of a public contract with U.S.-based Occidental Petroleum, which resulted in a suspension of free-trade talks with the United States. Left-wing economist Rafael Correa was elected president on November 26 after an acrimonious run-off contest against banana magnate Alvaro Noboa. At year's end it appeared that Correa's inauguration would quickly lead to confrontation with the Congress elected in October, in which Noboa's party gained the largest share of seats.

Established in 1830 after achieving independence from Spain in 1822, the Republic of Ecuador has endured many interrupted presidencies and military governments. The last military regime gave way to civilian rule when a new constitution was approved by referendum in 1978.

In January 2000, Vice President Gustavo Noboa took over as president after demonstrators forced his predecessor to step down. Significant numbers of mid-level military officers led by Colonel Lucio Gutierrez joined the main protests by indigenous groups, which were reportedly manipulated by putschist senior army commanders. Despite the protesters' acclamation of a three-person "junta" that included Gutierrez, Congress met in emergency session in the city of Guayaquil to ratify Noboa, who did not belong to any political party, as the new constitutional president.

In October 2002 legislative elections, the Social Christian Party secured the largest number of seats. Gutierrez won a surprise victory in the first round of the concurrent presidential election, defeating a large field that included two former presidents who stood as standard-bearers for Ecuador's traditional political parties. He emerged in the hard-fought campaign as an advocate for the elimination of the country's infamous corruption and the alleviation of its extraordinary rural poverty. A political novice at the head of a leftist coalition sustained by the country's increasingly empowered indigenous groups, Gutierrez went on to best populist banana magnate Alvaro Noboa in the November 2002 runoff. Gutierrez was sworn into office in January 2003. His election marked the first time that Ecuador's head of state shared the

humble background and indigenous ethnicity of the country's majority; native communities make up an estimated 40 percent of Ecuador's population.

Despite the unprecedented inclusion of indigenous people in Gutierrez's government, indigenous and peasant communities had largely withdrawn their vital political support by the end of 2003. The president was weakened by the conflicting demands of his heterogeneous coalition and the immediate effects of his economic reforms. Supporters of those measures—which included an overhaul of the corrupt customs service, the introduction of some tough fiscal policies, and price increases for energy and transportation—argued that they succeeded in fighting inflation and vastly improved Ecuador's balance of payments.

The decision by the powerful indigenous Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) movement and its associated Pachukutik party to withdraw support for Gutierrez portended serious social tensions. Dissent over the fiscal and labor reforms spilled into the streets, as one-time Gutierrez backers expressed their frustration that the government had not done more to fight poverty. In November 2003, a scandal erupted over Vice-President Alfredo Palacio's alleged ties to a businessman detained on drug-trafficking charges who had contributed \$30,000 to the Gutierrez-Palacio campaign.

In 2004, Gutierrez, having won the presidency on an anticorruption platform, faced serious questions about his commitment to transparency and honest government. In September 2004, he met in Panama with self-exiled former president Abdala Bucaram, who was forced from office in 1997 on grounds of "mental incapacity" amid rampant corruption scandals. Bucaram, known as "El Loco" (The Madman), controlled a small political party that was considered a key potential ally in the upcoming elections. Gutierrez's decision to hold the meeting highlighted his lack of support in Congress, where he had been forced to govern by means of temporary alliances. His political standing was also hurt when he dismissed the head of the national tax agency, who had won fame for cracking down on business-tax scofflaws and boosting the country's collection rates.

In the October 2004 regional and municipal elections, Gutierrez's Patriotic Society Party (PSP) failed to receive even the 5 percent of the vote required for official recognition as a political party, despite a 7 percent economic growth rate and a budget surplus. Subsequently, the country's largest opposition party and several other factions began to press for Gutierrez's removal. However, he refused to resign or hold early elections, and sought to change the alignment of political forces through judicial manipulation.

In April 2005, Gutierrez dismissed the Supreme Court on grounds of political bias. A new panel of judges, chosen on the basis of loyalty to the president, granted immunity to several exiled politicians accused of corruption, a move that opened the door to the return of Bucaram—and to a possible parliamentary alliance between him and the president. However, when Bucaram returned to Ecuador vowing to lead a "revolution of the poor" in the manner of Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez, middle-income groups in Quito, still furious over the former president's misrule, joined the protest movement against Gutierrez. Despite the president's effort to placate the protesters by dismissing the new Supreme Court later in April, his unpopular free-market economic policies, support for U.S. antinarcotics efforts, and allegations of cronyism and corruption all served to spell the end of his administration. His ouster, which was technically based on a spurious charge of "abandonment of post," marked

the third time in nine years that an elected president was thrown out of office by Congress and street protests.

Assuming the presidency after Gutierrez's removal, Palacio replaced the armed forces' commanders and reinstated CONAIE representatives at the head of several state bodies as part of an elaborate factional balancing act that was essential to his political survival. Palacio also reversed his predecessor's tough fiscal policies, diverting funds to social expenditures. In August, he declared a state of emergency in two oil-rich northeastern provinces where protests and a strike had brought the oil industry to a halt, giving troops permission to use "maximum force" to protect strategic installations. In late 2005, in an apparent attempt to bolster his rapidly waning popularity, Palacio demanded that public contracts with foreign oil companies be renegotiated to meet terms more favorable to the state. He also pushed for a referendum on the formation of a constituent assembly, but the proposal was blocked by both the Congress and the politicized Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE).

Much of 2006 was shaped by preparations for the October congressional and presidential elections and the ongoing struggles with social protests. Demonstrations against foreign oil companies and a proposed free-trade agreement (FTA) with the United States dominated the first half of the year. Protests in February and March led to the declaration of a state of emergency in six provinces, though Palacio was able to contain the protests in some areas through promises of increased social spending. Under the threat of a CONAIE-led uprising in May, the government decided to annul the contract of U.S.-based Occidental Petroleum, accusing the company of violating the terms of the agreement. That prompted the United States to suspend FTA talks indefinitely, threatening several important Ecuadorean export industries that stood to benefit from the proposed deal. The Palacio administration also continued to be racked by ministerial changes, with more than 50 individual alterations occurring during the president's 18 months in office at year's end. Meanwhile, relations with Colombia deteriorated as that country's military and bands of Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas crossed into Ecuadorean territory on several occasions.

The presidential contest featured a number of moderately well-known figures, including Ecuador's richest man, Alvaro Noboa; Leon Roldos, the brother of former president Jaime Roldos; and Gilmar Gutierrez, the brother of and stand-in for Lucio Gutierrez. The run-up was also marked by the emergence of Rafael Correa, a charismatic former finance minister who pledged to align Ecuador with Chavez's "Bolivarian revolution," renegotiate Ecuador's foreign debt, and end the FTA talks with the United States. However, he unexpectedly finished second to Noboa in the first round of voting on October 15. Congressional elections the same day resulted in the largest share of seats, 28 out of 100, going to Noboa's *Institutional Renewal Party of National Action* party, followed by Gutierrez's PSP with 24.

In the second round, held on November 26, Correa swept to victory with approximately 57 percent of the vote after six weeks of bitter campaigning. Noboa had led for much of the runoff campaign, but was hurt by accusations of exploitative labor practices as well as a messianic populist style that was off-putting to many Ecuadoreans. Even before his January inauguration, Correa moved toward confrontation with the incoming Congress due to his call for a constituent assembly to rewrite the country's constitution.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Ecuador is an electoral democracy. However, it suffers from an unstable political system that has brought it eight presidents in the past 11 years. In the latest executive upset, President Lucio Gutierrez in 2005 was ousted by an irregular session of the National Congress. The 2006 elections, while generally free and fair, were plagued by technical glitches that delayed first-round results for several days. In the second round, attempts to contain campaign spending, especially by the wealthy Noboa, were ineffective.

The 1978 constitution provides for a president elected to a four-year term. In 1998, the national Constituent Assembly mandated that as of 2002, a presidential candidate would need to win 40 percent of the votes in first-round balloting, and beat his or her closest rival by at least 10 percentage points, in order to avoid a runoff. The unicameral National Congress is composed of 100 members elected on a provincial basis every four years.

Ecuador's largely personalistic, clientelist, and poorly institutionalized political parties and groupings include the Popular Democracy-Christian Democratic Union (DP-UDC), the Social Christian Party (PSC), the Ecuadorian Roldosista Party (PRE), the Democratic Left (ID), the Pachakutik Movement (MUPP-NP), and the Alfarista Radical Front (FRA). Correa, whose major promise was the convocation of a constituent assembly to rewrite the constitution, ran as the sole candidate of the Country Alliance Party.

A high degree of regionalism increases tensions in Ecuadorean politics. The major distinction is between the coast, which is the base of both the economic elite and the Afro-Ecuadorean minority, and the interior (both the Andean mountain region and the Amazon River basin), where indigenous groups are centered. The representation level of indigenous groups has increased greatly over the past 15 years; the CONAIE indigenous movement is the most vocal, if not the most powerful, social group in the country.

Ecuador is racked by corruption; numerous politicians and functionaries have been investigated for graft, and the public perceives corruption to be present in nearly every social sphere. Ecuador was ranked 138 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Constitutional guarantees regarding freedom of expression are generally observed, and the media, which are mostly private, are outspoken. Several journalists reported receiving threats in 2006, and two were killed in February, though in both cases the motive was unclear. On a positive note, President Palacio vetoed a bill on December 30, 2005, that would have exposed journalists to the possibility of prison sentences for publishing telephone conversations without the consent of the participants.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government respects this right in practice. The government does not require religious groups to be licensed or registered unless they form nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that engage in commercial activity. The government allows missionary activity and religious demonstrations by all sects. Academic freedom is not restricted.

The right to organize political parties, civic groups, and unions is upheld by the authorities. Ecuador has numerous human rights organizations, and despite occasional acts of intimidation, they report openly on arbitrary arrests and instances of police brutality and military misconduct. Repeated police violence against protestors led to at least one death and several serious injuries in 2006, and human rights organizations denounced

a perceived "militarization" of the police. The country's labor unions are well organized and have the right to strike, though the labor code limits public sector strikes.

The judiciary, broadly undermined by the corruption afflicting the entire political system, is headed by a Supreme Court that, until the Court itself was placed in charge of appointments in 1997, was appointed by the legislature and thus subject to political influence. After the 2005 political crisis that led to Gutierrez's ouster, a special commission mandated by the legislature began appointing Supreme Court judges according to a merit-based system. The new arrangement was considered relatively effective. Separately, a new criminal procedural code that fundamentally changed Ecuador's legal system came into force in July 2001. The code abandoned the modalities of the civil-law system—investigation by judges, written testimony given *in camera*, judicially rendered verdicts—and replaced them with certain procedures associated with the common-law tradition—an adversarial system, with investigation and charging assigned to a prosecutorial corps independent of the judiciary; oral testimony in open court; and verdicts rendered by lay juries.

Torture and ill-treatment of detainees and prisoners remain widespread. The Inter-American Human Rights Commission has singled out pretrial detention as an area of particular concern. Police courts that are neither impartial nor independent continue to try members of security forces accused of human rights violations. However, under Defense Minister Oswaldo Jarrin, in office from August 2005 until August 2006, the military worked to formulate a doctrine that emphasizes the subordination of the military to civilian authorities.

Ecuador is a money laundering haven as well as a transshipment point for cocaine passing from neighboring Colombia to the United States. Widespread corruption in Ecuador's customs service led the government to privatize it in May 1999. The adoption of the U.S. dollar as the Ecuadorean currency in 2000 appears to have had the unintended effect of making the country more attractive for money laundering and other criminal financial activity.

An increase in the number of incursions by both Colombian guerrilla groups and Colombian soldiers into Ecuadorean territory in 2006 exacerbated concerns about the extent to which Colombia's civil war would affect public safety and the survival of democratic institutions in Ecuador. Meanwhile, rising rates of violent crime have undermined public faith in the police to maintain order.

Despite their growing political influence, indigenous people continue to suffer discrimination at many levels of society. In the Amazon region, where much of the country's natural wealth is located, indigenous groups have attempted to win a share of oil revenues and a voice in natural-resources and development decisions. Although the government tends to consult indigenous communities on natural-resources matters, their wishes are not always granted. Indigenous activists frequently report threats and violence against them by police, soldiers, and private security forces.

After the 2006 elections, women held 25 of 100 seats in Congress. Violence against women is common, particularly in indigenous areas, where victims are reluctant to speak out against other members of their community. Abortion is legal only if pregnancy threatens the woman's life or health, and in cases of rape if the victim is mentally retarded or insane. A 1987 law granted women the same rights as men with regard to divorce, property distribution, and inheritance, implementing provisions of the 1979 constitution that require equal rights for both sexes.

Egypt

Population: 75,400,000

Capital: Cairo

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Trend Arrow: Egypt received a downward trend arrow due to the security forces' ruthless suppression of political dissent.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

Despite constitutional reforms that allowed for multiparty presidential elections in 2005, the Egyptian government in 2006 backtracked on its promises of greater political openness. President Hosni Mubarak postponed municipal elections, fearing a large showing by the Muslim Brotherhood, and extended the 25-year-old Emergency Law despite earlier pledges that it would be replaced with specific antiterrorism legislation. Security services ruthlessly suppressed dissent by political activists who protested the government's reversals. Extremely limited reforms related to judicial independence and press freedom were enacted for the sole purpose of deflecting criticism and consolidating state control.

Egypt formally gained independence from Great Britain in 1922 and acquired full sovereignty following World War II. After leading a coup that overthrew the monarchy in 1952, Colonel Gamel Abdel Nasser established a repressive police state that he ruled until his death in 1970. The constitution adopted in 1971 under his successor, Anwar al-Sadat, established a strong presidential political system with nominal guarantees for most political and civil rights that were not fully respected in practice. Sadat signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979 and established a strong alliance with the United States, which has provided the Egyptian government with roughly \$2 billion in aid annually for the last quarter-century.

Following Sadat's assassination in 1981, then-vice president Hosni Mubarak became president and declared a state of emergency, which has been in force ever since. Despite receiving enormous infusions of foreign aid, the government failed to implement comprehensive economic reforms. A substantial deterioration in living conditions for many Egyptians fueled an Islamist insurgency in the early 1990s. The authorities jailed thousands of suspected militants without charge and cracked down heavily on political dissent. Although the armed infrastructure of Islamist groups had been largely eradicated by 1998, the government continued to restrict political and civil liberties as it struggled to address Egypt's dire socioeconomic problems.

High levels of economic growth in the late 1990s temporarily alleviated these problems, but the country experienced an economic slowdown after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States. Popular disaffection with the government spread palpably, and demands for political change became more vocal. Anti-war protests during the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 quickly evolved into antigovernment demonstrations, sparking a harsh response by security forces that left hundreds injured.

In the face of both rising internal discontent and growing U.S. pressure for political and economic liberalization, the government embarked on a high-profile effort to cast itself as a champion of reform in 2004. Mubarak removed several "old guard" ministers who had built extensive patronage networks over the previous two decades, appointed a new cabinet of younger technocrats, and introduced some economic reforms.

Business interests were now well represented within the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) and government; this was largely the work of the aging president's son, Gamal Mubarak. However, the awarding of all key economic portfolios in the new cabinet to associates of Gamal raised concerns that the president was paving the way for a hereditary transition, while the political reform plan unveiled by the NDP in September 2004 was largely cosmetic. Gamal further consolidated his control over the NDP as head of the "Policies Committee," a group charged with formulating party policy and reviewing legislation. Although Gamal's "new guard" represents a modernizing trend within the NDP, critics charge that there is little difference between the old and new guard, and that the aim is not so much to modernize the party as to provide a vehicle for Gamal's succession.

A broad consensus emerged in 2004 among leftist, liberal, and Islamist political forces as to the components of desired political reform: direct, multicandidate presidential elections; the abrogation of emergency law; full judicial supervision of elections; the lifting of restrictions on the formation of political parties; and an end to government interference in the operation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). However, the opposition remained polarized between unlicensed and licensed political groups, with the latter mostly accepting the regime's decision to put off reform until after the 2005 presidential and parliamentary elections.

In December 2004, Kifaya (Arabic for "enough"), an informal movement encompassing a broad spectrum of secular and Islamist activists, held the first-ever demonstration explicitly calling for Mubarak to step down. Despite a heavy-handed response by security forces, Kifaya persisted with the demonstrations in 2005, leading other opposition groups to do likewise.

While reluctant to crack down decisively on the protests for fear of alienating the West, the government was quick to detain opposition leaders who crossed the line. In January 2005, the authorities arrested and then eventually convicted Ghad (Tomorrow) Party Chairman Ayman Nour, on charges of forging signatures in his party's petition for a license. In February 2005, Mubarak publicly called for an amendment to the constitution that would allow Egypt's first multicandidate presidential election. The amendment, approved by parliament on May 10, restricted eligibility to candidates nominated by licensed parties or a substantial bloc of elected officials. Consequently, all major opposition groups denounced the amendment and boycotted the May 25 referendum that approved it.

The presidential election campaign was characterized by open and contentious public debate as well as an unprecedented assertion of judicial independence. The Judges' Club, a quasi-official syndicate, successfully pressured the authorities to permit more direct (if inadequate) judicial supervision of the voting.

Nevertheless, the results were predictably lopsided. Mubarak won 88 percent of the vote, while Nour, still in jail, finished a distant second with 7 percent. Three rounds of legislative elections, held in November and December, featured a strong showing by the Muslim Brotherhood, which increased its representation in Parliament sixfold, but otherwise confirmed the NDP's political dominance. The Muslim Brotherhood, whose candidates ran as independents, won 87 seats in the 454-seat Assembly; the NDP won at least 311 seats, just nine seats over the two-thirds parliamentary majority required to amend the constitution; and secular independents won a total of 37 seats.

Turnout for the presidential and parliamentary elections, and for the constitutional referendum, was under 25 percent. Violent attacks on opposition voters by security forces and progovernment thugs abounded during the first and second rounds, and increased in the third round of parliamentary elections. Monitors observed that voter intimidation and fraud marred the third round. Security forces cordoned off certain polling stations and prevented opposition voters from casting their ballots in some Muslim Brotherhood and opposition strongholds. One opposition supporter was killed and another wounded when police opened fire on voters in a city north of Cairo, although voting proceeded normally in other areas.

The government in 2006 postponed that year's municipal elections until 2008. Mubarak argued that the move was necessary in order to make the process more democratic and afford the municipal councils greater powers. In reality, the government feared that another strong showing by the Muslim Brotherhood would affect the next presidential election in 2011, since independent presidential candidates must have nominations from 250 elected officeholders, including at least 140 from the local councils.

The assertion of judicial independence during the 2005 elections was suppressed by the government in 2006. The judges' criticism of the government for its failure to prevent voter intimidation, refusal to certify the election results, and calls for greater judicial independence all angered the authorities. During the elections, security forces assaulted at least four judges monitoring voting stations. Other judges were forced to close their stations because of clashes with opposition members and security forces.

Egypt also experienced a surge in terrorist violence by Islamist extremists, leading some analysts to declare the return of Islamic militant activity after a seven-year lull. In April 2006, three bombs exploded simultaneously in the Sinai resort of Dahab. The blasts killed 23 people and injured 80 others. The Dahab bombings led to detention sweeps by the Egyptian security services in the Sinai area. In December 2006, three men were convicted for the 2004 Taba bombing. However, the trial procedures were seriously flawed; there were allegations of torture, forced confessions, and prolonged detention.

Economic reform continued steadily in 2006. The World Bank ranked Egypt number one for trade-policy reforms out of 155 countries. It was also one of the top 10 economic reformers, according to the World Bank's "Doing Business" survey.

However, the continued growth of the informal economic sector is a barrier to future economic growth and reform. Egyptian law establishes a minimum wage and requires companies to provide social security insurance, but off-the-record employment is widespread, especially in the agricultural sector. Analysts estimate that Egypt's informal sector represents 35 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Egypt is not an electoral democracy. The process of electing the president, who appoints the prime minister, cabinet, and all 26 provincial governors, is not fully competitive. Article 76 of the constitution, as amended in May 2005, requires that prospective presidential candidates must either be on the executive board of a political party controlling at least 5 percent of the seats in both houses of Parliament or secure the support of 250 members of parliament and municipal councils.

The 454-seat People's Assembly (Majlis al-Sha'b), or lower house of Parliament, exercises limited influence on government policy, as the executive initiates almost all legislation. The partially elected upper house, the Consultative, or Shura, Council (Majlis al-Shura), functions only in an advisory capacity. As a result of government restrictions on the licensing of political parties, state control over television and radio stations and systemic irregularities in the electoral process, legislative elections do not meet international standards. Owing mainly to closer judicial supervision of the polls, presidential and parliamentary elections in 2005 witnessed fewer allegations of massive fraud than in preceding election cycles, but there were widespread irregularities in both, and international monitors were prohibited. The Judges' Club, a quasi-official professional organization, refused to certify the results of the 2005 parliamentary elections, as many judges reported irregularities at polling stations.

Political opposition remains weak and ineffective. A ban on religious parties prevents Islamist groups from organizing politically, although members of the Muslim Brotherhood compete in elections as independents. Political parties cannot be established without the approval of the Political Parties Committee (PPC), an NDP-controlled body affiliated with the Shura Council that can reject applicants for failing to offer a "unique and distinct program that enriches political life." The Political Parties Law was slightly amended in 2005 to broaden the composition of the PPC.

Corruption in Egypt is all pervasive. Investors frequently complain that red tape and bureaucratic inertia make bribery essential to doing business. Some form of payment or influence (*wasta*) is required to get most things done, from expediting paperwork to finding employment to obtaining seats in Parliament. Newspapers have increased their reporting on high-profile corruption cases, however. In 2006, the opposition Kifaya movement published an extensive report entitled, "Corruption in Egypt: The Black Cloud is Not Disappearing," which concluded that corruption is hampering Egypt's economic, social, and political development. Egypt was ranked 70 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is restricted by vaguely worded statutes criminalizing direct criticism of the president, the military, and foreign heads of state, as well as speech that is un-Islamic, libelous, harmful to the country's reputation, or disruptive to sectarian coexistence. Incidents of the imprisonment of journalists and closure of publications on these grounds were declining, but at least four journalists

were charged with libel in 2006. In one case, Ibrahim Eissa, editor of *al-Dustur*, was found guilty of insulting the president and spreading rumors that threatened public security. The Egyptian government also temporarily shut down *Afaq Arabiya*, a Muslim Brotherhood publication, and arrested 20 of its staff. These recent actions have prompted journalists to call for President Hosni Mubarak to uphold his promise to repeal the 1996 law criminalizing libel. As a concession, the government passed a new press law in July 2006 that abolished custodial sentences for libel, but also increased the fines that could be imposed. Furthermore, journalists and human rights groups say the bill puts new limits on press freedom because it allows judges to determine whether imprisonment is appropriate for related offenses other than libel.

In May 2006, several journalists critical of the government were brutally assaulted, and in one case murdered, by unidentified assailants. One Egyptian American reporter for a U.S.-based newspaper was sexually assaulted by plainclothes security officials the same month as she attempted to cover the judges' story; a female reporter for *al-Dustur* suffered the same fate.

The government encourages legal political parties to publish newspapers, but restricts the licensing of nonpartisan newspapers and exercises influence over all privately owned publications through its monopoly on printing and distribution. The three leading daily newspapers are state controlled, and their editors are appointed by the president. Foreign publications and Egyptian publications registered abroad are subject to direct government censorship. Independent newspapers were allowed to open in 2005, but limitations on press freedom still abound, especially when reporters attempt to cover issues the government does not want to highlight.

The government owns and operates all terrestrial broadcast television stations. Although several private satellite television stations have been established, their owners have ties to the government and their programming is subject to state influence. In 2006, reporters from the Qatar-based satellite station Al-Jazeera were assaulted by security services and had their cameras confiscated while covering political protests. Films, plays, and books are subject to censorship, especially on grounds of containing information "not in accordance with the principles of Islam" or harmful to the country's reputation. A number of books and movies, including *The Da Vinci Code*, have been banned based on the advice of clerics of Al-Azhar, one of Sunni Islam's greatest centers of learning and considered the Islamic authority in Egypt.

The government does not significantly restrict or monitor internet use, but publication of material on the internet is subject to the same statutes as the regular press. Alaa Ahmed Seif al-Islam, an award-winning blogger, was arrested in May 2006 for public protest. The Muslim Brotherhood claimed that the government continued to pressure the country's main internet service providers to block access to its website.

Islam is the state religion. The government directly appoints the preachers and staff of registered mosques and closely monitors the content of sermons in thousands of small, unauthorized mosques. Most Egyptians are Sunni Muslims, but Coptic Christians comprise a substantial minority, and there are small numbers of Jews, Shiite Muslims, and Baha'is. Although non-Muslims are generally able to worship freely, religious expression considered deviant or insulting to Islam is subject to prosecution. Egyptian law does not recognize conversion from Islam to other religions.

Anti-Christian employment discrimination is evident in the public sector, espe-

cially the security services and military. The government frequently denies or delays authorization of applications to build and repair churches. Muslim extremists have carried out several killings of Coptic villagers and frequent attacks on Coptic homes, businesses, and churches in recent years. In April 2006, a Muslim man stabbed parishioners in three Alexandria churches before being arrested. During the funeral procession for one of the victims, clashes between Muslims and Copts prompted police intervention. One Muslim died and 40 people were injured. Clashes broke out again the following day, damaging stores and injuring dozens more.

Members of the Baha'i faith continue to be denied a range of civil documents, including identity cards, birth certificates, and marriage licenses. An April 2006 court ruling held that depriving Baha'is of ID cards was illegal and upheld their right to state their religion on official documents. However, the Egyptian government, pressured by Al-Azhar and the Muslim Brotherhood, filed an appeal challenging this decision. The Supreme Court upheld the appeal and issued a final ruling in December 2006 in favor of the government.

Academic freedom is limited in Egypt. Senior university administrators are appointed by the government, and the security services reportedly influence academic appointments and curriculum on sensitive topics. University professors and students have been prosecuted for political and human rights advocacy outside of the classroom. The authorities arbitrarily block dissidents from leaving the country to attend high-profile events abroad.

Freedoms of assembly and association are heavily restricted. Organizers of public demonstrations, rallies, and protests must receive advance approval from the Interior Ministry, which is rarely granted. An unprecedented number of unauthorized reformist demonstrations took place during 2005, mostly without direct government interference. In 2006, however, security services prevented many peaceful demonstrations from taking place, assaulting and arresting hundreds of political protesters.

The Emergency Law allows for the arrest of those who commit innocuous acts such as insulting the president, blocking traffic, or distributing leaflets and posters. The Emergency Law was invoked a number of times in 2006, including one instance where political activists were beaten and detained for voicing opposition to the April 30 decision to extend it.

In May 2006 alone, the government arrested hundreds of peaceful political protesters on charges of "intent to assault property and people, obstructing the authorities work, endangering public transport, disseminating propaganda, and insulting the head of state and public employees" according to court documents. When political rights activists turned out in large numbers to support four senior judges suspended for their calls for judicial independence, state security services arrested over 225 people.

The year 2006 also witnessed a government crackdown against the Muslim Brotherhood after its gains in the parliamentary election. The Muslim Brotherhood claims that they have had more than 400 members detained in 2006, among them Muhsin Radi, a member of Parliament, and MB spokesman 'Issam al-'Irian. The Kifaya movement reported dozens of arrests for demonstrating in Cairo and Alexandria in April and May; some were beaten and detained by special security service members as they tried to hold a rally in Cairo. Human Rights Watch reports that dozens of Kifaya demonstrators have been charged with "insulting the president," "spreading false

rumors," and "disturbing public order," and will be prosecuted under the paralegal state security system, as they were charged under the Emergency Law. One pro-democracy demonstrator, Mohamed al-Sharqawi, was arrested (and sexually assaulted in prison) after attending a peaceful demonstration in May 2006.

The Law of Associations prohibits the establishment of groups "threatening national unity [or] violating public morals," prohibits NGOs from receiving foreign grants without the approval of the Social Affairs Ministry, requires members of NGO governing boards to be approved by the ministry, and allows the ministry to dissolve NGOs without a judicial order. Security services have rejected registrations, decided who could serve on boards of directors, harassed activists, and intercepted donations. The government has restricted the activity of the U.S.-based International Republican Institute (IRI) in Egypt, recently forcing the organization to desist its activities until it acquires necessary permits.

The 2003 Unified Labor Law limits the right to strike to "nonstrategic" industries and requires workers to first obtain approval for a strike from the government-controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation, the country's only legal labor federation. No major strikes occurred in 2006, but a number of independent and opposition newspapers held a one-day strike to protest the new press law.

There was marked debate and controversy surrounding judicial independence in 2006. The Supreme Judicial Council, a supervisory body of senior judges, nominates and assigns most judges. However, the Justice Ministry controls promotions and compensation packages, giving it undue influence. A new Judicial Authority Law was passed in July 2006 that offered some concessions to judicial independence but fell short of the reforms advocated by the Judges' Club.

The Supreme Judicial Council stripped four outspoken senior judges of their immunity on February 16, 2006, after they publicly called for the dissolution of the council and its replacement by an independent, impartial body. The four judges, Mahmoud al-Khodairi, Ahmed Meki, Hesham Bastawisi, and Mahmoud Meki, have also criticized the government for fraudulent and violent conduct during the 2005 parliamentary elections. Mahmoud Meki and Bastawisi faced disciplinary hearings; Meki was cleared of charges that he had "disparaged the Supreme Judicial Council" and "talked to the press about political affairs," but the council issued a rebuke and denied a promotion to Bastawisi.

The trial of Ayman Nour was suspended for several months after a key witness revealed that he had been coerced into testifying against the dissident leader in July, 2005. Nour was convicted nevertheless in December 2005 and is now serving a five year prison term. A Cairo appeals court upheld Nour's conviction in May 2006. Human Rights Watch monitored his trial and reported "serious irregularities" and claimed it "did not meet the standard for a free and fair judicial proceeding."

Egypt remains subject to the perpetually renewable Emergency Law, renewed yet again in April 2006 despite Mubarak's promises in 2005 that it would be revoked and replaced with specific antiterrorism legislation. Under the Emergency Law, security cases are usually placed under the jurisdiction of exceptional courts that are controlled by the executive branch and deny defendants many constitutional protections. The Emergency State Security Courts, empowered to try defendants charged with violating decrees promulgated under the Emergency Law, issue verdicts that cannot be appealed and are subject to ratification by the president. Al-

though judges in these courts are usually selected from the civilian judiciary, they are appointed directly by the president. The detention terms of many political activists arrested in April 2006 were extended because of the emergency law, and their cases were transferred to the state security prosecutors.

Civilians charged with security-related offenses can also be referred by the president to military courts. Since military judges are appointed by the executive branch to short, renewable, two-year terms, these tribunals lack independence. Verdicts by military courts are often handed down on the basis of little more than the testimony of security officers and informers, and are subject to review only by a body of military judges and the president.

The Emergency Law restricts many other basic rights. It empowers the government to wiretap telephones, intercept mail, search persons and places without warrants, and indefinitely detain without charge suspects deemed a threat to national security. Local and international human rights organizations estimate that 8,000-10,000 people are currently detained without charge on suspicion of security or political offenses, in addition to several thousand who have been convicted of such offenses. In 2002, the UN Committee against Torture concluded that there is "widespread evidence of torture and ill-treatment" of suspects by the State Security Intelligence agency. Torture is not reserved for political dissidents, but is routinely used to extract information and punish petty criminals.

At least 309 suspicious deaths of detainees in government custody were reported by human rights groups between 1993 and 2005. Interior Ministry officials confirm that there have been no criminal investigations of security officials for torture in the past 19 years, nor have any disciplinary measures been imposed, despite numerous credible allegations. Conditions in Egyptian prisons are very poor; prisoners are subject to overcrowding, abuse, torture, and a lack of sanitation, hygiene, and medical care. At least a handful of high-profile cases in which a jailed protester was sexually assaulted were reported in 2006.

One incident involved 21-year-old Imad al-Kabir who was arrested in January 2006 for resisting authorities and assaulting an officer after he intervened in an altercation between police officers and one of his cousins. He was taken to Bulaq al-Dakrur police station where he was tied up, beaten, and raped while police officers videotaped the torture. When al-Kabir complained to prosecutors of his treatment, he was sentenced to three months in the same prison. Al-Kabir's case is part of a disturbing trend of growing incidents of police torture of those arrested for minor crimes.

Although the constitution provides for equality of the sexes, some aspects of the law and many traditional practices discriminate against women. Unmarried women under the age of 21 are not permitted to obtain passports without permission from their fathers. A Muslim heiress receives half the amount of a male heir's inheritance, though Christians are not subject to provisions of Islamic law governing inheritance. Domestic violence is common, and marital rape is not illegal. Job discrimination is evident even in the civil service. The law provides for equal access to education, but the adult literacy rate of women lags well behind that of men (34 percent and 63 percent, respectively). Female genital mutilation is practiced, despite government efforts to eradicate it.

El Salvador

Population: 7,000,000
Capital: San Salvador

Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F

Overview: El Salvador was overrun by crime and violence in 2006, facing the highest per capita murder rates in years. The situation was exacerbated by a corrupt and ineffective judicial system, which impeded effective law enforcement. Vigilante groups committing extrajudicial killings, reminiscent of the death squads that terrorized El Salvador during the 1979-1992 civil war, were also of particular concern. Although CAFTA-DR, a regional free-trade agreement, was enacted in 2006, it has yet to have a profound effect on poverty and outward migration, which continue to be major problems in El Salvador.

The Republic of El Salvador was established in 1859, and more than a century of civil strife and military rule followed. The country endured a civil war from 1979 to 1992 that left more than 75,000 people dead and 500,000 displaced. During the civil war—which pitted the right-wing military government against Marxist guerrillas led by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN)—paramilitary death squads terrorized the capital of San Salvador and other urban centers.

The National Republican Alliance (ARENA) has held presidential power since 1989. The current president, Elias Antonio "Tony" Saca Gonzalez, is the third president elected since the end of the civil war. The months before the March 2004 presidential election were tense, with threats of violence and intervention from both within the country and abroad. However, the polls were relatively peaceful and free of major irregularities. ARENA candidate Saca captured 58 percent of the vote, while Shafik Handal of the FMLN—which had transformed from a rebel group to an opposition political party following the civil war—received 36 percent. In June, Saca was sworn into office, along with the country's first female vice president, Ana Vilma de Escobar.

The divide between ARENA and the FMLN continued to dominate Salvadoran politics during the legislative and municipal elections of March 2006. Handal, legendary leader of the FMLN and symbol of the leftist movement in El Salvador, died of a heart attack in January 2006. His death marked a potential turning point for the Salvadoran left, but the election results showed no signs that the event affected support for the FMLN. ARENA won 34 seats in the 84-member Legislative Assembly, up from 27 seats in 2003, followed by the FMLN with 32 seats. The Partido de Conciliacion Nacional (PCN) captured 10 seats, while the Christian Democratic Party

won 6 and the Democratic Change party took 2. San Salvador's close mayoral race ended in protests as government officials initially announced that ARENA candidate Rodrigo Samayoa had won. Some 20,000 FLMN supporters marched in San Salvador on March 16, accusing ARENA officials of fraud and intimidation. Protestors were dispersed by police with tear gas and rubber bullets. In the end, the FMLN maintained its control over the emblematic mayoralty of San Salvador, which it had held since 1997. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal determined that FMLN candidate Violeta Menjívar, a former guerrilla, had won the post by a slim 44-vote margin; she was the first woman to be elected mayor of the city.

The country's homicide rate reached new heights in 2006, with an average of 11 murders a day occurring nationwide during the first eight months of the year. The Institute of Legal Medicine reported that 3,928 were killed in 2006, resulting in an average of about 10.8 homicides per day. This number is slightly higher than El Salvador's homicide rate from the previous year, where 3,812 Salvadorans were murdered. Out of the total number of homicides reported in 2006, nearly 79.3 percent were committed with firearms. The capital of San Salvador remains the most violent department of the country, reporting 1,457 murders in 2006. Crime hit commerce as well as individuals, with the National Civil Police reporting that tens of thousands of businesses were subject to the extortion of sums ranging from \$5 to \$50,000.

Saca's administration claimed that street gangs (*maras*), with an estimated 100,000 members and associates, were behind the country's crime wave. The forced repatriation of hundreds of Salvadorans with criminal records from the United States contributed to the problem and reflected the international reach of major gangs like Mara Salvatrucha (also known as MS-13), which had members in other Central American countries as well as the United States. Salvadoran government responses to the gang violence included large-scale round-ups of suspected members and crackdowns on displays of gang symbols. Unofficial death squads, allegedly linked to the police and army, also emerged to combat the gangs with extrajudicial murders. In response, security forces have increased operations in areas most impacted by violent crime, including five zones of San Salvador.

Meanwhile, El Salvador continued to struggle with the aftermath of the previous year's natural disasters, as well as a range of long-term economic problems. In May 2005, Hurricane Adrian struck the country, killing two people and displacing some 20,000. Torrential rains and mudslides following Hurricane Stan flooded at least 300 communities, killed more than 70 people, and displaced roughly 50,000 others. Damage from the storms was estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars. In October 2005, the Ilamatepec volcano erupted, killing at least two people and forcing thousands to be evacuated from affected areas.

The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), which lowered trade barriers between five Central American countries, the Dominican Republic, and the United States, came into effect on March 1, 2006. However, the increased foreign investment and job creation predicted by the Saca administration remained to be seen. The government estimates that at least 36 percent of the population lives in poverty. Together, underemployed workers and the unemployed make up 70 percent of the potential workforce.

The combination of poor economic performance and natural disasters spurred further emigration from El Salvador, which first began as a result of the civil war. It is

estimated that between 817,000 and 2.7 million Salvadorans, or about 13 to 40 percent of El Salvador's population, live outside the country, particularly in the United States. According to the Inter-American Development Bank, Salvadoran migrants abroad sent \$2.83 billion in remittances to El Salvador in 2005.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: El Salvador is an electoral democracy. The 2006 legislative and 2004 presidential elections were deemed free and fair.

The 1983 constitution and subsequent reforms provide for a president elected for a five-year term and the 84-member, unicameral National Assembly, elected for three years. The two largest political parties in El Salvador are the conservative Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), formerly a left-wing guerrilla organization. Other parties include the National Conciliation Party (PCN), the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), and the United Democratic Center (CDU).

Corruption is regarded as a serious problem throughout government, particularly in the country's judicial system. Early in the year President Saca promoted an Ethics Law with the purpose of dealing with corruption in the public sector. The initiative was later approved by Congress in May 2006. Critics, including the Governance Commissioner Gloria Salguero Gross stress that the law needs to be strengthened with an access to information component. El Salvador was ranked 57 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The media are privately owned, but ownership is confined to a small group of powerful businesspeople. There are five newspapers with a combined daily circulation of about 250,000. One government and five private television networks reach most of the country. However, TeleCorporacion Salvadoreno (TCS), which is openly aligned with ARENA, owns three of those networks and dominates the country's ratings. There is unrestricted access to the internet, and the government and private organizations have worked to extend internet access to the poor.

Salvadoran journalists practice self-censorship and are subject to more overt controls imposed by media owners with strong political and economic ties to the country's elite. Reporters are also hemmed in by criminal defamation laws and the right of judges to close legal proceedings to the media for national security reasons. In 2003, the National Assembly changed the code of criminal procedure to exempt journalists from having to reveal their sources if ordered to testify in a court case. At least 14 reporters were assaulted in July 2006, either by protesters or the National Civil Police, while covering street demonstrations. Concerns have also been raised about ethics in the news media, as some journalists have been accused of using their status for personal and family gain.

The government does not encroach on religious freedom. Academic freedom is respected.

Freedoms of assembly and association are upheld by the authorities. El Salvador has a wide array of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that generally operate without government restrictions. However, some NGOs have reported difficulties in registering with the government. Labor unions have long faced obstacles in a legal environment that has traditionally favored business interests over the labor movement. However, under pressure from the European Union, El Salvador ratified International Labor Organization conventions 87, 98, 135, and 151 in August 2006,

guaranteeing historic protections for the rights of labor unions; many activists have voiced doubts as to whether the rules would be enforced in practice.

The judicial system continues to be ineffectual and corrupt and to promote impunity, especially for those who are politically, economically, or institutionally well connected. Problems within the judicial system emerged as a major issue in El Salvador in 2006, as both national and international actors, including the United States Department of State and the Salvadoran Foundation for Social and Economic Development (FUSADES), spoke out to criticize defects in the system and advocate major reform. The World Bank-financed Judicial Modernization Project began to be enacted in 2006, with the goal of enhancing the judicial system's effectiveness and credibility through a system of monitoring and evaluation. This project is slated to last until 2008.

Human rights violations have declined steadily since the end of the civil war in 1992. The Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, who is elected by the National Assembly for a three-year term, was created by the 1992 peace accords. Nevertheless, political expression and civil liberties are still limited by sporadic political violence, repressive police measures, and vigilante groups committing extrajudicial killings against suspected criminals and gang members. President Saca, like other Central American leaders, has continued to use "iron fist" (*mano duro*) policies against the country's powerful gangs.

The antigang measures include the use of the police and the military in house-to-house sweeps of various neighborhoods, a tactic that recalls the violent civil war era. Thousands of gang members have been detained in the operations. However, judges have often refused to approve warrants for such wide searches, saying they are overly broad and unfairly brand people as members of the violent gangs. "Social cleansing" groups, such as "La Sombra Negra" and the "Comando Ejecutivo Antidelincuencial Transitorio," have been accused of working with the cooperation of the police and the army. Citing a faulty judicial system, these groups have been responsible for extrajudicial killings. Police have also been accused of indiscriminately murdering homeless street children.

Beyond the gang-related violence, complaints of police brutality and corruption are widespread. The U.S. State Department has reported complaints of excessive use of force and mistreatment of detainees by police, cases of arbitrary arrest, and lengthy pretrial detention. Prisons are overcrowded, and at the end of 2006 there were 5,841 prisoners being held in pretrial detention, representing nearly 40 percent of El Salvador's prison population. Thousands of prisoners in the system launched a major hunger strike in the fall of 2005 to protest poor conditions; inmates complained that they were tortured and denied food, medical care, and family visits.

The ghosts of the civil war death squads continue to haunt the country, along with past abuses by the military. In 1993, President Alfredo Cristiani declared a general amnesty for crimes committed during the war; Salvadoran law bars trials for those accused of human rights violations during the civil war. In March 2005, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organization of American States ordered a new investigation into the 1981 massacre of more than 500 people by government troops in the village of El Mozote. Saca denounced the investigation, saying it was a dangerous precedent and could disrupt the country's peace. By the March 2006 deadline set by the IACHR, the government of El Salvador had failed to

meet most of the recommendations made by the court. Some NGOs, such as Asociación Pro-Búsqueda de Ninas y Ninos Desaparecidos, have become active in addressing human rights violations such as the disappearance of children during the civil war, and many criticize the government for refusing to provide the appropriate support for such efforts.

There are three different indigenous groups in El Salvador: Nahua-Pipiles, Lencas, and Cacaoperas. However, much of the indigenous population has been assimilated into Spanish culture. There are no national laws regarding indigenous rights. According to the U.S. State Department's 2006 human rights report, access to land and credit remained problems for indigenous peoples.

While women are granted equal rights under family and property law, they are occasionally discriminated against in practice; women also suffer discrimination in employment. Violence against women and children is widespread and common. Child labor and human trafficking for purposes of prostitution are serious problems in the country.

Equatorial Guinea

Population: 500,000

Capital: Malabo

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	6,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview: Equatorial Guinea signed an oil production agreement with China in February 2006, continuing to reap huge profits from its natural resources even as the majority of its citizens remained mired in poverty. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo maintained his broad powers over the country's political institutions as well as the national oil industry.

Equatorial Guinea achieved independence from Spain in 1968. It has since been one of the world's most tightly closed and repressive societies. Current president Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo seized power in 1979 by deposing and murdering his uncle, Francisco Macias Nguema. Demands from donor countries for democratic reforms forced Obiang to legalize a multiparty system in 1992, though he and his clique continued to control political power. The 1996 presidential election, won by Obiang, was marred by official intimidation, a near total boycott by the political opposition, and very low voter turnout. The ruling Democratic Party of Equatorial

Guinea (PDGE) won 75 of 80 seats in similarly flawed parliamentary elections in 1999. Many opposition candidates were arrested or confined to their villages prior to the polls.

Four opposition challengers withdrew from the December 2002 presidential election, citing irregularities. Obiang won a third seven-year term with 99.5 percent of the vote. Following the election, the government announced the formation of a "government of national unity" that brought members of eight small parties into the cabinet. Despite reshuffles in 2004 and 2006, key cabinet positions continue to be held by presidential relatives and loyalists.

The PDGE won 68 of 100 seats in the April 2004 parliamentary elections, with allied parties taking 30. The opposition Convergence Party for Social Democracy (CPDS), which complained of numerous irregularities and voter intimidation, won the remaining two seats.

In June 2005, Obiang granted amnesty to six Armenian pilots who had been among 22 people convicted in November 2004 for alleged involvement in a coup plot discovered in March 2004. Under intense international pressure, Obiang in June 2006 freed several of the South African citizens in the group as part of a larger release of 41 political prisoners. Amnesty International had expressed concern over the likely use of torture in extracting confessions from the coup plot defendants, particularly in the case of a German suspect who died in custody. Many of the alleged plotters, some of whom were tried in Zimbabwe, had ties to the defunct mercenary firm Executive Outcomes, founded by apartheid-era South African military officers.

The Equatorial Guinean government accused Severo Moto, an opposition figure living in exile in Spain; South African financier and oil broker Eli Calil; and Sir Mark Thatcher, son of former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, of being behind the scheme to oust Obiang in 2004. Tried in a South African court, Thatcher testified as part of a plea bargain that he had unwittingly helped to bankroll the coup attempt. Moto and eight members of his "government in exile" were tried in absentia and convicted of treason. A separate group of Equatorial Guineans accused of trying to topple Obiang in October 2004 received sentences of up to 30 years in prison in September 2005. According to Amnesty International, all but two of the defendants who appeared in court said they had been tortured. Of the six defendants tried in absentia, three were allegedly held incommunicado in Equatorial Guinea after being abducted from Nigeria and Benin.

Equatorial Guinea is Africa's third-largest oil producer, and per capita gross domestic product is among the highest in the world. U.S. direct investment in Equatorial Guinea stands at more than \$10 billion, nearly all of it energy-related, and represents the fourth-highest level of U.S. direct investment in sub-Saharan Africa. The United States closed its embassy in the country in 1995, but reopened it in 2003. In 2006, the United States named its first resident ambassador to Equatorial Guinea in more than a decade. Other countries vie for Equatorial Guinea's oil, including China, which signed an oil production agreement there in February 2006 and is providing training to the local military forces.

Despite the country's oil wealth, there have been few improvements in the standard of living. Equatorial Guinea's economy is now 20 times larger than it was in the mid 1990s, but school enrollment and literacy rates continue to be very low. Over 50 percent of the population lacks access to clean water. According to the World Bank,

life expectancy decreased between 2000 and 2004. The majority of the country's impoverished citizens depend on subsistence agriculture. Equatorial Guinea ranked 120 out of 177 countries on the UN Development Program's 2006 Human Development Index.

World Bank programs were cut off in 1993 because of corruption and mismanagement. The government has since attempted to negotiate a "shadow" fiscal management program with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Equatorial Guinea declared its intent to implement the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in September 2004, but has made slow progress to date. According to the IMF, the government still holds offshore treasury accounts worth \$718 million.

Equatorial Guinea maintains a security agreement with Sao Tome and Principe aimed at guaranteeing the safety of offshore oil rigs, as well as controlling clandestine immigration and drug trafficking, and guaranteeing the security of maritime and air traffic.

The United Nations since 2004 has served as mediator in a dispute between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon over exploration rights in the potentially oil-rich Corisco Bay Islands. The Equatorial Guinean government briefly accused Gabon of providing assistance to the October 2004 coup plotters.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Equatorial Guinea is not an electoral democracy, and the country has never held a credible election. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, whose current seven-year term will end in 2009, holds broad powers and limits public participation in the policy-making process. The 100 members of the unicameral House of People's Representatives are elected to five-year terms but wield little power, and 98 of these seats are held by the ruling PDGE and allied parties. There are 13 registered political parties in Equatorial Guinea, 6 of which are aligned with the PDGE. The activities of the remaining parties, in particular the CPDS, are closely monitored by the government. Despite Obiang's iron grip on the country, members of his Mongomo clan compete with each other for political influence and financial gain.

Equatorial Guinea is considered one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Obiang and members of his inner circle and ethnic group have reaped huge personal profits from the growing oil industry. Equatorial Guinea ranked 151 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Press freedom is constitutionally guaranteed, but the government restricts this right in practice. The 1992 press law authorizes government censorship of all publications, and nearly all print and broadcast media are state run and tightly controlled. A few private newspapers and underground pamphlets are published irregularly. Criticism of the country's leadership is not tolerated, and self-censorship is widespread. Publications that irk the government are banned from the newsstands without explanation. In June 2005, authorities seized 200 copies of the country's sole opposition newspaper, *La Verdad*. Equatorial Guinea has one internet provider affiliated with the government telephone monopoly, and there have been unconfirmed reports that the government monitors citizens using the internet.

The constitution guarantees religious freedom, and government respect for freedom of individual religious practice has generally improved. The government does not restrict academic freedom, though faculty practice self-censorship.

Freedoms of association and assembly are restricted. Authorization must be obtained for any gathering of 10 or more people for purposes deemed political. There are no effective domestic human rights organizations, and the few international nongovernmental organizations operating in Equatorial Guinea are prohibited from promoting or defending human rights. Dozens of opposition activists remain in prison.

Though the constitution provides for the right to organize unions, only the Small Farmers Syndicate has legal recognition. The government has refused to register the Equatorial Guinea Trade Union, whose members carry out their activities in secret. Foreign oil firms have attempted unsuccessfully to reduce government control over the local industry's hiring process.

The judiciary is not independent, and laws on search and seizure—as well as detention—are routinely ignored. Amnesty International and the International Bar Association allege that the trials for the two separate groups of alleged 2004 coup plotters were marked by flagrant human rights abuses, including torture and forced confessions. Civil cases rarely go to trial, and a military tribunal handles cases tied to national security. Prison conditions, especially in the notorious Black Beach prison, are often life-threatening for inmates.

Obiang's Mongomo clan of the majority Fang ethnic group monopolizes political and economic power to the exclusion of other groups. Differences between the Fang and the Bubi are a major source of political tension and often erupt into violence. Fang vigilante groups abuse Bubi citizens with impunity.

All citizens are required to obtain permission to travel abroad from the local police commissioner, and some members of opposition parties have been denied this permission. Those who do travel abroad are sometimes subjected to interrogation on their return.

Constitutional and legal guarantees of equality for women are largely ignored, and violence against women is widespread. Traditional practices including primogeniture and polygamy discriminate against women. Most women lack educational opportunities and the ability to participate in the formal economy or government. Abortion is permitted to preserve the physical health of the mother, but only with spousal or parental authorization.

Eritrea

Population: 4,600,000
Capital: Asmara

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 6
Status: Not Free



Trend Arrow: Eritrea received a downward trend arrow due to heightened legal restrictions on religious minorities.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,4PF	6,4PF	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview: The repressive government of President Isaias Afwerki clamped down further on civil society and grew more isolated internationally in 2006. Leading journalists and democracy activists remained jailed for a fifth year, and Christians who belonged to unrecognized churches were increasingly persecuted. Meanwhile, the government continued its policy of refusing to permit competitive elections. The authorities also expelled a number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and UN peacekeepers, and were accused of supporting Islamist militants in Somalia.

In 1950, after years of Italian occupation, Eritrea was incorporated into Ethiopia. Its independence struggle began in 1962 as a nationalist and Marxist guerrilla war against the Ethiopian government of Emperor Haile Selassie. The seizure of power by a Marxist junta in Ethiopia in 1974 removed the ideological basis of the conflict, and by the time Eritrea finally defeated Ethiopia's northern armies in 1991, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) had discarded Marxism. Internationally recognized independence was achieved in May 1993 after a referendum supervised by the United Nations produced a landslide vote for statehood.

War with Ethiopia broke out in 1998. In May 2000, an Ethiopian military offensive made significant territorial gains. Eritrea signed a truce with Ethiopia in June 2000, and a peace treaty was signed in December 2000. The agreement provided for a UN-led buffer force to be installed along the Eritrean side of the contested border and stipulated that further negotiations should determine the final boundary line. The war had dominated the country's political and economic agenda, reflecting the government's habitual use of real or perceived national security threats to generate popular support and political unity.

In May 2001, 15 senior ruling-party members known as the Group of 15 publicly criticized President Isaias Afwerki and called for "the rule of law and for justice, through peaceful and legal ways and means." Eleven members of the dissident group were arrested for treason in September 2001. Three members who were out of the country

at the time escaped arrest, and one withdrew his support for the group. The small independent media sector was also shut down, and 18 journalists were imprisoned.

In 2005, the Eritrean government clamped down on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) by withdrawing tax exemptions and increasing registration requirements. The government ordered the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to end its operations in the country. Separately, tensions remained high with Ethiopia, as Eritrea objected to the inconclusive results of an internationally mediated solution to its long-standing border dispute. It claimed that the Ethiopians were not respecting the 2000 agreement, and the authorities banned UN helicopter flights in Eritrean airspace, restricted UN ground patrols, and expelled some of the peacekeepers.

Isaias's government added to its restrictions on civil society and isolated itself internationally in 2006. The journalists and democracy activists detained in 2001 remained jailed for a fifth year despite widespread international calls for their release, and competitive elections continued to be blocked. Reports appeared in 2006 of hundreds of followers of various unregistered churches (mostly Protestant) being detained, harassed, and abused. Approximately 2,000 individuals remained in detention at year's end because of their religious affiliation, according to the NGO Compass Direct.

The government also expelled several development NGOs, including Concern Worldwide, Mercy Corps and Acord. Five UN peacekeepers were expelled without cause, and the government was accused of supporting Islamist militants in Somalia. The UN-backed transitional government there, which the militants opposed, was receiving Ethiopian military aid.

The 2006 UN Human Poverty Index ranked Eritrea at 70 out of 102 countries measured. Per capita GDP was \$977. The government is estimated to have the highest level of per capita military spending as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), at 36.4 percent, in the world.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Eritrea is not an electoral democracy. Created in February 1994 as a successor to the EPLF, the Popular Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) maintains complete dominance over the country's political life. Instead of moving toward creating a framework for a democratic political system, the PFDJ has taken significant steps backward since the end of the war with Ethiopia. The 2001 crackdown on those calling for greater political pluralism, and subsequent repressive steps, clearly demonstrate the Eritrean government's authoritarian policies.

In 1994, a 50-member Constitutional Commission was established. A new constitution was adopted in 1997, authorizing "conditional" political pluralism with provisions for a multiparty system. The constitution calls for the 150-seat legislature, the National Assembly, to elect the president from among its members by a majority vote. In 2000, the National Assembly determined that the first general elections would be held in December 2001 and appointed a committee that issued draft regulations governing political parties. The regulations have never been enacted, and independent political parties authorized by the constitution do not exist. National elections have been postponed indefinitely. In 2004, regional assembly elections were conducted, but they were carefully orchestrated by the PFDJ and offered no real choice.

Eritrea has long maintained a reputation for a relatively low level of corruption. In recent years, however, graft appears to have increased somewhat. Eritrea was ranked 93 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Government control over all broadcasting outlets and the repression of independent print media have eliminated the vehicles for dissemination of opposing or alternative views. In its September 2001 crackdown, the government banned all privately owned newspapers while claiming that a parliamentary committee would examine conditions under which they would be permitted to reopen. Journalists arrested in 2001 remain imprisoned, and other journalists have subsequently been arrested. In 2006 the Committee to Protect Journalists listed Eritrea as one of the ten worst countries limiting press freedom in the world. Internet use remains limited, with an estimated 50,000 users in 2005 out of a population of more than four million.

The government places significant limitations on the exercise of religion. It officially recognizes only four faiths—Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Roman Catholicism, and Lutheranism as practiced by the Evangelical Church of Eritrea. Persecution of minority Christian sects has escalated in recent years, particularly against Jehovah's Witnesses, who were stripped of their basic civic rights in 1994, and evangelical and Pentecostal churches. Members of other minority churches have been jailed and tortured or ill-treated to make them abandon their faith. Some Muslims have also been targeted. The U.S. Department of State's 2006 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom cited Eritrea as one of eight top abusers of religious freedom in the world.

Academic freedom is constrained. High school students are required to participate in a highly unpopular policy of obligatory military service, often at a station far from their homes, such as the training camp in Sawa, in the far western part of the country, near the Ethiopian border. The conscription periods are open-ended, and no conscientious objector clause exists. Critics have alleged that such activities constitute forced labor.

The government continues to maintain a hostile attitude toward civil society. Independent NGOs are not allowed, and the legitimate role of human rights defenders is not recognized. In 2005, Eritrea enacted legislation to regulate the operations of all NGOs, requiring them to pay taxes on imported materials, submit project reports every three months, renew their licenses annually, and meet government-established target levels of financial resources. International human rights NGOs are barred from the country, and in 2006 the government expelled three remaining development NGOs.

The civil service, the military, the police, and other essential services have some restrictions on their freedom to form unions. In addition, groups of 20 or more persons seeking to form a union require special approval from the Ministry of Labor. The military conscription of men aged 18 to 45 has also created a scarcity of skilled labor.

A judiciary was formed by decree in 1993. It has never issued rulings significantly at variance with government positions, and constitutional guarantees are often ignored in cases related to state security. The provision of speedy trials is limited by a lack of trained personnel, inadequate funding, and poor infrastructure.

According to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, torture, arbitrary detentions, and political arrests are widespread. Religious persecution and ill-treat-

ment of those trying to avoid military service are increasing, and torture is systematically practiced by the army. Prison conditions are poor, and outside monitors such as the International Committee of the Red Cross have been denied access to detainees.

There have been reports of government and societal discrimination against the Kunama, one of the country's nine ethnic groups. Historically, the Kunama, who reside primarily in the west, have resisted attempts to integrate them into the national society.

Official government policy is supportive of free enterprise, and citizens generally have the freedom to choose their employment, establish private businesses, and operate them without government harassment.

Women played important roles in the guerrilla movement, and the government has worked in favor of improving the status of women. In an effort to encourage broader participation by women in politics, the PFDJ in 1997 named three women to its executive council and 12 women to its central committee. Women participated in the Constitutional Commission, filling almost half of the positions on the 50-member panel, and hold senior government positions, including minister of justice and minister of labor. Approximately 40 percent of all households are headed by women. Equal educational opportunity, equal pay for equal work, and penalties for domestic violence have been codified. However, traditional societal discrimination persists against women in the largely rural and agricultural country.

Estonia

Population: 1,300,000

Capital: Tallinn

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1.2F	1.2F	1.2F	1.2F	1.2F	1.2F	1.2F	1.1F	1.1F	1.1F

Overview:

Although initially expected to win a second term, Arnold Ruutel was defeated in Estonia's 2006 presidential election by a former foreign minister, Toomas Hendrik Iivane. The vote, which three rounds of balloting in parliament failed to resolve, was decided by a simple majority vote in an expanded electoral college that included representatives from local governments. In foreign relations, Estonia voted to ratify the European Union (EU) constitutional treaty. Meanwhile, little progress was made on finalizing an Estonian-Russian border treaty.

Dominated by Sweden in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and annexed by Russia in 1704, Estonia became independent in 1918. Soviet troops occupied the

country during World War II, following a secret protocol in the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact that forcibly incorporated Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the USSR. Under Soviet rule, approximately one-tenth of Estonia's population was deported, executed, or forced to flee abroad. Subsequent Russian immigration substantially altered the country's ethnic composition, with ethnic Estonians constituting just over 61 percent of the population in 1989. Estonia regained its independence with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. It adopted a new constitution in July 1992 and held its first legislative elections in September of the same year. Russian troops withdrew from Estonia in August 1994.

Despite securing the largest percentage of votes in March 1999 parliamentary elections, the left-wing Center Party of Estonia was forced into the opposition when the Reform Party, Pro Patria, and the Moderates (now known as the Estonian Social Democratic Party) formed a center-right majority coalition government. Pro Patria's Mart Laar, who was named prime minister, resigned in January 2002 amid growing infighting among the ruling coalition members; he was replaced by Reform Party leader Siim Kallas.

In March 2003 parliamentary elections, the Center Party and Res Publica, a newly formed right-of-center party, each captured 28 seats in the 101-seat Parliament. Despite his party's having received 4,000 fewer votes than the Center Party, Res Publica head Juhan Parts outmaneuvered Center Party leader Edgar Savisaar to form a centrist ruling coalition with the Reform Party and the People's Union and became prime minister.

In 2005, tensions mounted between Res Publica and the Reform Party, including over Parts's decision to ask President Arnold Ruutel to replace two Reform Party ministers. The crisis came to a head in March, when Parts stepped down as prime minister after parliament passed a vote of no confidence against Justice Minister Ken-Marti Vaher. Vaher had announced plans to implement a quota system for the number of corruption cases to be prosecuted, a move that many in the country regarded as reminiscent of Soviet-era practices. Parts's resignation resulted in the formation of a new cabinet headed by the Reform Party's Andrus Ansip, who assumed the post of prime minister in April.

In the months leading up to the August 2006 election for president, who is selected by members of Parliament, five of the country's main political parties—Pro Patria, Res Publica, the Reform Party, the Social Democratic Party, and the Center Party—began formal consultations to find a joint candidate to succeed Ruutel. After initially putting forward the names of 12 candidates whom they could support, the parties reduced the list to two possibilities: Deputy Parliament Speaker Ene Ergma and former foreign minister Toomas Hendrik Iivask. Ruutel announced that he would stand for the presidency only during a possible subsequent vote by the electoral college (composed of the 101 members of Parliament and 246 local government representatives), which takes place if no candidate receives two-thirds of the vote in Parliament in three rounds of voting. According to most analysts, Ruutel's chance of reelection would be high in the electoral college, since many local government leaders tended to back Ruutel's party, the People's Union. In addition, the Center Party formally declared its support for Ruutel's candidacy in mid-August, further increasing his chances of securing a second term in office.

In an expected outcome, neither Iivask nor Ergma secured the necessary two-

thirds of the vote to become president during the parliamentary rounds of voting held on August 28 and 29; the four parties that had put forward the two candidates had only 65 seats in Parliament. Deputies from the Center Party and the People's Union boycotted the vote. However, in the subsequent vote by the electoral college on September 23, Iivass captured 174 votes, while Ruutel gathered only 162. (A simple majority was required for victory.) The final result was regarded in part as a protest against the parties supporting Ruutel, which had forced the failure of the parliamentary round of voting and the formation of the electoral college. The outcome was also seen as a rejection of former Soviet-era leader Ruutel in favor of the more youthful Iivass, who was raised in the United States.

Estonia's relations with Russia continued to show some signs of strain during 2006. In May 2005, the two countries signed a long-anticipated border treaty. However, in June of that year, the Estonian Parliament introduced an amendment to the agreement referring to the Soviet occupation of Estonia, which provoked Russia to withdraw its signature from the treaty. As of late 2006, little progress had been made on resolving the status of the border treaty.

Estonia achieved two of its long-standing foreign policy goals when it was admitted to NATO in March 2004 and joined the European Union (EU) the same year. In May 2006, Estonia's Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of ratifying the EU Constitutional Treaty. Meanwhile, the government's plan to adopt the euro by January 2007 was delayed indefinitely because of Estonia's growing inflation rate.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Estonia is an electoral democracy. The 1992 constitution established a 101-member, unicameral legislature, the Riigikogu, whose members are elected for four-year terms.

A prime minister serves as head of government, and a president with a five-year term fills the largely ceremonial role of head of state. After the first president was chosen by popular vote in 1992, subsequent presidential elections reverted to parliamentary ballot. The prime minister is chosen by the president and confirmed by Parliament. The 1995, 1999, and 2003 parliamentary elections were free and fair. Political parties are allowed to organize freely, though only citizens may be members. The country's two main right-wing parties, Pro Patria and Res Publica, merged in 2006 to become the Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica. Other political parties in Estonia include the Center Party, Reform Party, Estonian Social Democratic Party, Estonian United People's Party, and the Estonian People's Union.

Corruption is regarded as a relatively minor problem. Estonia is among the world's leaders in the use of e-government. Government decisions are almost instantly available on the internet, where Estonians may comment and exchange views. Estonia was ranked 24 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government respects freedoms of speech and of the press. Three national television stations, including two in private hands, broadcast both Estonian- and Russian-language programs. Dozens of independent newspapers and radio stations offer diverse viewpoints, and Estonia is one of the most internet-friendly countries in the world.

Religious freedom is respected in law and in practice in this predominantly Lutheran country. Estonia has very few restrictions on academic freedom. In March,

the government adopted a plan of action that calls for 60 percent Estonian-language instruction in what are currently Russian-language high schools by 2011.

The constitution guarantees freedoms of assembly and association, and the government upholds those rights. Civil society is vibrant, though many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) still face some financial challenges. The government involves NGOs in the drafting of legislation, and the groups' representatives are invited to testify on pending policies. Workers have the right to organize freely, to strike, and to bargain collectively. While these rights are for the most part respected in practice, the Estonian Confederation of Trade Unions has reported anti-union discrimination in the private sector.

The judiciary is independent and generally free from government interference. Laws prohibiting arbitrary arrest and detention are largely observed, though lengthy pretrial detention periods remain a concern. There have been reports that some police officers physically or verbally abuse suspects. Despite ongoing improvements in the country's prison system, conditions remain poor and many facilities are overcrowded. In September, Parliament passed legislation allowing the use of electronic surveillance devices on convicts released on parole; if successful, the system could be used as an alternative to pretrial and short-term detentions.

Many ethnic Russians arrived in Estonia during the Soviet era and are now regarded as immigrants who must apply for citizenship through a process that includes Estonian-language capability. The use of Estonian is required in certain work environments, including among public sector employees, service personnel, and medical professionals. In December 2006, Amnesty International released a report charging that Estonia's Russian-speaking population faces discrimination in education and employment because of language and citizenship requirements for employment and limited possibilities to study in Russian in institutions of higher education. For the first time since the restoration of Estonia's independence, the number of naturalized citizens has exceeded that of stateless persons: some 141,000 were naturalized as of 2006, while approximately 136,000 residents are noncitizens. Although noncitizens may not participate in national elections, they can vote (but not serve as candidates) in local elections.

Women enjoy the same legal rights as men, but they continue to be underrepresented in senior business positions and do not always receive equal pay for equal work. About one-fifth of the members of Parliament are women. Estonia is a source, transit point, and destination for women trafficked for the purpose of prostitution. In January 2006, the government adopted a national action plan to address trafficking and established a database to provide information on trafficking-related issues.

Ethiopia

Population: 74,800,000

Capital: Addis Ababa

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Partly Free



Trend Arrow: Ethiopia received a downward trend arrow due to government repression of opposition protests.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,5PF	4,4PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF

Overview: In 2006, Ethiopia coped with the aftermath of disputed 2005 parliamentary elections, which saw a significant increase in the opposition vote, but which maintained the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in power. In the wake of the elections, more than 100 opposition leaders and civil society figures went on trial for alleged capital offenses, and the government further restrained the print media. Poor climatic conditions and the prospect of renewed violence with Eritrea over a long-running border dispute were also major issues of concern during the year. Meanwhile, late in the year Ethiopia sent troops into Somalia, which routed Islamist groups that had de facto controlled parts of the country.

One of the few African countries to avoid European colonization during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ethiopia ended a long tradition of monarchy in 1974, when Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown in a Marxist military coup. Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam subsequently established a brutal dictatorship that was overthrown by a coalition of guerrilla groups, with leadership from the northern Tigray region, in 1991. Those groups were spearheaded by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), itself an alliance of five parties, and EPRDF leader Meles Zenawi headed the country's new regime as interim president.

The EPRDF government oversaw a transition period that resulted in the emergence of democratic institutions and a new constitution in 1995. In May 2000 national elections, the EPRDF won a landslide victory over a weak and divided opposition, after which Parliament elected Meles to a second five-year term as prime minister. Opposition parties and some observers criticized the government's conduct of the vote, stating that the polls were subject to government interference, that media coverage was significantly tilted in the EPRDF's favor, and that opposition supporters were subjected to harassment and detention. However, the opposition was able to engage in some criticism of the government in the media during the official election

campaign, and a series of unprecedented public debates were broadcast over state-run radio and television.

A dispute over the border with neighboring Eritrea resulted in open warfare from 1998 until 2000. The Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), a mediating body, was established in the wake of the bloody conflict to draw a new border. It announced its decision in April 2002, laying out a boundary that assigned the town of Badme to Eritrea. The commission's judgments were supposed to be binding on both sides, but Ethiopia has continued to formally reject the EEBC decision.

The May 2005 elections for the powerful lower house of Parliament resulted in a major increase in opposition representation. The EPRDF and its allies won 327 seats, while the two main opposition parties took 161 seats, up from 12 seats in the previous Parliament. The governing coalition also won elections for eight of nine regional parliaments. Notwithstanding their significant gains, opposition parties argued that interference and fraud in the electoral process had deprived them of outright victory. Street demonstrations led to violence, excessive use of government force, and widespread arrests. Security forces killed 42 people and wounded more than 60 others. More than 4,000 people were arrested, including leading opposition figures, who were charged with capital offenses. The government subsequently imposed a ban on demonstrations in the capital and, in September, arrested additional opposition supporters.

In 2006, reverberations from the disputed parliamentary elections continued. Over 100 of the jailed opposition leaders, human rights activists and journalists went on trial in February, charged with crimes ranging from "outrages against the constitution and constitutional order" to treason and attempted genocide. Amnesty International considers the defendants to be "prisoners of conscience, imprisoned solely on account of their nonviolent opinions and activities."

Guerrilla activity by the Oromo Liberation Front and other groups continued amid government intimidation of regime opponents, especially in the Oromo-dominated southern region. Scores of ethnic Oromos, especially students, were arrested in late 2005 and early 2006. The prospect of renewed violence with Eritrea was also a major source of concern during the year. Separately, Ethiopia sent troops into neighboring Somalia to protect its UN-backed transitional government from an Islamist militia that was increasing its control over parts of the country. By year's end these forces were poised to take control of Mogadishu, the Somali capital.

Because Ethiopia's economy depended on a fragile agricultural sector, the threat of drought and famine remained a potential source of instability in 2006.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Ethiopia is not an electoral democracy, but the presence of a significant elected opposition as of 2005 does mark a potential step forward in the development of the country's democratic political culture. In addition to fraud claims by the opposition, the European Union and other observers stated that the 2005 elections did not meet international standards. However, former U.S. president Jimmy Carter, who led a team of observers at the polls, concluded that despite serious problems—including faulty voter-registration lists and significant administrative irregularities—the balloting essentially represented the will of the Ethiopian people.

The 2005 national election was the third since 1991. Previous elections included

polling for local officials (1992), a Constituent Assembly (1994), and both regional and national legislatures (1995 and 2000). These resulted in allegations from opposition parties and civil society groups of major irregularities, including unequal access to media, biased election officials, lack of transparent procedures, a flawed election law, and a partisan National Electoral Board.

The country's legislature is bicameral, consisting of a 108-seat upper house, the House of Federation, and a 547-seat lower house, the House of People's Representatives. The lower house is filled through popular elections, while the upper chamber is selected by the state legislatures. Lawmakers in both houses serve five-year terms. Executive power is vested in a prime minister, who is chosen by the House of People's Representatives. The 1995 constitution has a number of unique features, including a federal structure that grants certain powers and the right of secession to ethnically based states. However, the reality differs from what is constitutionally mandated, as the right of the people to select their government is seriously limited in practice. In 2003, the central government acquired additional powers to intervene in states' affairs when public security is deemed to be at risk.

More than 60 legally recognized political parties are currently active in Ethiopia, but the political scene continues to be dominated by the EPRDF. While some opposition parties argue that their ability to function is seriously impeded by government harassment, observers note that opposition parties have at times failed to comport themselves in a fashion consistent with a democratic political culture.

Ethiopia was ranked 130 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. The government has taken a number of initiatives to limit corruption, but it has also been accused of participating in corrupt practices.

The news media are dominated by state-owned broadcasters and government-oriented newspapers. Opposition and civic organizations criticize slanted news coverage. A number of privately owned newspapers exist, but they struggle to remain financially viable and face intermittent government harassment. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 18 journalists are jailed for their work in Ethiopia. Three are serving lengthy sentences, while others are on trial for antistate crimes, and could face the death penalty if convicted. In its world press freedom review covering 2005, the International Press Institute specifically cites the Ethiopian government as failing to respect press freedom.

Press freedom groups have criticized a draft press law, saying it would further chill the media environment; the law was not enacted in 2005, but, in October 2006, the government said it would reintroduce it. The legislation includes restrictions on who may practice journalism; government-controlled licensing and registration systems; harsh sanctions for violations of the law, including up to five years' imprisonment; excessively broad exceptions to the right to access information held by public authorities; and the establishment of a government-controlled press council with powers to engage in prior censorship. In addition, cross-ownership of newspapers and FM radio stations would not be permitted. In 2006, licenses were awarded to two private FM stations in the capital. There is extremely limited internet usage, confined mainly to major urban areas.

Constitutionally mandated religious freedom is generally respected, although religious tensions have risen in recent years. The Ethiopian Coptic Church is influ-

ential, particularly in the north. In the south there is a large Muslim community, made up mainly of Arabs, Somalis, and Oromos.

Academic freedom is restricted. In recent years, student strikes to protest police brutality and various government policies have led to scores of deaths and injuries and hundreds of arrests. Student grievances include perceived government repression of the Oromo ethnic group. Many students were killed, injured or arrested during protests against the May 2005 election results.

Freedoms of assembly and association are limited. A number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are active, but they are generally reluctant to energetically discuss issues and advocate policies that may bring them into conflict with the government. A draft NGO law, which the government said it would introduce into Parliament during the current session includes a provision permitting the government to arbitrarily close NGOs at any time, and is opposed by much of the civil society sector. In addition, in October the Ministry of Justice announced that it had established a new system enabling it to more closely regulate NGO activities.

According to the Workers' Group of the International Labor Organization (ILO), severe restrictions on the rights of trade unions exist in Ethiopia. The labor laws authorize only one trade union in companies employing more than 20 workers. Government workers in "essential industries," a term that is broadly defined, are not allowed to strike. The Confederation of Ethiopian Unions is under government control. The law governing trade unions states that a trade organization may not act in an overtly political manner. Some union leaders have been removed from their elected offices or forced to leave the country. All unions must be registered, but the government retains the authority to cancel union registration.

The judiciary is officially independent, though there are no significant examples of decisions at variance with government policy. The efficacy of police, judicial, and administrative systems at the local level is highly uneven. Some progress has been made in reducing a significant backlog of court cases. Human Rights Watch issued a report in 2006 stating that the Ethiopian government used intimidation, arbitrary detentions and excessive force in rural areas in the wake of election-related protests. In 2006, the government announced its intention to submit two antiterrorism bills to parliament; one deals with the prevention and control of terrorist acts, while the second seeks to combat money laundering and the provision of financial support to terrorists.

The government has tended to favor Tigrayan ethnic interests in economic and political matters. Politics within the EPRDF have been dominated by the Tigrayan People's Democratic Front. Discrimination against and repression of other groups, especially the Oromo, have been widespread.

The government recently established a women's affairs ministry, and the Parliament has passed legislation designed to protect women's rights in a number of areas. In practice, however, women's rights are routinely violated. Women have traditionally had few land or property rights, especially in rural areas, where there is little opportunity for female employment beyond agricultural labor. Violence against women and social discrimination are reportedly common. Societal norms and limited infrastructure prevent many women from seeking legal redress for their grievances. While illegal, the kidnapping of women and girls for marriage continues in parts of the country. General deficiencies in education exacerbate the problems of rural pov-

erty and gender inequality. According to Save the Children, Ethiopia has one of the lowest rates of school enrollment in sub-Saharan Africa.

Fiji

Population: 800,000

Capital: Suva

Political Rights: 6*

Civil Liberties: 4*

Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: Fiji's political rights rating declined from 4 to 6 and its civil liberties rating from 3 to 4 because of the ouster of Prime Minister Qarase and the establishment of an interim military government by the head of the military in early December, as well as subsequent limits imposed on freedom of assembly and declines in the rule of law.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,3PF	4,3PF	2,3F	6,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	6,4PF

Overview:

General elections in May 2006 elected Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase of the United Fiji Party to another term. Tensions between the military and Qarase intensified subsequently as a result of the government's proposal of controversial bills that would grant amnesty to persons involved in the 2000 coup. Mediation failed, and Commodore Frank Bainimarama, head of the military, ousted Qarase and his government in early December and established an interim military government.

Fiji was colonized by Britain in 1874, and became an independent member of the Commonwealth in 1970. Intense ethnic rivalry between the indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians has become the main source of political and social tension. Indians were first brought to Fiji by the British in the nineteenth century to work on sugar plantations. Today they make up nearly 40 percent of the population and control a large share of the economy. The Indo-Fijian-led Alliance Party ruled until May 1987, when Sitiveni Rabuka, an army officer of Fijian descent, overthrew the government in a military coup. Rabuka led a second coup just four months later to remove the interim government. In 1990, a constitution that guaranteed indigenous Fijian control of government was promulgated, and two years later Rabuka was named prime minister. To regain admission to the Commonwealth, Fiji adopted a new constitution in 1997 that does not guarantee control of government by any ethnic group. The Indo-Fijian Labour Party under Mahendra Chaudhry ruled until it was overthrown by George Speight, an indigenous Fijian, in a May 2000 coup. Speight and his armed

band took the cabinet hostage, and many civilian indigenous Fijians destroyed Indo-Fijian homes and businesses. Speight surrendered after a 56-day standoff. In 2002, he was sentenced to death for treason, though the penalty was later commuted to life in prison. After the hostage crisis, the military installed Laisenia Qarase, a banker and indigenous Fijian of the United Fiji Party (UFP), to lead an interim government. He was subsequently confirmed as prime minister in the 2001 elections. Tensions continued between Qarase's UFP and Chaudhry's Labour Party as Qarase refused to appoint Labour members to his cabinet, in violation of a constitutional requirement that any party receiving more than 10 percent of the seats in Parliament be offered cabinet posts.

General elections were held in May 2006, and the balloting was deemed fair and open. European Union observers reported a large voter turnout and improvements in media coverage, vote counting, and transparency, but said progress was still needed in voter registration and education. The UFP and Labour won the majority of seats, with the UFP taking 36, Labour taking 31, independents taking 2, and the United People's Party (UPP) claiming the remaining 4. Qarase was reelected to another term, Labour agreed to join a multiparty cabinet, and President Ratu Josefa Iloilo appointed Mick Beddoes, president of UPP, as leader of the opposition. However, the prospect of easing political tensions between the UPP and Labour and of ethnic tensions between Fijians and Indo-Fijians quickly disappeared when Qarase demanded that all Labour ministers who oppose his budget resign from the cabinet. Tensions between Qarase and Commodore Frank Bainimarama, the military chief, also intensified in October when Bainimarama asked Qarase to resign or drop several controversial bills that would grant amnesty to persons involved in the May 2000 coup.

Relations have long been strained between Qarase and the outspoken Bainimarama over the government's handling of those involved in the May 2000 coup. Bainimarama wants the government to act more decisively to bring those involved in the May 2000 coup to justice, while Qarase has done little to help the country to heal and recover.

Recovery from the far-reaching effects of the May 2000 coup has been slow and arduous. Poverty and crime are worsening. One-third of the population lives in poverty, child mortality accounts for more than 75 percent of all deaths, and in 2005, rape cases increased by 70 percent. Tens of thousands of Indo-Fijians have left the country in search of a brighter future elsewhere, and hundreds of Fijian soldiers and police officers have departed to find better-paying jobs with foreign armies and security companies. Several hundred suspects of the 2000 coup have been tried and sentenced, but prison sentences are frequently suspended or cut short for unspecified reasons. Several convicted senior officials continued to receive government pay while in prison or were given political appointments once released. Victims of the coup-related looting and attacks continue to wait for government compensation. The most contentious government action for the population and Bainimarama was the government's Reconciliation, Tolerance, and Unity bill, which grants amnesty to persons convicted for the coup, immunity to those not yet charged, and erases the criminal records of those convicted. Widespread public opposition forced the government to introduce an amended version in December 2005 that would grant amnesty only for nonviolent crimes, illegal assembly, and illegal demonstration.

Bainimarama wanted Qarase to remove amnesty from the bill all together. Under intense public pressure, Qarase agreed to withdraw the bill "pending a detailed legal examination" and rejected another one of Bainimarama's demands to dismiss everyone in government who was involved in the 2002 coup.

Mediation and talks between Qarase and Bainimara failed, and on December 5, Bainimarama ousted Qarase in a bloodless military coup. Bainimarama became head of the interim military government and appointed Dr. Jona Senilagakali, a former military doctor, as the caretaker prime minister. In subsequent weeks, Bainimarama dismissed the election supervisor and removed many senior civil servants from their posts and replaced the heads of many state-owned corporations in a "clean-up campaign" to address alleged incompetence and corruption. Initially, public sentiment was mixed; while Fijians desire the return of democratic processes, political stability, and economic recovery, they also sympathize with Bainimarama's frustration with government inaction regarding the 2000 coup and the country's persistent ethnic and political tensions. Increasing worries about the political and economic ramifications of the coup appear to have turned public opinion against Bainarama and the coup subsequently.

Bainimarama suspended certain civil rights, including freedoms of assembly and expression, and some journalists reported harassment by the military. He also warned Qarase not to return to the capital and refused to meet with the Great Council of Chiefs, which has been critical of the military takeover along with the Methodist Church. The military arrested pro-democracy activists in a peaceful protest in the capital, and six others were rounded up by the police in a midnight raid.

Toward the end of December, Bainimarama predicted the formation of an interim government by February 2007 and stated that he would consider returning executive authority to deposed President Ratu Josefa Iloilo, while underscoring that the military would clean up the government before returning it to civilian rule. Meanwhile, tourism plummeted, the Commonwealth suspended Fiji's membership, international donors cut off aid, and many countries cut military ties with Fiji.

On other fronts, the government in December 2005 rejected a visa application for Reverend Sun Myung Moon to visit Fiji due to strong opposition from local church leaders. In the same month, the Great Council of Chiefs issued a proposal to codify Fijian customs and traditions, which has received mixed reaction from the public. The government in September 2006 introduced another measure to expand state control of the media. The plan would create a Broadcast Licensing Authority to regulate programming, and the chair and members of the authority would be appointed by the minister of information.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Due primarily to the latest military coup, Fiji is not an electoral democracy. Under the constitutional system, the bicameral Parliament consists of the 32-seat Senate and the 71-seat House of Representatives. Senators are appointed by the president on the recommendation of the traditional Great Council of Chiefs. House members are elected for five-year terms, with 25 seats open to all races and ethnicities, 23 reserved for indigenous Fijians, 19 for Indo-Fijians, 3 for other ethnic groups (mainly citizens of European and East Asian extraction), and 1 for voters on outlying Rotuma Island. Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase of the UFP came to power on an interim basis after

the May 2000 coup, and was confirmed in office in the 2001 elections. President Ratu Josefa Iloilo is the head of state and commander-in-chief of the military. The president is appointed to a five-year term by the Great Council of Chiefs in consultation with the prime minister. The 1997 constitution ended the previous charter's guarantee of a parliamentary majority for indigenous Fijians, but various laws and policies give preferential treatment to indigenous Fijians and discriminate against other groups. The two leading political parties are largely ethnic-based: indigenous Fijians support the UFP; Indo-Fijians support the Labour Party. The Alternative Vote system was introduced in 1998 to foster moderation in the country's ethnic-based politics. Each voter casts two ballots: one is for a "communal" constituency based on ethnicity, and the other is for an "open" constituency based on geography. The May 2006 elections were considered free and fair.

Official corruption and abuses are widespread, and government reform pledges have not produced significant results. Fiji was not included in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government has considerable authority to censor the media and restrict freedom of speech. The Television Act grants the government powers to control programming content. The Press Correction Act authorizes officials to arrest anyone who publishes "malicious" material and to order a publication to print a correcting statement to an allegedly false or distorted article. A media bill proposed in September 2006 that would allow additional state control of media content and conduct remained shelved due to strong public opposition. In July 2006, the government approved a bill to provide public television broadcasting, in addition to existing public radio broadcasting. The government-owned Fiji Broadcasting Corporation operates four radio stations and broadcasts in English, Fijian, and Hindustani. In 2005, the government rejected Beijing's petition for a Chinese-language television license. The government does not control access to the internet. Access is primarily limited by cost and connectivity constraints outside the capital. Following the December coup, journalists reported harassment by the military, and the editor in chief of *The Daily Post* was arrested; the government holds majority shares of the newspaper, which took a critical stance toward the military takeover.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion. Religious affiliation largely runs along ethnic lines; indigenous Fijians are Christians and Indo-Fijians are mostly Hindus. The number of attacks on Hindu and Muslim places of worship has increased in recent years. The Methodist Church holds considerable political influence. Its current leader has called for a more restrained role for his church in politics, and the World Council of Churches has also criticized Fiji's Methodist Church for being too politically involved in national affairs.

Academic freedom is generally respected and the government provides eight years of free education. However, the country's education system suffers from lack of funding, facilities, and qualified personnel at all levels as well as increasing political intervention.

Freedoms of assembly and association are guaranteed in the constitution, but organizers must obtain government permission for gatherings, and the Emergency Powers Act of 1998 allows Parliament to censor the press, ban public meetings, authorize searches without warrants, and seize private property during a declared state of emergency. Workers can organize, and several trade unions exist in the country.

Democracy advocates and the political opposition demonstrated concern about the suppression of peaceful public protests after the December 2006 coup.

The judiciary is independent, and trials are generally free and fair. Many politicians and soldiers have been found guilty of treason or other crimes committed during and after the May 2000 coup. However, a lack of resources has created a severe backlog for court hearings. Criminal suspects are frequently held for long periods before trial, and prisons are severely overcrowded, with poor sanitary and living conditions. The high court ordered the release of two robbery suspects in October 2004 because of poor prison conditions. The government announced plans in 2005 to build a new prison facility, but funds have yet to be allocated.

Political, economic, and social debates are frequently divided along ethnic lines, and race-based discrimination is pervasive. The main rivalry is between the indigenous Fijians, who dominate government and the armed forces, and the Indo-Fijians, who control much of the economy. Indigenous Fijians receive preferential treatment in education, housing, land acquisition, and other areas, and some jobs are not open to nonindigenous Fijians. In June 2006, the human rights commission found that the government's affirmative action program under the Social Justice Act of 2001 violates the constitution. In August 2006, the government created a commission to investigate allegations of discrimination in the civil service. Discrimination and political and economic troubles have caused more than 120,000 Indo-Fijians to leave Fiji since the late 1980s. Part of the resulting void has been filled by legal and illegal migrants from mainland China, who now make up about 1 percent of the population and control 5 percent of the economy. Their growing economic strength has made them new targets of indigenous Fijian resentment and attacks. Muslims, too, are under increasing pressure to defend their religion and identity, and have had to publicly deny allegations that Muslim students in Fiji are tied to terrorists.

Discrimination and violence against women are widespread. The number of rape, child abuse, and incest cases continues to rise. Women's groups claim that many offenders use traditional reconciliation mechanisms to avoid felony charges, and bribery to delay police action. Women are not well represented in government and leadership positions, and do not enjoy equal pay. There have been reports of human trafficking involving Chinese women. Violence against homosexuals is also reported to be on the rise. The government asserts that legal protections against discrimination do not include homosexuality.

Finland

Population: 5,300,000

Capital: Helsinki

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In January 2006, Tarja Halonen of the Social Democratic Party was reelected for a second six-year term as president of Finland. From July through December 2006, Finland held the presidency of the Council of the European Union. In September, Finland agreed to contribute 200 troops to a UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon.

Finland was ruled by Sweden until the early eighteenth century and then became a grand duchy of Russia until independence in 1917. The country is traditionally neutral, but its army has enjoyed broad popular support ever since it fended off a Soviet invasion during World War II. Finland joined the European Union in 1995 after its friendship treaty with the Soviet Union became void. It has been an enthusiastic member-state and is the only Nordic country to have adopted the euro currency.

In the February 2000 presidential election, Tarja Halonen, of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), was chosen as the country's first woman president. She defeated four other female candidates—in a total field of seven—from across the political spectrum.

In 2003, the Center Party came to power after winning 55 seats in parliamentary elections. The second-largest party, the SDP, had led the ruling coalition since 1995. It remained part of the new ruling coalition, which also included the Center Party and the Swedish People's Party, representing the Swedish-speaking minority. Anneli Jaatteenmaki replaced the SDP's Paavo Lipponen as prime minister, becoming the first woman to hold the post. However, just two months after she was chosen, Jaatteenmaki stepped down when it was alleged that she had leaked information from classified foreign policy documents and then lied about having done so. After Jaatteenmaki's resignation, Matti Vanhanen of the Center Party succeeded her.

A Helsinki court unanimously acquitted Jaatteenmaki of disclosing official secrets in March 2004. However, Martti Manninen, a presidential aide who had given her the documents, was found guilty of violating the Official Secrets Act and fined 3,600 euros. Jaatteenmaki subsequently drew the most votes in the Finnish elections for the European Parliament.

Finland emerged as a leader of the smaller states within the EU during the 2003 drafting of the EU constitution. Unlike in other EU member-states, the proposed

constitution was uncontroversial in Finland, and Prime Minister Vanhanen ruled out a possible referendum on the treaty in August 2004.

In 2006, the World Economic Forum ranked the Finnish economy as the second most competitive in the world after Switzerland's. Finland was ranked number one for educational and training institutions by the same index. All five Nordic countries—Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, and Norway—were in the top 15 positions.

On January 29, 2006, Tarja Halonen of the SDP was reelected for a second term as president. She defeated National Coalition Party candidate Sauli Niinisto in a second-round vote. The runoff took place after none of the candidates received more than half of the votes in the first round on January 15.

On July 1, 2006, Finland began its six-month presidency of the Council of the European Union. Major events during the presidency included the Sixth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM 6) in Helsinki. The presidency had a pacifying effect on the run-up to the 2007 Finnish parliamentary elections, as candidates were reluctant to raise inflammatory issues while in the European spotlight.

In 2006, Finns continued to debate the proposal of abandoning their traditional neutrality and seeking membership in NATO, an issue of particular relevance given the recent inclusion of the nearby Baltic states—Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia—in the alliance. Despite its past isolationism, Finland in September agreed to participate in the renewed UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) crisis management operation, sending 200 troops to the troubled region. The decision was especially controversial given the fact that an Israeli bombing had killed a Finnish peacekeeper in the town of Khiam in July.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Finland is an electoral democracy. The prime minister has responsibility for running the government. The president, whose role is mainly ceremonial, is directly elected for a six-year term. The president appoints the prime minister and the deputy prime minister from the majority party or coalition after elections. The selection must be approved by the Parliament.

Representatives in the 200-seat unicameral Parliament, the Eduskunta, are elected to four-year terms. The Aland Islands—an autonomous region located off the southwestern coast of Finland whose inhabitants speak Swedish—have their own 29-seat Parliament and have 1 seat in the national legislature. The indigenous Saami of northern Finland also have their own Parliament.

The two main winners of the March 2003 parliamentary elections were the Center Party, with 24.7 percent of the vote, and the SDP, with 24.5 percent. Other parties include the National Coalition (18.5 percent), the Left Alliance (9.9 percent), the Green League (8.0 percent), the Christian Democrats (5.3 percent), the Swedish People's Party (4.6 percent), and the True Finns (1.6 percent).

Since 2000, Finland has been ranked as the country with the lowest level of perceived corruption in Transparency International's annual Corruption Perceptions Index. In May 2005, the Parliament passed a law criminalizing the acceptance of a bribe.

Finnish law provides for freedom of speech, which is also respected in practice. Finland has a large variety of newspapers and magazines, grants the right to publish printed material to every citizen, and protects the right to reply to public criticism. Newspapers are privately owned but publicly subsidized, and many are controlled

by or support a particular political party. In February 2004, the Eduskunta substantially liberalized a controversial media law that had placed burdensome restrictions on internet publishers and service providers. As a result, internet traffic logging is no longer required, and online discussion groups are beyond the scope of the law. However, web publications must name a responsible editor in chief and archive published material for at least 21 days.

Finns enjoy freedom of religion. The Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church are both state churches and receive public money from income taxes, but citizens may exempt themselves from contributing to those funds. Other religious groups are eligible for tax relief if they register and are recognized by the government. The government officially recognizes 55 religious groups. Religious education is part of the curriculum in all secondary public schools, but students may opt out of such classes in favor of more general instruction in ethics. The government respects academic freedom, and privacy rights are also protected. In June 2005, Kaj-Erik Relander, the former chief executive of the telecommunications operator Sonera, was convicted of abusing communications privacy laws by ordering the illegal scrutiny of staff telephone calls.

Freedoms of association and assembly are respected in law and in practice. Workers have the right to organize, bargain collectively, and strike. Approximately 75 percent of workers belong to trade unions.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, which consists of the Supreme Court, the supreme administrative court, and the lower courts. The president appoints Supreme Court judges, who in turn appoint the lower court judges. The Ministry of the Interior controls police and Frontier Guard forces. Ethnic minorities and asylum seekers report occasional police discrimination, and according to the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Finland was found to be in violation of Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms on six occasions in 2005.

The rights of ethnic and religious minorities are protected in Finland. The criminal code covers ethnic agitation, and penalizes anyone who threatens a racial, national, ethnic or religious group. Since 1991, the indigenous Saami, who make up less than 1 percent of the population, have been heard in the Eduskunta on relevant matters. The constitution guarantees the Saami cultural autonomy and the right to pursue their traditional livelihoods, which include fishing and reindeer herding. Their language and culture are also protected through public financial support. However, representatives of the community have complained that they cannot exercise their rights in practice and that they do not have the right to self-determination with respect to land use. While Roma (Gypsies) also make up a very small percentage of the population, they are more widely disadvantaged and marginalized.

In May 2004, a new Aliens' Act streamlined the procedures for asylum and immigration applications as well as for work and residency permits. The new law also allowed for the granting of residency permits for individual humane reasons. Despite those changes, the number of asylum approvals has declined in recent years. Although it has experienced some racial tensions, Finland is the only major European country that has not produced a right-wing anti-immigrant political party.

Women enjoy equal rights in Finland. In 1906, Finland became the first country in Europe to grant women the vote and the first in the world to allow women to be-

come electoral candidates. In the current Parliament, 38 percent of the delegates are women, as are 8 of the 18 government ministers. However, women earn only about 80 percent as much as men of the same age, education, and profession. Women are generally employed in lower-paid occupations due to a deeply entrenched idea of "men's jobs" and "women's jobs." According to the U.S. State Department's 2006 Human Rights report, domestic violence toward women is high in Finland as compared to other countries in the region.

Finland is both a destination and a transit country for trafficked people. In August 2004, new legislation came into force, making trafficking in persons a criminal offense. In July 2006, anti-trafficking laws led to prosecution for the first time ever, when 7 men and a woman were caught trafficking 15 Estonian women. In March 2005, the Finnish government unveiled a National Action Plan to combat trafficking. It established a number of services for victims, including a national assistance coordinator, temporary residences, a witness protection program, and legal and psychological counseling. A large-scale trafficking ring from India was uncovered in Helsinki in 2006, as numbers of people being trafficked from India to Finland rose significantly that summer.

France

Population: 61,200,000

Capital: Paris

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

The French government weakened over the course of 2006, likely delaying any major initiatives until after presidential and parliamentary elections in mid-2007. A major reform of the labor market failed in the face of massive protests by students and workers, undermining the government of Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin. Attention turned later in the year to expected contenders in the 2007 presidential election.

After the French Revolution of 1789, republics alternated with Bonapartist and Bourbon monarchies until the creation of the Third Republic in 1871. Invaded and defeated by Germany in World War II, France was split into an occupied northern section and the collaborationist Vichy regime in the south. The Fourth Republic was established after the war, but eventually fell victim to domestic political turbulence

and a series of colonial setbacks. In 1958, Charles de Gaulle, Free France's wartime leader, returned to create the strong presidential system of the Fifth Republic, which stands today.

Jacques Chirac was first elected president in 1995. In the first round of the May 2002 presidential election, it was expected that he and Lionel Jospin, the prime minister and head of the rival center-left Socialist Party (PS), would receive the most votes and move to the second round. However, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the head of the far-right, xenophobic National Front, stunned France and the world by receiving more votes than Jospin. Chirac defeated Le Pen overwhelmingly in the second round, and in the subsequent June parliamentary elections, the newly created Union for a Presidential Majority (UMP), later renamed the Union for a Popular Movement, won a comfortable majority of seats in Parliament for Chirac.

In early 2003, France joined Russia, another permanent veto-holder on the United Nations Security Council, to block UN authorization for the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, which nevertheless proceeded in March of that year. France's stance severely strained its relations with the United States, but bolstered Chirac's popularity at home. Since the invasion, Chirac has worked to strengthen the European Union (EU) as a counterweight to U.S. power.

A strong EU foreign policy was a key French goal in the drafting of a new constitution for the bloc. Both the UMP and the PS backed the charter, giving it a broad base of support among the political leadership. However, in 2005, French voters dealt a blow to their country's standing in the union by rejecting the proposed constitution in a referendum. The "no" vote by France, a founding member of the EU, helped to suspend progress on the constitution for well over a year.

Economic concerns had been central to France's rejection of the draft constitution. After the UMP's victory in the 2002 national elections, a weak economy has caused it to suffer in subsequent voting, including polls for regional councils and for the European Parliament in 2004. Though the EU constitution did not deal extensively with the economy, it kindled fears of immigration from poorer EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe. Voters also linked the constitution to the question of Turkish membership, which many opposed, and to a directive that would make it easier for workers from other EU countries to take certain service sector jobs in France.

France had long been one of the most dominant members of the EU, and its failure to win support for the constitution among its own people caused great political reverberations. Amid talk of "no more politics as usual," Chirac finally replaced Jean-Pierre Raffarin as prime minister. His unexpected choice to fill the post was Dominique de Villepin, an aristocratic former interior minister and foreign minister. De Villepin enjoyed a degree of popularity during his first few months on the job, saying he would focus on the economy and unemployment. Growth in the gross domestic product remained slow, however: 1.2 percent in 2005, and 2.0 percent in 2006.

In late 2005, France was traumatized by weeks of ethnic upheaval. The accidental deaths of two teenagers of North African descent, electrocuted in a power substation while fleeing police, touched off weeks of riots. The violence caused massive property damage, especially car-burnings, as well as at least one death and many injuries. Most of the rioters were youths descended from immigrants from North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. Despite their French birth and citizenship, many reported economic discrimination and harassment by police in recent anticrime opera-

tions. The violence caused the government to invoke a state of emergency and a rarely used curfew law. It also provoked a major discussion about the failure to fully integrate minorities into French society.

Economic anxiety returned to the fore in 2006, when the government proposed legislation creating a new form of job contract, known as the *contrat premiere embauche*, or CPE. The reform would have made it easier to lay off young workers in their first two years of private sector employment. It provoked massive demonstrations led by students and trade unionists, drawing well over a million people across the country on March 28 and April 4. The contract law was eventually withdrawn by the government, and both Chirac and de Villepin suffered politically as a result.

In 2006, the so-called Clearstream scandal further weakened the government. The complex affair included accusations that de Villepin had used government intelligence assets to falsely connect a rival within the UMP, Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, and other politicians to offshore bank accounts.

With the president and prime minister in decline, French voters' attention turned to contenders for the 2007 presidential election. The likely UMP candidate was Sarkozy, the party leader. He suffered in popularity during the riots of late 2005, having been associated with the harsh policing tactics that helped inspire them. However, many voters reportedly admired his forthright talk about the need for change in France. In November, the Socialist Party chose Segolene Royal as its presidential candidate, marking the first woman to be so chosen by one of the major political parties.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: France is an electoral democracy. The president is elected for a five-year term, reduced from seven years as of the 2002 election. Members of the key house of Parliament, the 577-seat National Assembly, are also elected to five-year terms; the upper house, the 321-seat Senate, is an indirectly elected body. The prime minister must be able to command a majority in Parliament. For most of the Fifth Republic's history, the president and prime minister have been of the same party, and the president has been the most powerful figure in the country. However, there have been several periods, such as 1997-2002, in which the president and prime minister belonged to rival parties. In such circumstances, the prime minister has the dominant role in domestic affairs, while the president largely guides foreign policy.

Parties organize and compete on a free and fair basis. Political parties with significant support range from the largely unreformed French Communist Party on the left to the anti-immigrant and anti-EU National Front on the right. France remains a relatively unitary state, with some administrative powers devolved to regions and smaller prefectures, but with key decisions made in Paris.

President Jacques Chirac has used his immunity as head of state to avoid prosecution on corruption allegations stemming from his time as mayor of Paris. However, his protege, Alain Juppe, was convicted in 2004 of allowing UMP party workers to be paid out of Paris's municipal treasury when he was the city's treasurer and Chirac was its mayor. The more recent Clearstream affair (see above) has also tarnished the French political class. Members of the French elite, trained in a small number of prestigious schools, often move between politics and business, increas-

ing opportunities for corruption. France was ranked 18 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The French media operate freely and represent a wide range of political opinion. Though an 1881 law forbids "offending" various personages, including the president and foreign heads of state, the press remains lively and critical. However, the media are not entirely free of harassment. Journalists covering events involving the National Front have been attacked by supporters of the party. Two reporters were arrested on December 30, 2002, after filming the deportation of a Malian immigrant, and there was a failed attempt to murder a journalist working for the newspaper *Le Figaro* in Corsica in 2003. Members of the press were also assaulted in the riots of November 2005. Internet access is unrestricted in France.

Freedom of religion is protected by the constitution, and strong antidefamation laws prohibit religiously motivated attacks. Not all branches of the Church of Scientology and the Jehovah's Witnesses are recognized as religious associations for tax purposes. A law that took effect in 2004 bans "ostentatious" religious symbols in schools. Widely believed to be aimed at the *hijab*, a headscarf worn by Muslim women and girls, the controversial ban was supported by most voters. Militants kidnapped two French journalists in Iraq in August 2004, demanding that the ban be overturned; the journalists were freed in December that year, but the law remained in place. Academic freedom is generally respected by French authorities.

In October 2006, the National Assembly passed legislation making it illegal to deny that Turkey committed genocide against the Armenians during World War I. The offense would be punishable by up to a year in prison and a fine of 45,000 euros (US\$56,000). However, the bill would not take effect until signed by the president, who had expressed opposition. A number of European countries forbid denial of the Nazi genocide of the Jews during World War II, but the French bill was the first of its kind to address other historical events, raising questions about freedom of speech and historical research.

Freedoms of assembly and association are respected. Civic organizations and nongovernmental organizations can operate freely. Trade unions are strong in France, although membership has declined over the past two decades.

France has a well-qualified judiciary, and the rule of law is firmly established. The legal system is based on Roman law, and French citizens are for the most part treated equally. However, France's antiterrorism campaign has included surveillance of mosques, and apparently unrelated government raids, such as those involving tax violations, have appeared to target places where Muslims in particular are found, like *halal* butcher shops. Terrorism suspects can be detained for up to four days without being charged. France is more willing than other European countries to deport radical Muslim clerics for speech that is considered incitement to extremism or terrorism. The police are frequently criticized for aggressiveness in random personal checks, which often target youths of North African and African descent. Such police checks have deepened resentment between minorities and the authorities. A Council of Europe delegation reported in 2004 that French prisons suffer from overcrowding and poor conditions, though no prisoner maltreatment was found.

The violence of late 2005 has fueled concerns about Arab and black immigration and the failure of integration policies in France. The rise of the National Front has tempted the government to tighten immigration and asylum rules, which are per-

ceived to be abused by economic migrants. In 2005, the government supported the beginning of talks on Turkish accession to the European Union, but there is strong popular opposition in France to Turkish membership and the influx of Muslim migrants it could bring. Separately, the dispute over Corsican autonomy continues. In December 2001, the government devolved some legislative powers to the island and allowed teaching in the Corsican language in public schools. However, voters on the island, which hosts a sometimes violent separatist movement, rejected a government proposal for devolution of more authority to local Corsican institutions in June 2003.

Gender equality is protected in France, and a law governing the 2002 legislative elections threatened to reduce public funding for political parties whose candidate lists for the National Assembly consisted of more men than women. No party fully complied; women made up 37 percent of the list run by the Socialists, who had introduced the parity bill. Despite equal legal status and well-established social liberty, women earn about three-quarters of what men earn. The rights of homosexuals are protected in France, and a type of nonmarriage civil union, the PACS, or civil solidarity pact, is recognized.

Gabon

Population: 1,400,000

Capital: Libreville

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	6,4PF	6,4PF

Overview:

President Omar Bongo, Africa's longest-serving ruler, continues to exercise broad powers and authority. However, opposition parties struck a deal with the government on a package of electoral reforms that are scheduled to be implemented before communal elections in 2007. The ruling party won a majority in the December 2006 legislative elections that were seen as generally free and fair. Gabon's dwindling oil reserves will be exhausted within 30 years, and there is pressure on the government to diversify the economy.

Gabon gained independence from France in 1960. President Omar Bongo declared the country a one-party state in 1968. France maintains a military contingent in Gabon and has intervened twice to preserve Bongo's regime. In 1990, protests prompted by economic hardship forced Bongo to accept a conference that opposi-

tion leaders hoped would promote a peaceful democratic transition. However, Bongo retained power in a rigged 1993 presidential election. The 1996 parliamentary elections were also seriously flawed.

Following opposition gains in the 1996 local government polls, including mayoral victories in Libreville and several other major cities, the government transferred key electoral functions from the electoral commission to the Interior Ministry. Bongo's electoral victory in 1998, with 61 percent of the vote, followed a campaign that made profligate use of state resources and state media. The polling, partially boycotted by the opposition, was marked by serious irregularities.

Another partial opposition boycott, low voter turnout, and government interference in the polls helped assure victory for the ruling Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG) in the December 2001 legislative elections. The next year's legislative by-elections, held to fill seats for which the 2001 results had been nullified, left the PDG and allied parties with 107 seats in the National Assembly, compared with 13 held by the opposition. In the 2003 senatorial elections, municipal and regional government officials elected 91 senators, all from the PDG, to six-year terms. There were widespread reports of irregularities, and the elections were considered neither free nor fair.

The National Assembly in 2003 removed a 1997 constitutional amendment that had imposed term limits on the presidency, and replaced the country's runoff system with a single round of voting in all elections. The changes were resisted by most opposition parties and widely viewed as an attempt to make Bongo president for life. Many observers also theorized that he was grooming his son, Ali Bongo Ondimba, to succeed him. The younger Bongo has been defense minister since 1999.

After results of a census released in 2005 showed that the population had grown by 50 percent from 1993 to 2003, opposition leaders and independent experts accused the government of inflating the figures in order to falsify the electoral register and manipulate economic data to qualify for increased aid.

The 2005 presidential election occurred over two days, with security forces voting on November 25 and the public on November 27, an arrangement criticized by the opposition for increasing opportunities for fraud. Though generally peaceful, the election was marred by irregularities, including incomplete and inaccurate electoral lists, the abuse of government resources, and unequal access to the media. The government claimed a voter turnout of over 63 percent, though other observers reported that actual participation may have been as low as 30 percent. Official results gave Bongo approximately 79 percent of the vote. Pierre Mamboundou of the Union for Gabonese People (UPG) won 14 percent, with former cabinet minister Zacharie Myboto coming in third. The government refused to register Myboto's newly created party, the Gabonese Union for Democracy and Development (UGDD), forcing him to run as an independent.

Mamboundou challenged the result publicly, and police used tear gas and batons to disperse a demonstration by his supporters in December 2005. Fourteen opposition members were among the 23 supporters and bystanders arrested and charged with vandalism.

In May 2006, the government reached agreement with opposition parties, including the UPG and the newly registered UGDD, on an electoral reform package that would introduce a single ballot paper, restore the two-round runoff system, provide equal access to state media for opposition political parties, and establish a

permanent national electoral commission in time for 2007 communal elections. Legislative elections were held in December 2006 with the PDG taking 81 of the 120 seats. Parties allied to the PDG took another 16. Opposition party and independent candidates won the remaining seats, including UPG leader Mamboundu. The elections were judged to be credible, and were seen as an improvement over the flawed 2005 presidential contest.

Three decades of autocratic and corrupt rule have made Bongo one of the world's richest men, although some money has trickled down to rural areas and contributed to higher education standards. New oil discoveries and higher world prices in recent years have provided a temporary boost to Gabon's economy. Oil income currently accounts for 60 percent of all government revenue, but oil reserves are expected to be depleted within 30 years. To secure a standby agreement signed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in September 2005, Gabon agreed to a series of economic reforms, including the privatization of its state-owned companies and the reduction of public sector employment and salary growth.

The United Nations has since 2004 served as mediator in a dispute between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon over exploration rights in the potentially oil-rich Corisco Bay Islands. During 2006, allegations surfaced that senior Gabonese officials had attempted to sell at least one of the islands to Equatorial Guinea for personal gain.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Gabon is not an electoral democracy. However, the December 2006 legislative elections were as credible as, and an improvement over, past elections, including the flawed November 2005 presidential election. Bongo's WIDE presidential prerogatives include powers to veto legislation, dissolve the legislature, call new elections, and issue decrees that have the force of law. He appoints all cabinet ministers and heads of state-owned corporations.

Gabon's bicameral legislature consists of a Senate with 91 seats and a lower chamber, the National Assembly, with 120. Senators are elected to six-year terms by regional and municipal government officials. National Assembly members are elected by direct popular vote to serve five-year terms. National Assembly elections were held in December 2006, with the PDG and allied parties taking 97 seats. Senate elections are scheduled for early 2009.

Bongo's PDG has held power continuously since its creation in 1968, and is the only party with national reach. Of 35 registered parties, 29 belong to the presidential majority. Freedom to form and join political parties is generally respected, but civil servants face harassment and potential discrimination if they affiliate with opposition groups.

Corruption is widespread in Gabon. A special government ministry to fight corruption was established in 2003, but it has yet to issue a report or take action against corrupt officials. Gabon was ranked 90 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Press freedom is guaranteed in law but often restricted in practice. State censorship of the press continued in 2006, with publications printed outside of the country, usually in Cameroon, subject to review before distribution. Journalists practice self-censorship, and the state is authorized to criminalize civil libel suits. Journalists are particularly careful about criticizing the president or members of his family. Norbert

Ngoua Mezui, founder and editor of an independent newspaper, *Nku'u Le Messenger*, was arrested in October and made to serve a 21-day sentence on criminal defamation charges. The case stemmed from an original sentence he had received in 2003 for an article on Equatorial Guinea's alleged payment of the salaries of high-ranking Gabonese officials. Mezui's arrest followed weeks of debate over the so-called Mbianne affair, which involved the possible sale of one of the Corisco Bay Islands to Equatorial Guinea. Another publication, *Echos du Nord*, was suspended during the year for "unethical" reporting after publishing a story about infighting within the government. Despite the media controls, Gabon does not limit access to the internet.

Religious freedom is enshrined in the constitution and generally upheld by authorities. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

The rights of assembly and association are guaranteed, but not always respected. During the 2005 presidential campaign, the government banned all marches by political groups except those allied with President Bongo's campaign. Nongovernmental organizations operate openly, but local human rights groups are weak and not entirely independent. Virtually the entire formal private sector workforce is unionized. Collective bargaining is allowed by industry, not by firm.

The judiciary is not independent, but rights to legal counsel and a public criminal trial are generally respected. Judges may deliver summary verdicts, and torture is sometimes used to produce confessions. Prison conditions are marked by beatings and insufficient food, water, and medical care. Arbitrary arrest and long periods of pretrial detention are common.

While no legal restrictions on travel exist, interference by the authorities occurs regularly. Discrimination against African immigrants, including harassment by security forces and arbitrary detention, is a problem. Though equal under the law, most of Gabon's several thousand indigenous Pygmies live in extreme poverty in isolated forest communities without access to government services, and are often exploited as cheap labor by other ethnic groups.

Gabon has been criticized for the exploitation of thousands of child laborers who are sent from other Central or West African countries to work as domestic servants. The government has cooperated with international organizations to fight child trafficking but says it lacks sufficient funds and resources to tackle the problem.

Legal protections for women include equal-access laws for education, business, and investment, but these laws favor educated women in urban areas. Women continue to face legal and cultural discrimination, however, particularly in rural areas, and domestic violence is reportedly widespread. Rape is illegal, but cases are seldom prosecuted. Women have no property rights in common-law marriages, which are practiced widely. Despite legal protections, trafficking in women and children, especially girls, continues to occur. Young girls from Benin and Togo often work as domestic servants and are prey to sexual harassment and other forms of abuse. Abortion is prohibited.

↓ The Gambia

Population: 1,500,000
Capital: Banjul

Political Rights: 5
Civil Liberties: 4
Status: Partly Free



Trend Arrow: The Gambia received a downward trend arrow due to a crackdown on the media following a coup attempt.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,6NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	5,5PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF

Overview: A coup attempt in March raised fears of political instability in The Gambia. Over 20 suspects were indicted during the year. The government, through the feared National Intelligence Agency (NIA), cracked down on the press in the aftermath of the attempted coup, arresting several prominent local journalists and shuttering a leading private paper. Several journalists were held incommunicado, while the NIA refused to disclose their locations or the accusations against them. The Gambia held a presidential election in September, in which President Yahya Jammeh won reelection with 67 percent of the vote.

After gaining independence from Britain in 1965, The Gambia functioned as an electoral democracy under President Sir Dawda Jawara and his People's Progressive Party for almost 30 years. A 1981 coup by leftist soldiers was reversed by intervention from Senegal, which borders The Gambia on three sides. The two countries formed the Confederation of Senegambia a year later, but it was dissolved in 1989. Senegal declined to rescue the Jawara government again when Lieutenant Yahya Jammeh spearheaded a military coup in 1994. The leaders of the coup denounced the ousted government's alleged corruption, promising transparency, accountability, and early elections. Instead, they quickly imposed draconian decrees curtailing civil and political rights and the free media. A new constitution, adopted by a closely controlled 1996 referendum, allowed Jammeh to transform his military dictatorship into a nominally civilian administration.

Jammeh secured a victory in the October 2001 presidential poll, defeating opposition leader Ousainou Darboe, a human rights lawyer who headed a three-party opposition coalition, by 53 percent of the vote to 33 percent. Three other candidates won a combined total of 14 percent.

In the January 2002 National Assembly elections, the ruling Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC) won all but three seats. The polls showed signs of improvement over the previous, highly flawed legislative vote in 1997.

However, there were some administrative problems with voter registration, and the major opposition coalition boycotted the polls.

In November 2005, three opposition leaders were detained for several weeks and charged with "sedition"; the charges were later dropped. The three—Hamat Bah, Omar Jallow, and Halifa Sallah, each representing a small opposition party—had formed a coalition with Darboe's United Democratic Party (UDP), with the aim of unseating Jammeh in the 2006 presidential election. The coalition, the National Alliance for Development and Democracy (NADD), had made a strong showing in parliamentary by-elections in October 2005. It splintered in early 2006.

On March 22, 2006, officials announced that they had foiled an attempted coup. More than 20 suspects were arrested during the year, including senior intelligence and defense personnel. Their trials in civilian and military courts on charges of conspiracy and treason were still under way at year's end. Amnesty International expressed concern about the suspects' detention, saying that they were "at serious risk of torture."

The coup attempt also sparked a wave of repression against The Gambia's tiny private press. In March and April, agents from the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) arrested three journalists from the local private publication *The Independent*, holding them incommunicado for weeks in apparent connection with articles about the coup. The government also shut down the paper. One of the detained journalists, reporter Lamin Fatty, was held in an NIA detention facility for over two months, during which the Agency refused to release information on his whereabouts or the accusations against him. He was eventually criminally charged with publishing "false news," becoming the first Gambian journalist to be prosecuted under harsh new media laws passed in 2004. The NIA arrested several more journalists in June in connection with a crackdown on alleged contributors to a highly critical U.S.-based website run by an exiled Gambian. One journalist arrested in the crackdown, Malick Mboob, spent nearly five months in secret NIA detention before being released without charge, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). CPJ also reported that another journalist, who was reported missing in July, had been secretly arrested by the government and remained in detention at year's end.

Jammeh won a new five-year mandate in presidential elections held on September 22, 2006, taking 67.3 percent of the vote. Darboe, running as a candidate for the UDP, received 26.6 percent, while Sallah captured the remaining share. Darboe rejected the results as a "sham," although election observers from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) pronounced the vote "generally peaceful, free, fair and transparent." A UN envoy said that the polls were relatively free and fair, but that The Gambia needed international support to strengthen its democratic institutions.

A small, poor country with few natural resources, The Gambia depends on exports of peanuts and other commodities. Tourism and remittances from Gambians living abroad are an important source of foreign exchange. In June 2006, the U.S. government suspended The Gambia's eligibility for aid under the Millennium Challenge Corporation, citing concerns over political freedom and human rights.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The Gambia is not an electoral democracy. While the conduct of the 2006 presidential poll was deemed free and fair

by regional observers, serious government repression of the media and the opposition in the run-up to the vote made a level playing field for the three candidates impossible. The president is both chief of state and head of government. He is elected by popular vote for a five-year term; the number of terms is not restricted. Of the 53 seats in the unicameral National Assembly, 48 are elected by popular vote and five are appointed by the president; members serve for five years.

Major political parties include the ruling APRC; the National Reconciliation Party (NRP); the People's Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS), and the UDP. The National Alliance for Democracy and Development (NADD) is a coalition of several smaller opposition groups, including the PDOIS.

Official corruption remains a serious problem in The Gambia. The country's anticorruption commission began hearings in July 2004 as part of President Yahya Jammeh's "Operation No Compromise." Chaired by a Nigerian judge, the commission is probing the acquisition of assets by active and retired ministers and senior military officials during Jammeh's decade in power. However, neither the president nor any elected lawmaker has had to appear before the panel. The Gambia was ranked out 121 of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The private press in The Gambia operates under extremely difficult conditions; the government frequently arrests, threatens, and harasses local journalists. State-run Radio Gambia broadcasts only tightly controlled news programming that is also relayed by private radio stations. The country is home to a single, government-run television station. A leading private newspaper was shuttered by the government in 2006.

The independent press suffered a serious blow in December 2004 with the murder of prominent journalist Deyda Hydera, the managing editor of the *Point* newspaper who also worked for Agence France-Presse and Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF). Hydera, a veteran campaigner for press freedom, was gunned down in his car at night on his way home from work. The murder has remained unsolved, as have a series of arson attacks that targeted local independent journalists between 2000 and 2004. Hydera's murder came two days after the National Assembly passed new amendments to the Criminal Code and the Newspaper Act, strengthening the criminal penalties for press offenses and multiplying the fees for publication and broadcasting licenses.

The state generally does not restrict internet usage. However, several alleged local contributors to a U.S.-based website that was critical of the government were imprisoned by the National Intelligence Agency or harassed in 2006 after their names were leaked to Gambian authorities.

Freedom of religion is legally guaranteed and upheld by the government. Academic freedom is also respected.

Freedoms of assembly and association are provided by law but not always observed in practice. Security forces often crack down violently on demonstrators. In the lead-up to an African Union Summit held in Banjul in July 2006, the government barred a coalition of regional civil society organizations from holding a forum on free expression. Gambians, except for civil service employees and members of the security forces, have the right to form unions, strike, and bargain for wages.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary. Lower courts are ham-

pered by corruption and are sometimes subject to executive influence, but the judiciary has demonstrated its independence on several occasions, at times in significant cases. A number of judges have been brought to The Gambia from other African countries, and they tend to operate fairly and vigorously. Local chiefs preside over courts at the village level. The judicial system recognizes customary law, or Sharia (Islamic law), primarily in marital matters.

Although the Jammeh government has made some steps towards political openness, it still has extensive repressive powers. A 1995 decree allows the National Intelligence Agency to "search, arrest, or detain any person, or seize, impound, or search any vessel, equipment, plant, or property without a warrant" in the name of "state security." In such cases, the right to seek a writ of habeas corpus is suspended. Torture of prisoners has been reported, though conditions in some of the country's prisons have improved.

Impunity for the country's security forces is a problem. The National Assembly passed a law in 2001 giving amnesty "for any fact, matter or omission to act, or things done or purported to have been done during any unlawful assembly, public disturbance, riotous situation or period of public emergency." The legislation was backdated to April 2000, when security forces had cracked down on demonstrators, killing 16 people. Military decrees giving authorities broad power to detain individuals indefinitely without charge "in the interest of national security" are still in force.

The Gambia's various ethnic groups coexist in relative harmony. The constitution prohibits discrimination based on religion, language, ethnicity, gender, and other factors, and the government generally enforces these provisions.

Religious and traditional obstacles to the advancement of women are being addressed by both the government and women's organizations. Women have fewer opportunities for higher education and wage employment than men, especially in rural areas. However, the government has waived school fees for girls, and women occupy senior government posts, including those of vice president and education minister. Sharia provisions regarding family law and inheritance restrict women's rights. Female genital mutilation is not banned and is widely practiced, but women's groups are working to eliminate it, and the government supports their efforts.

Georgia

Population: 4,400,000

Capital: Tbilisi

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	3,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview: In 2006, Georgia continued its efforts to enact reforms under difficult conditions. The most notable changes involved law enforcement, the state bureaucracy, and the country's universities, where safeguards were implemented to combat entrenched corruption. In October, Russia imposed an economic blockade, cutting off all cross-border trade and travel as part of a broader breakdown in bilateral relations. Meanwhile, the governing National Movement party continued to dominate the domestic political scene, as the opposition has so far proven incapable of providing meaningful competition.

Absorbed by Russia in the early nineteenth century, Georgia gained its independence in 1918. In 1922, it entered the Soviet Union as a component of the Transcaucasian Federated Soviet Republic, becoming a separate Soviet republic in 1936. An attempt by the region of South Ossetia in 1990 to declare independence from Georgia and join Russia's North Ossetia sparked a war between the separatists and Georgian forces. Although a ceasefire was signed in June 1992, South Ossetia's final political status remains unresolved.

Following a national referendum in April 1991, Georgia declared its independence from the Soviet Union, which collapsed in December of that year. Nationalist leader and former dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia was elected president in May. The next year, he was overthrown by opposition forces and replaced with former Georgian Communist Party head and Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze. Parliamentary elections held in 1992 resulted in more than 30 parties and blocs gaining seats, although none secured a clear majority.

In 1993, Georgia experienced the violent secession of the long-simmering Abkhazia region and an armed insurrection by Gamsakhurdia loyalists. Although Shevardnadze blamed Russia for arming and encouraging Abkhazian separatists, he legalized the presence of 19,000 Russian troops in Georgia in exchange for Russian support against Gamsakhurdia, who, once defeated, committed suicide. In early 1994, Georgia and Abkhazia signed an agreement in Moscow that called for a ceasefire, the stationing of Commonwealth of Independent States troops under Russian command along the Abkhazian border, and the return of refugees under UN super-

vision. In parliamentary elections in November and December 1995, the Shevardnadze-founded Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG) captured the most seats, while Shevardnadze was elected with 77 percent of the vote in a concurrent presidential poll.

The ruling CUG repeated its victory four years later, in the October 1999 parliamentary elections. Observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) concluded that, despite some irregularities, the vote was generally fair. In the April 2000 presidential poll, Shevardnadze easily won a second five-year term with a reported 81 percent of the vote. While his win was widely anticipated, the large margin of his victory led to accusations of electoral fraud. Election monitors noted numerous and serious irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing, inflated voter turnout figures, and a strong pro-Shevardnadze bias in the state media.

Following the parliamentary elections, various competing factions developed within the CUG. Shevardnadze himself faced growing opposition from prominent members, including Speaker of Parliament Zurab Zhvania and Justice Minister Mikheil Saakashvili, who criticized the president's failure to contain widespread corruption. While Shevardnadze resigned as CUG chairman in September 2001, Saakashvili left the CUG to form his own party, the National Movement, and a formal party split was ratified in May 2002. Local elections held in June saw the CUG lose its long-standing dominance to several rival parties, including the New Rights Party, which was formed by prominent businesspeople, the National Movement, and the Labor Party. Subsequently, Saakashvili was named to the influential post of chairman of the Tbilisi City Council.

A flawed parliamentary vote on November 2, 2003, served as the catalyst for the civic action, known as the Rose Revolution, that ultimately led to Shevardnadze's resignation from office. According to official Central Election Commission results, the For New Georgia pro-Shevardnadze coalition received 21 percent of the vote. The Union of Democratic Revival (UGR), a party led by Asian Abashidze, head of the southwestern region of Ajaria, won almost 19 percent of the vote. Saakashvili's National Movement came in a close third with 18 percent, followed by the Labor Party with 12 percent. The only other parties to pass the 7 percent threshold to enter Parliament were the opposition Burjanadze-Democrats alliance formed by Zhvania and Speaker of Parliament Nino Buijanadze, which captured almost 9 percent of the vote, and New Rights, which secured 7 percent.

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy, a domestic monitoring organization that conducted a parallel vote tabulation, concluded that the National Movement had won the election with nearly 27 percent of the vote, leaving For New Georgia in second place with about 19 percent. Monitors from the OSCE reported that the balloting fell short of international standards for democratic elections. Among the violations noted were ballot-box stuffing, inaccurate voter lists, biased media coverage, harassment of some domestic election monitors, and pressure on public employees to support progovernment candidates.

A series of mass public demonstrations took place in the aftermath of the flawed vote. On November 22, protesters led by Saakashvili broke into the Parliament building and forced Shevardnadze, who was addressing the new legislature's opening session, to flee the premises. Shevardnadze resigned the following day, and Burjanadze was named interim president. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court cancelled the results of the parliamentary elections.

A snap presidential election was called for January 4, 2004, with Saakashvili effectively facing no opposition. Capitalizing on mass dissatisfaction with corruption, cronyism, and poverty, he won with an overwhelming 96 percent of the vote. In new parliamentary elections held on March 28, 2004, the National Movement-Democrats bloc (composed of Saakashvili's National Movement and the Burjanadze-Democrats) captured about two-thirds of the seats, followed by the Rightist Opposition bloc (composed of the Industrialists and New Rights Party) with nearly 10 percent; seven other parties received 8 percent or less of the total number of seats.

In October 2006, relations with Russia reached new lows, with Moscow imposing an economic blockade on the country of 4 million in response to the Georgian authorities' detention of several alleged Russian spies. The mutual border was closed to trade and transportation, and sea and air travel between the two countries was also barred. Visa restrictions imposed by Moscow augmented the serious economic strain imposed on Georgia by limiting remittances from Georgians working in Russia, which represent an important economic contribution to the Georgian economy. Although the detained Russians were quickly released, the blockade remained in place at year's end. Meanwhile, the "frozen conflicts" in Abkhazia and South Ossetia brought Moscow and Tbilisi closer to confrontation. Georgian defense minister Irakli Okruashvili, who took a particularly hard line on these disputes, was moved from the Defense Ministry to the Ministry of Economic Development in late November 2006. He then abruptly declined to accept the new appointment and suggested he would study abroad for an undetermined period of time.

The government's domestic policy remained focused on corruption in 2006. Reforms overseen by the Education Ministry to implement national university entrance exams have already begun to reduce university corruption and increase public trust in the higher education system. The reforms, along with an earlier traffic-police overhaul and the dramatic reduction of patronage employment in government ministries, have begun to break down corruption across the wider society.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Georgia is an electoral democracy. While the constitution and the election law provide for universal suffrage and equal voting rights, the November 2003 parliamentary elections, which led to President Eduard Shevardnadze's ouster, as well as previous votes, fell short of international standards for democratic elections. According to an observer mission from the OSCE, the January 2004 presidential and March 2004 parliamentary elections represented "commendable progress in relation to previous elections." Parliamentary by-elections in 2005 fit this pattern of improvement, although the absence of a political opposition capable of contesting power remains critical. Parliamentary terms are four years, and presidential terms are five years, with the next presidential vote scheduled for 2009. At the end of 2006, the government was advancing a plan to amend the constitution in order to move up the presidential election and hold it and the parliamentary vote concurrently in 2008.

In 2005, the unicameral Parliament passed amendments to modify its composition, effective after the next parliamentary elections in 2008. The number of members will shrink from the current 235 to 150, with 100 members to be elected by party list and 50 under a first-past-the-post system.

The Rose Revolution in 2003 propelled the National Movement to power, and it

remains the country's dominant party. In addition, there are two parliamentary opposition blocs, the New Conservatives-Industrialists and the Democratic Front, which came into being in late 2005. It is comprised of two party groups—the Republicans and the Conservatives, which were formerly part of the National Movement—along with a number of independent members of Parliament. The weakness of the opposition and the formidable political presence of President Mikheil Saakashvili has created a political environment that is for the time being dominated by Saakashvili's United National Movement. Going forward, the system will be tested by the degree to which alternative political voices and policy options can establish a meaningful place on the country's political landscape.

The current administration has made a priority of combating corruption. A number of officials accused of graft or embezzlement during the presidency of Eduard Shevardnadze were arrested in 2004. In June 2005, the Georgian government adopted a National Anticorruption Strategy and Action Plan, which seeks to improve the transparency and effectiveness of the civil service, while strengthening the role of inspectors general within public agencies; the implementation of this plan is in its nascent stages. Georgia was ranked 99 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Georgia's constitution provides guarantees for press freedom. Before the 2003-2004 leadership change, the country's independent press was able to publish critical political analyses, although economic constraints limited the circulation of most newspapers, especially outside the capital. In December 2004, a Law on Broadcasting was adopted, and in 2005, State TV and Radio was transformed into Georgian Public Broadcasting. The public broadcasting entity is supervised by a nine-member board appointed by Parliament, with two candidates for each position preselected by the president from among a number of applicants.

While a diversity of political opinions and perspectives flourish in the print media, broadcast media in 2006 continued to suffer from some self-censorship, perhaps due, at least in part, to the absence of an established political opposition to provide a clear articulation of alternative views. Nevertheless, broadcast enterprises such as Imedi, which is partly owned by Rupert Murdoch's U.S.-based News Corp., regularly take a line opposed to the government, as does the more polemical antigovernment Kafkasia channel. Rustavi-2, which gained notoriety as one of the main drivers of the Rose Revolution, has since 2004 taken a line generally supportive of the current government. To the extent that there is political debate in the broadcast media, it rarely amounts to a thoughtful discussion of public policy.

In 2004, the government adopted a new libel law stipulating that cases will be considered in civil rather than criminal courts. The new law makes clear that statements in Parliament, in the courts, and during political debates are not considered libel; moves the burden of proof to the accuser; and specifies entire companies, rather than individual reporters, as defendants. The authorities do not restrict access to the internet, but high-speed internet connections are prohibitively expensive for many ordinary citizens.

Freedom of religion is respected for the country's largely Georgian Orthodox Christian population and some traditional minority religious groups, including Muslims and Jews. However, members of newer groups, including Baptists, Pentecostals, and Jehovah's Witnesses, have faced harassment and intimidation by law en-

forcement officials and certain Georgian Orthodox extremists, but reports of such treatment have decreased over the past year.

The government does not restrict academic freedom. In an effort to unshackle the educational system from the widespread corruption that plagues most post-Soviet countries, Georgia has put in place far-reaching reforms that are also designed to improve academic standards and independence. These steps have gone a considerable way toward eliminating the bribes students typically paid to receive high marks or pass entrance examinations. National exams for university admissions were administered by the Education Ministry in the summer of 2005 and 2006. Students can only take the exam at newly accredited institutions, as part of Georgia's effort to comply with the Bologna process, an intergovernmental initiative to establish a European Higher Education Area by 2010 and to promote the European standards of higher education.

The authorities respect freedoms of association and assembly. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are able to register and operate without arbitrary restrictions. The community of NGOs in Georgia is large and active and plays an important role in public debates and discussions. The constitution and the Law on Trade Unions allow workers to organize and prohibit antiunion discrimination. The Amalgamated Trade Unions of Georgia, the successor to the grouping that existed during the Soviet period, is the principal trade union confederation. It is not affiliated with, and receives no funding from, the government.

The judiciary is not fully independent and continues to suffer from extensive corruption and pressure from the executive branch. The payment of bribes to judges is reported to be common, and efforts to reform the judicial system have not moved forward in a meaningful way. The judiciary has been unable to date to establish itself as an independent institutional actor and still suffers from a lack of professionalism. The judiciary also often relied on pretrial detention regardless of the gravity of the offense.

The police force has dramatically improved its performance since the government dismissed half of its personnel in August 2004 as part of an anticorruption overhaul. Prison conditions in Georgia are grim. Riots at Tbilisi prison number 5 in March 2006 were emblematic of the significant problems facing this system. Gang activity along with serious prison overcrowding is pervasive. Tbilisi prison number 5, for example, was designed to hold approximately 1,500 prisoners but holds a population of more than twice that number. Criticism and calls for reform by ombudsman Sozar Subari have largely gone unheeded by the penitentiary department chief, Bacho Akhalaia.

The government generally respects the rights of ethnic minorities in areas of the country that are not contested by separatists. Freedom of residence, as well as the freedom to travel to and from the country, are generally respected.

Societal violence against women is a problem. The Georgian authorities have acknowledged the issue of violence against women and in June passed the first law on domestic violence, which among other provisions allows victims to file immediate protective orders against their abusers and police to issue a temporary restrictive order against persons suspected of abusing a family member.

While there are no laws that specifically criminalize spousal abuse or violence against women, the Criminal Code classifies rape, including spousal rape, and sexual coercion as crimes. Although Georgian law prohibits trafficking in persons, the country is a source, transit point, and destination for the trade.

Germany

Population: 82,400,000

Capital: Berlin

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: The "grand coalition" of the center-right Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union and the center-left Social Democratic Party marked its first full year in power in 2006. The new government lost public support as planned reforms in health care and other areas made little progress. Chancellor Angela Merkel remained personally popular, however.

Modern Germany emerged in 1871 out of the fragmented Germanic states that had existed until then. Defeated in World War I, and again more devastatingly in World War II, Germany was divided into two states—the capitalist and democratic Federal Republic in the west and the Communist German Democratic Republic in the east—during the ensuing Cold War. The Berlin Wall, which had kept East Berliners from fleeing west, was opened in 1989, and East Germany was absorbed into the Federal Republic the following year. Despite more than a decade of massive subsidies, eastern Germany remains considerably poorer than the rest of the country, with higher levels of unemployment. The economic situation has contributed to higher levels of support for extremist political groups in the former East.

A coalition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Green Party was first elected in 1998, with the SPD's Gerhard Schroeder as chancellor. The government's first term was marked by slow economic growth—gross domestic product (GDP) grew just 0.6 percent in 2001 and 0.2 percent in 2002—and the SPD's opinion-poll ratings languished in late 2002. However, Schroeder drew voter support by vocally opposing U.S. preparations to invade Iraq, and the coalition parties bested the opposition alliance of the Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) in the September 2002 legislative elections.

The government's poll ratings sank quickly again after the elections, and the SPD lagged far behind the CDU/CSU in popularity for most of Schroeder's second term. The primary reason was dissatisfaction with the economy, which shrank slightly in 2003. The unemployment rate remained stubbornly high, at around 10 percent. Schroeder began to tackle that issue in earnest with labor-market reforms in 2002. His proposals included making it easier for firms to fire workers, encouraging the creation of part-time and lower-wage "mini-jobs," and cutting benefits to the unemployed if they proved unwilling to take an available job or to move to take a job.

The reforms both irritated labor unions, a key component of the SPD's electoral base, and failed to improve the economy quickly enough for voters. GDP grew by just 0.9 percent in 2005. Schroeder had promised in 1998 to reduce the number of unemployed workers to below 3.5 million, but at the end of two terms, just under 5 million were unemployed. The SPD's May 2005 state electoral defeat in North Rhine-Westphalia, a heartland for the party, led the chancellor to call for a parliamentary vote of confidence, which he planned to lose in order to bring national elections forward by a year. He duly lost the vote, but Germany's constitution makes it difficult to call early elections. Only after the Constitutional Court approved the move were elections set for September 18, 2005.

The CDU/CSU chose Angela Merkel, its parliamentary leader, as its candidate for chancellor, and the alliance led throughout the campaign. Its preferred coalition partner was the smaller Free Democratic Party (FDP), a socially liberal party that favors free markets. The CDU/CSU's campaign was seen as lackluster and error-prone, however; Merkel named a flat-tax advocate as her finance minister designate, a move that worried many voters even though a flat tax was not part of the party's official platform. As a result, the CDU/CSU gradually lost support over the course of the campaign and in the end won just 225 seats, while the SPD took 222. The FDP did well, winning 61 seats, up from 47, but the CDU/CSU and FDP did not have enough total seats to form a government. The SPD and Greens also fell short of a majority. (The newly formed Left Party, consisting of left-wing SPD rebels and the successor to East Germany's Communist Party, took 54 seats.) The standoff led to protracted coalition negotiations, which are unusual in Germany. In the end, the only possible combination was a "grand coalition" between the CDU/CSU and the SPD. Merkel became Germany's first female chancellor.

Merkel began her term with extremely high personal popularity ratings. However, over the course of 2006, the grand coalition proved slow to move on new legislation as the two constituent parties engaged in long negotiations over a wide variety of issues, the most important of which was health-care reform. The CDU/CSU proposed changing the funding system from payments linked to each worker's income to a flat-rate premium. The SPD, however, insisted on keeping the link to pay. The compromise was to set up a mixed system, beginning only in 2009.

Concerns over the assimilation of Muslim immigrants were prominent in 2006. In May, a German politician of Turkish descent was badly beaten, allegedly by neo-Nazis. In August, two crude bombs, which failed to detonate, were found on German trains. One Lebanese man linked to the plot was arrested, and another was arrested and released. Two other suspects were held in Lebanon. In September, a Mozart opera, *Idomeneo*, was canceled because of security concerns over a controversial staging that featured the severed heads of Jesus, Buddha, and the prophet Muhammad. The incident overshadowed a conference dedicated to the coexistence of Muslim immigrants, their German-born children, and ethnic Germans.

In 2005, Germany's government agreed with its European Union (EU) partners to open negotiations with Turkey on EU membership, despite some German concerns about accepting Turkey. Merkel is on record as opposing Turkish membership, but the EU's official position is that negotiation does not guarantee Turkey's admission. Germany will adopt the rotating six-month presidency of the EU at the beginning of 2007.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Germany is an electoral democracy. The constitution provides for a lower house of parliament, the Bundestag, elected at least every four years through a 50-50 mixture of proportional representation and single-member districts, as well as an upper house, the Bundesrat or Federal Council, which represents the states and approves key legislation, including economic bills. Its members are delegates from the individual state governments, and each state's delegation must vote as a block. The country's head of state is a largely ceremonial president, chosen jointly by the Bundestag and a group of state representatives. In Germany's federal system, state governments have considerable authority over areas such as education and policing, as well as substantial powers to tax and spend. The chancellor is elected by the Bundestag and usually serves for the duration of a four-year legislative session. He or she can only be deposed in the middle of a term if the Bundestag chooses a replacement, in a so-called constructive vote of no confidence.

Political pluralism in Germany has been constrained by laws restricting the far left and far right. The Communist Party of Germany was banned in the Federal Republic in 1956. However, the former ruling party of Communist East Germany, renamed the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), was a legal and democratic far-left party that participated in state governments. It recently merged with former left-wing SPD members to form the new Left Party for the 2005 elections.

The two main far-right parties—the National Democratic Party (NDP) and the German People's Union (DVU)—are hostile to immigration and the EU. Although they sometimes receive a small share of the vote—the NDP won 9 percent in a state election in Saxony in 2004, and 7.3 percent in Mecklenburg/Upper Pomerania in 2006—they are routinely kept out of government and pose little threat to democratic rule. Their strength, like that of the Left Party, is greater in the former East Germany, where unemployment and poor economic conditions feed political frustration. However, the alteration of asylum laws has undercut basic support for the far-right parties, which once again won no seats in the 2005 federal elections. (Parties must win at least 5 percent of the vote to be represented in the Bundestag, a provision designed to prevent the proliferation of parties and the instability that characterized Germany in the Weimar era between the world wars.) Nazism is illegal, but the government's attempts to ban the NDP as a neo-Nazi group were stalled in court when it was revealed that many of those testifying against the party were government agents.

Germany's government is accountable through open debates in Parliament, which are covered widely in the media. The government is free of pervasive corruption and was ranked 16 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is protected in the constitution, and the media are largely free and independent. However, it remains illegal to advocate Nazism or deny the Holocaust. German authorities have sought unsuccessfully to prosecute internet users outside Germany who post Nazi propaganda aimed at Germany. In March 2003, the Constitutional Court ruled that surveillance of journalists' telephone calls could be deemed legal by judges in "serious" cases. The lack of a definition of "serious" is a cause for concern among reporters, who fear that the word's vagueness invites abuse. Germany is one of the only European countries without freedom-of-information legislation.

Freedom of belief is protected under law. Religions that fulfill certain requirements have the status of a "corporation under public law," and the government collects taxes from church members on the churches' behalf, for a fee. However, Germany has taken a strong stance against the Church of Scientology, which it deems an economic organization rather than a religion. The four biggest political parties deny membership to Scientologists, and the group has been under surveillance by government intelligence agencies. The Jehovah's Witnesses were denied public law corporation status in 1997 for failing to demonstrate "indispensable loyalty" to the democratic state, but this ruling was overturned on church-state separation grounds in 2000. The state of Berlin continued to disallow public-law corporation status for the Witnesses until 2006, when court rulings forced it to do so. The Jehovah's Witnesses' organizations also have tax-exempt status. Eight states have passed laws prohibiting female Muslim schoolteachers from wearing headscarves (*hijab*) on duty, amid a climate becoming slightly but perceptibly more hostile to Muslim immigrants and their German-born children. Academic freedom is generally respected.

Civic groups and nongovernmental organizations operate without hindrance. The right of peaceful assembly is not infringed upon, except in the case of outlawed groups, such as those advocating Nazism or opposing the democratic order. Trade unions, farmers' groups, and business confederations are free to organize, and they have traditionally played a strong role in Germany's consensus-based policy-making system. However, unions have weakened in recent years.

The judiciary is independent, and the rule of law prevails. The Federal Constitutional Court vets the compatibility of legislation with the basic law. In addition to having its own provisions, Germany is a party to the European Convention on Human Rights. Prison conditions are adequate. Anti-immigrant sentiments have led to attacks on members of ethnic minorities (see above), though immigrants are less "ghettoized" than in some of Germany's neighboring countries, such as France.

Women's rights are strongly protected, with generous maternity policies and antidiscrimination laws, though the latter do not prevent some wage discrimination. There are six women in the 14-member federal cabinet. Limited gay partnership rights are respected.

Ghana

Population: 22,600,000

Capital: Accra

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview: Early in 2006, several important members of the National Democratic Congress, the main opposition party, split off and formed a rival party that may present a threat to the current two-party dominance of the political system in the 2008 presidential election. In September, thousands of secondary-school teachers seeking better wages staged a two-month strike that affected 360,000 students. Also, despite Ghana's current constitution, succession disputes continue to occur over chieftaincy in the Northern regions; in 2006 this led to bouts of violence and months of government-imposed curfews in the region. Finally, in a slight deterioration of press freedoms, Ghanaian journalists in 2006 were subject to a number of attacks and acts of intimidation, primarily by supporters of several drug barons who were on trial.

Ghana, long known as the Gold Coast, had once been a major center for the slave trade. It emerged from British rule in 1957, becoming sub-Saharan Africa's first European colony to achieve independence. After the 1966 overthrow of its charismatic independence leader, Kwame Nkrumah, the country was rocked for 15 years by a series of military coups. Successive military and civilian governments vied with each other in both incompetence and dishonesty.

In 1979, Jerry Rawlings led a coup against the ruling military junta and, as promised, returned power to a civilian government after a purge of corrupt senior army officers. However, the new civilian administration did not live up to Rawlings's expectations. He seized power again in December 1981 and set up the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), claiming that the move was necessary to restore a worthy government to the people of Ghana. Despite its populist objectives, the PNDC proved to be a brutally repressive enterprise, banning political parties and free expression and quelling all dissent. In the late 1980s, Rawlings was faced with a crumbling economy and increasingly intense demands for genuine political representation. He responded to the first problem by transforming Ghana into an early model for the structural adjustment programs urged by international lenders; he eventually responded to the second challenge by agreeing to the adoption of a new constitution in 1992 that legalized political parties. The subsequent elections, however, were considered neither free nor fair, and Rawlings was confirmed as head of state.

Ghanaians were finally given their first opportunity to choose their representatives in genuine elections in December 1996. But even that balloting, which was generally regarded as free and fair, assured Rawlings of his place in the presidency thanks to opposition disunity and the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) party's extensive use of state media and patronage.

In 2000, Ghana's presidential and parliamentary polls were not only widely considered to be free and fair, but were hailed in Africa and abroad as a successful test of the democratic process. The presidential poll marked the first time in Ghana's history that one democratically elected president was succeeded by another. The opposition, led by John Kufuor and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), alleged intimidation in the second round of voting as the results came in, but it soon became apparent that they had actually won soundly with 57 percent of the vote, compared with 43 percent for Rawlings's chosen successor, John Atta Mills. During concurrent legislative polls, the opposition also broke the NDC's stranglehold on Parliament.

Kufuor won 53 percent of the vote in the December 2004 presidential election, followed again by Atta Mills, with 44 percent. The two other presidential candidates, Edward Mahama of the Grand Coalition (GC) and George Aggudey of the Convention People's Party (CPP), won less than 2 percent each. The Ghanaian constitution requires a runoff between the top two candidates if the leading candidate received 51 percent of the vote or less in the first round. Given the proximity of Kufuor's 53 percent to this limit, Atta Mills and the NDC alleged irregularities and called for a vote recount, but the Electoral Commission turned down the request.

In that year's legislative elections, in which candidates from eight parties contested 230 parliamentary seats, the NPP maintained its majority. It won 128 seats, followed by the NDC with 94 seats, the GC with four, the CPP with three, and an independent who took the remaining seat. An alliance of civil society groups, the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers, deployed thousands of monitors across the country for both polls. Some sporadic violence was reported, as well as a few incidents of intimidation and other irregularities, but domestic and international observers judged the elections to have been generally free and fair.

Both the NPP and the NDC held national congresses to elect their respective leaders in December 2005. The events have become a regular part of the Ghanaian political process, and they served as previews for the next presidential campaign in 2008. During the NPP congress, Kufuor made a brief appearance but left early, apparently to show that the NPP's internal decision making was free from presidential influence. The number of presidential hopefuls in the NPP alone ranges from 18 to 24, often changing on a daily basis. In contrast, evidence that Rawlings supporters had used force, threats, and physical intimidation against dissenters within the NDC cast a shadow over that party's congress. As a result, a number of high-profile NDC members defected and worked throughout 2006 to form an alternative party, the Democratic Freedom Party. It remained unclear whether the new party would present a serious challenge to either the NPP or the NDC. Much of the uncertainty stemmed from predictions of additional NDC defections; many politicians were waiting until the 2008 elections drew nearer before committing themselves to one faction or the other.

On the whole, Ghana has become a relatively peaceful country in a region plagued by conflict and instability. However, tribal disagreement over the successor to the throne of a paramount chief turned violent in January 2006, when supporters of the

two rival claimants clashed in the northern town of Bimbilla. The Northern Regional Security Council imposed months of curfews on Bimbilla and the surrounding areas to ensure that the conflict did not intensify. The incident was reminiscent of 1994 fighting between the Konkomba and Nanumba ethnic groups in the north, which left 1,000 people dead and caused 150,000 others to flee their homes.

Driven by high global prices for cocoa and gold, two of Ghana's main exports, the country's growth rate has exceeded 5 percent for the past two years. In addition, the Kufuor administration's reputation for good governance has won aid from foreign donors. Ghana qualified in 2004 for debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which will slash the country's \$6 billion external debt in half over 20 years and reduce debt-service payments each year. However, as a crucial and often overlooked requirement for debt relief, Ghana is required to stop or reduce significantly its borrowing and donor dependence; this has not happened yet, and is unlikely to occur in the near future as international borrowing and donations are an integral component of Ghana's current economic and political stability. Nonetheless, Japan has also canceled its \$1 billion in Ghanaian debt. In August 2006, Kufuor signed an agreement with the U.S.-funded Millennium Challenge Corporation to receive \$547 million to target poverty—the largest grant awarded by the corporation to date. Despite those gains, Ghana remains highly dependent on foreign aid, and any shift in the country's economic fortunes is likely to affect the electoral outcome in 2008.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Ghana is an electoral democracy. The December 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections were considered generally fair and competitive. The president and vice president are directly elected on the same ticket for four-year terms. Members of Ghana's unicameral, 230-seat Parliament are also elected for four-year terms. In February 2006, the president signed the Representation of the People Amendment Act, giving Ghanaians living overseas the right to vote. The Parliament had quickly passed the bill during a boycott by many NDC lawmakers, who vehemently opposed the measure.

The country's political system is dominated by the ruling NPP and the opposition NDC, which has held power in the past. A number of smaller parties also hold seats in Parliament, and a splinter faction of the NDC emerged in 2006 as a new party that could draw significant support in future elections.

The government of President John Kufuor has made efforts to improve transparency and reduce corruption, but graft remains a widespread problem, and political patronage has deep roots. In 2003, the government passed the Public Procurement Act, the Financial Management Act, and the Audit Service Act to promote public sector accountability and combat corruption. But a lack of implementation capacity has prevented the legislation from fully taking effect, and the 2006 draft budget has not provided sufficient resources to reverse this trend. In order to demonstrate continued progress in the fight against corruption, Kufuor conducted a massive reshuffle of government ministries in early 2006. The move reduced some of the bureaucratic overlap between ministries and forced out a number of ministers who had been implicated in corruption scandals. However, other graft-tainted ministers remained in office and were not recommended for investigation. Ghana was ranked 70 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Cor-

ruption Perceptions Index, down five places from 2005 but still among the top five countries in Africa.

Freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected. Numerous private radio stations operate, and many independent newspapers and magazines are published in Accra with relatively high levels of professionalism for the region. Significantly though, Ghana has yet to pass legislation protecting freedom of information. A civil society initiative in 1997 brought the need for such a bill to the nation's attention, but neither the president nor the Parliament has taken any action as yet. Internet access is unrestricted.

In 2006, journalists experienced a troubling spate of intimidation and harassment related to a series of cocaine scandals being investigated in the courts. In response to the attacks, the Ghana Journalists Association released a statement threatening legal action against anyone who engages in harassment of reporters. Nonetheless, shortly after that announcement, an independent radio journalist was attacked by five policemen and briefly detained just outside of Accra.

Religious freedom is respected, and the government continued its prosecution of perpetrators of religious violence in 2006.

Academic freedom is also guaranteed and respected. In 2005, in line with the UN Millennium Development Goals for education, the government removed all fees for access to primary and secondary education, though university tuitions remain. As a result, student enrollment has risen by more than 16 percent since the new policy was implemented. Ghana's educational system is struggling to keep up with the increase, and the government has turned to churches and community centers to help provide locations for instruction. Also in 2005, the vice chancellor of the University for Development Studies reportedly banned tribal associations from campus for the 2005-2006 academic year in order to promote school unity and discourage ethnic divisions. A separate, nationwide ban on campus demonstrations remains in place but has been neither enforced nor challenged.

The rights to peaceful assembly and association are constitutionally guaranteed, and permits are not required for meetings or demonstrations. In February 2006, NDC members of Parliament (MPs) who fervently opposed the bill enabling Ghanaians living overseas to vote led a series of mass protests in Accra. Though demonstrators were quite impassioned and participating MPs boycotted Parliament, the entire exercise was carried out without violence or police repression. Numerous nongovernmental organizations also operate openly and freely.

Under 2003 labor laws that conform to International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions, every worker has the right to form or join a trade union. About 20 percent of the workforce is employed in the formal sector, but less than 9 percent of those are unionized, partly due to a weak economy. At the beginning of the academic year in September 2006, thousands of secondary-school teachers went on strike to obtain better pay. The action affected more than 360,000 students and persisted until early November, when the teachers returned to work but demanded pay for the month they had spent on strike. The Accra High Court found the strike to be illegal, but the National Association of Graduate Teachers maintains that they only returned due to public concern about how the strike would affect students' education.

Ghanaian courts have acted with increased autonomy under the 1992 constitution, but corruption remains a problem. Scarce resources compromise the judicial

process and poorly paid judges are frequently tempted by bribes. Traditional courts play a significant role in Ghanaian justice, since much of the population, particularly in the north of the country, still looks to tribal leaders to resolve disputes. A parliamentary committee on judicial corruption has recommended establishing and enforcing codes of conduct, disciplinary mechanisms, and transparent complaint procedures.

While the government has taken steps to improve prisons, conditions are harsh and sometimes life-threatening. Cells are overcrowded, and officials do not provide prisoners with adequate nutrition or medical care. Delays in the prosecution of the accused, caused by imperfections in the judicial system, often lead to extended periods of pretrial detention. Security forces manning checkpoints to catch criminals and seize weapons occasionally solicit bribes from motorists.

Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission finished hearing testimony from more than 2,000 people in 2004. While the hearings covered all of Ghana's history since independence, much of the focus was on the early years of then-president Jerry Rawlings's rule in the 1980s. The proceedings were seen as a test of Ghana's ability to look into its past, acknowledge its failings, and continue to move democratically into the future. In 2006, following the commission's recommendation, Kufuor's administration began paying reparations to the 2,000 victims in amounts ranging from \$217 to \$3,300, depending on the severity of the crime in question.

Communal and ethnic violence occasionally flares in Ghana. The north of the country in particular is dominated by various tribal associations, many of which have ties to major political parties based in the south. Disagreement over the successor to the throne of a paramount chief in the north turned violent in January 2006, when supporters of the two rivals for the seat clashed in the northern town of Bimbila. Fears persist that ethnic tensions could lead to a wider political conflict if the NPP or the NDC were to intervene on behalf of a particular ethnic group.

Ghana is home to about 62,000 refugees from countries all over the region, but according to the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition, the majority of these (39,000) come from Liberia. Refugees from Togo (16,000) are also present, having fled their country when violence broke out in the wake of the 2005 death of President Gnassingbe Eyadema. Tensions exist between refugees and local populations, but no hostile acts occurred in 2006.

Ghanaians are generally free to travel throughout the country despite occasional road blocks erected by security forces or civilians looking to make money. But in January, as a result of the ongoing chieftaincy dispute in Bimbilla, the Northern Regional Security Council imposed a curfew on the city and its surrounding area. Eventually, as the tension dissipated, the MP for Bimbilla campaigned for an end to the curfew, arguing that it posed a serious health risk by forcing residents to sleep indoors in the seasonal heat. The curfew was eventually lifted at the end of April.

Despite their equal rights under the law, Ghanaian women suffer societal discrimination that is particularly serious in rural areas, where opportunities for education and wage employment are limited. Women's enrollment in universities, however, is increasing, and more girls than boys enrolled in primary and secondary education throughout the country in 2005. Domestic violence against women is said to be common but often goes unreported. A domestic violence bill was debated in parliament in 2006 but has yet to be passed. In the course of the debate, a provision that protects against marital rape was removed. A member of the National African Peer

Review Mechanism Governing Council argued that the bill would be discriminatory if it were to pass without the provision because it would provide more protection for those experiencing extramarital sexual violence than those subject to sexual exploitation by their spouses.

Female genital mutilation was made illegal in Ghana in 1994, and those who perform the operation face a prison sentence of at least three years. In October 2006, Parliament began debating an amendment to the 1994 law that would extend its reach to relatives or guardians who give their consent for the procedure to be performed.

In 2005, Ghana passed a human trafficking bill, and has since taken steps to discourage the trafficking of children by increasing the registration of infants at birth and extending microloans to over 1,000 mothers whose poverty might otherwise force them to sell their children. The government has not yet prosecuted anyone under the new law.

Greece

Population: 11,100,000

Capital: Athens

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview:

A general strike in March 2006 caused widespread disruption to transportation and other public services. In February, a weeklong strike by seamen, to demand higher pensions and measures to combat unemployment, had led to food shortages and disrupted trade. Separately, the Greek government granted approval for the construction of the first working mosque in the country since Ottoman rule.

The core of modern Greece gained independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1830. The ensuing century brought additional territorial gains at the Ottomans' expense, as well as domestic political struggles between royalists and republicans. During World War n, Greece fell to Germany in 1941 after a failed invasion by Italy the previous year. Local Communist and royalist partisans put up a strong resistance against the occupiers, who were driven out with the help of British forces in 1944. National solidarity broke down in the early postwar period, when royalists won national elections and eventually defeated the Communists in a civil war. In 1967, a group of army officers staged a military coup, suspending elections and arresting hundreds of political activists. A referendum in 1974 rejected the restoration of the monarchy, and a new constitution in 1975 declared Greece a parliamentary republic.

During parliamentary elections in March 2004, the New Democracy party received 45 percent of the vote, winning 165 of the 300 seats in the unicameral parliament. New Democracy defeated the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), which won 117 seats, and the Communist Party of Greece, which captured 12 seats. A coalition of leftist and environmentalist movements (Synaspismos, or SYN) won six seats. PASOK had governed the country since 1981, except for a brief period from 1990 to 1993, when New Democracy was in power.

A three-year-old nationalist and xenophobic party, the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS), won 4.1 percent of the vote during European Parliament elections in June 2004. LAOS, which had failed to pass a 3 percent threshold to win seats during the March national elections, is led by a populist journalist, Yeoryios Karatzaferis, who has been accused by various human rights groups of holding racist and anti-Semitic views. LAOS's electoral gains represented the largest increase in support for the far right in the country in 20 years.

The Greek Parliament overwhelmingly approved a proposed constitution for the European Union at a special session in April 2005. The charter was backed by 268 of the 300 lawmakers.

Members of the radical group November 17 who were convicted in 2003 of more than 2,500 crimes began the appeals process in December 2005. The group, which had committed a series of murders, bombings, and robberies since its formation in 1975, had begun to unravel after the arrest of one of its members in June 2002.

A general strike in March 2006 caused widespread disruption to transportation and other public services. The action was part of ongoing opposition to the conservative government's attempts to reform the economy and comply with EU budget-deficit limits. Also in 2006, the Greek government approved plans to build the first working mosque in the country since Ottoman rule. Athens had been the only EU capital without a functioning mosque built for the purpose of worship.

In December 2006, the head of the Greek Orthodox Church Archbishop Christodoulos met with Pope Benedict at the Vatican in an effort to end the schism between Eastern and Western Christianity that began in 1054.

A strike by teachers disrupted the start of school in the fall.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Greece is an electoral democracy. All 300 members of the unicameral Parliament are elected according to a system of proportional representation. The president is elected by Parliament to a five-year term. The Parliament elected a new president, Karolos Papoulias of PASOK, in March 2005; he was the sole candidate. The president must be elected by a two-thirds majority or, on the third ballot, by a three-fifths majority. The Greek president has no legislative power but can declare war and grant pardons. The prime minister, the most powerful person in Greek politics, is chosen by the president and is usually the leader of the party with a majority in Parliament; the current prime minister is Konstandinos Karamanlis of the New Democracy Party.

There are currently five political parties represented in Parliament: the conservative governing party, New Democracy; the main opposition, PASOK; the Communist Party of Greece (KKE); the Coalition of the Left and Progress (Synaspismos); and the Democratic Socialist Movement (Dikki).

The country has generally fair electoral laws, equal campaigning opportunities,

and a system of compulsory voting that is weakly enforced. Some representatives of the Roma (Gypsy) community complain that certain municipalities have failed to register Roma who did not fulfill basic residency requirements.

Corruption continues to be a problem, although the government has made an effort to rectify the situation. Greece was ranked 54 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. According to the 2005 U.S. State Department report on human rights, efforts by the police anticorruption unit remain weak.

The constitution includes provisions for freedom of speech and the press. There are, however, some limits on speech that incites fear, violence, and disharmony among the population, as well as publications that offend religious beliefs, that are obscene, or that advocate the violent overthrow of the political system. Under a new media law in the country, media companies—including television stations, radio stations, newspapers and magazines—are required to have registered shares held by individuals. The law, which also limits foreign ownership of Greek media, has been cited by the EU for possible incompatibility with the provisions of the European Community Treaty dealing with the free movement of capital and freedom of establishment. Internet access is not restricted. In February 2006, an artist who had created a satirical website about corruption in civil service hiring was arrested for internet fraud.

While the constitution guarantees the right of all citizens to practice the religion of their choice, the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ is considered the "prevailing" denomination of the country. Members of some minority religions face social discrimination and legal barriers. For example, some religious groups have encountered legal restrictions on inheriting property as a religious entity. Although all religious organizations have to pay taxes, the government subsidizes the Orthodox Church. In addition, "known" religious groups are required to obtain permits from the Ministry of Education and Religion in order to open houses of worship. Proselytizing is prohibited, and consequently, Mormons and members of the Jehovah's Witnesses are routinely arrested and have reported abuse by police officers for their religious beliefs. Anti-Semitism remains a problem in the country. Until the government approved the construction of a mosque in 2006, Muslims in Athens had to meet and pray in dozens of unofficial prayer rooms, some in garages and private homes.

Academic freedom is not restricted in Greece. The constitution allows for freedom of association, but there are limits on the freedom of groups representing ethnic minorities. International and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) generally operate in the country without interference from authorities. In some cases, domestic human rights groups receive government funding and assistance. The right to freedom of assembly is guaranteed by the constitution and generally protected by the government.

The constitution and laws provide workers with the right to join and form unions. Twenty-six percent of all nonagricultural salaried workers are union members. Strikes in February and March 2006 crippled the country. The general strike in March was called to protest the conservative government's economic reforms, which have been instituted to meet EU budget requirements.

The judiciary is independent, and the constitution provides for public trials. However, a number of NGOs have raised concerns about the ill-treatment of detain-

ees, especially immigrants and members of religious minorities, by law enforcement officials. In a March 2006 follow-up report, the Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner indicated that prison overcrowding in Greece had increased since an initial study in 2002.

Although military service is compulsory, conscientious objectors citing religious and ideological reasons can participate in an alternative national service program, working in state hospitals or municipal agencies to fulfill their obligations. However, human rights organizations like Amnesty International and the UN Human Rights Committee have criticized the program as punitive in nature, in part because the alternative service period is nearly double the 12 months required for military service.

Despite government efforts, racial intolerance is still pervasive in society and is often expressed by figures in the media, in politics, and in the Orthodox Church. Ethnic and religious minority groups face a number of barriers. The government does not officially recognize the existence of any non-Muslim minority groups, particularly Slavophones. The government does not recognize Macedonian as a language, as officials fear secessionist aspirations among its speakers. Using the term *Turkos* or *Tourkikos* ("Turk" and "Turkish," respectively) in the title of an association is illegal and may lead to persecution. Police officers have recently been provided with training on human rights and the prohibition of racial discrimination.

Immigrants are disproportionately affected by institutional problems in the judicial system. Bureaucratic delays in the legalization process for immigrants force many into a semilegal status when they are not able to effectively renew their immigration papers, putting them in jeopardy of deportation. In addition, because the translation service in the Greek court system is underfinanced, many defendants who do not speak Greek are not properly advised of their rights. Greece has been criticized by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and human rights organizations for its treatment of thousands of asylum seekers, many of whom cross into the country from Turkey. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has reported that many migrants who manage to enter illegally are locked up in unhygienic, overcrowded detention centers, without any prior screening to determine whether their asylum claims are legitimate.

The Roma community continues to face considerable discrimination, particularly in housing cases as they are often targeted for eviction. The Center on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) reports that, in 2006, 68 homes were demolished in Patras leaving around 340 Roma homeless. Rulings by the European Committee for Social Rights in 2005 and 2006 have found that Greek policies related to the housing and accommodation of Roma violate Article 16 of the European Social Charter, which provides for the right of the family to social, legal, and economic protection. In preparation for the 2004 Olympic Games, more than a hundred Roma were evicted in 2002 from a construction site in Athens near the Olympic stadium. More than 200 Roma households currently risk eviction to make way for the construction of a football stadium in the Votanikos district of Athens.

Women lack specific legislation to deal with domestic violence and, in addition, face gender-based discrimination in the workplace. However, women have made progress in politics. In the 2004 elections, women took 14 percent of the seats in parliament, almost double the 8.7 percent they had held after the previous elections.

Trafficking in women and children for prostitution remains a problem, but the government has made efforts over the past few years to address the issue. The U.S.

State Department ranked Greece as a Tier 2 country in its 2006 Trafficking in Persons Report, removing it from the Tier 2 Watch List. In 2005, the country had increased its capacity to protect and assist victims, enacting a new law that provides a one-month "reflection period" for suspected victims. In 2006, Greece established additional anti-trafficking task forces, concluded a long-awaited protocol with Albania to repatriate trafficked children, and implemented a national awareness campaign.

Grenada

Population: 100,000
Capital: St. George's

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview: Grenada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission submitted its long-awaited report to parliament in 2006, recommending new trials for the "Grenada 17," who had been convicted for the 1983 assassination of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop. Meanwhile, tensions between Prime Minister Keith Mitchell and the opposition National Democratic Congress party deepened over government investment practices and other issues.

Grenada, a Commonwealth member that gained independence from Britain in 1974, includes the islands of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Maurice Bishop's Marxist New Jewel Movement seized power in 1979, creating a People's Revolutionary Government (PRG). In 1983, Bishop was murdered by New Jewel hard-liners Bernard Coard and Hudson Austin, who took control of the country. However, a joint U.S.-Caribbean military intervention quickly removed the PRG and set the country on a path toward new elections. In 1986, Coard and 18 others were sentenced to death; subsequently, 2 of the 19 were pardoned, and the rest—who became known as the Grenada 17—had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment.

Prime Minister Keith Mitchell has ruled Grenada since 1995, when his New National Party (NNP) won a bare majority of eight seats in the 15-seat House of Representatives. In January 1999, Mitchell called elections 18 months early after the resignation of Foreign Minister Raphael Fletcher left the NNP with a minority of seven seats. Voters then awarded the ruling party a clean sweep of all 15 seats.

In the run-up to the November 2003 elections, the Mitchell government was accused of garnering voter support by giving public workers retroactive payments.

The opposition also reported discrepancies in voter lists. Nevertheless, the elections were deemed to be generally free and fair. The NNP captured eight seats, while the National Democratic Congress (NDC), headed by Tillman Thomas, won seven seats.

Relations between the Mitchell government and the parliamentary opposition remained contentious in 2006, with frequent allegations of wrongdoing. An inquiry continued into accusations that Mitchell had accepted US\$500,000 from German-born Eric E. Resteiner in exchange for Resteiner's appointment as trade counselor for Grenada in 1999. Mitchell maintained that the money had been approved by the cabinet and was for legitimate expenses related to trade promotion. In February 2005, Grenadian authorities had begun investigations into the possibility of fraud in the Agricultural Emergency Rehabilitation Program after farmers complained that they had not received payments. The NDC in January 2006 threatened mass protests and accused the ruling party of attempting to prevent its elected members from assuming their seats in Parliament, but the lawmakers later took up their posts without incident.

Separately, Grenada continued to struggle with the legacy of the 1983 coup. In March 2004, the Grenada high court found the sentences given to 14 members of the Grenada 17 to be unconstitutional. The government then appealed to the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court and won a reversal of the lower court's decision. In February 2006, the Mitchell government amended prison rules in an effort to prevent the early release of the Grenada 17, and in June, the Privy Council in London rejected a petition to release three of the prisoners. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission—which was formally inaugurated in September 2001 and has a mandate to investigate violence that occurred between the mid-1970s and the late 1980s—experienced delays and disputes that hampered its inquiry and stalled the release of its final report. In June 2006, the commission finally published its findings, which included a recommendation that the Grenada 17 receive new trials. Amnesty International in 2003 had designated the 17 as political prisoners after concluding that the original trial was unfair and that the prisoners' subsequent appeals had been manipulated for political reasons.

In 2006, Grenada pressed ahead with its recovery from Hurricane Ivan, which struck the island in September 2004 and caused nearly \$900 million in damage, more than twice the country's annual gross domestic product. Agriculture and tourism were upended, and unemployment jumped to 20 percent. However, the country resumed a modest 5 percent growth rate in 2006, driven in part by new construction and other preparations for the 2007 World Cricket Cup.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Grenada is an electoral democracy. The 2003 parliamentary elections were considered generally free and fair, despite some allegations of voter-list manipulation. The bicameral parliament consists of the directly elected, 15-seat House of Representatives, whose members serve five-year terms, and the 13-seat Senate, to which the prime minister appoints 10 senators and the opposition leader names 3. The prime minister is typically the leader of the majority party in the House of Representatives and is appointed by the governor general, who represents the British monarchy. Grenada's main political parties are the ruling NNP, the opposition NDC, the Grenada United Labor Party (GULP), and the People's Labor Movement (PLM).

Corruption remains a contentious political issue in Grenada, and the country

compares unfavorably with several other island nations in the English-speaking Caribbean. Grenada was ranked 66 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The right to free expression is generally respected. The media, including three weekly newspapers and several other publications, are independent and freely criticize the government. However, in November 2005, Prime Minister Keith Mitchell sought to liquidate the assets of the newspaper *Grenada Today* after winning a substantial judgment in a libel suit that he brought after the paper published an article critical of his policies on investment in the country. Some activists feared that the case would have a chilling effect on freedom of the press. In addition to the print media, Grenada is home to a variety of broadcasters. A private corporation, with a minority stake owned by the government, operates the principal radio and television stations. There are also nine privately owned radio stations, one privately owned television station, and a privately owned cable company. Access to the internet is unrestricted.

Citizens of Grenada generally enjoy the free exercise of religious beliefs, and there are no official restrictions on academic freedom.

Constitutional guarantees regarding freedoms of assembly and association are respected. Grenada has a robust civil society that participates actively in domestic and international discussions, although limited resources hamper its effectiveness. Workers have the right to organize and bargain collectively. Numerous independent labor unions represent an estimated 20 to 25 percent of the workforce. All unions belong to the Grenada Trades Union Council (GTUC). A 1993 law gave the government the right to establish tribunals empowered to make "binding and final" rulings when a labor dispute is considered to be of vital interest to the state; the GTUC claimed that the law was an infringement on the right to strike.

The authority of Grenada's independent and prestigious judiciary is generally respected by the 782-member Royal Grenada Police Force. There are no military courts. In 1991, Grenada rejoined the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States court system, with the right of appeal to the Privy Council in London. In April 2005, the Caribbean Court of Justice was inaugurated in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, replacing the Privy Council. Detainees and defendants are guaranteed a range of legal rights, which the government respects in practice. However, a lack of judges and facilities has led to a backlog of six months to one year for cases involving serious offenses. In addition, the highly publicized case of the Grenada 17 has been repeatedly criticized for its perceived political manipulation by the government. Amnesty International has called for an independent judicial review of the convictions, having classified the 17 as political prisoners.

In June 2005, Mitchell released a report on the actions of the Royal Grenada Police Force in the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan in 2004. Police officers were accused of looting and criticized for their inability to restore order; several top police officials were asked to resign. In April 2006, the government launched a nationwide crime-reduction initiative that included measures to prevent the abuse of power.

Grenada's prison conditions are poor, but they meet minimum international standards and the government allows visits by human rights monitors. Hurricane Ivan caused severe damage to the country's only prison, and a new facility is expected to remedy some of the shortcomings of the old one. Flogging is still legal but rarely used,

primarily as a punishment for sex crimes and theft. In June 2006, the government opened a military-style delinquency camp for juveniles convicted of minor offenses.

Grenada has no significant problems involving discrimination against minorities. Women are represented in the government, though there are more in the ministries than in Parliament. Women generally earn less than men for equal work. Domestic violence against women is common, and most instances of abuse go unreported or are settled out of court.

Guatemala

Population: 13,000,000
Capital: Guatemala City

Political Rights: 3*
Civil Liberties: 4
Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: Guatemala's political rights rating improved from 4 to 3 as a result of greater minority organizing and participation in government.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	3,4PF

Overview: In 2006, Guatemala suffered a sharp increase in violent crime presumed to be linked to drug-trafficking and gang-related activity. The country also experienced a series of protests over the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement, land rights, and the provision of health care. A year after the devastation wrought by Tropical Storm Stan, the country struggled to rebuild. On a positive note, the Berger administration has increased the participation of minority groups from Mayan society as well as groups from human rights and other civic sectors, widening political participation among political elites.

The Republic of Guatemala, which was established in 1839, has endured a history of dictatorship, coups, and guerrilla insurgencies. Civilian rule followed the 1985 elections, and a 36-year civil war, which claimed the lives of more than 200,000 people, ended with the signing of a peace agreement in 1996. The peace accords led to the successful demobilization of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) guerrillas and their legalization as a political group. A truth commission mandated by the peace accords began receiving complaints of rights violations committed during the conflict. However, in a May 1999 referendum, voters rejected a package of amendments to the constitution that had been approved by Congress a year earlier and prepared in accordance with the peace plan. The general consensus was

that the government had failed to implement substantive reforms addressing social and economic inequalities, including ending military impunity, fully recognizing the rights of the Maya Indians, and reforming taxation to pay for health, education, and housing programs for the poor.

In July 2003, the constitutional court ruled that retired General Efraín Ríos Montt—who used the army to employ brutal "scorched earth" tactics against the URNG during his 18 months as ruler of Guatemala in 1982 and 1983—could run for the presidency. Before the decision, violent demonstrations were staged in Guatemala City, as the National Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG) brought armed supporters to intimidate the court's justices and critics. Ríos Montt was later chosen as the FRG's candidate. In the first round of the presidential election, Oscar Berger of the Grand National Alliance (GAN), a former mayor of Guatemala City, received 34 percent of the vote. Álvaro Colom of the National Union for Hope (UNE) obtained 26 percent, and Ríos Montt came in a distant third with 19 percent. In the runoff election, Berger won the presidency with 54 percent of the vote.

Although the next presidential election is not scheduled until 2007, the latter half of 2006 featured an increase in political activity as the campaign period approached. Opinion polls found that nearly 75 percent of the Guatemalan public were dissatisfied with the Berger administration, primarily due to an increase in violent crime, the implementation of the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA), an insufficient effort to rebuild following the October 2005 impact of Tropical Storm Stan, and unrest over land rights, oil prices, environmental issues, and human rights. In light of the challenges facing Berger, it was not surprising that his political opponent from 2003, Colom, led in the polls at the close of 2006. Guatemala's Constitutional Court declared in 2006 that its previous ruling allowing Ríos Montt to run for president in 2003 was unconstitutional, and that he would not be permitted to run in the future. Meanwhile, the Spanish National Court continued with its plans to prosecute eight former military leaders, including Ríos Montt, for crimes against humanity. The court issued international warrants for their arrest and ordered that the suspects' international assets be frozen.

Guatemala on July 1, 2006, became the fourth Central American country to implement DR-CAFTA, which linked the region to the United States. The country's entrance into the trade agreement has been the subject of debate, as critics and proponents alike remain unsure of its eventual effects. Critics are concerned that it will have a negative impact on producers, vendors, and consumers, as it will favor large export-oriented producers and threaten small-scale companies that are unable to compete with imported U.S. products. Analysts noted reports of an increase in imports and a decrease in exports in 2006 compared to 2005, particularly in poultry and textiles, along with unclear effects on investment rates in the country. Supporters of the treaty, however, maintained that in the long run it would increase U.S. investment in Guatemalan industry and lead to overall economic growth. In response to the ratification of DR-CAFTA, union members, farmers, and students launched widespread protests in the capital, insisting that the treaty would hurt the poor.

Violent crime reached unprecedented levels in 2006. Current estimates of the murder rate in Guatemala range from 16 to 23 murders a day, up from 14.6 in 2005, giving the country the second-highest rate in Latin America after El Salvador. There were 5,886 homicides in 2006, a 10 percent increase from the 5,338 homicides in 2005,

which was a 15 percent increase from 2004, and only 5 percent of cases were investigated. The continued practice of lynching, mutilation, and torture along with an increase in political assassinations carried out by plainclothes security forces, angered mobs, and gangs, among others has shocked the country. The upsurge in violent crime has been attributed to a number of factors, including an increase in drug-trafficking and related turf battles between rival gangs, the proliferation of arms in circulation, continued economic ills and weak institutions in criminal justice. In response, the Berger administration in April 2006 dispatched the army to areas of concern and announced that 3,000 soldiers would continue to support the efforts of national police to fight organized crime through 2007. Many of the 3,000 soldiers would replace 2,500 police officers dismissed in 2005 for involvement in criminal activities. Additionally, in April 2006 Congress passed an anticrime law that was remanded for revisions at the last minute, since it reduced the sentences of some of the most serious crimes. President Berger later vetoed the law that same month.

In an effort to respond to the problem of drug-trafficking, government officials in August 2006 eradicated poppy plants in San Marcos, seized 120 kilograms of cocaine, and destroyed 80 clandestine drug-trafficking landing strips discovered in the northern department of Peten. The landing strips, also discovered in Quetzaltenango, were presumed to have been built by Mexican cartels and to have handled a cargo of 2,000 to 5,000 kilograms of cocaine each over the course of the year. Also that year, the Guatemalan government created a second special army unit, supported by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, to destroy clandestine airstrips in the south and southwest of the country. Progress in combating drug-trafficking in Guatemala has been hampered by corruption among law enforcement officials. Policemen are presumed to have been responsible for the theft of 475 kilograms of cocaine from a police warehouse early in the year.

Protests and strikes were widespread in Guatemala in 2006. Teachers' unions, hospital workers, and farmers protested at various times throughout the year. The protests that received the most sustained attention from government officials and police were those related to land disputes. Some 62.5 percent of Guatemala's land remains in the hands of 1.5 percent of the population, spurring calls for reform. In 2005, 1,052 separate land disputes were reported. The majority of the 2006 land protests occurred in western and northern departments where many farmers have been evicted to make way for increased gold and nickel mining. In response, farmers seized land and demanded titles promised by mining companies. Police and military personnel were dispatched to protest sites, and some protesters were injured or killed in the resulting clashes. Separately, hospital employees from 12 public hospitals in the capital launched a strike in June that lasted through November to demand additional supplies, an increase in the health-care budget for 2007, and added job security for health care workers.

Complaints about the slow pace of reconstruction after Tropical Storm Stan continued throughout 2006. A year after the storm struck, only 590 out of the 2,855 proposed reconstruction projects had been completed. There were also suspicions that the reconstruction effort was rife with corruption, since millions of reconstruction dollars were allocated to departments that were not affected by the storm.

In foreign policy matters, Guatemala in 2006 became involved in a heated contest for an open seat on the UN Security Council. It was the only Latin American

country nominated to replace Argentina on the council until Venezuela entered the race months before the election. By the end of October, the matter was still undecided, and voting in the UN General Assembly was temporarily suspended until an agreement on how to break the stalemate could be reached. Guatemala led most of the rounds of voting, but it failed to garner the two-thirds majority needed to win the seat. The runoff between Guatemala and Venezuela highlighted the ideological divide that characterized the region in 2006. The United States remained firmly behind Guatemala's nomination, while leftist Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez, a strident critic of the U.S. government, refused to concede defeat, at least until after the Venezuelan presidential elections later in the year. Guatemala also refused to withdraw its bid until an appropriate alternative could be named. After several rounds the two countries agreed to identify Panama as a new candidate, thus ending the race.

The long-standing border dispute between Guatemala and Belize underwent a marked improvement in 2006. The countries participated in a series of meetings as part of a 2005 agreement that required the neighboring countries to identify issues and laws to be negotiated, establish their respective positions, and seek to resolve their differences when possible. Currently the countries are discussing commerce, tourism, development, infrastructure, security, justice, immigration, and maritime matters.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Guatemala is an electoral democracy. Though the campaigns were marred by instances of intimidation, violence, and fraud, the 2003 presidential and legislative elections were regarded by international observers as generally free and fair. The 1985 constitution, amended in 1994, provides for a four-year presidential term and prohibits reelection. The unicameral Congress of the Republic, consisting of 158 members, is elected for four years. Elections take place within a highly fragmented multiparty system comprised of traditional parties, emerging parties, and coalitions. Few parties represent a large political force as their clout changes with each new election, and coalitions are more likely to garner more support. Two traditional parties are the Frente Republicano Guatemalteco (FRG) and the Partido de Avanzada Nacional (PAN). A newer, emerging party is the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), formerly a guerrilla movement. Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza (UNE), a political party founded in 2001 and led by Mr. Alvaro Colom has gained support and popularity and has emerged as an important political force. Other parties include those in the coalition that gave Oscar Berger the presidency, such as Partido Patriota (PP), Partido Solidaridad Nacional (PSN), and Partido Movimiento Reformador (MR).

One important accomplishment of the current administration has been the increased political participation of a wide array of leaders from indigenous and human rights organizations and other civil society sectors, including Rigoberta Menchu, human rights activist Frank LaRue, Marta Altolaguirre, and Eduardo Stein.

However, this positive development has been accompanied by widespread corruption and growing lawlessness. Moreover, efforts to promote transparency have made little progress. Guatemala was ranked 111 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. Corruption within the police force is particularly pronounced and led to the dismissal of 2,500 police officers in 2005. Officers were allegedly responsible for the disappearance of 475

kilograms of cocaine in early 2006. Corruption concerns have also surrounded the Tropical Storm Stan reconstruction effort.

While freedom of speech is protected by the constitution, those who loudly condemn the government or past human rights abuses can become targets of persecution. The press and most broadcast media outlets are privately owned, and media ownership is extremely concentrated. A Mexican businessman, Angel Gonzelez, owns a monopoly of broadcast television networks and has significant holdings in radio. Newspaper ownership is concentrated in the hands of moderate business elites, and most papers have centrist or conservative editorial views. Six dailies are published in the capital, but only two of those circulate in other parts of the country. Violence against journalists as a means of intimidation diminished in 2006; however, three television reporters from two stations were attacked in Chiquimula in July. The government does not restrict internet access.

The constitution guarantees religious freedom. However, members of indigenous communities have faced discrimination for the open practice of their Mayan religion. The government does not interfere with academic freedom, but scholars have received death threats for raising questions about past human rights abuses or continuing injustices.

The constitution guarantees freedom of association. However, human rights groups are the targets of frequent death threats and acts of violence. The Guatemalan human rights prosecutor's office pushed for a UN-appointed commission to curb threats and attacks against human rights activists, resulting in the 2004 creation of the Commission for the Investigation of Illegal Bodies and Clandestine Security Apparatus. Freedom of assembly is guaranteed and is generally respected in practice. In 2006, however, police used force to break up several demonstrations, resulting in the injury and death of some protesters.

Trade unions are targets of intimidation, physical attacks, and assassination, particularly in rural areas during land disputes. Workers are frequently denied the right to organize and are subject to mass firings and blacklisting, particularly in export-processing zones, where the majority of workers are women. Sexual harassment in the workplace remains legal.

The judiciary is plagued by corruption, inefficiency, capacity shortages, and violent intimidation of judges, prosecutors, and witnesses. According to the U.S. State Department's human rights report, eight judicial sector workers were killed in 2005. While the constitution provides for a litany of procedural rights, the ineffectiveness of the judiciary restricts these rights in practice. The indigenous population continues to be shut out of the national justice system. Although indigenous languages are now being used in courtrooms around the country, Guatemalan authorities mostly dismiss traditional justice systems.

Police regularly employ lethal force, in many instances without justification. Police officers abuse and torture suspects, corruption is pervasive, and some police officers engage in extortion and kidnapping for ransom. Human rights groups have accused the police of extrajudicial killings of suspected gang members as a reaction to the growing level of crime. Using the military to maintain internal security remains controversial, since the peace accords placed limits on the practice. However, President Oscar Berger announced in 2006 that he will continue to allow some 3,000 soldiers to work alongside the police force. cursory recruitment efforts have left the

indigenous community seriously underrepresented in the ranks of the National Civilian Police (PNC). Prison conditions are harsh, and the facilities are rife with gang-related violence and drug-related corruption.

During his first year in government, the Berger administration has cut the size of the military by 43 percent, and the military budget was slashed to \$15.5 million. However, in 2005, for the first time in 15 years, partially because of the military reductions, the United States provided more than \$3 million in military aid. Human rights groups denounced the resumption of military aid, noting that the Guatemalan military remained corrupt and unrepentant for human rights violations of the past. They also cited the military's ties to drug traffickers.

The state has a structurally weak justice system, regularly confronted by organized crime rings, youth gangs, and remnants of the security forces. Together, these forces have taken the state hostage, paralyzed effective criminal justice, and left social order practically in a state of anarchy with alarmingly high crime rates. More than 5,300 people were murdered in 2005, and current statistics indicate that the murder rate increased in 2006 to 5,885 homicides. Guatemala has one of the worst murder rates in the Western Hemisphere. Also in 2006, instances of vigilante justice increased, as lynching became a more common occurrence.

Roughly 80 percent of the Guatemalan population lives below poverty level and does not benefit from social security. Guatemala also continues to rank high on inequality indicators, with some 63 percent of gross domestic product concentrated in the hands of 20 percent of the population. Unemployment and underemployment levels remain high. Infant mortality rates among the Maya are among the highest in the hemisphere, and discrimination against the Mayan community continues to be a major concern. The government in recent years has approved the eviction of indigenous groups from areas of development, particularly where there are mining and hydroelectric projects.

Violence against women and children is widespread. Street children and women, especially those believed to be engaged in prostitution, are the most common victims of murder. Women and children are drawn into prostitution both locally and in neighboring countries. The numbers of women murdered in Guatemala have risen consistently for four consecutive years, with over 2,200 women and girls slain since 2001. There were 665 cases registered in 2005, and between January and May 2006 there were 299 reported killings of women. According to Guatemala's Human Rights Ombudsman, 70 percent of all homicides are not investigated, and in 97 percent of cases, no arrests were made. Human rights organizations have condemned the environment of impunity in which these crimes take place and have called for Guatemalan authorities to take immediate action. Early in 2006, the government started a commission to investigate crimes against women and implement mechanisms to prevent and punish them.

Guatemala has the highest rate of child labor in the Americas, with one-third of school-aged children forced to work on farms or in factories. As much as 20 percent of the workforce consists of children. Guatemala is a source, transit point, and destination country for its own nationals and other Central American women and children trafficked for purposes of both sexual exploitation and child labor. Transgender women and gay men also continued to be targets of violent attacks.

Guinea

Population: 9,800,000

Capital: Conakry

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF

Overview:

In December 2005, Guinea held multiparty municipal elections marked by low turnout. The international community had considered the polls a test of democratic reforms undertaken by then-prime minister Cellou Dalein Diallo. The ruling Party for Unity and Progress (PUP) won a majority of seats, prompting the main opposition party to withdraw from Parliament in protest over what it termed massive electoral fraud. Diallo was sacked in April 2006, and the position of prime minister remained vacant at year's end. Three new private radio stations went on the air in August, breaking a decades-long state monopoly on broadcasting, though local journalists continued to face repression and state censorship. Meanwhile, President Lansana Conte remained in ill health, increasing fears of a power vacuum should he die before the expiration of his term in 2010.

Under Ahmed Sekou Toure, Guinea declared independence from France in 1958. Alone among France's many African colonies, Guinea rejected continued close ties with France. Paris retaliated quickly, removing or destroying all "colonial property" and enforcing an unofficial but devastating economic boycott. Sekou Toure's one-party rule became highly repressive, and Guinea grew increasingly impoverished under his Soviet-style economic policies. Lansana Conte seized power in a 1984 coup and was nearly toppled by a 1996 army mutiny. In the midst of general looting in Conakry, he rallied loyal troops and reestablished his rule.

Conte was returned to office in a 1998 presidential election that was marked by state patronage, media that strongly backed the incumbent, broad manipulation of the electoral process, and opposition disunity. Although the poll was an improvement over past elections, hundreds of people were arrested after the vote, including the official third-place finisher, Alpha Conde. The June 2002 People's National Assembly elections, in which the ruling Party for Unity and Progress (PUP) easily won a two-thirds majority, were not considered fair because of an opposition boycott and the government's control of the electoral system. Conte won a third presidential term in a December 2003 election that was boycotted by the country's major opposition parties and which international observers criticized as neither free nor fair.

Guinea's first municipal elections in a decade were held on December 18, 2005.

They were part of a series of reforms Guinea had undertaken to win back foreign aid, which had declined because of concerns over the country's record on governance and human rights. Conte's PUP won 272 out of 341 seats, though international media reports cited low turnout as a defining feature of the vote. Election observers said the conduct of the polls was essentially peaceful and orderly, though they pointed to a number of procedural problems that could have compromised the tallies. Opposition leaders denounced the results as the product of massive fraud, and the main opposition Union of Progress and Renewal (UPR) withdrew in protest from parliament in January 2006. The UPR had been the only opposition party represented in the legislature.

The elections had been seen as a test of Guinea's commitment to democratic reform as concerns mounted over the country's presidential succession should Conte die before the expiration of his term in 2010. The president, who rarely appears in public, has been in poor health in recent years and has sought treatment abroad; reports citing diplomats say Conte suffers from diabetes and a suspected heart ailment.

In an apparent sign of high-level power struggles between factions in the ruling party, Prime Minister Cellou Dalein Diallo was sacked from his position in April, only hours after Conte had approved a cabinet shuffle that would have given him more power. Diallo, an economist who was popular amongst the international community, had been the architect of Guinea's democratic reforms. The post of prime minister remained vacant at year's end. The Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG) said that the political maneuvering displayed a "fundamental decrepitude, verging on anarchy, at the centre of a government incapable of taking decisions except by the decree of an individual [Conte] who is fickle at best and may now not be fully competent to act."

In June, local trade unions called a nationwide general strike to demand higher wages in the face of huge increases in the prices of basic goods. Rioting broke out across the country and in Conakry, with many protesters focusing their anger on the government and Conte. Human Rights Watch alleged that authorities had killed, raped, assaulted and robbed protesters and bystanders during the unrest. The strike ended after eight days with an agreement on prices and wages.

In August, three new private radio stations went on the air, ending a decades-long state monopoly on the broadcast media. Initially the stations aired mostly music; it was unclear whether they planned to issue independent news bulletins. The private press in Guinea, based entirely in Conakry, faces strict government surveillance; at least three local newspapers were suspended during the year for coverage deemed unacceptable by the government. Self-censorship is widespread.

Guinea is one of the world's largest producers of bauxite and is also rich in gold, diamonds, and iron ore. However, corruption, mismanagement, and conflict have negatively affected the economy. In the past two years, the government has struggled to stem mounting public discontent over high prices for staple goods, which have been blamed on corruption. The World Bank in 2004 halted the disbursement of further loans to Guinea and suspended field projects following the government's failure to pay off debt-servicing arrears. Lenders have cited Guinea for bad governance, lack of transparency, corruption, and improper economic practices.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Guinea is not an electoral democracy. A referendum held in 2001 proposed to extend presidential terms from five to seven years, allow for unlimited terms in office, and eliminate presidential age limits. The provisions were approved in a flawed vote that was boycotted by members of the opposition and marred by low turnout. The referendum also granted President Lansana Conte the power to appoint local officials and Supreme Court judges. The 114 members of the unicameral People's National Assembly are elected by direct popular vote to serve five-year terms. The prime minister is head of government.

President Conte's Party for Unity and Progress (PUP) controls every level of the government as well as substantial patronage networks throughout the military and civil bureaucracy. Opposition parties include the Union for Progress and Renewal (UPR), which was the only opposition party represented in parliament after the 2002 elections; the Union of Republican Forces (UFR), led by former prime minister Sidya Toure; and the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea.

The government controls the national election commission, as well as registration and election procedures. In the December 2003 presidential election, Conte, who reportedly captured more than 90 percent of the vote, faced only one relatively unknown opponent in the poll; a Supreme Court panel had disqualified six other presidential hopefuls for reasons ranging from a failure to pay the application fee to questionable dates of birth. The main opposition parties boycotted the election. While the opposition participated in the 2005 municipal elections, the leading opposition group pulled out of parliament in January 2006 to protest the results.

The cabinet and the military leadership include members of all major ethnic groups in Guinea, but a disproportionate number of senior military officers belong to Conte's Soussou ethnic group. Politics and parties are largely divided along ethnic lines. The ruling party is more ethnically integrated than opposition parties, which have clear regional and ethnic bases. The International Crisis Group has warned that squabbling for power among Guinea's three main ethnic groups—the Soussou, the Peuhl, and the Malinke—and among the country's different political and military factions could plunge the country into the kind of chaos seen in neighboring Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Cote d'Ivoire.

Corruption has been cited as a serious problem in the country by both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Guinea was ranked 160 out of 163 countries surveyed by Transparency International in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index; this was the lowest ranking of any African country.

The government has wide powers to bar any communications that insult the president or disturb the peace, and defamation and slander are considered criminal offenses. Several newspapers in Conakry offer sharp criticism of the government despite frequent harassment. The print media have little impact in rural areas, where incomes are low and illiteracy is high. Foreign-based publications, such as the French news weekly *Jeune Afrique L'Intelligent*, are occasionally seized by authorities before distribution if they carry articles on sensitive topics, such as the president's health. While private radio stations went on the air in Guinea for the first time in 2006, it remained unclear whether they would be able to operate freely. Internet access is unrestricted, but exists almost solely in urban areas.

Constitutionally protected religious rights are respected in practice, though the main body representing the country's Muslims, who constitute a majority of the

population, is government controlled. Academic freedom is generally respected, but the government influences hiring and the content of curriculums.

Several statutes restrict freedoms of association and assembly in apparent contravention of constitutional guarantees. The government may ban any gathering that "threatens national unity." Nevertheless, several human rights groups and many other nongovernmental organizations operate openly in Guinea. The constitution provides for the right to form and join unions. Several labor confederations compete and have the right to bargain collectively. Unions in rural areas sometimes face harassment and government interference. A massive general strike in June 2006 was suspended after eight days, following an agreement between trade unions and the government on wages and the prices of basic goods.

While nominally independent, the judicial system remains affected by corruption, nepotism, ethnic bias, and political interference, and lacks resources and training. Minor civil cases are often handled by traditional ethnic courts. Arbitrary arrests and detention are common, and there are reports of persistent maltreatment and torture of detainees. Prison conditions are harsh and sometimes life-threatening. Security forces commit abuses, including torture and extrajudicial execution, with impunity.

Women have far fewer educational and employment opportunities than men, and many societal customs discriminate against women. Constitutionally protected women's rights are often unrealized. Women have access to land, credit, and business, but inheritance laws favor men. Violence against women is said to be prevalent. Spousal abuse is a criminal offense, but security forces rarely intervene in domestic matters. Women's groups are working to eradicate the illegal but widespread practice of female genital mutilation.

Guinea-Bissau

Population: 1,400,000

Capital: Bissau

Political Rights: 4*

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: Guinea-Bissau's rating for political rights dropped from 3 to 4 due to political instability following President Joao Bernardo Vieira's decision to dismiss the opposition prime minister, whose party held the most seats in parliament, in favor of a political ally.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,4PF	3,5PF	3,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	6,4PF	4,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF

Overview:

Political infighting and military action along the northern border with Senegal threatened Guinea-Bissau's frag-

ile peace in 2006. A presidential election held in 2005 was heralded as an important step toward restoring democratic rule after a civil war and years of political turmoil. However, the United Nations and other observers expressed concern in 2006 that the country was headed toward further political instability and that democratic institutions had been undermined following President Joao Bernardo Vieira's decision, in late 2005, to dismiss opposition Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior and replace him with a political ally. Severe economic difficulties further hampered peace-building in the tiny West African nation.

Guinea-Bissau won independence from Portugal in 1973, after a 12-year guerrilla war. The African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) held power for the next 18 years. Luis Cabral became president in 1974 and made Joao Bernardo Vieira his prime minister; however, Vieira toppled Cabral in 1980. Constitutional revisions in 1991 ended the PAIGC's repressive one-party rule. Vieira, a former guerrilla commander in the war for independence, won the country's first free and fair presidential election in 1994, but he later came to be seen as the leader of a corrupt ruling class.

An army mutiny broke out in 1998 after Vieira sacked General Ansumane Mane, accusing him of smuggling arms to rebels in the southern Casamance region of neighboring Senegal, which for years had complained that Guinea-Bissau was backing the rebels. Encouraged by France, Senegal and Guinea sent about 3,000 troops to intervene on behalf of Vieira. The troops were eventually replaced by fewer than 600 unarmed West African peacekeepers, leaving Vieira vulnerable to his enemies. A military junta led by Mane overthrew him in May 1999.

Populist Kumba Yala of the Social Renewal Party (PRS) was elected president in early 2000. However, fighting broke out the same year between military supporters of Yala and Mane after the latter declared himself head of the armed forces; Mane was subsequently killed. In November 2002, Yala dissolved the National People's Assembly. He failed to promulgate a constitution approved in 2001, and Guinea-Bissau was governed by decree. Widespread instability led to military intervention in 2003. A Transitional National Council (TNC) was established to oversee a pledged return to elected government, with businessman Henrique Rosa serving as interim president.

In March 2004 legislative elections that were considered free and fair by international observers, the PAIGC won 45 of the 100 seats in the National People's Assembly, followed by the PRS with 35 seats, and the United Social Democratic Party (PUSD) with 17 seats. Smaller parties captured the remainder.

There were fears that the July 2005 presidential election would be marred by violence. Prior to the first round of voting, Yala demanded that he be reinstated as president, and several of his armed supporters briefly occupied the presidential palace. Yala had been barred from taking part in any political activity following his ouster in 2003, while Vieira had also been barred from participating in the election because of his asylum status; he had been living in exile in Portugal for six years. The Supreme Court, however, cleared the way for both Yala and Vieira to contest the presidential poll; failure to do so could have fueled further unrest in Guinea-Bissau, where the armed forces have been fractured by the country's political and ethnic rivalries. Vieira ran as an independent candidate.

More than a dozen candidates vied for the presidency in the first round, but

only three made a strong showing. Malam Bacai Sanha, a former interim president and the PAIGC candidate, won 36 percent, followed by Vieira with 29 percent, and Yala with 25 percent. The PAIGC disputed the results of the first round and demanded a recount in some parts of the country. The electoral commission said there had been some voting irregularities, but the Supreme Court determined that the voting had been free and fair. Vieira won 52.4 percent of the second round vote, to Sanha's 47.6 percent, after Yala threw his support behind Vieira.

Vieira dismissed Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior in October 2005 and replaced him in November with a political ally, Aristides Gomes, despite the fact that Gomes Junior's PAIGC was the largest party in the Assembly and therefore had the right to nominate the prime minister. The move, which was undertaken by decree, sparked concern among international observers. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan warned in a December 2005 report to the Security Council that "lingering political instability" in Guinea-Bissau was hampering democracy and causing donors to withhold urgently needed assistance. The country's Supreme Court, responding to a challenge brought by the PAIGC, ruled in February 2006 that the appointment of Aristides Gomes's government was constitutional. The opposition party announced the same month that it would continue its opposition to Aristides Gomes' government nevertheless. In March, Annan issued a second report expressing concern that political tensions had undermined democratic institutions in Guinea-Bissau, including the judiciary.

Also in March 2006, the military launched an offensive against Senegalese separatist rebels based in northern Guinea-Bissau. Thousands of civilians were displaced in the fighting. A month later, the military pronounced the mission successful in driving the rebels back over the border into Senegal, and troops withdrew from the area.

A UN report in July noted that the lack of financial resources was a critical obstacle to peace-building in Guinea-Bissau. The country is among the world's 10 poorest. The vast majority of Guinea-Bissau's citizens survive on subsistence farming, and cashew nuts are a key export. The country suffers from a heavy external debt and has pervasive underemployment, though possible offshore oil reserves could help alleviate those problems in the future. The European Union agreed in December 2005 to contribute 9.6 million euros (US\$11.5 million) to Guinea-Bissau's budget, contingent on political stability and good governance. However, the government continued to experience difficulties in paying state employees throughout the year. The start of the 2005-2006 school year was delayed for months following a teacher's strike over unpaid wages, combined with an outbreak of cholera.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Guinea-Bissau is an electoral democracy. The 100 members of the unicameral Assembly are elected by popular vote to serve a maximum of four years. The president is elected for a five-year term; there are no term limits.

The March 2004 legislative elections were marked by strong turnout, and international observers declared the polls largely free and fair despite administrative problems such as ballot shortages and polling booths opening late. A national electoral commission oversaw the 2005 presidential election, and at least 200 international observers monitoring the poll said it had been "free, fair, and transparent." More

than 80 percent of registered voters turned out in the first round of voting; turnout was lower in the second round.

Guinea-Bissau was not ranked in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. Official graft is a serious problem.

The law provides for freedom of speech and the press, but journalists occasionally practice self-censorship and face some harassment. There are a number of private and community radio stations. Several private newspapers publish sporadically, more because of financial constraints than government interference. Internet access is unrestricted.

Religious freedom is protected and is usually respected in practice. Academic freedom is similarly guaranteed and respected.

The rights to peaceful assembly and association are protected by law and generally upheld by the authorities. Up to 15,000 people participated in a "march for peace" in May 2005 prior to the presidential election; the demonstration was completed without violence. After the first round of voting in June, a small number of protesters clashed with security forces after demanding that their candidate, former president Kumba Yala, be declared the winner of the poll. Reports said three people were killed.

Nongovernmental organizations and human rights groups operate openly. The right to strike is guaranteed. Collective bargaining rights are not guaranteed, but a National Council for Social Consultation, which includes government, worker, and employer representatives, has been established to deal with labor issues. Most wages are established in bilateral negotiations between workers and employers, according to the U.S. State Department's 2006 human rights report. In September 2006, police used force to break up a peaceful demonstration by several hundred health workers who were requesting pay raises and other benefits, the same report noted.

Freedom of the judiciary was increasingly limited under Yala. While significant strides have been made in restoring a level of judicial independence since his ouster in 2004, poor training, scant resources, and corruption remain problems. Traditional law usually prevails in rural areas. Police routinely ignore privacy rights and protections against unreasonable search and seizure. Prison conditions are poor but generally not life-threatening.

Ethnic identity is strong in Guinea-Bissau, and ethnicity is a serious factor in politics and governance. In December 2004, the new chief of staff of the armed forces appointed 65 senior officers who had been purged in recent years. The move was aimed at providing more ethnic and political balance to the upper ranks of the armed forces. The military has been dominated by the majority Balanta ethnic group. Those appointed included several close associates of current president Joao Bernardo Vieira. According to the U.S. State Department, all major ethnic groups were represented in government in 2006.

Women face significant traditional and societal discrimination, despite some legal protection. They generally do not receive equal pay for equal work and have fewer opportunities for education and jobs in the small formal sector. Women of certain ethnic groups cannot own or manage land or inherit property. Domestic violence against women is common, and female genital mutilation is legal and widespread. In September 2006, a bill that would ban the practice was introduced in Parliament.

Guyana

Population: 700,000

Capital: Georgetown

Political Rights: 2*

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Free



Status Change: Guyana's political rights rating improved from 3 to 2, and its status from Partly Free to Free, because the country's 2006 general elections were widely considered to be free and fair, and the emergence of the new Alliance for Change Party helped to increase the openness of the political system.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	3,3PF	2,3F

Overview: Following weeks of rising violence and political uncertainty, President Bharrat Jagdeo handily won another five-year term in office when his People's Progressive Party-Civic (PPP-C) received 54 percent of the vote and a 36-seat majority in the 65-member National Assembly. The August 28 elections were characterized by lower-than-expected turnout but were considered relatively free and fair, proceeding without the violent protests that many feared would spark wider disorder. The emergence of the new multi-racial Alliance for Change Party helped increase the openness of the political system.

From its 1966 independence from Britain until 1992, Guyana was ruled by the autocratic, predominantly Afro-Guyanese People's National Congress party (PNC). Descendants of indentured workers from India—known as Indo-Guyanese—make up about half of the population, while about 36 percent are Afro-Guyanese descended from African slaves.

In 1992, Cheddi Jagan of the predominantly Indo-Guyanese People's Progressive Party (PPP) was elected president in Guyana's first free and fair election. Upon his death five years later, he was succeeded by his wife, Janet, who resigned in 1999 due to poor health. Her successor, Finance Minister Bharrat Jagdeo of the PPP-C—an alliance of the PPP and the Civic Party—was reelected in March 2001 after 90 percent of eligible voters turned out to cast their ballots, largely along racial lines. Jagdeo's first initiative on being declared the winner was to make a televised national appeal to his countrymen to begin a process of national healing. In mid-2001, violence erupted in several small towns as residents protested crime, poverty, and poor public services.

A rising crime rate and a parliamentary impasse dominated Guyana's political scene throughout 2002. The PPP-C and the main opposition People's National Con-

grass-Reform party (PNC-R) traded bitter words over the issue of payment for opposition members engaged in a boycott of Parliament that began in March 2002 and lasted for 14 months.

That year's outbreak of violent crime exacerbated uneasy relations between the two main ethnic groups. In September, the PPP-C-dominated Parliament passed four anticrime initiatives. However, PNC-R representatives who boycotted the legislative session claimed that the measures would not solve Guyana's crime problem, but rather were meant "to arm the regime with the draconian powers of dictatorship." In January 2003, Amnesty International said that the recently adopted anticrime legislation's mandatory death penalty provisions for those committing a "terrorist act" were "in breach of international law." The political climate appeared to improve, however briefly, in early 2004, when the two main parties announced that they had reached agreement on a wide variety of issues, including tax reform; procurement; and the composition of the commissions that control appointments, promotions, and discipline in the judiciary, the police, public administration, and public education.

Then, in January 2004, a police informant brought public accusations of the existence of death squads whose members included serving and former police officials. The groups allegedly enjoyed official sanction and had killed some 64 people. An investigation of gun licenses and telephone records revealed apparent links to Guyana's home affairs minister, Ronald Gajraj, and both the United States and Canada revoked the minister's visas without publicly stating their reasons. However, efforts to pursue the charges ground to a halt when the informant himself was murdered in June, and the chief magistrate heading the inquiry quit, following reports that she too was on a death squad "hit list." In protest of the alleged involvement of the home affairs minister with the death squads, the PNC-R boycotted most sessions of Parliament for several weeks, including the presentation and debate of the 2004 budget. The breakdown effectively eclipsed the two parties' recent policy accord. Although an official inquiry in 2005 largely exonerated Gajraj, it criticized various aspects of his conduct, such as his use of a criminal informant who—it was later revealed—was a professional hit man, and his award of firearms licenses before police background checks of applicants were finished.

In January 2005, the government declared Georgetown a disaster zone as days of continuous rain led to severe flooding in which more than 30 people were killed, tens of thousands of people were displaced, and agriculture suffered widespread damage. Two years later, Guyana was still struggling to recover. According to the United Nations, Guyana sustained \$465 million in losses that affected more than one-third of the country's population.

In 2006, Guyana endured escalating violence ahead of the August 28 elections. In the spring, the country was shaken by the brutal slaying of a top government official, agriculture minister Satyadeo Sawh, by masked gunmen. In early August, four newspaper employees were shot dead in a brazen attack on the outskirts of the capital. Many observers viewed the high-profile crimes as part of an effort to create a climate of instability around the elections. The country's Parliament was dissolved amid acrimony and mudslinging, and the elections were delayed by several weeks as deep conflicts within the seven-member Guyana Elections Commission threatened to undermine the credibility of the process.

Despite those concerns, the elections unfolded without incident, due in part to

the heavy presence of international observers. President Jagdeo handily won another five-year term in office when his PPP-C received 54 percent of the vote and a 36-seat majority in the 65-member National Assembly. The PNC-R won 34 percent of the vote and 21 seats in Parliament. A new party, the Alliance for Change (AFC), won five seats, and two minor parties, the United Force and the Justice for All Party, each won a single seat. The emergence of the Alliance for Change as a multiracial political party indicates that the extent to which Guyana's fierce racial divide drives the country's politics may be softening.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Guyana is an electoral democracy. The 2001 elections generated a broader consensus about the importance of electoral reform to the democratic process. The 1980 constitution provides for a strong president and a 65-seat National Assembly, elected every five years. An Assembly Speaker is also elected, and two additional, nonvoting members are appointed by the president. The leader of the party with a plurality of parliamentary seats becomes president for a five-year term, and appoints the prime minister and cabinet.

The 2006 elections strengthened the hand of the ruling PPP-C, but also demonstrated that some Guyanese are beginning to vote across ethnic lines, a development symbolized by the establishment of the multiethnic AFC. The main opposition party remained the PNC-R. Other significant political parties or groupings in Guyana include the Alliance for Guyana, the Guyana Action Party, the Guyana Labor Party, the United Force, the Justice for All Party, and the Working People's Alliance.

Guyana was ranked 121 out of 163 countries surveyed by Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. The U.S. State Department has declared the country to be a transshipment point for South American cocaine destined for North America and Europe, with counternarcotics efforts undermined by corruption that is allegedly widespread and reaches to high levels of government, but remains uninvestigated. In a 2005 report, the department said Guyana's inadequate resources for law enforcement, poor interagency coordination, and weak judicial system reflected a lack of political will to deal with the issue. The informal economy, it said, is driven primarily by drug proceeds and may be equal to between 50 and 60 percent of formal economic activity.

Several independent newspapers operate freely, including the daily *Stabroek News*. The government owns and operates the country's sole radio station, which broadcasts on three frequencies. Seventeen privately owned television stations freely criticize the government. However, opposition party leaders complain that they lack access to the state media. There are no government restrictions on the internet. In February 2006, the Guyana Elections Committee launched a 15-member independent media monitoring unit to assess whether the media were providing unbiased news or stoking ethnic tensions.

Guyanese generally enjoy freedom of religion, and the government does not restrict academic freedom.

The government largely respects freedoms of assembly and association in practice. The freedom to form labor unions is also generally respected, and unions are well organized. However, companies are not obligated to recognize unions in former state enterprises that have been sold off by the government.

The judicial system is independent, but due process is undermined by shortages of staff and funds. Guyana was the only former British colony in the Caribbean to have cut all ties to the Privy Council of London, the court of last resort for other former colonies in the region. In 2005, Guyana was one of only a handful of Caribbean countries to adopt the Trinidad-based Caribbean Court of Justice as its highest appellate court, replacing the Privy Council. Prisons are overcrowded, and conditions are poor. In June 2006, the Inter-American Development Bank approved a \$25 million loan to Guyana to help modernize the justice system.

The Guyana Defence Force and the national Guyana Police Force are under civilian control. Racial polarization has seriously eroded law enforcement, with many Indo-Guyanese complaining that they are victimized by Afro-Guyanese criminals and ignored by the predominantly Afro-Guyanese police. Meanwhile, many Afro-Guyanese claim that the police are manipulated by the government for its own purposes. Official inquiries have repeatedly pointed to the need for improved investigative techniques, more funding, community-oriented policing, better disciplinary procedures, greater accountability, and a better ethnic balance in the police force, but the government has given mostly lip service to the proposed reforms. While authorities have taken some steps to investigate extrajudicial killings, and charges have been brought against some officers, abuses are still committed with relative impunity. According to the Guyana Human Rights Association, the effectiveness of the Police Complaints Authority steadily increased despite severe staff shortages, and more than 160 of the 257 registered complaints against police were handled by the end of 2006, including three that led to criminal charges and another 31 that required disciplinary action.

Racial clashes have diminished within the last decade. However, long-standing animosity between Afro- and Indo-Guyanese remains a serious concern. A Racial Hostility Bill passed in September 2002 increased the penalties for race-based crimes. In May 2003, the government appointed an ethnic relations commission to help combat discrimination and reduce social tensions.

Guyana is home to nine indigenous groups with a total population of about 80,000. Human rights violations against them, particularly with respect to land and resource use, are widespread and pervasive. Indigenous peoples' attempts to seek redress through the courts have been met with unwarranted delays by the judiciary. The Guyana Action Party enjoys strong Amerindian support in the country's south.

Domestic violence and violence against women in general are widespread. Rape, including spousal rape, is illegal, but often goes unreported and is infrequently prosecuted. While increasing numbers of victims have been willing to approach authorities, they continue to face social stigmatization. In May 2006, Amnesty International released a study criticizing Guyana's justice system for not prosecuting rapes. It reported that only 9 of 647 cases between 2000 and 2004 ended with convictions. The Guyana Human Rights Association has charged that the legal system's treatment of victims of sexual violence is intentionally and systematically humiliating. Sodomy is punishable with a maximum sentence of life in prison. Guyana has the second highest HIV prevalence rate in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Haiti

Population: 8,500,000
Capital: Port-au-Prince

Political Rights: 4*
Civil Liberties: 5*
Status: Partly Free



Status Change: Haiti's political rights rating rose from 7 to 4, its civil liberties ratings from 6 to 5, and its status from Not Free to Partly Free, due to the holding of elections for the first time in more than five years.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	6,5NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	4,5PF

Overview:

In 2006, Haiti began the process of establishing a democratic government through elections. The first round of presidential and legislative elections was held on February 7, and presidential candidate Rene Preval received just enough support to win without the need for a runoff. Runoff elections for undecided parliamentary races occurred on April 21, and local elections to select 9,000 other public officials were successfully held in early December. Street violence persisted despite the presence of a UN peacekeeping force, and the Haitian economy remained in tatters as international donors pledged an additional \$750 million in aid.

Since gaining independence from France in 1804 following a slave revolt, the Republic of Haiti has endured a history of poverty, violence, instability, and dictatorship. A 1986 military coup ended 29 years of rule by the Duvalier family, and the army ruled for most of the next eight years. Under international pressure, the military permitted the implementation of a French-style constitution in 1987.

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was revered as a defender of the powerless, was first elected president in 1990. Despite calling on supporters to use force to defend his government, he was deposed and exiled by a military triumvirate after only eight months in office. While paramilitary thugs terrorized the populace, the regime engaged in blatant narcotics trafficking. The United States and the United Nations imposed a trade and oil embargo, and the United Nations authorized the deployment of a multinational force in July 1994 to facilitate the return of the legitimate Haitian authorities. In September 1994, facing an imminent U.S. invasion, the military rulers stepped down. U.S. troops took control of the country, and Aristide was reinstated. He dismantled the military before the June 1995 parliamentary elections got under way. International observers questioned the legitimacy of the balloting, and Aristide's support began to fracture. The more militant Lavalas Family (FL) party remained firmly behind him, while the National Front for Change and Democracy (FNCD), a

leftist coalition that had backed him in 1990, claimed fraud and boycotted the runoff elections. The FL won an overwhelming parliamentary majority.

The FL nominated Rene Preval, who had been Aristide's prime minister in 1991, as its next presidential candidate, despite the fact that he was not a party member. In the December 1995 election, which was marred by irregularities and fraud, Preval won about 89 percent of the vote, with a turnout of less than one-third of those eligible. He took office in February 1996. The United Nations had planned to withdraw its troops by the end of the month, but the new U.S.-trained Haitian National Police (HNP) lacked the competence to fill the void. The UN force extended its stay at Preval's urging, but cut its presence to 1,300 troops by June; the U.S. combat force had withdrawn two months earlier.

Aristide was swept to the presidency again in November 2000. The election was boycotted by all major opposition parties and held amid widespread civil unrest and voter intimidation. Aristide ran on a populist platform of economic revitalization; opponents claimed that he was bent on establishing a one-party state. His win of nearly 92 percent was mirrored in that year's parliamentary elections, which gave his supporters 80 percent of the seats in the lower house and all but one seat in the upper house.

Despite the electoral victory, Aristide ultimately lacked the domestic legitimacy and international backing to stay in power. Foreign donors cut their aid programs to Haiti in 2000 when a standoff between Aristide and his opponents prevented new elections, and poverty worsened. An armed revolt, led by a combination of Haitian political gangs and former army officers, threatened Aristide's hold on power in February 2004. The United States and France declined to send peacekeepers in the absence of a political settlement between Aristide and opposition groups, and he was obliged to resign that month and accept eventual exile in South Africa.

The circumstances surrounding the forced resignation were quickly papered over by a constitutional transition that elevated Boniface Alexandre, head of the Supreme Court, to the position of president. Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, an Aristide ally, agreed to remain in office to help the transition process, but was later jailed by the interim government. Political decay continued throughout the rest of the country. By March 1, the National Resistance Front for the Liberation of Haiti—led by the controversial Guy Philippe, a former soldier and the U.S.-trained chief of police of Cap Haitien—had rolled into Port-au-Prince. Without a mandate to disarm the new arrivals, an international peacekeeping force—sent under UN auspices to restore order—limited itself to patrols while generalized looting took place.

On March 10, a commission of elder statesmen announced that Gerard Latortue, who had been in exile in Miami, would become the country's new prime minister. The UN peacekeeping force gradually expanded beyond the capital and was renewed by contributions from Brazil and other Latin American countries. The force eventually reached 7,400 troops and civilian police, but they maintained a continuous presence only in major cities and were not able to ensure security nationwide.

The proposed 2005 electoral timetable suffered repeated postponements throughout the year. Against the advice of the UN Security Council and other international bodies, Haitian electoral authorities finally decided to delay the first round of presidential and legislative elections until February 7, 2006. The interim government and international authorities had hoped to ensure that new elected officials were sworn

in by that date, which would have marked the end of former president Aristide's term had he not been ousted prematurely.

Despite early turbulence when some polling stations opened late, the 2006 presidential and municipal elections were deemed the cleanest and fairest in Haitian history, and turnout surpassed 50 percent. The elections yielded evidence of both political consensus and continued fragmentation. Former president René Préval (1995-2000) won his second term with 51 percent in the first round after minimal campaigning, triumphing over at least 33 other presidential contenders. But Préval's newly organized Lespwa Party failed to win a majority in either house of Parliament despite the strong advantage of his position as president-elect in the weeks before the second round of parliamentary elections. Lespwa won just 11 of 27 seats in the Senate and 20 of 85 seats in the lower house. The results signify that while Préval emerged as a strong candidate among the Haitian electorate, he lacked the coattails needed to create an equally large showing in Parliament.

The presidential election, which was conducted peacefully, temporarily deteriorated into competing allegations of fraud and massive street demonstrations, with the losing candidates challenging the legitimacy of the result. The fact that 34 candidates chose to vie for the presidency demonstrated the high level of atomization among the country's political classes, though the robust voter support for a single candidate, Préval, showed that the poor were much more united. He garnered enough votes to claim the presidency without need for a runoff. Meanwhile, parliamentary runoff votes were held April 21, and the new legislature was subsequently sworn into office. Lawmakers embraced an active role in discussing policies, but generated no concrete legislative proposals during the year. On December 3, the final round of local elections were successfully held when Haiti elected 1 senator, 10 deputies, and 9,000 local public officials.

In July 2006, international donors pledged an additional \$750 million to assist with Haiti's economic recovery. The country had some of the worst human development statistics in the Western Hemisphere, ranking at or near the bottom on life expectancy, infant mortality, poverty and literacy. In the view of many foreign and local observers, Haiti represented the closest example of a failed state in the Americas, but the election of the Préval government presented a window of opportunity to reverse that perception. In one positive sign, Haiti in 2006 rejoined the Caribbean Community after two years of estrangement.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Haiti is an electoral democracy. In 2006, citizens changed their government in the most credible elections since 1990.

The country's 1987 constitution provides for a president elected for a five-year term, an elected National Assembly composed of the 27-member Senate and the 99-member Chamber of Deputies, and a prime minister appointed by the president. Senators are elected for six-year terms, and deputies for four-year terms. There are no legislative term limits, but the president cannot serve consecutive terms.

In order to serve in the lower house of Parliament, a citizen must be a native Haitian who has attained 25 years of age, has a clean criminal record, has resided in the electoral district for at least two years, and owns at least one property in the district. The Chamber of Deputies has the power to impeach the president with a

two-thirds vote. Senators must be native-born Haitians who have attained 30 years of age, and have resided in their districts for four consecutive years prior to elections. The Haitian legislature is currently divided among several small parties with no single party holding a majority. President Rene Preval's first-round victory in 2006 helped to sweep a large number of candidates from his Lespwa party into Parliament, but the party's grassroots support was not very substantial. The functioning of the legislature is adversely affected by a lack of adequate meeting space, the absence of trained professional staff, and poorly developed institutional norms.

Transparency International ranked Haiti at the bottom of the list of 163 countries surveyed in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and the press is constrained by the absence of a viable judicial system and widespread insecurity, and violence against journalists is common. International observers find that media outlets tend to practice self-censorship to avoid violent retribution for critical reporting. There are a variety of newspapers, including the two French-language papers *Le Matin* and *Le Nouvelliste* with a combined circulation of fewer than 20,000 readers. The weekly newspaper *Haiti Progres* is published in French but offers one page of Creole-language news and one page in English. While opposition to the government can be found in the written press, most Haitians lack access to such publications due to illiteracy and poverty. There are 275 private radio stations, including more than 40 in the capital. Most stations carry news and talk shows, which many citizens regard as their only opportunity to speak out with some freedom. Television is state run and has traditionally been strongly biased in favor of the government. There are five television stations, and while satellite television is available, it has a minimal impact, as most Haitians cannot afford it. The few stations carrying news or opinion programming express a range of views. There is no official censorship of books or films, and access to the internet is unrestricted, but Haitians fear violence from nonstate actors if they express their views openly.

The government generally respects religious and academic freedom. However, the absence of a functional police force means that there is little protection for those who are persecuted for their views.

The freedoms of assembly and association, including labor rights, are not respected in practice. Haiti has rich civil society traditions at the local level, but many of its formally organized civil society groupings have been co-opted by political and economic elites for their own gain. Unions are too weak to engage in collective bargaining, and their organizing efforts are undermined by the country's high unemployment rate.

The judicial system continues to be corrupt, inefficient, and dysfunctional. The legal system is burdened by a large backlog of cases, outdated legal codes, and poor facilities. Moreover, official business is conducted in French rather than Creole. Prison conditions are harsh, and the ponderous legal system guarantees lengthy pretrial detentions. Amnesty International estimates that Haitian authorities are holding some 2,000 people without charge, including 100 political prisoners. Former prime minister Yvon Neptune, who had been jailed on dubious charges by the interim government, was released by Preval in 2006.

The Haitian National Police (HNP) force increased from 4,000 officers to more than 5,700 officers in 2006 according to UN figures. The HNP virtually collapsed

during the 2004 uprising and is only slowly evolving into a cohesive organization. Police have been accused of using excessive force and mistreating detainees, and claims of corruption are frequent. The HNP has been used against antigovernment protesters, but it is too disorganized and poorly equipped to be an effective instrument of state repression. Police brutality has been on the rise, and there is credible evidence of extrajudicial killings by members of the HNP. The UN peacekeeping force has helped to establish a minimum level of security in some parts of the country, but much of Haiti remains ungovernable.

In 2006, ongoing urban violence in the Port-au-Prince slums of Cite Soleil and Bel Air hampered efforts to carry out the new elections. Mob violence and armed gangs pose considerable threats in urban areas more generally. Private security forces that carry out extralegal searches and seizures are flourishing. The trafficking of drugs and people is a serious problem.

There is widespread violence against women and children. Up to 300,000 children serve in *restavec* ("live with," in Creole), a form of unpaid domestic labor with a long national history.

Honduras

Population: 7,400,000

Capital: Tegucigalpa

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,3F	2.3F	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

President Manuel Zelaya's new administration was put to the test in 2006 as disagreements over social issues such as education and the environment gave rise to protests, strikes and street barricades throughout the country. A new regional free-trade treaty known as DR-CAFTA was implemented in April, but gang-related crime and violence continued to hinder development. Honduran nongovernmental organizations also reported a disturbing trend of "social cleansing" and vigilante killings that targeted young people suspected of gang activity. In October, the Inter-American Human Rights Court denounced Honduras's failure to curb such practices. Threats to press freedom and insufficient labor laws, especially with respect to women, were also areas of concern during the year.

The Republic of Honduras was established in 1839, some 18 years after independence from Spain. The country has endured decades of military rule and inter-

mittent elected governments, with the last military regime giving way to civilian authorities in 1982. However, the military continued to be the most powerful institution in the country through much of the 1980s and 1990s. Under the 1982 constitution, Honduran presidents have the power to veto the military and choose its leaders; the first president to exercise that power did so in 1999.

A 1969 border war between Honduras and El Salvador, sometimes known as the "Soccer War," ended with a peace treaty in 1980. In 1992, the International Court of Justice ruled that 69 percent of the territory in dispute should go to Honduras, and the court in 2003 rejected a Salvadoran appeal. In 2004, El Salvador challenged the judgment again, citing new evidence. However, Salvadoran and Honduran leaders formally ended the boundary conflict in April 2006 with a new bilateral agreement that has been praised by the Organization of American States (OAS) and other institutions.

In the fall of 1998, Honduras was devastated by Hurricane Mitch, which killed over 5,000 people, destroyed 70 to 80 percent of Honduras's transportation system, and ruined 70 percent of the country's crops, causing roughly \$900 million in damage. Flooding associated with Mitch was extensive, and an estimated 18 percent of the population was affected by the storm. In November 2005, Tropical Storm Gamma struck the northern coast, causing massive flooding and mudslides that destroyed homes and infrastructure. More than 25,000 people were displaced, and at least 32 people were killed.

After a fractious electoral campaign, Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales of the Liberal Party (PL) won the presidency in November 2005 and took office in January 2006. In the concurrent legislative elections, the PL had taken control of the unicameral National Congress, winning 62 of the 128 seats. The rival National Party (PN), which had held power before the vote, took 55 seats. Among the minor parties, the new Democratic Unification Party (PUD) won five seats, the Christian Democrats (PDC) won four, and the National Innovation and Unity Party (PINU) took two. The run-up to the November balloting had been marred by violence. PN activists clashed with campaigners for the PL in San Pedro Sula, the country's second-largest city and business center. In several cases, PL campaigners were left injured after severe beatings, and one PL supporter was shot and killed. An election monitor for the PL was also killed by PN activists. Electoral officials were accused of prematurely declaring Zelaya's win, causing his opponent, PN candidate Porfirio Lobo Sosa, to contest the results.

During the first year of his presidency, Zelaya faced several social crises that dominated the political landscape and, at times, paralyzed the country. During the summer of 2006, various groups—including teachers, students, environmental activists, indigenous communities, doctors and taxi drivers—took part in strikes, road-blocks and demonstrations supporting an array of social causes and economic demands. A 10-day strike in August by schoolteachers highlighted Zelaya's limited capacity to govern. Several cabinet members have resigned since the beginning of his presidency, voicing doubts as to his leadership abilities and the true motives behind his programs.

According to the UN Development Program's 2006 National Human Development Report, income disparity has increased in Honduras since 2001, and economic growth has been stagnant for the past five years. The U.S. Agency for International

Development (USAID) has determined that 77.1 percent of Hondurans live in poverty, with the highest poverty rates in rural areas. Honduras has an extremely young population: 41 percent are under 15, and 20 percent are between the ages of 15 and 24. UNESCO reports that 29 percent of Honduran children drop out of school before fifth grade, and youths head about 10 percent of Honduran households.

As in other parts of Central America, crime and violence associated with street gangs have plagued Honduras, spurring the rise of vigilante groups that target young people suspected of gang activity. In October 2006, the Inter-American Human Rights Court condemned the government for human rights violations associated with the extrajudicial executions of three youths and one adult in 1995, and ordered officials to establish programs for the security forces that would address the rights of children and youths. The court also instructed the government to launch a public-awareness campaign to curb violence against children.

Migration to the United States, and to a lesser extent Canada, has become an increasingly common choice for poor Hondurans with limited opportunities for advancement at home. In the wake of Hurricane Mitch in 1998, the United States granted Temporary Protected Status to thousands of Honduran migrants, renewing the designation most recently in July 2006. There were approximately 408,000 Hondurans living in the United States as of 2004, many of whom were undocumented. Honduras received \$1.76 billion in migrant remittances in 2005.

Honduras implemented the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA), which included the United States, on April 1, 2006, becoming the third of the seven signatory countries to do so. The long-term economic and social consequences of the treaty have yet to be seen.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Honduras is an electoral democracy. The 2005 elections, although marred by violence and vote-counting problems, were considered free and fair by observers from the OAS and local monitoring organizations. The constitution provides for a president and a 128-member, unicameral National Congress, both elected for four-year terms. The number of votes received by a party in each of the country's 18 regions determines its proportional representation in the Congress. The legislature is currently controlled by the ruling Liberal Party and the opposition National Party, but three smaller parties also hold seats.

Official corruption and the lingering power of the military have dominated the political scene since the return to civilian rule in 1982. The army exerts considerable, if waning, influence over the government, and officers have been found guilty of drug trafficking, taking sides in drug-cartel turf wars and protecting drug shipments in transit through Honduras. In 2005, the government implemented an anticorruption plan, but effective enforcement is by no means assured. Honduras was ranked 121 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Authorities generally respect constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and of the press. Newspapers circulate freely, numerous radio and television stations broadcast without interference, and there is unrestricted access to the internet. However, the Committee for Free Expression reports that more than 20 journalists have been charged or threatened in the last two years. Media ownership is concen-

trated in the hands of a few powerful business interests with intersecting political and economic ties, and although the Supreme Court in May 2005 struck down restrictive defamation laws that protected public officials from insult, self-censorship by journalists remains a problem. In October and November 2006, four journalists were caught up in defamation lawsuits after reporting on business irregularities, but the cases were later dismissed.

Lack of access to government officials and information is a significant obstacle for many reporters. Corruption among journalists also remains a problem. Public and private entities sometimes give reporters cash awards, widely perceived to be payment for favorable coverage. Some journalists work multiple jobs, often moonlighting as public relations officials for government agencies that they cover. In January 2006, President Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales introduced a draft Transparency Law designed to combat corruption and promote access to information. The bill has been hotly contested, as many civil society groups and journalists believe it will only encourage corruption and impunity in its current form. It was submitted for final debate before the National Congress in October 2006 and passed into law in November 2006. However, the final law contained certain changes from the original proposal that have drawn criticism from civil society groups and journalists who claim that corrupt politicians are manipulating the law to protect their own past.

Freedom of religion is respected. In June 2005, the country's Supreme Electoral Court struck down a 184-year-old ban on clerics running for elected office, prompting 14 evangelical Christian ministers to run for seats in Congress. In July 2005, the Supreme Court ruled that the Supreme Electoral Court had violated the constitution by overturning the ban, reversing their decision. Academic freedom also is generally honored. Overall, Honduran civil society feels constrained in its ability to express and demonstrate its position on public policy issues, and media self-censorship reflects the intimate relationship between the government and leading media outlets.

Constitutional guarantees regarding freedom of association are generally observed, and citizens have the right to freely assemble. In January 2006, the National Congress passed a Citizen Participation Law, protecting the participation of civil society groups and individuals in the democratic process. Labor unions are well organized and can strike, but labor actions often result in clashes with security forces. Labor leaders and members of groups pressing for peasant land rights remain vulnerable to repression. However, indigenous and Afro-Honduran activists achieved a small victory in 2006 when the World Bank agreed to look into accusations of corruption in the Honduran Lands Administration Program, a controversial property-titling project that has failed to take account of indigenous and African-descendant land rights.

The criminal justice system has been buffeted by high levels of street crime and harsh police crackdowns. While the murder rate has dropped from 154 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1999 to 46 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2005, it is still among the highest in the region. Most of the slayings are attributed to youth gangs, including international groups like Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and 18th Street, which are especially active in the cities of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. According to police statistics, there were approximately 36,000 gang members in Honduras at the end of 2003. The government has adopted an "iron fist" approach to the problem, making mem-

bership in a gang punishable by up to 12 years in prison and using the military to conduct raids and help maintain order in major cities. However, there have been cases of security personnel, particularly the police, acting independently or in concert with other vigilante groups to commit extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and illegal searches. Nongovernmental organizations working in Honduras, such as Casa Alianza, have reported the killings of hundreds of young adults and children as part of supposed "social cleansing" efforts. The judicial system is also weak, and there have been reported cases of lengthy pretrial detention, denial of due process to detainees, and harsh prison conditions, including the beating and abuse of inmates by security forces.

Some 85,000 workers, most of them women, are employed in the low-wage maquiladora (assembly plant) export sector. These women are extremely vulnerable to exploitation by employers, and according to the Center for Women's Rights, more than 100 maquilas since 1995 have shut down suddenly without fully compensating their employees, leaving a debt of almost 300 million lempiras (US\$16 million) to approximately 400,000 workers with impunity. The most recent cases of such abuse occurred in July 2006, when Sang Kyung Honduras S. de R. L. and Sunrise Industries S. A. suddenly closed their doors, leaving a combined debt of 6.5 million lempiras to their 350 employees. Various groups have called on the Honduran government to protect maquila workers in free-trade zones by enacting appropriate labor laws, but so far these calls have gone unanswered.

Child labor is a problem in rural areas and in the informal economy. Prostitution has drawn in local women and children as well as sex workers from neighboring countries. Casa Alianza estimates that as many as 10,000 girls and boys are working as prostitutes.

HIV/AIDS is on the rise in Honduras. In 2005, the country reported that 66,000 people had died of AIDS, while 200,000 new cases were registered with the health system. The United Nations estimates that as much as 2 percent of the country's population may have HIV/AIDS.

Hungary

Population: 10,100,000

Capital: Budapest

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Trend Arrow: Hungary received a downward trend arrow due to major riots, described as the most serious since the country's invasion by the Soviet Union in 1956, following a leaked admission by Prime Minister Gyurcsany that the government had been lying about its economic performance and other issues.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In April 2006, Hungary's ruling coalition government won reelection. However, later in the year, the country experienced major riots as a result of a leaked admission by Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany that the government had been lying to the people about its economic performance and other issues. The unrest was described as the most serious since the 1956 invasion by the Soviet Union, but Gyurcsany, defying expectations, refused to resign and kept his job. In the wake of the unrest, he promised major fiscal austerity reforms.

King Stephen I, who ruled from 1001 to 1038, is credited with founding the Hungarian state. In the centuries that followed, Hungarian lands passed through Ottoman and Austrian hands. In the mid-nineteenth century, Hungary established a liberal constitutional monarchy under the Austrian Hapsburgs, but two world wars and a Communist dictatorship in the twentieth century forestalled true independence.

The Soviet Union crushed an uprising by Hungarians seeking to liberalize the political and economic system in 1956, an event that remains prominent in the country's consciousness. Subsequent Communist policy was relatively liberal compared with the rest of the Soviet bloc, but in the late 1980s, the country's economy was in sharp decline, and the ruling Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party came under intense pressure to accept reforms. Ultimately, the party congress dissolved itself, and Hungary held its first free, multiparty parliamentary elections in 1990. Since that time, government control in Hungary has passed freely and fairly between left- and right-leaning parties. The country has followed an aggressive path of reform and pursued the popular cause of European integration.

In the 1998 legislative elections, Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union captured the largest number of seats and ruled in coalition with the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) and the Independent Smallholders' Party. After two rounds of voting in the

2002 elections, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP) won 42.8 percent (178 mandates), and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SzDSz) narrowly exceeded the 5 percent threshold (19 mandates) for representation in Parliament. Voters elected one candidate on a joint MSzP-SzDSz ticket. Following the election, the MSzP formed a majority government in partnership with the SzDSz. The new Socialist-liberal coalition chose Peter Medgyessy as prime minister.

Medgyessy sent Hungarian troops to join U.S.-led operations in Iraq, an unpopular move among many voters. After years of negotiation, and an 84 percent "yes" vote in a 2003 referendum, Hungary entered the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004, along with nine other countries, most of them in formerly Communist Eastern Europe. However, shortly afterward, the MSzP, like most governing parties in the EU, did badly in elections to the European Parliament, winning just nine of 24 seats.

In August that year, Medgyessy resigned as a result of a dispute with his coalition partner, the SzDSz. He was replaced by millionaire business magnate and Sports Minister Gyurcsany. Gyurcsany's biggest challenge has been to bring Hungary's finances under control while keeping the support of the left wing of the MSzP. Hungary's budget deficit has become the highest in Europe as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP).

In April 2006, the coalition won reelection after a nationalist and populist campaign by Viktor Orban, the head of Fidesz, failed to capture enough voters from the ruling party. The MSzP won 186 seats, SzDSz won 18, and joint candidates for the two parties won 6, giving the coalition a comfortable majority of 210 out of 386 seats. However, in September, comments Gyurcsany made in a May internal party meeting were leaked to the press. In the recorded remarks, Gyurcsany admitted that his government had repeatedly lied to the electorate about its budgetary and economic performance. The leak caused riots in September, the most extensive unrest since the abortive 1956 revolution. Gyurcsany refused to resign, however, saying that his comments were intended to galvanize his party for major fiscal reforms. Weeks after his taped comments were revealed, his government survived a no-confidence vote. However, the ruling coalition parties—the MSzP and the SzDSz—suffered badly in local elections held later that month, indicating a surviving but much weakened government.

Hungary must maintain a budget deficit of 3 percent of GDP or less to adopt the EU's euro as its currency (replacing the Hungarian forint), and the government has conceded that it will miss its target date of 2010 for the switch. The 2006 deficit was expected to be 10 percent or more. Gyurcsany has proposed slashing public sector jobs by 20 percent, seriously reforming health care, and imposing other cost-cutting measures. However, the scandal over his leaked comments may have robbed him of the political clout needed to implement the austerity program.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Hungary is an electoral democracy. Voters elect representatives every four years to the 386-seat, unicameral National Assembly under a mixed system of proportional and direct representation. A proposal to move to pure proportional representation has been discussed but not yet adopted, as has a proposal to shrink Parliament to fewer than 300 members. The Hungarian Parliament elects both the president, whose duties are mainly ceremonial, and the prime minister.

Post-Communist elections in Hungary have been generally free and fair, although some problems persist. During the heated 2002 parliamentary elections, few parties respected campaign spending caps. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) observed that state media coverage frequently favored the ruling Fidesz party, and that government-sponsored "voter education" advertisements appeared to mirror Fidesz-sponsored campaign ads. By the 2006 election, however, the OSCE no longer monitored Hungarian polls.

The main political parties are the MSzP and the conservative Fidesz, which has moved in an increasingly nationalist direction. The SzDSz, a free-market and limited-government party, is the third largest party but has considerably less support than the other two, narrowly clearing the minimum 5 percent threshold required to enter Parliament in 2002 and 2006.

Despite the large Roma population, only a small number have been elected to the National Assembly in recent elections. Toward the end of 2002, the European Commission reported that Hungary was not meeting its constitutional obligation to ensure direct parliamentary representation of minorities. Hungary's constitution guarantees national and ethnic minorities the right to form self-governing bodies, and all 13 recognized minorities have exercised this right.

Previous and current governments have introduced stronger penalties for bribery and implemented a long-term anticorruption strategy. However, some corruption persists. In 2003-2004, a major corruption scandal involving Hungary's second-largest bank touched then-prime minister Peter Medgyessy and Csaba Laszlo, the finance minister. Laszlo had previously been a director of K&H, the bank at the center of the scandal, and Medgyessy had been the chairman of Inter-Europa, another bank involved in the affair. There were allegations of questionable public tenders in 2004, and Deputy Speaker of Parliament Ferenc Wekler resigned that year after his personal vineyard received large state subsidies. Hungary was ranked 41 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech is respected, and independent media operate freely in Hungary, although within a highly polarized atmosphere. Political controversy continues to trouble state television and radio. A 1996 media law requires ruling and opposition parties to share appointments to state media oversight boards. Left-leaning opposition parties had previously accused the Fidesz party of stacking the oversight boards with supporters. After losing power in the 2002 parliamentary elections, Fidesz leaders accused the new Socialist-liberal government of attempting to inappropriately influence state television and radio. A large number of libel suits, some resulting in suspended prison sentences for journalists, contribute to the tense media environment. Foreign ownership of Hungarian media is extensive, but the successful introduction of private Hungarian television stations, such as Hir TV (launched in 2002), has challenged the argument that state-supported media are necessary for balanced coverage. Internet access is unrestricted.

The constitution guarantees religious freedom and provides for the separation of church and state. While adherents of all religions are generally free to worship in their own manner, the state provides financial support and tax breaks to four traditional groups, or "historical churches": the Roman Catholic Church, the Calvinist Church, the Lutheran Church, and the Alliance of Hungarian Jewish Communities.

Some critics have charged that these practices effectively discriminate against smaller denominations. The state does not restrict academic freedom.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, and the government respects this right in practice. Nongovernmental organizations are active in Hungary and operate without restrictions. The government respects citizens' rights to form associations, strike, and petition public authorities. Trade unions account for less than 30 percent of the workforce.

Hungary has a three-tiered, independent judiciary in addition to the Supreme Court and a Constitutional Court. The constitution guarantees equality before the law, and courts are generally fair. Limited budget resources leave the system vulnerable to outside influence, but court funding is being improved, as required by EU membership. The police have been criticized for racist attitudes, and often use of excessive force, toward the Roma minority despite a government campaign against anti-Roma racism. Prisons suffer from overcrowding but generally are approaching Western European standards.

Hungary implemented a legal rights protection network in 2001 to provide legal aid to the Roma community and passed an antidiscrimination law that was introduced in 2003 as a requirement of EU membership. The government has also created a Roma Coordination Council, appointed special commissioners in the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment and Labor to specifically oversee Roma issues, and named a minister-without-portfolio in the prime minister's office to promote equal opportunity. However, the Roma population continues to face widespread discrimination in many respects, and Roma are five times more likely to live in poverty than the population as a whole.

In 2001, the Parliament passed the controversial Status Law, which granted special health and educational benefits to ethnic Hungarians residing outside the country and caused concern in Romania and Slovakia, which have large Hungarian minorities. In 2003, Hungary modified the application of the law to address these concerns, as well as those of the EU. In December 2004, a referendum was held on extending citizenship to ethnic Hungarians abroad, reawakening some objections among Hungary's neighbors. Though a majority voted in favor, turnout was insufficient for the referendum to pass.

Women possess the same legal rights as men, but they face hiring and pay discrimination and tend to be underrepresented in senior-level business and government positions. Hungary is primarily a transit point, but also a source and destination country, for trafficked persons, including women trafficked for prostitution.

Iceland

Population: 300,000

Capital: Reykjavik

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Prime Minister Halldor Asgrimsson of the Progressive Party stepped down after a poor performance by the ruling coalition in May local elections. He was succeeded by Geir Haarde of the Independence Party. Separately, in March, the United States had announced that it was ending its military presence on the island. Also in 2006, Iceland drew international criticism by reopening commercial whaling, which threatened endangered species.

In the year 930, the Norse chiefs of Iceland established the Althingi, which is now the oldest parliament in the world. After being dominated for centuries by Denmark and Norway, Iceland gained independence in 1944. It became a founding member of NATO in 1949, despite having no standing army of its own. Iceland entered into a defense agreement with the United States two years later, and declared itself a nuclear-free zone in 1985.

In general elections held in May 2003, David Oddsson's right-of-center Independence Party (IP) won 34 percent of the votes, gaining only two seats more than the left-leaning Social Democratic Alliance. The IP then formed a ruling coalition with the Progressive Party, acceding to the condition that Oddsson hand over the premiership to Progressive Party leader Halldor Asgrimsson the following year. Oddsson held the post from 1991 to 2004, making him the longest-serving prime minister in Europe.

In May 2004, the president, Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, refused to sign a law passed by Parliament that would have placed limits on media ownership. It was the first time an Icelandic president had vetoed a law in the republic's 60-year history. The veto stoked a constitutional controversy, as many felt that the president had departed from his office's traditionally apolitical role. The proposed law would have, in part, withheld broadcasting licenses from companies whose main businesses were not media related and from companies that owned nonmedia assets.

In 2005, an Icelandic court dismissed accounting fraud charges against Jon Asgeir Johannesson, the head of leading retail investment company Baugur. According to the firm, the charges were politically motivated. In 2006, the Supreme Court rejected a request by defendants in the case to throw out the remaining charges against them.

In another business scandal, allegations were made in early 2006 that S-Group, which had purchased a portion of former state bank *Bunadarbanki* during privatization, had lied about the status of German shareholders during the transaction. According to the *Iceland Review*, the owners of S-Group had close ties to the Progressive Party.

Asgrimsson stepped down as prime minister in June, following a poor performance by the ruling coalition in local elections. He was replaced by Geir Haarde, who had become the IP chairman after Oddsson retired from the post in October 2005.

Iceland in 2006 reopened explicit commercial whaling, allowing the hunting of species including the endangered Fin whale. The country had drawn international criticism since resuming whale hunts, ostensibly for scientific purposes, in 2003, after a moratorium dating to 1989. Iceland's tourism industry, which benefited from a whale-watching boom, had also opposed the resumption of any hunting.

While Iceland has strong historical, cultural, and economic ties with Europe, it has been hesitant to join the European Union (EU), primarily because of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy. Icelanders believe the policy would threaten their own fishing industry, upon which the economy is heavily dependent. However, the country has access to European markets as a member of the European Economic Area. In other multilateral activity, Iceland helped chair the Council of Baltic Sea States in 2006.

In March 2006, the United States informed the Icelandic government that it would withdraw its military presence from the island, but it remained committed to the country's defense under the 1951 treaty. In June, Iceland's justice minister proposed creating a National Security Department to deal with crime monitoring and terrorism prevention.

The World Economic Forum in September ranked the Icelandic economy 14th out of 117 in the world in terms of competitiveness; that was two positions higher than the country's 2005 ranking.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Iceland is an electoral democracy. The constitution, adopted in 1944, vests power in a president, whose functions are mainly ceremonial; a prime minister; a 63-seat unicameral legislature (the Althingi); and a judiciary. The president is directly elected for a four-year term. The legislature is also elected for four years, but it can be dissolved for early elections in certain circumstances. The prime minister, who performs most executive functions, is appointed by the president but is responsible to the legislature. Elections are free and fair.

Five political parties are represented in the Althingi. The largest is the Independence Party, whose former leader, David Oddsson, was Europe's longest-serving prime minister until he handed power to Progressive Party leader Halldor Asgrimsson in September 2004. Asgrimsson turned over the premiership to Geir Haarde following a poor local election performance in 2006. Although the Independence Party has dominated Icelandic politics since the country's independence, elections are competitive.

Corruption is generally not a problem for Iceland. It tied Finland and New Zealand as the country with the lowest level of perceived corruption in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index, which covered 163 countries. However, former minister of industry and commerce Valgerdur Sverrisdóttir was

accused that year of hiding details about the site on which the K&rahnjukavirkjun dam was being built. The land is said to have active seismic faults. Protests against the dam project led to confrontations with police, prompting accusations of unwarranted harsh treatment and infringement on civil liberties.

The constitution guarantees freedom of speech and of the press. Iceland's wide range of print publications includes both independent and party-affiliated newspapers. An autonomous board of directors oversees the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service, which operates a number of transmitting and relay stations. There are both private and public television stations. However, media ownership is concentrated, with the Nordurljos (Northern Lights) Corporation controlling most of the private television networks and radio stations, and two out of the country's three national newspapers. Some reporters practice self-censorship to avoid publishing libelous material. A proposed law to restrict media ownership was the cause of one of the country's most severe political crises in 2004.

The constitution provides for the right to form religious associations and to practice any religion freely, though nearly 90 percent of Icelanders belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The state financially supports and promotes the church through a special tax and religious instruction in schools. However, citizens who do not belong to a recognized religious organization may choose to give the tax to the University of Iceland and have their children exempted from religious instruction. In January 2006, the Icelandic Pagan Association sued several government ministries in order to receive funding proportional to its membership from money that is currently funneled into the state church, according to a U.S. State Department report. In November, the courts ruled against the Pagan Association, which is appealing the verdict to the Supreme Court. A new curriculum was implemented in 2006 by the Ministry of Education, taking a more multicultural approach to religious education.

Academic freedom is respected, and the education system is free of excessive political involvement.

The freedoms of association and peaceful assembly are upheld. Many domestic and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely in Iceland and enjoy extensive government cooperation. In late 2004, the government cut all direct funding to the Icelandic Human Rights Center, an organization started by NGOs to collect information on human rights issues in Iceland and abroad. According to the Council of Europe, authorities felt that state funding of independent human rights organizations was highly problematic. Iceland's labor movement is robust, with about 85 percent of all eligible workers belonging to unions. All unions have the right to strike.

The judiciary is independent. The law does not provide for trial by jury, but many trials and appeals use panels consisting of several judges. All judges serve for life. Under amendments passed in 1996, the constitution states that all people shall be treated equally before the law, regardless of sex, religion, opinion, ethnic origin, race, property, or other status. However, there is no constitutional provision specifically prohibiting racial discrimination in other contexts. In 2003, the UN Committee against Torture (CAT) issued a report that was critical of the country's legal provisions against torture. It found that the laws do not clearly define and prohibit the practice or ban the use of evidence obtained through torture. The Icelandic government disagreed with the report's findings. Prison conditions generally meet international standards.

In May 2004, the Act on Foreigners, which specifies the government's powers with regard to immigrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, was amended to close perceived loopholes. In addition, authorities can search houses without a prior court order in some cases of suspected immigration fraud. The new provisions led to criticism by human rights organizations, which claimed that they were discriminatory and violated privacy rights. In 2005, immigrant advocates expressed concerns about the government's handling of asylum requests, stating that the border patrol did not handle them properly. Also that year, the government announced plans to establish an Icelandic Immigration Council to administer immigration policy. The council began working in May 2006, gathering statistics and conducting outreach. Foreigners can vote in municipal elections if they have been residents of the country for at least five years, or three years for citizens of Scandinavian countries.

Women enjoy equal rights in Iceland, and more than 80 percent of women participate in the workforce. Of the 63 members of the Althingi, 21 are women, but there is no quota for the representation of women in Parliament. There are also 3 women in the 12-member cabinet. A pay gap exists between men and women in spite of laws designed to prevent disparities. In September, a plan was launched to reduce violence against women from 2006 to 2011 and to change public attitudes toward domestic violence. There has been some concern about women of immigrant origin, who may not have the opportunity to learn the Icelandic language and customs and may be unaware of their rights and status under the law. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has also criticized Iceland concerning immigrant women who become sex-trade workers in the country. The government participates in the Nordic-Baltic Action Group against Human Trafficking.

India

Population: 1,121,800,000

Capital: New Delhi

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,4PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F

Overview: Leftist parties and coalitions led by the ruling Congress Party performed well in several state elections in 2006, while the opposition Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party remained marginalized as a political force at the national level. The peace dialogue with Pakistan continued during the year, but was shaken by July bombings on a number of trains in Mumbai, which killed almost 200 commuters. Owing to the sustained efforts of local activists and lawyers and of the Supreme Court and

the National Human Rights Commission, some progress was made on prosecution of the 2002 communal violence in Gujarat with the February 2006 announcement that nine suspects in the Best Bakery had been convicted. During the year, the continued spread of the Maoist insurgent movement led to increased violence and human rights violations in a number of states in India's tribal belt, particularly Chhattisgarh.

India achieved independence in 1947 with the partition of British India into a predominantly Hindu India, under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and a predominantly Muslim Pakistan. The centrist, secular Congress Party ruled at the federal level for much of the first five decades of independence. From the mid-1990s onward, however, the political balance changed. The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) soon became a major factor in Parliament and a regular contender for power, leading governments on several occasions. In addition, the pattern shifted from single-party to coalition governments, typically involving large numbers of parties and an increasingly important role for parties based in a single state.

The period since 1990 has also been a time of major economic reform, with the Congress government initiating a shift toward market-oriented policies following a balance-of-payments crisis in 1991. In December 1992, Hindu fundamentalists supported by major figures in the BJP destroyed a sixteenth-century mosque in the northern town of Ayodhya, and some 2,000 people, mainly Muslims, subsequently died in riots and police gunfire. This incident highlighted the dilemma that has plagued the BJP: on the one hand, its traditional program strongly favored a vigorous promotion of what the party regarded as Hindu cultural interests; on the other, the party recognized that it needed to moderate its program in order to win elections and govern.

BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee's formation of a government in 1998 marked the arrival of the party as a regular contender for national leadership. His government fell after a regional party defected, but it won reelection in 1999 as the lead partner in the 22-party National Democratic Alliance. In February 2002, 59 people were killed in Godhra, Gujarat, when a fire broke out on a train carrying members of a Hindu extremist group. A Muslim mob was initially blamed for the fire (an official commission has since deemed it an accident), and in the anti-Muslim riots and pogroms that followed throughout Gujarat, an estimated 2,000 people were killed and 100,000 were left homeless and dispossessed. The violence was orchestrated by Hindu nationalist groups, who organized transportation and provisions for the mobs and provided printed records of Muslim-owned property. Evidence that the BJP-led state government was complicit in the carnage prompted calls for Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi's dismissal. Although the central government tried to distance itself from these events, Modi retained the support of the party leadership and won state elections held later that year.

The rehabilitation of those displaced by the violence, as well as the prosecution of those responsible for murder, rape, and destruction of property, made little headway after the riots. Witnesses in the few cases brought to trial have faced threats and intimidation by local authorities and Hindu nationalist sympathizers, as have lawyers and activists working on witnesses' behalf. On several occasions, the Supreme Court attempted to correct the Gujarat government's abysmal prosecution record. In March 2004, it ordered that witnesses be given protection by national

forces rather than by Gujarat state police; in April that year, it ordered that the high-profile Best Bakery case, in which 14 people were burned to death inside a bakery in Vadodara, be retried outside of Gujarat; and in August 2004, it directed the state government to review more than 2,000 closed riot cases and reexamine acquittals to determine the possibility of filing appeals. As a result, a number of cases are currently under review or are being retried in other states; in February 2006, the nine defendants in the Best Bakery case were convicted, and during the year disciplinary action was taken against some 40 police officers for their role in the riots.

Buoyed by victories in several key state elections as well as high levels of economic growth, the BJP government called early national elections in the spring of 2004. However, in a surprise result, it was defeated—final results gave the BJP only 137 seats out of 545 in the lower house of Parliament, and its allies also performed poorly. Consequently, the Congress Party was able to form a coalition government with a large collection of regional parties, though its majority depended on additional parliamentary support from a group of leftist parties. In a further surprise, Congress leader Sonia Gandhi declined the position of prime minister and instead appointed former finance minister Manmohan Singh to the post. However, in an unusual power-sharing arrangement, she retained the party leadership and wields considerable influence over official policy.

In the postelection period, the new Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government agreed to a Common Minimum Program that promised a renewed focus on effective governance, a social-democratic budget, and the reversal of several policies initiated by the previous government, including the repeal of controversial antiterrorism legislation and the removal from state-run schools of textbooks that had been imbued with Hindu nationalist ideology. However, the UPA found it difficult to implement some of its economic policies because of tensions among its disparate coalition partners and opposition from the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), one of its leftist allies, to issues such as the privatization of public sector assets and labor law reform.

As a political force in opposition, the BJP remained weak and plagued by infighting over issues of party leadership and ideology. A coalition in which the BJP was a junior partner won the key November 2005 Bihar state elections, and the BJP took control of Karnataka state in February 2006 after a Congress-led coalition collapsed, marking its first major success outside north India. However, it performed poorly in state elections held in April and May 2006; the Left Front made strong gains in its own traditional strongholds of Kerala and West Bengal, while Congress managed to hold on to power in Tamil Nadu and Assam in coalition deals with regional parties. The growing popularity of regional and caste-based parties, coupled with the Left Front's renewed strength, continued to hinder Congress's ability to reestablish itself as a national force and implement key economic reforms. The government also faced widespread protests in May 2006 over proposals to expand existing public sector affirmative-action programs to cover private sector jobs and educational institutions.

A peace dialogue between India and Pakistan continued in 2006 despite new violence linked to Pakistan-based militant groups. Bilateral relations had sharply worsened in December 2001 following an attack on the Indian Parliament building by members of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), a Pakistan-based, Islamist militant group. The

two countries came close to war in 2002, but sustained diplomatic pressure from the United States and others led to some easing of tensions between the neighbors. They instituted a ceasefire in November 2003 and initiated formal talks in January 2004 on eight baskets of issues, including the disputed territory of Kashmir. Follow-up discussions continued on a regular basis, and periodic meetings of the two national leaders made it evident that they wished to continue the dialogue. A number of confidence-building measures, such as improved nuclear safeguards, reopened transport links, and an increased diplomatic presence, were gradually implemented, with direct rail links recommencing in January 2006. The Indian government continued to shy away from negotiating directly on the status of Kashmir, but reduced its troop levels in the territory by 3,000 men during the year.

In the most serious 2006 violence, a series of coordinated bomb blasts on commuter trains in Mumbai on July 11, 2006, killed over 200 people and injured more than 700 others, making it the worst terrorist attack on Indian soil since 1993. Police investigations following the attacks, which included the temporary detention of hundreds of suspects, indicated the involvement of LeT as well as local groups such as the banned Students' Islamic Movement of India. The bombings were a setback for the peace process, with India suspending a planned round of discussions, but in contrast to the aftermath of previous attacks, the official response was measured, and there were few instances of retaliation or rioting against India's Muslim population. Also in 2006, India's relations with Bangladesh became increasingly strained, with India accusing its neighbor of sheltering various insurgent and Islamist groups who used its territory as a base from which to infiltrate and attack India.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: India is an electoral democracy. The 1950 constitution provides for a lower house of Parliament, the 545-seat Lok Sabha (House of the People), whose members are directly elected for five-year terms (except for two appointed seats for Indians of European descent). The Lok Sabha determines the leadership and composition of the government. Members of the 245-seat upper house, the Rajya Sabha (Council of States), are either elected by the state legislatures or nominated by the president, and serve staggered six-year terms. Executive power is vested in a prime minister and a cabinet. The president, who serves as head of state, is chosen for a five-year term by state and national lawmakers.

India is a mature democracy that has held regular and reasonably free elections since independence. A large number of regional and national parties participate, and sitting governments are thrown out of office with increasing regularity. Under the supervision of the vigilant Election Commission of India (ECI), recent elections have generally been free and fair. The last elections, held in spring 2004, saw a decline in levels of election-related violence, but some vote fraud and other minor irregularities occurred in Bihar despite the introduction of electronic voting machines throughout the country. The February 2005 state elections held in Bihar and Jharkhand were marred by more widespread violence, but a rerun November Bihar election was relatively free of violence and irregularities, as were elections held in Kerala and West Bengal in the spring of 2006. Badly maintained voter lists and the intimidation of voters in some areas continue to be matters of concern.

A wide range of political parties operate freely, and there are no restrictions on

peaceful political activism. However, despite the vibrancy of the Indian political system, effective and accountable rule continues to be undermined by political infighting, pervasive criminality in politics, decrepit state institutions, and widespread corruption. India was ranked 70 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. The electoral system depends on black money obtained through tax evasion and other means. Politicians and civil servants are regularly caught accepting bribes or engaging in other corrupt behavior. In one recent major incident, 11 members of Parliament were forced to resign after being filmed taking cash in return for asking specific questions in Lok Sabha sessions. Moreover, a number of candidates with criminal records have been elected, particularly in the state legislatures. In 2002, the ECI was able to implement a Supreme Court directive requiring candidates seeking election to declare their financial assets, criminal records, and educational backgrounds. However, those with links to organized crime, as well as those whose election victories were dependent on unreported money, continue to serve as lawmakers, as do a number of MPs who face serious criminal charges.

India's private press continues to be vigorous and is by far the freest in South Asia, although journalists face a number of constraints. The constitution protects freedoms of speech and of expression but does not explicitly mention media freedom. In recent years, the government has occasionally used its power under the Official Secrets Act (OSA) to censor security-related articles. In 2005, the International Federation of Journalists welcomed the passage of a Right to Information Bill and called for the scrapping of the OSA. Intimidation of journalists by a variety of actors continues. On a number of occasions during 2006, reporters were attacked or threatened by police, right-wing groups, insurgents, officials, or criminals, and two journalists were killed. Members of the press are particularly vulnerable in rural areas and insurgency-racked states such as Chhattisgarh, Kashmir, Assam, and Manipur. The broadcast media are predominantly in private hands, but the state-controlled All India Radio enjoys a dominant position, and its news coverage favors the government. Internet access is unrestricted, although some states have proposed legislation that would require the registration of customers at internet cafes, and an official attempt to block certain web pages led inadvertently to a temporary ban on access to thousands of blogs in July 2006. Potentially inflammatory books and films are occasionally banned or censored by the national or state governments.

The right to practice one's religion freely is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected in this officially secular but Hindu-majority country. However, violence against religious minorities, including attacks on clergy and the destruction of churches and mosques, remains a problem, and prosecution of those involved in such attacks has been inadequate. Members of the *sangh parivar*, a group of Hindu nationalist organizations including the BJP, and some local media outlets promote antiminority propaganda. Legislation on the books in several states, including Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat, criminalizes religious conversions that take place as a result of "force" or "allurement," and the Rajasthan state assembly attempted to pass similar legislation in 2006 that did not enter into law due to the governor's refusal to endorse it. These laws have been opposed by human rights activists and religious groups, who argue that the statutes' vague provisions could be misused.

The promotion of Hindu nationalist ideology by the former BJP government also

affected the educational system. Textbooks rewritten to favor a Hindu extremist version of history were introduced in late 2002, despite protests from academics, minority leaders, and advocates of secular values. The new Congress-led government pledged to reverse the "saffronization" of education and, in March 2005, released new textbooks based on those replaced in 2002. However, continuing problems with textbooks in some states led the federal government to propose the creation of a National Textbook Council that would monitor textbooks used in all public and private schools, according to the U.S. State Department's 2006 International Religious Freedom Report. Academic freedom is also occasionally threatened by intimidation of and attacks on professors and institutions. In February 2005, a professor in Bangalore was assaulted by student activists, apparently as a result of his support for proposed talks between the government and Maoist rebels known as Naxalites.

There are some restrictions on freedoms of assembly and association. Section 144 of the criminal procedure code empowers state-level authorities to declare a state of emergency, restrict free assembly, and impose curfews, and officials occasionally use Section 144 to prevent demonstrations. Police and hired thugs also occasionally beat, arbitrarily detain, or otherwise harass villagers and members of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) who protest forced relocation from the sites of development projects. During 2006, Amnesty International documented several instances in which police used excessive force against demonstrators, particularly in the context of ongoing protests against the Narmada Dam project.

Human rights organizations generally operate freely. However, rights groups have expressed concern over the intimidation of human rights defenders by officials and other actors, with tactics including threats, legal harassment, the use of excessive force by police, and occasionally lethal violence. In Gujarat, individuals and organizations that have taken an active role in pushing for justice following the 2002 riots have faced harassment from state authorities, including targeted investigations by tax authorities or the police, as well as threatening telephone calls, according to Human Rights Watch. The work of rights activists may also be hindered by a 2001 Home Ministry order that requires organizations to obtain clearance before holding international conferences or workshops if the subject matter is "political, semi-political, communal, or religious in nature or is related to human rights." Foreign monitors are occasionally denied visas to conduct research trips in India on human rights-related issues.

Workers in the formal economy regularly exercise their rights to bargain collectively and strike. However, the Essential Services Maintenance Act enables the government to ban strikes in certain key industries and limits the right of public servants to strike. Estimates of the number of child laborers vary widely, from 12 million to 55 million. Many work in the informal sector in hazardous conditions, and some are bonded laborers. In October 2006, new legislation came into force that banned children younger than 14 from working as domestic servants or in the hospitality sector at hotels, restaurants, or roadside food stalls.

The judiciary is independent of the executive. Judges have exercised unprecedented activism in response to public-interest litigation over official corruption, environmental issues, and other matters. However, in recent years, courts have initiated several contempt-of-court cases against activists and journalists, raising ques-

tions about their misuse of the law to intimidate those who expose the behavior of corrupt judges or who question their verdicts. Contempt of court laws, which did not accept the truth of allegations against judges as a defense, were reformed in 2006 by an amendment that makes truth a defense, provided it is in the public and national interest.

The judiciary is reportedly rife with corruption, and access to effective justice by most citizens except the elites, particularly at the lower levels, is extremely difficult to achieve. The court system is severely backlogged and understaffed—there are currently more than 30 million civil and criminal cases pending—which results in the lengthy pretrial detention of a large number of people. The Indian criminal justice system also fails to provide equal protection under the law to minorities, *dalits* (untouchables), and people from other lower castes and underprivileged groups, such as tribal members. Muslims are underrepresented in the police force and army, with only 29,000 serving in the 1.1 million-strong army even though Muslims comprise an estimated 13 percent of the population, according to the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Particularly in rural India, parallel justice is often dispensed by caste *panchayats* (informal councils) or Muslim religious leaders, who issue edicts concerning marriage, divorce, and other social customs. In the worst cases, such edicts result in violence or persecution against those who are perceived to have transgressed social norms, particularly women and members of the lower castes.

Police often torture or otherwise ill-treat suspects to extract confessions or bribes. Custodial rape of female detainees continues to be a problem, as does routine abuse of ordinary prisoners, particularly minorities and members of the lower castes. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), whose profile has grown since its creation in 1993, is headed by a retired Supreme Court judge and handles roughly 75,000 complaints each year. However, while it monitors abuses, initiates investigations, and makes independent assessments, its recommendations are often not implemented and it has few enforcement powers. In addition, the commission has no jurisdiction over the armed forces, which severely hampers its effectiveness.

Reports by the NHRC, Human Rights Watch, and a number of other groups allege that police in Gujarat were given orders by the state government not to intervene during the communal violence that engulfed the state in 2002, and that police have since been reluctant to register complaints against or arrest those accused of murder, rape, or complicity in the rioting. After the state's legal machinery was deemed to be biased, the Supreme Court in 2004 ordered two cases, including the Best Bakery case, to be retried in other states, and also ordered the review of more than 2,000 closed complaints and 200 acquittals. While the majority of these retrials and reviews were still ongoing at year's end, in February 2006 a Mumbai special court sentenced nine people to life imprisonment for their role in the Best Bakery massacre. Also during the year, almost 1,600 cases were reopened, and disciplinary action was taken against more than 40 police officials involved in the communal violence, according to Amnesty International. The vast majority of victims, however, are still waiting for justice.

Police, army, and paramilitary forces continue to be implicated in disappearances, extrajudicial killing, rape, torture, arbitrary detention, and destruction of homes, particularly in the context of insurgencies in Kashmir, the tribal belt, and several north-

eastern states. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and the Disturbed Areas Act remain in effect in a number of states, granting security forces broad powers of arrest and detention. Security forces also continue to hold suspects under the broadly drawn National Security Act, which authorizes detention without charge for up to one year. The criminal procedure code requires the central or relevant state government to approve prosecution of security force members, but such approval is rarely granted, leading to impunity for security forces implicated in human rights abuses. After the alleged custodial rape and killing of a civilian in 2004, antigovernment protests erupted in the northeastern state of Manipur, with protesters demanding that AFSPA be lifted. The government appointed a committee to review AFSPA later that year, but by the end of 2006, it had yet to act on the panel's unanimous June 2005 recommendation that the law be repealed. In response to spiraling Naxalite-related violence, the Chhattisgarh state government passed the Special Public Protection Act in March 2006, but its broad provisions—allowing detentions of up to three years for "unlawful activities" and criminalizing provision of support to the Naxalites, even if under duress—were criticized by Human Rights Watch.

In 2002, the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) widened the definition of terrorism, banned a number of terrorist organizations, increased the state's powers of investigation, and allowed for up to 90 days of preventive detention without charge. The act was used in a number of states to detain political opponents, members of minority groups (including tribal members, dalits, Muslims, and others), and other ordinary citizens, as well as terrorist suspects. Both Indian and international NGOs have documented that it was overwhelmingly used against Muslims. In a positive step, the new Congress-led government repealed POTA in 2004 and ordered a review of all cases in which a suspect was held under the act. However, more than a year after the repeal, not all cases had been fully reviewed, according to Amnesty International's 2005 report.

In India's seven northeastern states, more than 40 insurgent groups, who seek either greater autonomy or complete independence for their ethnic or tribal groups, sporadically attack security forces and engage in intertribal violence. The rebel groups have been implicated in numerous bombings, killings, abductions, and rapes of civilians, and also operate extensive extortion networks. More than 600 hundred troops, militants, and civilians were killed in 2006, with the states of Manipur and Assam registering the highest levels of violence. A series of explosions in Assam in June left six people dead and more than 70 wounded. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of civilians have been displaced, and many live in squalid conditions in camps and are unable to return to their homes.

The recent spread and influence of the Naxalites is cause for serious concern. They number an estimated 10,000 armed fighters supported by a further 40,000 cadre members, and are organized into a number of groups that have since late 2004 been loosely allied as the Communist Party of India (Maoist). The *Economist* reported that they now have a presence in half of India's 28 states, operating in 170 of India's 602 districts and controlling some rural areas outright. Focusing on the tribal areas in states such as Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand, their stated aim is to establish a Communist state on behalf of marginalized groups, including tribal peoples, lower castes, and the landless poor. According to Human

Rights Watch, they have imposed illegal taxes; requisitioned food and shelter from villagers; engaged in forced recruitment, extortion, and abduction; and hampered the delivery of aid to the isolated rural areas whose inhabitants they claim to represent.

Naxalite-related violence, including land-mine blasts and bombings, politically motivated assassinations, and other attacks, killed more than 400 police officers, politicians, landlords, and villagers during 2006. Particularly after the June 2005 launch of the anti-Maoist Salwa Judum campaign in Chhattisgarh, local civilians who are perceived to be progovernment have been targeted. Dozens of villagers were killed or injured in a land-mine blast in February 2006 when returning from a Salwa Judum meeting, and in April, Naxalites kidnapped 52 villagers, including more than 20 women; they were interrogated and beaten, and while most were eventually released, 15 were hacked to death. Nearly 50,000 civilians have been displaced by armed clashes between Naxalites and security forces, and live in temporary government-run camps.

The constitution bars discrimination based on caste, and laws set aside quotas in education and government jobs for members of the so-called scheduled tribes, scheduled castes (dalits), and other backward castes (OBCs). In addition, women and religious and ethnic minorities are represented in national and local government, and in 2004 Manmohan Singh, a Sikh, became India's first prime minister from a minority group. However, members of the lower castes as well as religious and ethnic minorities continue to face routine unofficial discrimination and violence. The worst abuse is experienced by the country's 160 million dalits, who are often denied access to land and other public amenities, abused by landlords and police, punished by village councils or members of the upper castes for alleged social transgressions, and forced to work in miserable conditions. However, a government proposal to reserve an extra 27 percent of places in universities and technical institutes for OBCs—which when combined with existing reservations would take the total number of reserved slots to 49.5 percent—triggered widespread protests in May 2006, with critics alleging that many reserved places would remain vacant and that official policy should concentrate on improving opportunities at lower levels of the educational system. In November 2006, findings of the government-initiated Sachar Committee report, which found that Indian Muslims were disproportionately more likely to be poor, illiterate, and less likely to have access to government employment, medical care, or loans, spurred debate over the necessity of providing proactive official assistance for Muslims.

Tension between different ethnic groups over land, jobs, or resources occasionally flares into violent confrontation, and sporadic Hindu-Muslim violence remains a concern. Riots erupted in early May 2006 in Vadodara, Gujarat, after authorities demolished an ancient Muslim shrine, leaving six people dead, and more than 30 others were injured in communal violence in Ahmedabad later that month. In July 2005, ethnic Assamese began a drive to evict hundreds of Muslims from some districts in northern Assam, claiming that they were in fact migrants from Bangladesh. Other forms of discrimination against Muslims are sometimes excused in the context of ongoing tensions with Pakistan as well as the global campaign against terrorism. Although India hosts several hundred thousand refugees from neighboring states (mostly Tibetans, minority groups from Burma, and Sri Lankan Tamils), it has no federal refugee law, and the treatment of displaced persons varies widely, according to Refugees International.

Property rights are somewhat tenuous for tribal groups and other marginalized communities, and members of these groups are often denied adequate resettlement opportunities and compensation when their lands are seized by the state for development projects. In recent years, financial distress and high levels of indebtedness in some rural areas have led to rising suicide rates, with more than 17,000 farmers killing themselves in 2003, according to the *New York Times*.

Each year, several thousand women are burned to death, driven to suicide, or otherwise killed, and countless others are harassed, beaten, or deserted by husbands, in the context of domestic disputes that sometimes include dowry-related issues. Despite the fact that making demands for dowry is illegal and that hundreds of people are convicted each year for the crime, the practice continues. Rape and other violence against women are serious problems, with lower-caste and tribal women being particularly vulnerable to attacks. Muslim women and girls were subjected to horrific sexual violence during the communal riots that engulfed Gujarat in 2002, and there have been few official attempts to provide rehabilitation for surviving victims or to prosecute their attackers, according to Amnesty International. In October 2006, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, which bans dowry-related harassment, widens the definition of violence to include emotional or verbal abuse, and criminalizes spousal rape, took effect.

Muslim personal status laws as well as traditional Hindu practices discriminate against women in terms of inheritance and property rights, as well as adoption. The malign neglect of female children after birth remains a concern. There has been an increasing use of sex-determination tests during pregnancy, after which female fetuses are more likely to be aborted, despite a prohibition against tests being conducted for this purpose. The trend, coupled with the practice of female infanticide by those who cannot afford the tests, has contributed to a significant imbalance in the male-female birth ratios in a number of states, particularly in the northwest. The criminalization of homosexual behavior has led to harassment of gay men as well as the NGOs who work with them, according to Human Rights Watch. NGOs are currently challenging this discriminatory, colonial-era legislative framework in the Indian court system.

Indonesia

Population: 225,500,000

Capital: Jakarta

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7.5NF	6.4PF	4.4PF	3.4PF	3.4PF	3.4PF	3.4PF	3.4PF	2.3F	2.3F

Overview: President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's reform campaign proceeded in fits and starts, with a notable cabinet reshuffle in December 2005 and the passage of a number of reforms as well as the reversal of some gains in the face of considerable public opposition. Despite the appointment of a new, reformist military leader early in 2006, military-business ties and an entrenched tradition of impunity continued to inhibit much-needed military reform. Further progress was made toward securing peace in the northwestern province of Aceh, with the passage of an Aceh governance bill in July 2006 and the successful completion of the province's first elections in December. A former rebel leader was elected governor in the peaceful balloting. Unrest in the eastern province of Papua persisted, however, and the arrival of dozens of Papuan asylum seekers on Australian shores in February complicated Indonesia's relations with that country. The year also saw a worrisome rise in conservative Islamism, including a spate of religious attacks and the passage of illegal Sharia (Islamic law) ordinances in a number of districts. Democracy activists waged a widespread and largely successful campaign to promote the country's secular ideology of *Pancasila* in response. Staggered, direct elections for regional leaders continued to be held across the country over the year.

Indonesia won full independence in 1949 following a four-year, intermittent war between nationalist rebels and the country's Dutch colonial rulers. After several parliamentary governments collapsed, the republic's first president, Sukarno, assumed authoritarian powers in 1957 under a system he called "Guided Democracy." Sukarno retained his political supremacy by balancing the country's two most powerful groups, the conservative Indonesian National Army (TNI) and the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI), against his Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI). This unstable political triad collapsed in 1965, when the army, led by General Suharto, crushed an apparent coup attempt blamed on the PKI. The TNI and its conservative Muslim allies subsequently engaged in mass acts of violence against suspected PKI members that ultimately resulted in an estimated 500,000 deaths. With TNI backing, Suharto eased aside the populist Sukarno and formally became president in 1968. Having eliminated the PKI, Suharto's "New Order" regime merged "old order" po-

litical parties into two easily controlled groups and created Golkar, a progovernment party based on bureaucratic and military interests whose consistent victory was ensured by heavily constrained and manipulated elections held at five-year intervals. During his 32 years in power, Suharto created a political system that rewarded supporters—increasingly, family members—and punished opponents, while embarking on an economic development program that saw the Indonesian economy grow by an annual average of 7 percent for three decades; millions of Indonesians rose from poverty. By the 1990s, Suharto's children and cronies were the major beneficiaries of state privatization schemes and often ran large business monopolies that operated with little oversight. When the Asian financial crisis hit, devaluing the currency by more than 5,000 percent over six months, Suharto agreed to a \$43 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout in October 1997. In 1998, the country's economy shrank by 13.8 percent, marking the largest single-year contraction for any country since the Great Depression.

Soaring prices and rising unemployment attributed to the corruption, collusion, and nepotism of the Suharto regime prompted devastating urban riots in May 1998, in the midst of which Suharto resigned. Vice President B.J. Habibie, a longtime Suharto loyalist, succeeded him. He removed legal constraints on the free functioning of the press, labor unions, and political parties in response to the *reformasi* (reformation) movement.

In June 1999, Indonesia held its first free legislative elections since 1955. The Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P), led by Sukarno's daughter, Megawati Sukarnoputri, won 154 of the 462 contested seats. Golkar won 120 seats. In October 1999, the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), consisting of members of the elected House of Representatives (DPR) and 195 appointed members, selected Muslim leader Abdurrahman Wahid as president and Megawati as vice president.

Hopes that the two reformist leaders—representing moderate Islam and Indonesian nationalism, respectively—could tackle Indonesia's deep-seated political, economic, and social problems went unfulfilled. Violence continued unabated in Aceh, the Moluccas, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan; the economy was not revived; and Wahid's administration was dogged by allegations of corruption. Wahid was impeached, and Megawati became president in July 2001.

While Megawati is widely credited with stabilizing Indonesia's post-1997 economy (which only returned to precrisis per capita income levels in 2004), critics claim that corruption rose simultaneously, in part because decentralization expanded local government powers without extending effective oversight. Megawati's administration also faced a significant rise in internal security threats. Security forces arrested scores of suspected members of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)—a transnational network of Southeast Asian Islamic militants loosely linked to al-Qaeda—after terrorist bombings on the resort island of Bali killed 202 people in 2002. Similar hard-line approaches to insurgencies in Aceh and Papua failed to bring peace to those provinces.

Voters punished Megawati in the April 2004 parliamentary elections by shifting support from the PDI-P to the Democratic Party (PD), the electoral vehicle for Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), who had earlier resigned as Megawati's coordinating minister for political and security affairs. Still, the PD holds only 55 out of 550 seats in the DPR. Golkar emerged as the largest but not the majority party, taking 128 seats, with the PDI-P trailing not too far behind with 109 seats. Electoral advances for the

Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) largely reflected reform-oriented voters' attraction to the party's anticorruption platform. In May 2004, the government lifted a year-old martial-law decree in Aceh, even as the military continued offensives against separatist rebels.

SBY won 61 percent of the vote and claimed a mandate for change in the September 2004 direct presidential election. On taking office in October, he announced a reform agenda focused on curbing corruption, creating jobs, and attracting investment. The fact that Vice President Jusuf Kalla is the chairman of Golkar (the two men ran together in September) has generally helped shore up the administration's parliamentary support.

SBY's administration was quickly confronted with a major disaster when Aceh, an oil-rich, insurgency-plagued province of 4.6 million people on the northern tip of the island of Sumatra, was hit by a devastating earthquake and tsunami in December 2004. A total of 237,000 Indonesians were counted dead or missing by the Health Ministry as of February 2005; more than half a million were rendered homeless, and property damage was estimated at between \$4.5 billion and \$5 billion. While inefficiency and press restrictions reminiscent of the earlier regimes plagued the initial government response, cooperation between government troops and separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM) insurgents in the tsunami's aftermath ultimately helped to launch ceasefire negotiations. The government and the GAM in August 2005 signed a peace agreement, known as the Helsinki Accord, that has succeeded beyond all expectations, significant challenges notwithstanding.

The GAM formally disarmed in December 2005, and the final withdrawal of police personnel occurred in January 2006, significantly decreasing the military and police presence in the province. The employment and reintegration into Acehese society of former GAM rebels and the passage of a controversial governance bill proved significant challenges in 2006. Although critics said it included excessive concessions to Acehese nationalism, the governance bill passed unscathed in July. It contained provisions allowing for independent party candidates (and thus former GAM rebels) to run in the province's gubernatorial elections as well as the continuation of Sharia law in the province, as established during the Megawati period. The December 11, 2006, local elections in Aceh marked a landmark achievement for peace in the province as well as democratization in Indonesia. Against all expectations, GAM's governor/deputy governor team—Irwandi Yusuf and Muhammed Nazar—won overwhelmingly against seven other slates, polling 38.2 percent and carrying 15 of the 19 districts. The elections were peaceful and saw tremendous participation with 86.9 percent of voters registered and a turnout of more than 78 percent. Jakarta's acceptance of a former GAM negotiator as Aceh's governor has been heralded as another significant step toward solidifying resolution of the long-standing conflict.

The government's efforts to secure peace and stability in Papua, on Indonesia's eastern periphery, have proven less successful. A severe famine struck the province in December 2005, requiring emergency food supplies to be flown in. Papuans have traditionally resented Indonesian rule and especially the government's exploitation of the province's natural resources. The separatist movement maintains that the government has not fulfilled its commitment to "special autonomy," granted in 2001. Low-level abuse by TNI forces persists, and a series of demonstrations calling for the closure of a controversial mine and copper company with close TNI ties be-

gan in late February 2006 and grew violent by mid-March. The plight of the Papuans received international attention in February when 43 refugees arrived in Australia seeking political asylum and claiming fear of persecution by their home government. The Australian Immigration Department's acceptance of 42 out of the 43 refugees strained bilateral relations.

Low-level conflict between the country's Muslim and Christian populations endures, despite peace agreements in December 2001 in Poso on the island of Sulawesi, and in early 2002 in Ambon in the Moluccas. Periodic attacks have continued to occur, including the beheadings of three Christian schoolgirls in Poso in November 2005. The trial of three suspects began in November 2006, one of whom confessed to planning the attacks to avenge the deaths of Muslims killed during communal violence on Sulawesi that peaked between 1998 and 2000. The trial remained ongoing at year's end. The execution of three Christian militants in September 2006 for attacks against Muslims in Central Sulawesi in 2000 generated yet another spike in ongoing tensions between the two groups. Such localized strife presents the government with a particular challenge, as it motivates and provides outlets for the transnational JI network, whose goals have shifted since 2001 from creating a regional caliphate to establishing an Islamic state in Indonesia. Although the spate of arrests in 2002 set the group back significantly, it showed signs of ongoing recruitment, adaptation, and splintering into cells during 2006, making it more difficult to track down and arrest members. Moreover, the release of numerous militants jailed for planning and executing the Bali bombings in the spring caused some alarm about the possibility of a renewed threat to Indonesian security.

In addition to increasing security measures, the government has for the first time employed the help of the country's moderate Muslim forces in countering radical Islam. The 2006 founding of a new "task force against terrorism" comprised of Muslim scholars, representatives of the Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI), and members of the Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, Indonesia's two largest Islamic organizations, marks a significant achievement given the extent to which the U.S.-led "global war on terrorism" has recently tied the hands of Indonesia's moderate Muslims, who are wary of appearing to sympathize with the West. The push for a greater Islamization of Indonesia—supported by the election of Islamist parties in local elections and evidenced by the passing of Sharia-like ordinances in more than 30 districts as well as a proposed, restrictive antipornography bill at the national level—generated a separate, larger debate about Indonesia's secular traditions. The central government, which had ultimate authority over religious issues, was criticized for much of the year for not revoking the ordinances, many of which violated the constitutional rights of women and religious minorities. In an effort to galvanize support for the state's secular character and religious tolerance, democracy activists in June launched what appears to have been a largely successful promotional campaign for the national ideology of *Pancasila*. October polls found that a clear majority of Indonesians (nearly 80 percent) continued to prefer a secular state to an Islamic one.

Economic reform—including a campaign to ameliorate the country's deeply entrenched corruption and attract foreign investment—has been at the forefront of SBY's agenda and a key determinant of public satisfaction with the government for the last two years. Nearly 40 million people live in poverty in Indonesia, and the

economic hardship caused by the 2004 tsunami is still felt by many. In order to remedy the country's large budget deficit, SBY pushed through a cut in fuel subsidies in October 2005 that increased fuel prices by 114 percent; significant protests followed. Inflation soared as a result and remains an issue of concern, particularly as it affects foreign investment. Yet, over 2006 the economy improved, as the rupiah strengthened.

SBY orchestrated a significant cabinet reshuffle in December 2005 that replaced Golkar's Aburizal Bakrie with Finance Minister Boediono as coordinating minister for the economy. Bakrie, whose family owned the country's top conglomerate, was appointed coordinating minister for people's welfare, thus separating him from economic policy. The move also weakened the influence of Golkar, the party most reflective of the "old guard" and resistant to reform. Sri Mulyani Indrawati, a former IMF official, was appointed to the finance ministry. The reshuffle more generally helped strengthen the president's alliances, leaving only the PDI-P in opposition. Plans for another rearrangement including the removal of Bakrie, whose company caused a disastrous mud eruption in East Java in May 2006, are reportedly under way.

Labor law reforms, proposed in May 2006 and designed to improve the country's investment climate, met with significant resistance and generated a series of protests throughout the spring that ultimately led the administration to postpone them; plans to raise electricity tariffs were similarly reversed following public opposition in March. SBY's popularity has waned considerably over his first 18 months as president, primarily because of the October 2005 fuel-price hikes and his perceived failure to reduce unemployment, but also because of this tendency to capitulate on his policies in the face of public protest. Such disillusionment among the public has undermined his support in Parliament and reduced his ability to push through further reforms. Vice President Kalla's September 2006 announcement that he would not seek the presidency in 2009 was clearly a boon for the coalition administration, however, and should help diminish fractious rivalries from erupting in advance of the presidential election.

Despite the announcement in early 2006 of a new three-pronged approach to combating the avian influenza outbreak, bird flu continued to claim human lives during the year, and containment efforts were hampered by the lack of funding for a blanket poultry cull and the decentralized nature of governance in the country. Much-needed military reform continued to face significant setbacks.

Largely as a result of SBY's initiative, Indonesia assumed a more prominent role on the international stage in 2006, garnering significant attention and high expectations as a secular democracy with the world's largest Muslim population. The November 2005 resumption of military ties with the United States reflected the interest of that country and its allies in securing the Indonesian government's antiterrorism cooperation. In September 2006, Indonesia announced that it would contribute roughly 1,000 soldiers to a UN peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon, despite earlier objections from Israel; the last of three troop contingents deployed to the country in late November. In October, Indonesia won a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council reserved for Asian countries, to be held for a two-year term in 2007-2008.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Indonesia is an electoral democracy. In 2004, for the first time, Indonesians directly elected their president and all 550 members of the House of Representative (DPR), as well as

representatives to a new legislative body, the Regional Representatives Council (DPD). (Before 2004, presidents were elected by the People's Consultative Assembly [MPR], itself comprised of a combination of elected lawmakers and appointed officials. The MPR, currently comprised of elected DPR and DPD members, now performs tasks involving the swearing in and dismissal of presidents and the amendment of the constitution.) The DPD is tasked with proposing, discussing, and monitoring laws related to regional autonomy. Presidents and vice presidents can serve up to two five-year terms. Legislators also serve five-year terms.

Staggered, direct elections for regional leaders across Indonesia began in June 2005 and are scheduled to continue through 2008. While voter turnout (65 to 75 percent) was lower than in the 2004 national elections, the polls were generally considered to be free, fair, and relatively peaceful. A very small number of violent incidents were reported in 2006.

Both new parties—such as the PD and the PKS—and established parties have gained office. As of June 2006, 40 percent of incumbent candidates had been voted out of office since local elections began. Still, some electoral rules favor larger, more established parties and may limit political access. For example, independent candidates cannot contest elections—candidates must be nominated by political parties—and voters choose parties, not candidates, in the voting booth. Parties, in turn, must prove that they have a nationwide network of members and offices before they can make nominations. Parties that fail to win 3 percent of the vote are not allowed to contest future elections. The exception to these rules is in Aceh, where independent candidates can run thanks to a concession made in the Helsinki Accord and codified in the July 2006 governance law. The provision allows for the potential transformation of GAM separatists into viable candidates. December 2006 saw this occur for the first time, when former GAM separatists not only contested the local elections but won overwhelmingly, securing the offices of governor and deputy governor. Although the president will continue to be directly elected, beginning in 2009 the presidential candidate must be nominated by at least 15 percent of the members of the DPR. Similarly, since direct elections for provincial governors and regents began in 2005, candidates have needed 15 percent of the vote in local assemblies to secure a nomination. These nominating requirements tend to perpetuate corrupt practices, with nominations often sold to the highest bidder.

While the military formally withdrew from politics when it lost its 38 appointed seats in the MPR in 2004, the army maintains a "territorial network" of soldiers in every district and village, which gives it influence at the local level.

Corruption remains endemic in Indonesia, including in the judiciary. In 2003, the government created the Corruption Eradication Commission, a group of special prosecutors with the power to investigate any suspected misconduct involving government officials who are believed to have cost the state more than one billion rupiah, approximately \$10,500. The government has no formal right to intervene with the work of this body. In 2005, the official Indonesian Corruption Watch, headed by veteran legal aid activist Tenten Madduki Marzuki, indicted several high-ranking electoral officials for graft. Yet even successful convictions of high-profile defendants have produced scandal: two court clerks active in the appeal of a former Aceh governor's 2005 conviction were arrested that year for accepting bribes to aid him.

Plans to protect officials from graft investigations, announced in 2006, risk undermining some of the progress that has been made in this area.

SBY has requested that his officials divest their personal business interests on taking office, yet several high-level officials continue to own some of the country's largest businesses, including Golkar's Aburizal Bakrie, chairman of Bakrie and Brothers, a major Suharto-era conglomerate. The need to maintain good relations with Vice President Jusuf Kalla, Golkar's chairman, limits the extent to which SBY can move to rid his cabinet of corruption. Indonesia was ranked 130 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The state of press freedom in Indonesia is mixed. The country has a large independent media presence, with roughly 60 radio stations in Jakarta and 10 independent television stations nationwide in addition to the public Televisi Republik Indonesia. Yet strict licensing rules mean that thousands of television and radio stations operate illegally; international press freedom groups are sharply critical of a new set of private broadcasting regulations that went into effect in February 2006, objecting especially to their restraints on access to information. The new regulations prompted the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI), Indonesia's largest trade union for journalists, to accuse SBY's Department of Communication and Information of reinstating the censorship that existed under Suharto's Department of Information. Moreover, libel laws and political pressure restrict the areas journalists can report on and how they frame their stories. In the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, Aceh was closed to members of the foreign media, and government delegations visited local newspapers to express displeasure at their reporting on the situation. The foreign press has been banned from the restive province of Papua since 2003. In September 2006, five Australian journalists were arrested, questioned, and on the point of being expelled from the country for visiting the forbidden province. Defaming the president and vice president is prohibited by law, and criminal defamation charges are often brought against journalists. In a high-profile defamation case in 2006, online editor Teguh Santosa was detained for republishing one of 12 controversial Danish cartoons of the prophet Muhammad, an alleged violation of Article 156 of the Criminal Code on "insult against religion." Santosa's indictment was ultimately ruled unacceptable in September. There are more than 62,000 internet hosts in Indonesia, an estimated 10 million internet users, and no reported government restrictions on access.

Early 2006 saw a considerable rise in religious intolerance, with increasing attacks against members of the Ahmadiyah sect, which many Muslims view as heretical, on Lombok; a wave of attacks against religious minorities, women, and the press by vigilante groups such as the Islamic Defenders Front and the Betawi Brotherhood Forum; and mobs forcibly closing churches in Muslim-majority areas. In an effort to ameliorate the situation, the government issued a Regulation on Building Houses of Worship in March, but the new rules met resistance from all sides, with members of minority faiths fearing it would only make it impossible to build in majority Muslim areas and the MUI arguing that it went too far in accommodating minorities. A draft pornography law, introduced by the PKS, was debated by the DPR for much of the year, pitting the country's moderate majority against the conservative minority. The broader campaign launched by democracy activists against the rise of conservative Islamism, and in particular the adoption of Sharia ordinances in a number of districts, appears to have succeeded in preserving the country's official ad-

herence to secularism. While the president unequivocally defended the preservation of the state's secular *Pancasila* ideology, the central government has been criticized for not revoking the ordinances or taking sufficient action to curb vigilante aggression, in accordance with its responsibility for upholding religious tolerance. Indonesia officially recognizes five faiths: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Animists, Confucians, Baha'is, and other members of unrecognized religions have difficulty obtaining national identity cards, which are needed to register births, marriages, and divorces. Academic freedom in Indonesia is generally respected.

Indonesia has many effective, outspoken human rights groups, yet they are subject to monitoring and interference by the government. Independence activists in Papua and in the Moluccas, and labor and political activists in Java and Sulawesi, all remain likely targets for human rights abuse. The case of Munir Said Thalib, a prominent rights activist who died of arsenic poisoning in 2004 while on a flight from Jakarta to Amsterdam, remains unsolved; in October 2006, the Supreme Court overturned the December 2005 conviction of the only person convicted of his murder, and little has been done by the police or prosecutors to follow up the investigation. Although the government generally respects freedom of assembly, the authorities have restricted this right in conflict areas. An alliance of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Aceh protested what they felt were key failures of the governance bill passed in July.

Indonesian workers can join independent unions, bargain collectively, and, except for civil servants, stage strikes. Workers do have strong legal protection, to the degree that this became a push for reform by business groups in 2006 to promote investment. Government enforcement of minimum-wage and other labor laws is weak, however, and there are credible reports of employers dismissing or otherwise exacting retribution from union organizers. Moreover, unions allege that factory managers at times use youth gangs or plainclothes security forces—often off-duty soldiers and police—to intimidate workers or break strikes. Roughly 10 to 15 percent of Indonesia's 80 million industrial workers are unionized. The country's trade unions in 2006 staged a series of protests that eventually forced SBY to reverse his labor law reforms. According to the International Labor Organization, there are nearly 700,000 child domestic workers in Indonesia.

SBY has made legal reform a key objective of his new government and has appointed well-known reformers to the positions of attorney general and chief justice of the Supreme Court. In January 2006, he endorsed the Judicial Commission's reevaluation of all 49 Supreme Court justices, as the Supreme Court has been the slowest of the country's judicial institutions to reform. The system is so mired in corruption that justice typically is awarded to the highest bidder. Bribes often influence prosecution, conviction, and sentencing in civil and criminal cases, and court outcomes are subject to influence by military personnel and government officials. Courts often limit defendants' access to counsel and allow forced confessions in criminal cases. Low salaries for judicial officials and the lack of punishment for illegal activity perpetuate the problem.

The Constitutional Court has established an early record for independent rulings that take due consideration of legal principles. When SBY took the economically necessary, but broadly unpopular, step of doubling gasoline prices in 2005,

the court ruled that the move to impeach the president on the basis of that policy had no legal standing. The court also ruled in the fall of 2006, however, to strip the Judicial Commission of its oversight powers, which will inevitably stall efforts to curb graft in the courts.

Judicial weakness perpetuates abuse on the part of security forces, who regularly go unpunished for a range of human rights violations. These range from ongoing low-level abuse in conflict zones like Papua, where the TNI recently increased its presence, to torture of criminal suspects, peaceful political activists, and Indonesians involved in land and other disputes with authorities. Senior military officers are not held accountable for human rights violations anywhere in the archipelago.

Ending the culture of impunity in the military is crucial to the country's democratic consolidation and move away from the repression of Suharto's New Order era. Defense Minister Juwono Sudarsono, a respected civilian who held the same post during the Wahid administration, has moved to ensure civilian control of the military by folding the TNI into the civilian-led Ministry of Defense, but only military personnel have since been deemed qualified to take up positions in the ministry. The appointment of air force Marshal Djoko Suyanto as the new military leader in January 2006 was also a positive sign, since the air force is the military branch with the least allegiance to the "old guard." Military reform has faced considerable setbacks over the year, however, primarily because of the colossal problem of military funding. The plan for the TNI to comply with a 2004 law by selling off its extensive business interests by 2009 has been significantly scaled back, with Sudarsono maintaining that the country's insufficient defense spending—with the TNI receiving only 30 percent of its funding from the state budget—necessitates private financing for arms and equipment. The need to uphold its business interests perpetuates the military's use of violence and intimidation. Human rights groups worry that the restoration of military ties with the United States in November 2005 and Yudhoyono's encouragement of more active military involvement in counterterrorism contradicts recent reforms that exclusively entrust the police with domestic security, thus blurring the line between the two mandates and potentially opening the door to military repression of political dissent.

Sudarsono has also recently led the fight against trying TNI soldiers in civilian courts. Efforts to curb military impunity were dealt a setback by the acquittals or relatively short jail terms handed down in cases related to the 1999 violence in East Timor that killed more than 1,000 civilians. In a series of trials that ended in August 2004, a Jakarta court acquitted 12 defendants and handed down jail terms of between 3 and 10 years to the six found guilty. That trial process was largely judged a failure. In response to moves in the international community to establish a war crimes tribunal, Indonesia and East Timor formed a Commission on Truth and Friendship, which met for the first time in August 2005, but does not have prosecutorial powers. The Human Rights Court for Aceh, proposed along with the governance bill, similarly lacks the authority to try human rights abuses committed prior to the signing of the 2005 Helsinki Accord, including routine torture and intimidation by the TNI as documented by Human Rights Watch since 2003.

Ethnic Chinese continue to face some harassment and violence, though far less than in the late 1990s, when attacks killed hundreds and destroyed many Chinese-owned shops and churches. Unlike other Indonesians, ethnic Chinese must show a

citizenship card to obtain a passport, credit card, or business license, or to enroll a child in school—a requirement that makes them vulnerable to extortion by bureaucrats. Ethnic Chinese make up less than 3 percent of the nation's population, but are resented by some Indonesians for reputedly holding the lion's share of private wealth. A few ethnic Chinese have amassed huge fortunes in business, though most are ordinary traders or merchants.

Ethnic Dayaks in Kalimantan and members of Indonesia's other minority groups face considerable discrimination. The government at times fails to stop mining and logging companies, which often act in collusion with local military and police, from encroaching on communal land in Kalimantan and other areas. That state also appropriates land claimed by indigenous Indonesians for development projects without fair compensation. A major September 2006 Human Rights Watch report documented the forced eviction of tens of thousands of urban poor in Jakarta, where local police and the military have used excessive force, including gunfire, at the behest of local government authorities. In Kalimantan and other areas, many disputes between ethnic groups are said to be linked to the government's decades-old policy of resettling tens of thousands of Indonesians to remote parts of the archipelago from overcrowded areas such as Java.

Indonesian women face considerable discrimination. They are often steered by factory employers into low-level, low-paying jobs, and female university graduates reportedly receive salaries that are 25 percent lower, on average, than those paid to their male counterparts. Female household servants at times are forced to work without pay, for extremely low wages, or in situations of debt bondage. Female genital mutilation is reportedly still practiced in some areas, although the more extreme forms apparently are becoming less common. Trafficking of women for prostitution, forced labor, and debt bondage reportedly continues unabated, often with the complicity or involvement of police, soldiers, and officials, despite the passage of a child-trafficking bill and stiffer provisions against trafficking of women. Abortion is illegal in Indonesia, except to save a woman's life. The recent passage of Sharia-like ordinances in a number of districts went a long way to further infringe upon women's constitutional rights. Women who protested the laws in Tangerang were attacked by members of religious vigilante groups.

↓ Iran

Population: 70,300,000
Capital: Tehran

Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 6
Status: Not Free



Trend Arrow: Iran received a downward trend arrow due to government crackdowns on freedom of assembly.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,7NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF

Overview:

Political and civil liberties continued to deteriorate in 2006 under the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. While the reform movement was dealt significant blows through government suppression of dissent and control over media outlets, there was growing frustration over the Ahmadinejad government's handling of domestic policy. The government crackdown on peaceful demonstrations and strikes throughout the year also inhibited peaceful reform efforts. Negotiations over Iran's nuclear program are at an impasse, and the country faces the serious prospect of international sanctions due to its refusal to suspend uranium enrichment activities. As a result the U.N. Security Council unanimously voted to impose limited sanctions. Ahmedinejad and his allies experienced a political setback in the municipal and Assembly of Experts elections in December.

In 1979, a tumultuous revolution ousted Iran's hereditary monarchy, which was marked by widespread corruption and misguided modernization efforts. The revolution mobilized the entire Iranian population and brought together diverse political interests, from clerics to Communists as well as democrats and human rights activists, in their efforts to rid Iran of the Pahlavi dynasty's rule. Ultimately, it was the more organized clerical establishment, in a strategic alliance with Iran's merchant class, who came out on top. Under the charismatic leadership of the previously exiled cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, democratic and republican interests were subsumed by more conservative theocratic rule. The constitution drafted by Khomeini's disciples provided for a president and parliament elected through universal adult suffrage, but an unelected clerical body, the Council of Guardians, was empowered to approve electoral candidates and certify that the decisions of elected officials were in accord with Sharia (Islamic law). Khomeini was named supreme leader and invested with control over the security and intelligence services, armed forces, and judiciary. Soon after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, Iran became embroiled in an eight-year war of attrition with neighboring Iraq when Iraqi leader

Saddam Hussein launched an invasion to settle a long-running border dispute. The conflict, which lasted from 1980 to 1988, cost over a million lives.

After Khomeini's death in 1989, the title of supreme leader passed to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a middle-ranking cleric who lacked the religious credentials and popularity of his predecessor. The constitution was changed to consolidate his power and give him final authority on all matters of foreign and domestic policy. Beneath its veneer of religious probity, the Islamic Republic gave rise to a new elite that accumulated wealth through opaque and unaccountable means. Basic freedoms were quickly revoked, and women in particular experienced severe regression in their status and rights. By the mid-1990s, dismal economic conditions and a demographic trend toward a younger population had created widespread hostility to clerical rule. A coalition of reformers began to emerge within the leadership, advocating a gradual process of political reform, economic liberalization, and normalization of relations with the outside world that was designed to legitimize, but not radically alter, the existing political system.

Representing this coalition, former culture minister Mohammed Khatami was elected president in 1997 with nearly 70 percent of the vote. Khatami's administration made considerable strides over the next few years in expanding public freedom. More than 200 independent newspapers and magazines representing a diverse array of viewpoints were established, and the authorities relaxed the enforcement of strict Islamic restrictions on social interaction between the sexes. Reformists won 80 percent of the seats in the country's first nationwide municipal elections in 1999 and took the vast majority of seats in parliamentary elections the following year.

The 2000 parliamentary elections prompted a backlash by hard-line clerics that continued through 2006. Over the four years after the elections, the conservative-controlled judiciary closed more than 100 reformist newspapers and jailed hundreds of liberal journalists and activists, while security forces cracked down ruthlessly on student protests against these measures. Significant political and economic reforms were overwhelmingly approved by Parliament, only to be vetoed by the Council of Guardians.

Despite being reelected with 78 percent of the vote in 2001, Khatami did not use his popular mandate to challenge the country's conservative clerics, ignoring recurrent pleas by reformist members of Parliament to call a national referendum to approve vetoed reform legislation, and repeatedly imploring citizens to refrain from demonstrating in public. Within the broader reform movement, Khatami was accused not just of being ineffective, but also of willingly serving as a democratic facade for an oppressive regime. Many Iranians abandoned hopes for government-led reform. Record low turnout for the February 2003 municipal elections resulted in a landslide victory by hard-liners and showed that the ability of reformist politicians to mobilize the public had deteriorated markedly.

Popular dissatisfaction with the inability of the reform movement to deliver, coupled with the fact that the Council of Guardians rejected the candidacies of most reformist politicians, including scores of incumbents, allowed hard-liners to triumph in the February 2004 parliamentary elections. Emboldened by the victory, the clerical establishment quickly moved to further restrict public freedom. Several major reformist newspapers were closed, while dozens of journalists and civil society activists were arrested during the year as the authorities attacked the country's last

refuge of free expression—the internet. In October, the head of the judiciary, Ayatollah Mahmoud Shahroudi, announced that "anyone who disseminates information aimed at disturbing the public mind through computer systems" would be jailed. The government also launched a crackdown on "social corruption," sending thousands of morality police and vigilantes into the streets to enforce Islamic dress codes and prevent public mingling of men and women.

The June 2005 presidential election swept away the last bastion of reformist political power in Iran. While the Council of Guardians ensured a reactionary outcome by rejecting the candidacies of popular reformers, the victory of Tehran mayor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad over other approved candidates in a two-round election reflected popular desires for a change in the status quo. The son of a blacksmith, Ahmadinejad dressed modestly and lived in a working-class neighborhood. As Iran's first nonclerical president in more than two decades, he campaigned on promises to fight elite corruption and redistribute Iran's oil wealth to the poor and middle class.

Ahmadinejad signaled his intent to further erode political and civil liberties by awarding the powerful ministries of Information and the Interior to hard-liners who have been implicated directly in the extrajudicial killings of dissidents and other egregious human rights abuses. He quickly began a wide-ranging purge of the administration, including the dismissal of 40 of Iran's most experienced diplomats and seven state bank directors. The new president and many of the new appointees were veterans of the Iran-Iraq War.

His government tightened restrictions on media and announced plans to impose more stringent controls. Human rights suffered, with increasing reports of arrest, torture, and execution. Sharia was also more strictly imposed than under Khatami. Nevertheless, most political power remains with the senior clerics and the supreme leader.

Nevertheless, the most significant change associated with Ahmadinejad's ascension was in Iran's foreign policy. After two years of efforts by Britain, France, and Germany to convince Tehran to permanently halt its uranium-enrichment and plutonium-reprocessing programs, the new administration rejected a European Union (EU) package of economic incentives in August 2005 and resumed uranium processing work. The following month, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) ruled that Iran was in "non-compliance" with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Rather than attempting to allay fears that Iran was seeking to develop nuclear weapons, Ahmadinejad seemed intent on enflaming them, declaring that Iran was "ready to transfer nuclear know-how to Islamic countries."

In January 2006, Iran announced that it was resuming other aspects of its nuclear fuel research, triggering condemnation from the international community. Iran's foreign minister also announced the end of Iran's voluntary cooperation with the IAEA. In April, an IAEA report faulted Iran for failing to suspend uranium enrichment and improve cooperation with inspectors. As a result of the IAEA reports and faltering negotiations, the UN Security Council in July adopted Resolution 1696, calling for Iran to suspend uranium enrichment by August 31 or face the possibility of economic sanctions.

Despite renewed efforts by the United Nations, the EU and Russia to reach a negotiated settlement with Iran, the nuclear issue remains at an impasse. The main sticking point is Iran's unwillingness to suspend uranium enrichment, which offi-

cials say must precede talks involving the United States. Iranians insist they seek only peaceful uses of nuclear energy and accuse the West of restraining their progress. Iran rejected the August 31 UN deadline, later stating that it would engage in negotiations only if UN sanctions ended. However, on November 14, 2006, the IAEA reported that traces of plutonium and enriched uranium were found at a nuclear waste facility, after which the U.N. voted unanimously to impose sanctions and ban the sale to Iran of materials that could be used for nuclear or missile programs.

The nuclear crisis has been heightened by Ahmadinejad's repeated calls for the destruction of Israel and public remarks questioning the reality of the Holocaust. During the opening of the UN General Assembly in September, Ahmadinejad defended Iran's right to nuclear energy while criticizing the United States and the United Nations.

Iran has further alarmed the international community through its actions relating to the latest conflict between Israel and Lebanon in July and August 2006. Iran has been accused of using Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shiite militia and political party, as its proxy against Israel. The summer conflict was sparked by Hezbollah's abduction of two Israeli soldiers in a cross-border raid, and some analysts have theorized that Iran ordered the action specifically to draw Israel into a larger military clash. Iran remains accused of being a state sponsor of terrorism, not only through its support of Hezbollah, but because of its ties to Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Iraqi Shiite militias.

In view of Ahmadinejad's confrontation with the international community, fear of appearing unpatriotic reinforced a trend toward self-censorship in the Iranian media and inhibited public criticism of the president. More reform-minded Iranians have criticized Ahmadinejad for isolating Iran internationally and stifling civil liberties at home. As a result, Ahmadinejad and his allies experienced a political setback in the December 2006 municipal and Assembly of Experts election. Many candidates closely associated with Ahmadinejad were not victorious in either election as voters turned to more moderate voices.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Iran is not an electoral democracy. The most powerful figure in the Iranian government is the supreme leader (Vali-e-Faghih), currently Ayatollah Ali Khamenei; he is chosen by the Assembly of Experts, a clerics-only body whose 86 members are elected to eight-year terms by popular vote from a government-screened list of candidates. The supreme leader is commander in chief of the armed forces and appoints the leaders of the judiciary, the heads of state broadcast media, the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, the Expediency Council, and half of the Council of Guardians. Although the president and Parliament are responsible for designating cabinet ministers, the supreme leader exercises de facto control over appointments to the ministries of Defense, the Interior, and Intelligence.

All candidates for election to the presidency and the 290-seat unicameral Parliament, both with four-year terms, are vetted for allegiance to the ruling theocracy and adherence to Islamic principles by the 12-person Council of Guardians. The council consists of six clergymen appointed by the supreme leader and six civil law experts selected by the head of the judiciary, all for six-year terms (the latter are nominally subject to parliamentary approval). The Council of Guardians also has the power to

reject legislation approved by Parliament; disputes between the two are arbitrated by the Expediency Council, another unelected, conservative-dominated body, currently headed by former president Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, who has sided with the reformist camp to curb the influence of his rival, current president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The recent elections in December 2006 for the Assembly of Experts were heavily vetted and even delayed by one month. The field of candidates fell sharply as the election cycle wound down; all of the women candidates were disqualified.

However, voter turnout was at 60 percent for the municipal elections, and voters sent a strong message to the current conservative administration. Moderate candidates came out on top in both elections, although the Interior Ministry submitted an election bill in July 2006 that would involve the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in the election vetting process and increase the voting age to 18, as well as impose new qualifications for presidential candidates.

Corruption is pervasive. The hard-line clerical establishment has grown immensely wealthy through its control of tax-exempt foundations (*bonyads*) that monopolize many sectors of the economy, such as cement and sugar production. Iran was ranked 105 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is severely limited. The government directly controls all television and radio broadcasting. Satellite dishes are illegal, though generally tolerated. However, there have been increasing reports of satellite dish confiscation and steep fines. The authorities have had some success in jamming broadcasts by dissident overseas satellite stations and recently made it illegal to cooperate with any Persian-language satellite channel. In December 2005, Iran's Supreme National Security Council blocked the launch of an independent satellite channel, Saba TV, run by former Parliament Speaker Mehdi Karrubi.

The Ministry of Culture must approve publication of all books and inspects foreign books prior to domestic distribution. The Press Court has extensive procedural and jurisdictional power in prosecuting journalists, editors, and publishers for such vaguely worded offenses as "insulting Islam" and "damaging the foundations of the Islamic Republic." The authorities frequently issue ad hoc gag orders banning media coverage of specific topics and events. Despite a period of greater press freedom between the initial election of President Mohammed Khatami and a series of student protests in 1999, threats against and arrests of Iranian journalists have increased in recent years. Many journalists are banned from leaving Iran, and the Islamic Culture and Guidance Ministry announced in September 2006 that it would not allow U.S. reporters to work inside the country.

The Ahmadinejad government holds that the duty of the media is to report and support government actions, not comment on them. Sensitivity over the nuclear issue at home and abroad has led to a greater government crackdown on news reporting. Use of "suspicious sources," or sources that criticize the government, is forbidden.

In 2006, the Iranian government shut down a number of newspapers that it perceived to be insufficiently supportive of the leadership and Ahmadinejad. Papers such as *Sharq*, *Hafez*, *Nameh*, *Khatereh*, and *Karnameh* have all recently been banned. They have been accused of "insulting religious, political, and national figures" as well as "fomenting discord." State forces have also tried to influence edito-

rial content, not only through arrests but by advising publications on the subjects they can cover and what sources they can use. The Intelligence, Security and Islamic Culture and Guidance ministries have instructed two state news agencies to coordinate coverage with them. In February, the Supreme National Security Council also instructed publications to portray Iran's diplomatic efforts regarding the nuclear dispute as successful.

In July, the government announced that journalists who criticized the government would be prosecuted. Two editors of reformist publications, Lutfollah Meysami and Issa Saharkhiz, were arrested in August. Meysami was found guilty of insulting and libeling the police and propagandizing against the system. Saharkhiz was sentenced to a jail term and banned from journalistic activity for five years for publishing anticonstitutional articles and propagandizing against the government, among other offenses. The press crackdown under Ahmadinejad is not only due to sensitivities surrounding the nuclear negotiations, but was also an effort to control information that could have impacted the elections for the Assembly of Experts and municipal councils. However, it is worth noting that Akbar Ganji, an Iranian journalist who was arrested and served a six-year prison term, was released in October 2006 after paying a fine of US\$163,000. His release followed numerous domestic and international appeals to the government and a prolonged hunger strike.

The government systematically censors internet content by forcing internet service providers (ISPs) to block access to a growing list of "immoral sites and political sites that insult the country's political and religious leaders." At least a dozen journalists and bloggers (writers of internet journals known as weblogs, or blogs) were indicted or convicted of press offenses during 2006, and many more were summoned for questioning about their writings. In May, the Communication and Information Technology Ministry announced the creation of a central filtering site that would block access to unauthorized websites, identify internet users, and keep a record of sites visited. The ministry also announced the launch of a "national" internet later that year. Many internet sites of student groups and civil society organizations were shut down in 2006.

Religious freedom is limited in Iran, which is largely Shiite Muslim with minorities of Sunni Muslims, Baha'is, Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. Shiite clerics who dissent from the ruling establishment are frequently harassed. Sunnis enjoy equal rights under the law, but there is discrimination in practice, such as the absence of a Sunni mosque in Tehran and the paucity of Sunnis in senior government offices. The constitution recognizes Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians as religious minorities and generally allows them to worship without interference so long as they do not proselytize. Conversion by Muslims to a non-Muslim religion is punishable by death. The non-Muslim minorities are barred from election to representative bodies (though a set number of parliamentary seats are reserved for them), cannot hold senior government or military positions, and face restrictions in employment, education, and property ownership. Some 300,000 Baha'is, Iran's largest non-Muslim minority, are not recognized in the constitution, enjoy virtually no rights under the law and are banned from practicing their faith. Hundreds of Baha'is have been executed since the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Discrimination and harassment against Sufi Muslims has increased. In February 2006, security forces in Qom attacked and detained hundreds of Sufis gathered in front of their house of worship to prevent its

destruction. Following the election of Ahmadinejad, negative campaigns against religious minorities in Iran have increased through the state-controlled media. In March 2006, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 60/171, expressing serious concern about the continued discrimination against religious minorities in Iran.

Academic freedom in Iran is limited. Scholars are frequently detained for expressing political views, and students involved in organizing protests often face suspension or expulsion by university disciplinary committees. In the months following his election, Ahmadinejad replaced the heads of at least a dozen major universities. In April 2006, Ramin Jahanbegloo, a prominent intellectual and head of the Cultural Research Bureau, a think tank in Iran, was arrested at Tehran airport and taken to Evin prison, a notorious torture center. There the authorities forced him to confess that he had conspired to overthrow the Islamic Republic, but he was subsequently released. Student political activists have also been targeted by the regime. In September 2006, over 50 liberal student-rights activists were ejected from their universities. The government has also prevented liberal student activists from registering for the new academic year, and has begun a campaign targeting liberal student organizations. Authorities bugged and monitored the movements and communications of student activists, even arresting some on vague charges. In July 2006, Ahmad Batebi, a well-known former student activist, was re-arrested and returned to Evin prison.

The 1979 constitution prohibits public demonstrations that "violate the principles of Islam," a vague provision used to justify the heavy-handed dispersal of assemblies and marches. Hard-line vigilante organizations unofficially sanctioned by the conservative establishment—most notably the Basij and Ansar-i Hezbollah—play a major role in breaking up public demonstrations.

The Iranian government frequently disrupts peaceful protests and arrests participants. Even former officials are not immune. Former member of Parliament Mousavi Khoini was detained in June 2005 while attending a peaceful public protest. He has been held without charge, and has claimed that prison officials tortured him in order to force him to renounce past criticism of the government. As a member of Parliament, Khoini had repeatedly challenged the judiciary and intelligence services for human rights abuses. In July 2006, Iranian security services violently dispersed a peaceful assembly of women's rights activists marking International Women's Day. Police beat and arrested a number of demonstrators. Freedom of assembly was heavily restricted in 2006, as many more peaceful protests were violently dispersed by security forces.

The constitution permits the establishment of political parties, professional syndicates, and other civic organizations, provided they do not violate the principles of "freedom, sovereignty, and national unity" or question the Islamic basis of the republic. Human rights discourse and grassroots activism are integral parts of Iranian society. However, human rights and civil society activists face many challenges. The security services routinely arrest and harass secular activists. In August 2006, the Interior Ministry announced the closure of the Center for the Defense of Human Rights, founded by Nobel peace laureate Shirin Ebadi, for failure to obtain a permit. The action was part of the ministry's wider effort to control and regulate the activities of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Although permits are not required by law, the ministry has been imposing them and shutting down organizations that do not seek or qualify for them.

Iranian law does not allow independent labor unions to exist, though workers'

councils are represented in the government-sanctioned Workers' House, the country's only legal labor federation. In the past year, there were more than 800 protests and demonstrations in Iran, many of which were labor related. In December 2006, a bus strike over the preemptive arrest of 14 bus driver association leaders and wage disputes caused traffic chaos in the capital. Security forces attacked and arrested hundreds of the striking drivers.

The judicial system is not independent, as the supreme leader directly appoints the head of the judiciary, who in turn appoints senior judges. General Courts ostensibly safeguard the rights of defendants, but in practice, suspects are frequently tried in closed sessions without access to legal counsel. Political and other sensitive cases are tried before Revolutionary Courts, where due process protections are routinely disregarded and trials are often summary, lasting as little as five minutes. Dissident clerics are tried before the Special Court for the Clergy. The country's penal code is based on Sharia and provides for flogging, stoning, amputation, and death for a range of social and political offenses; these punishments are carried out in practice.

Although the constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, these practices are increasingly routine. Suspected dissidents are often held in unofficial, illegal detention centers run by a security apparatus consisting of the intelligence services, the Revolutionary Guard, judicial officials, and the police. Allegations of torture are common in such centers and in the notorious Evin prison. Although legislation banning the use of torture in interrogations was promulgated in 2004, allegations of torture persisted in 2006.

Prison conditions are notoriously poor in Iran, and allegations of torture and death in captivity are common. Political prisoners are held under deplorable conditions, and supporters who protest their detention or defend their cause are also prosecuted. Two student activists died in Evin prison in 2006 following mistreatment and hunger strikes. Valiollah Feyz Mahdavi died on September 7, 2006, following the death of Akbar Mohammadi on July 30. Khalil Bahramian, a lawyer defending Akbar Mohammadi, was charged with insulting the system after he commented on the questionable death.

Iran is a world leader in juvenile executions. Even though it has ratified two treaties on children's rights, it has executed more juveniles in the last five years than any other country. Overall, execution of prisoners has risen since Ahmadinejad's election. In 2006 alone, the authorities executed 10 prisoners and condemned 21 to death. Women are again being sentenced to death by stoning.

The constitution and laws call for equal rights for all ethnic groups, allowing considerable cultural and linguistic freedom, but in practice these rights are restricted by the authorities. Ethnic Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis, and Azeris complain of political and economic discrimination, as do religious minorities. Kurdish opposition groups suspected of separatist aspirations, such as the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI), are brutally suppressed.

Ethnic tensions and dissent among minorities have been on the rise for the past two years. In March 2006, Baluchis attacked a police motorcade, and clashes erupted in May between Azeris and government forces over an offensive cartoon published in a state-run newspaper. There have also been a number of attacks against the government by ethnic Arabs living in southwestern Iran. However, the most pressing ethnic issue is the "Kurdish question." Approximately 5 million Kurds live in Iran, concen-

trated in some of the least developed areas of the country. The autonomy of Kurds in neighboring Iraq has inspired Iranian Kurds to agitate for greater independence. KDPI conducted a number of military operations against the government in 2006.

Women are widely educated; 94 percent of secondary school-aged girls attend school, compared to only 80 percent of boys, and a majority of university students are female. Although Iranian women currently hold seats in Parliament, they do not enjoy the same political rights as men. Women are barred from serving as judges and are routinely excluded from running for public office. Women also face systematic discrimination in legal and social matters. A woman cannot obtain a passport without the permission of a male relative or her husband, and women do not enjoy equal rights under Sharia statutes governing divorce, inheritance, and child custody. A woman's testimony in court is given only half the weight of a man's. Women must conform to strict dress codes and are segregated from men in most public places. Bowing to popular pressure, Ahmadinejad issued a ruling in May 2006 that allowed women to attend soccer matches, but it was promptly overturned by religious authorities.

Iraq

Population: 29,600,000

Capital: Baghdad

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 6*

Status: Not Free



Ratings Change: Iraq's civil liberties rating declined from 5 to 6 because of growing sectarian violence and insecurity.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	6,5NF	6,6NF

Overview:

A new full-term Iraqi government came to power as a result of free and fair elections in December 2005. The Shia-dominated cabinet, led by Prime Minister Nouri Kamel al-Maliki, faced numerous challenges in its first year. Sectarian violence swept the country after the bombing of a Shia shrine prompted reprisal killings that have not abated. Meanwhile, the Sunni-led insurgency was dealt a blow when U.S. forces killed terrorist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and many Sunni Arab tribes decided to pledge their support for the country's new institutions. Al-Maliki's government is hampered by a lack of security and widespread corruption but maintains its commitment to democracy. The Supreme Court confirmed the November 2006 guilty verdict against Saddam Hussein in the al Dujail trial, and the former Iraqi leader was executed by hanging in December.

The modern state of Iraq, consisting of three former Ottoman provinces, was established after World War I as a League of Nations mandate administered by Britain. The British installed a constitutional monarchy that privileged the Sunni Arab minority at the expense of Kurds and Shiite Arabs. Sunni Arab political dominance in Iraq, which formally gained independence in 1932, continued after the monarchy was overthrown in a 1958 military coup. The Arab nationalist Baath party seized power in 1968. The new regime's de facto strongman, Saddam Hussein, formally assumed the presidency in 1979.

Hussein brutally suppressed all opposition to his rule and sought to establish Iraq as the dominant regional power by invading Iran in 1980. During the ensuing eight-year war, his regime used chemical weapons against both Iranian troops and rebellious Iraqi Kurds. Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait in 1990 but were ousted the following year by a U.S.-led coalition. After the war, the UN Security Council imposed economic sanctions on Iraq, pending the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction. Because of Iraq's refusal to fully cooperate with UN weapons inspectors, however, the sanctions remained in place for over a decade.

Following the establishment of a U.S.-enforced no-fly zone north of the 36th parallel in 1991, most of the three northern provinces of Erbil, Duhok, and Suleimaniyah came under the control of Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which together established a Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). During the 1990s, the two Kurdish parties alternately fought and cooperated with one another. Mid-decade, the KDP and the PUK fought a devastating internecine conflict that jeopardized their fragile autonomy and invited interference from neighboring states. After a settlement was reached in 1998, northern Iraq was governed through a rigid joint administration system, with each of the two parties in control of fixed regions within the no-fly zone. The UN Oil for Food Program, established in 1997, improved economic conditions in the region.

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, a U.S.-led military coalition invaded Iraq in March 2003, captured Baghdad less than three weeks later, and established a Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to administer the country temporarily. In July, after extensive negotiations with leading Iraqi political and religious leaders, the CPA appointed a 25-member Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) and granted it limited lawmaking authority.

The initial euphoria felt by many Iraqis after the Hussein regime's collapse was quickly tempered by the security vacuum, widespread looting, and acute electricity and water shortages that followed. The CPA decided to disband Iraq's military and reconstitute the armed services. Unable to build up the new forces quickly enough, and with insufficient troops of its own, the U.S.-led coalition presided over a worsening security situation. Unemployment rose as the violence hindered economic activity and thousands of former high-ranking Baath party officials were put out of work because of de-Baathification policies.

Sunni Arabs, who constitute roughly 20 percent of the population, viewed the prospect of majoritarian democracy with immense trepidation. Disproportionately affected by de-Baathification and upset about losing their standing within the Iraqi government to the Shia majority, Sunni Arabs were not eager to participate in the coalition-led political transition plans. Exploiting these fears, loose networks of former

regime officials, Sunni Arab tribe members and al-Qaeda militants began organizing and funding an insurgency that rapidly gained strength in late 2003 and 2004.

Deteriorating security conditions slowed progress in many critical areas of Iraq's reconstruction. Oil production remained below prewar levels as a result of sabotage, while essential public services, such as power and water, were repeatedly disrupted in most areas of the country. Residents of northern Iraq, where Kurdish militia forces (*peshmerga*) continued to maintain security, were spared most of these tribulations. In spite of the escalating insurgency, Iraq's political transition progressed substantially. In March 2004, the IGC adopted a Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) to serve as the country's interim constitution. In June, after weeks of UN-mediated negotiations among the main (noninsurgent) political groups, the CPA and the IGC transferred sovereignty to an Iraqi Interim Government (IIG), headed by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

Elections for a 275-seat Transitional National Assembly (TNA), along with simultaneous elections for provincial governments and the KRG, were held in January 2005. Insurgents' calls for a boycott and threats of violence on election day led the vast majority of Sunni Arabs to stay away from the polls, handing a landslide victory to the Shiite-led United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) and a KDP/PUK Kurdish coalition. After three months of contentious negotiations, the TNA selected a new Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG), headed by Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari.

The meager representation of Sunni Arabs in the TNA (only 17 seats) gave them little voice in the process of drafting a permanent constitution. The final text that went to referendum clearly reflected the interests of the Shiite and Kurdish coalitions. It outlined a federal system with powerful regional governments. The constitution recognized KRG autonomy and allowed other provinces to form similar autonomous regions. But the charter failed to unequivocally stipulate that revenue from oil and natural gas fields, located mostly in Kurdish and Shiite regions, be distributed equitably nationwide.

Many articles of the constitution pertaining to internationally recognized political rights and civil liberties depend on subsequent legislation for clarification and enforcement. The charter also stipulates that the Federal Supreme Court should include an unspecified number of "experts in Islamic jurisprudence" alongside civil judges. The draft constitution was approved by a popular referendum in October 2005, though two Sunni Arab provinces voted overwhelmingly against it. However, under a compromise brokered as a concession to Sunni demands before the referendum, the first elected parliament would form a Constitutional Review Committee to determine whether the document should be amended. Any amendments would have to be ratified by referendum. The Constitutional Review Committee was created by parliament in September 2006.

The Sunni Arab community's self-exclusion from the political process paved the way for Shiite and Kurdish parties to extend their influence throughout government. Cabinet ministries were distributed according to ethnicity and sect, following a trend established early in the transitional phase, with powerful ministerial positions, such as interior, oil, and foreign affairs, reserved for Shia and Kurdish candidates from the main political parties. Shia political parties' control over the interior ministry allowed their associated militia forces to infiltrate the police and counterinsurgency forces. Extrajudicial detentions and killings by Shiite militias and

militia-dominated police units, as well as Kurdish security forces in the north, proliferated during 2005.

In sharp contrast to the January elections, many prominent Sunni Arab moderates ran in the December 2005 elections for a full-term Parliament, and the minority increased its political representation. The Shia UIA led the elections, but failed to gain an absolute majority. After a four-month negotiating deadlock, Nouri Kamel al-Maliki of the Shia Da' wa party was chosen as prime minister. Moqtada al-Sadr, leader of the Mahdi Army, a major Shia militia, emerged as an important power broker while his armed followers continued to undermine security.

The February 2006 bombing of al-Askari shrine, an important Shia pilgrimage site in the city of Samarra, set off a new cycle of intense sectarian conflict that has not yet abated. Sectarian fighting has erupted throughout Baghdad and in provincial cities where Sunni and Shia Arabs live in close proximity. Iraqi Kurdistan has largely avoided such violence. Civilian deaths increased dramatically, and the transfer of operational command of Iraqi security forces to the Iraqi government was delayed. However, al-Qaeda suffered a blow in June, when U.S. forces killed its leader in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Although the robust Sunni insurgency remains active, many Sunni Arab tribes and communities have reportedly turned against the radical foreign fighters they once supported.

The trials of Saddam Hussein and several other former senior Iraqi officials culminated in 2006. The al Dujail trial concluded in July 2006 with a verdict delivered on November 5. Saddam Hussein and six other defendants were found guilty of crimes against humanity in the arbitrary killing and displacement from the town of Dujail in 1982. Hussein and two others were sentenced to death by hanging. Another trial opened in August 2006 in which Hussein and six other defendants faced charges of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes stemming from the Anfal campaign against the Kurdish population in northern Iraq, which may have resulted in the death of up to 100,000 Kurds. Although the verdict handed down for the Dujail trial was appealed, Iraq's Supreme Court confirmed the original decision, and Saddam was executed on December 30, 2006, by hanging.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Although it has conducted free and fair elections, Iraq is not considered an electoral democracy due to the foreign military presence and impairments caused by ongoing sectarian and insurgent violence. Under the constitution, the president and two vice presidents are elected by Parliament and must appoint the prime minister, who is nominated by the largest parliamentary bloc. Elections are to be held every four years. Although the president and vice presidents are not directly elected by the people, the roles are largely ceremonial. The prime minister is charged with forming a cabinet and running the executive functions of the state. The Parliament consists of a 275-seat lower house, the Council of Representatives, and a still-unformed upper house, the Federal Council, which would represent provincial interests. The constitution provides for independent executive, legislative and judicial branches, as well as "independent associations" like the central bank and the electoral commission. Political parties representing a wide range of viewpoints are allowed to organize and campaign without legal restrictions, but the Baath party is officially banned.

The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI), whose nine-member board

was selected by a UN advisory committee, has sole responsibility for administering elections in Iraq. Voting in January 2005 for the transitional National Assembly and the constitutional referendum in October 2005 were certified as free and fair by international monitors. The December 2005 elections for a four-year government also went smoothly, though there was some insurgent violence. Sunni Arabs came out in greater numbers nevertheless and increased their representation in Parliament.

Iraq is plagued by pervasive corruption. In August 2005, a group of 27 former senior officials of Iyad Allawi's interim government, including former ministers of defense, labor, transportation, electricity, and housing, were indicted in connection with the embezzlement of more than \$1 billion from military contract expenditures. According to the head of the Commission for Public Integrity, "Every government department is plagued by some type of corruption and the problem has become endemic countrywide." Corruption has seriously hampered reconstruction efforts, and it is estimated that 25 percent of donor funds are unaccounted for. Iraq was ranked 160 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Corruption within the Oil Ministry has become a serious national security threat. Iraq depends heavily on oil for state revenue, but almost half of the oil money is being funneled to illegal armed groups through smuggling and protection rackets. A member of the National Assembly was indicted in 2006 for stealing millions of dollars allocated to protect a critical pipeline against attack. He was accused of channeling some of that money to the insurgency. Even the inspector general's office, which oversees all ministries' activities, is not immune from corruption; several inspectors general of various ministries were fired in 2006. Although the Iraqi government now requires employees to sign codes of conduct and complete financial disclosure forms, there is not full compliance.

Freedom of expression is protected by the constitution and generally respected by the authorities. However, it has been seriously impeded by sectarian tensions and fear of violent reprisals. Over a dozen private television stations are in operation. Although most are affiliated with particular religious or political groups, the nonpartisan station Al-Sharqiya is the most widely watched. Major Arab satellite stations are easily accessible, as roughly one-third of Iraqi families own a satellite dish. More than 150 print publications have been established since 2003 and are allowed to operate without significant government interference. Internet access is not restricted by the authorities, but only about 0.1 percent of the population has access.

Although the Iraqi media are not subject to direct government censorship, violent retributions against journalists have hindered their ability to report widely and objectively. Many have continued to persevere in spite of violence and political threats. As many as 130 journalists and media workers, most of them Iraqis, have been killed in Iraq since 2003. In the single most deadly attack against the media, assailants dressed in police uniforms stormed the al-Shabbiya satellite station building in October 2006, killing dozens of employees. Dozens of journalists were abducted in 2006 by insurgents and militias, or were detained without charge or disclosure of supporting evidence by U.S. forces, on suspicion of aiding and abetting insurgents. Bilal Hussein, a photographer, has been held without charge in U.S. custody since April for photographing insurgents in al-Anbar province.

A new set of laws passed in 2006 criminalizes the ridicule of public officials, and a number of Iraqi journalists have been charged with the offense. The Qatar-based Al-Jazeera satellite television station has been banned from working in the country since August 2004 for violating CPA Order 14, which prohibits media organizations from publishing or broadcasting material that incites violence or civil disorder. Al-Arabiya, an Arab satellite station based in Dubai, was suspended from working in Iraq for one month in 2006 on charges of inciting sectarianism and violence.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution and generally respected by the government. Mosques, churches, and other religious institutions are allowed to operate with little formal oversight. However, all religious communities in Iraq were threatened by sectarian violence in 2006. Following the bombing of al-Askari shrine in February, sectarian fighting erupted in much of the country and has not abated since. Thousands of Iraqis have been killed by death squads, insurgents and militias. Members of both major sects and other groups have been driven from mixed or isolated neighborhoods because of sectarian tension and violence. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, there are approximately 1.6 million internally displaced persons in Iraq, and another 1.8 million who have fled the country. Northern Iraq has largely escaped the unrest.

Baathist-era restrictions on academic freedom were abolished in 2003. However, academic institutions operate in a highly politicized and insecure environment. Hundreds of university professors and intellectuals have been assassinated by insurgents or political militias for voicing their opinions, encouraging dialogue, or for sectarian reasons.

Rights to freedom of assembly and association are recognized by the constitution and generally respected in practice. The constitution guarantees these rights "in a way that does not violate public order and morality." Domestic and international nongovernmental organizations were able to operate without legal restrictions, though security constraints limited their activities in many regions. Peaceful demonstrations occurred frequently during the year without interference from coalition forces or the Iraqi government, except when they were in violation of curfews. Gatherings or rallies that violated anti-Baath strictures were considered illegal.

The constitution guarantees "the right of forming and joining professional associations and unions." Iraq's 1987 labor law remains in effect, technically prohibiting unionization in the public sector. However, union activity has flourished in nearly all industries since 2003, and strikes have not been uncommon. In 2005, the interim Iraqi government promulgated Decree 8750, which gave authorities the power to seize all union funds and prevent their dispersal, with the promise of future laws to be passed under the permanent government. To date there have been no new labor laws passed, but a parliamentary committee (consisting of mostly pro-union lawmakers) was established to revise the decree and enact International Labor Organization-compliant labor laws drafted in 2004. At least three union leaders, including the International Federation of Trade Union's International Secretary Hadi Saleh, were murdered in 2005.

The new constitution provides for an independent judiciary. The Higher Judicial Council (HJC)—headed by the chief judge of the Federal Supreme Court and composed of Iraq's 17 chief appellate judges and several judges from the Federal Court of Cassation—has administrative authority over the court system in Iraq. In

practice, however, judges have come under immense political pressure and have largely been unable to pursue cases involving organized crime, corruption and militia activity. Since 2003, 13 judges have been killed, according to the Higher Judicial Council. The new constitution stipulates that trials must be conducted in public "unless the court decides to make it secret." The accused are "innocent until proven guilty in a fair legal trial." According to a recent UN report, the "growing perception of impunity for current and past crimes committed risks further eroding the rule of law."

Persons accused of committing war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity fall under the jurisdiction of the Iraqi High Tribunal (IHT), previously known as the Iraq Special Tribunal. The IHT statute does not explicitly require that guilt be proven beyond a reasonable doubt and lacks adequate safeguards against self-incrimination. Numerous irregularities were noted by international observers in the al Dujail trial, which culminated in the execution by hanging of Saddam Hussein in December 2006.

Iraq's Criminal Procedure Code and the constitution prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, though both practices are common in security-related cases. There were credible reports of illegal detention facilities run by the Interior Ministry and party-sponsored militias. The constitution prohibits all forms of torture and inhumane treatment, and affords any victims the right to compensation. But neither coalition forces nor the Iraqi authorities have established effective safeguards against the mistreatment of detainees, and allegations of torture by security services were serious and widespread in 2006.

There is a critical lack of centralized control over the use of force in Iraq. Insurgents, militias, and criminal gangs, many with ties to government security forces, were responsible for the mistreatment and killing of thousands of Iraqi civilians in 2006. Human rights abuses by the nascent security forces have taken on a sectarian dimension, fueling instability. Police recruits have themselves been a target of violence. As of August 2006, there were approximately 36,000 people in detention. Cases of torture have been documented in both official and unofficial detention centers. The interior minister has attempted to stem abuses by police forces and complicity with militias by firing thousands of employees, including an entire brigade, but the problem remains endemic. The frequent employment of martial law in attempts to stem growing insecurity and violence grants sweeping powers of arrest and restricts basic freedoms.

Although the exact number fluctuated during the year, over 13,000 Iraqis suspected of involvement in the insurgency were held by the U.S. military at any given time, before being released or handed over to the Iraqi authorities. Detainees in coalition custody have also experienced torture and mistreatment.

The internal security forces are dominated by Shiites, and there were credible allegations of employment discrimination against Sunni Arabs and non-Muslim minorities in some government institutions in 2006. Many former members of the Baath party faced difficulty in obtaining work in Shia-dominated ministries and government institutions due to the overzealous application of de-Baathification procedures. Minorities in northern Iraq—Turkmen, Arabs, Christians, and Shabak—reported instances of discrimination and harassment at the hands of Kurdish authorities in 2006. Palestinians were the targets of harassment and discrimination by both police and the general public throughout the year.

The constitution promises Iraqi women equal rights under the law, and they are guaranteed 25 percent of the seats in the legislature. While women comprised 32 percent of the TNA, the portion dropped to 25 percent after the December 2005 elections. Public security for Iraqi women remained a major problem in 2006. Women who hold jobs, attend university, or go out in public unveiled were frequently harassed, and in some cases killed, by radical Islamist groups of both major sects.

Ireland

Population: 4,200,000

Capital: Dublin

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: Ireland's government, led by the Fianna Fail party, saw a further decline in popularity in its last full year before a mid-2007 election deadline. The political slide came despite still-impressive economic growth. The prime minister, Bertie Ahern, was questioned by Parliament over loans he had received while serving as finance minister; he apologized, but denied any wrongdoing.

The Irish Free State emerged from the United Kingdom after the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. (Six Protestant-majority counties in the province of Ulster remained within the United Kingdom.) A brief civil war followed, ending in 1923. In 1937, the Irish Free State adopted a new constitution and a new name—Ireland, or Eire.

Ireland has been neutral in its foreign policy, staying out of World War II and NATO. It joined the European Community (now the European Union, or EU) along with Britain and Denmark in 1973. Thanks in part to large subsidies for poorer regions within the EU, Ireland has enjoyed high rates of economic growth and has gone from being one of the poorest countries in Europe to being one of the richest. It adopted the euro upon its launch as an electronic currency in 1999 and introduced euro notes and coins in 2001.

Ireland has resisted any EU moves that would impinge on its neutrality, including the idea of setting up an EU military capability. Partly for this reason, Irish voters rejected the EU's Treaty of Nice in June 2001, temporarily blocking the enlargement of the bloc into Eastern Europe. In a second referendum, in October 2002, Irish voters approved the treaty.

Growth in the gross domestic product averaged an outstanding 8.6 percent from

1998 through 2002, which in turn led to inflation and wage increases, gradually eroding Ireland's competitiveness. The trend, compounded by a strong euro, slowed growth to still-impressive rates, including 5.4 percent growth in 2005 and a similar result forecast for 2006. The slowdown nonetheless hit the government's budget, forcing the country to take a step back from the highly generous fiscal policies of previous years.

Budget tightening soon led to voter disillusionment. This was amplified by a perception that the governing coalition—Fianna Fail and its smaller ally, the Progressive Democratic Party—had grown arrogant since coming to power in 1997, increasing taxes after having promised before the 2002 general elections not to do so. As a result, Fianna Fail did poorly in local elections in June 2004, despite the fact that they coincided with a popular government-sponsored referendum on tightening Irish citizenship laws. The voters' verdict was confirmed with another poor showing for Fianna Fail in European Parliament elections later that month. Prime Minister Bertie Ahern reshuffled his cabinet in September 2004, hoping to shore up the coalition before national elections, which must be held by mid-2007. The coalition was shown to be nine points behind a planned opposition alliance between Fine Gael and the smaller Labour Party in a mid-2006 public opinion poll.

Meanwhile, Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats have disagreed about the pace of economic reforms in the state sector. In addition, there has been intraparty strife in both the government and opposition camps; the Labour Party's leader and deputy leader are reported to get along poorly, and Ahern has suffered backbench dissent within Fianna Fail.

The Northern Ireland peace process remained uncertain in 2006. In February, Fianna Fail ruled out any coalition with Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) militant group, or even tacit support by Sinn Fein for a Fianna Fail-led minority government. Other parties have similarly foresworn cooperation with Sinn Fein. In March, Dublin experienced some of the turmoil usually found only in Northern Ireland itself. Republicans blocked a unionist demonstration in Dublin, prompting the biggest riot the city had seen in 25 years. However, in October, an international Independent Monitoring Commission certified that the IRA had definitively abandoned armed conflict as a means to political ends.

In October, Ahern faced questions from Parliament about loans, worth approximately \$65,000, that he had received from business friends during his tenure as finance minister in the early 1990s. He denied that any favors were exchanged for the loans, which he had accepted while experiencing financial difficulties accompanying the end of his marriage. He conceded, however, that some of the friends had been appointed to government boards. He said that this was due only to his relationships with them, and not due to the loans.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Ireland is an electoral democracy. The legislature consists of a lower house (the Dail), whose 166 members are elected by proportional representation for five-year terms, and an upper house (the Seanad, or Senate) with 60 members, some appointed and some elected by representatives of various interest groups. The Senate is mainly a consultative body. The president, whose functions are largely ceremonial, is directly elected for a seven-year term. The prime minister is chosen by Parliament.

The political party system is open to the rise and fall of competing groupings. The two largest parties—Fianna Fail and Fine Gael—do not differ widely in ideological orientation but represent the opposing sides of the 1920s civil war. The smaller parties are the Labour Party, the Progressive Democrats, Sinn Fein, and the Greens.

Corruption has been a recurring problem, with many scandals involving members of Fianna Fail. Charles Haughey, a former prime minister who headed several governments from 1979 to 1992, was discovered in 1997 to have received up to one million euros from the owner of a food and textile retailer. Unproven allegations of corruption have also dogged Prime Minister Bertie Ahern, who was found to have signed blank checks as party leader, and accepted loans from businessmen friends while he was finance minister. In 2005, accusations of cronyism were aired relating to the appointment of allegedly unqualified but politically connected individuals to government bodies. Despite those cases, Ireland was ranked 18 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The media are free and independent, and internet access is unrestricted. The print media present a variety of viewpoints. Television and radio are dominated by the state broadcaster, RTE, but the growth of cable and satellite television is weakening its influence. The state maintains the right to censor pornographic and violent material, which critics charge is an anachronistic practice and possibly a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights.

In 2006, the government moved away from its reliance on self-regulation by the press and introduced a privacy bill that press-freedom advocates worry will hamper journalism. The bill would make it easier for individuals and companies to use legal means to end press scrutiny. For example, the bill makes "watching, besetting or following" someone a violation of privacy, even if a journalist believes the subject of scrutiny is guilty of a crime. However, the bill had not yet passed as of the end of 2006.

Freedom of religion is provided in the constitution, and discrimination on the basis of religion is illegal. Although the country is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, there is no state religion, and adherents of other faiths face few impediments to religious expression. Religious education is provided in most primary and secondary schools, whose boards include officials of the Catholic Church. However, parents may exempt their children from religious instruction, and the constitution requires equal funding for students wishing instruction in other faiths. Academic freedom is respected.

There are freedoms of assembly and association, and nongovernmental organizations can operate freely. The right of public assembly and demonstration is not legally infringed, though Ireland experienced an unusual outbreak of violence at an attempted march by Northern Irish unionists in Dublin in 2006. Collective bargaining is legal and unrestricted, and labor unions operate without hindrance.

The legal system is based on common law, and the judiciary is independent. Council of Europe inspectors in 2003 found evidence of some ill-treatment, including beatings, of detainees by police, mostly at the time of arrest, but stated that prisons are generally well run. Despite equal protection for all under the law, the Irish Travellers, a nomadic group of about 25,000 people, face social discrimination in housing, hiring, and other areas.

Inequality persists in pay rates for men and women, but discrimination in em-

ployment on the basis of sex and sexual orientation is forbidden under national and EU law. The past two presidents have been women: Mary McAleese (elected in 1997 and reelected in 2004) and Mary Robinson (1990-1997). Abortion is legal only when the life of the mother is in danger.

Israel

Population: 7,200,000 [Note: Figure includes about 187,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank and about 20,000 in the Golan Heights. Approximately 172,000 Jews and 170,000 Arabs live in East Jerusalem.]

Capital: Jerusalem



Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free

Note: The numerical rating and status reflect the state of political rights and civil liberties within Israel itself. Separate reports examine political rights and civil liberties in the Israeli-occupied territories and in the Palestinian-administered areas.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,3F	1,3F	1,2F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview: Israel held early national elections in March 2006 after Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered a debilitating stroke in January and his deputy, Ehud Olmert, assumed the premiership. Sharon's newly formed Kadima party led the voting and built a coalition government that included the center-left Labor Party, which had placed second. A June 2006 cross-border attack from the Gaza Strip led Israeli forces to reenter that area. Fierce fighting ensued, but was soon overshadowed by a parallel development in the north. A cross-border attack from Lebanon by the Islamist militia Hezbollah prompted the Israelis to launch a month-long bombing campaign and ground incursion, while Hezbollah kept up a rocket bombardment of northern Israel. The United Nations in August imposed a ceasefire and authorized a multinational force to patrol southern Lebanon as Israeli troops withdrew.

Israel was formed in 1948 from part of the British Mandate of Palestine, which had been created by the League of Nations following the defeat and breakup of the Ottoman Empire in World War I. The British relinquished control of Palestine (separated in 1921 from the territory of Transjordan) to the United Nations in 1947; a UN partition plan dividing Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state was rejected by the Arab Higher Committee and the Arab League. Following Israel's 1948 declaration of independence, it was attacked by a coalition of Arab states. While Israel maintained

its sovereignty and expanded its borders, Transjordan seized East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip.

As a result of its 1967 war with Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, Israel occupied the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. Syria had previously used the Golan to shell northern Israeli towns. Israel annexed East Jerusalem in 1967 and extended Israeli law to the Golan Heights in 1981. It returned the Sinai to Egypt in 1982 as part of a peace agreement between the two countries.

In 1993, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's Labor Party-led coalition government secured a breakthrough agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The Declaration of Principles, negotiated secretly between Israeli and Palestinian delegations in Oslo, Norway, provided for a phased Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip and limited Palestinian autonomy in those areas, in exchange for Palestinian recognition of Israel and a renunciation of terrorism. On November 4, 1995, a right-wing Jewish extremist, opposed to the peace process, assassinated Rabin in Tel Aviv.

Prime Minister Ehud Barak presided over a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the south of Lebanon in 2000 as well as renewed Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. A flurry of talks in 2000, including an extended summit at Camp David with the U.S., Israeli, and Palestinian leadership, failed to produce a final settlement allowing Palestinian statehood. Following the breakdown of negotiations and a controversial visit by Ariel Sharon, then leader of the right-wing Likud Party, to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in September 2000, the Palestinians launched an armed uprising, effectively ending the peace process.

Sharon, campaigning on his ability to bring security to Israel, defeated incumbent Prime Minister Ehud Barak of the Labor Party in prime ministerial elections in 2001. In March 2002, after a series of particularly devastating attacks, the government launched Operation Defensive Shield, reoccupying many of the West Bank areas that had been ceded to the autonomous Palestinian Authority (PA) during the Oslo peace process. Israel also began the construction of a controversial security barrier roughly along the West Bank side of the 1949 armistice line, or Green Line, a move that was criticized for, among other things, creating hardships for Arabs living or working in the barrier's vicinity. Sharon was reelected in January 2003 against a backdrop of continuing Palestinian violence in Israel.

After the death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in November 2004, Mahmoud Abbas (also known as Abu Mazen), a moderate PLO leader, was elected president of the PA in January 2005. The following month, Abbas and Sharon met in Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt, and declared—but did not sign—a truce; Abbas had previously coordinated a *tahida* (declared calm) among some Palestinian militant groups, and Sharon vowed to refrain from attacking these groups in exchange for a halt in Palestinian attacks. The agreement led to a general decline in violence but did not halt it. Nevertheless, the truce, along with the continued construction of the security barrier in the West Bank, Israeli intelligence operations, and targeted killings of suspected Palestinian terrorists, helped reduce the overall level of terrorism inside Israel in 2005, continuing a trend from 2004. In its efforts to stamp out terrorism, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) also staged air strikes, demolished private homes, and imposed curfews. The United States, the European Union, and many other countries joined the United Nations in criticizing Israel for its tactics, which frequently caused civilian deaths in Palestinian areas.

In September 2005, Sharon's government completed its planned unilateral withdrawal of Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip and four sites in the West Bank, overcoming fierce opposition from settler groups and many within Likud itself. In order to shake off his right-wing critics and press ahead with a broader unilateral disengagement plan, Sharon in November left Likud and founded a new, centrist party dubbed Kadima. The move upended the political balance as March 2006 elections approached, with Kadima quickly growing into a third major force alongside traditional rivals Labor and Likud and the remaining assortment of smaller special-interest parties. In January, Sharon suffered a massive stroke, leaving him in a coma. Then-deputy prime minister Ehud Olmert became acting prime minister as well as acting Kadima chairman.

In the March elections, Kadima won 29 of the 120 seats in Israel's Knesset (parliament), with 22 percent of the popular vote. Labor won 19 seats, while Shas (a religious party with strong support among Sephardic Jews) and Likud each took 12 seats, and the rightist Yisrael Beiteinu, a party with strong support among Israel's Russian-speaking immigrants, won 11 seats. The remainder went to a wide range of smaller parties. A standout was the newly formed Pensioners party, which gained seven seats in its first-ever campaign. The elections drew Israel's lowest voter turnout on record, estimated at just over 63 percent and also showed a significant loss of support for Likud and its smaller far-right allies.

In January 2006, elections were held for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), the legislature of the PA. The Islamist faction Hamas, running under the name List of Change and Reform, won 74 of 132 seats. Fatah, the party formed by Arafat and now led by Abbas, won only 45 seats. The election formula distributed half of the seats by nationwide proportional representation and half through races in individual districts. The two parties ran approximately even on the national level, and some analysts blamed poor candidate discipline at the local level for a split in the Fatah vote that tipped many districts to Hamas. The results allowed Hamas to form a government without Fatah support, and were met with disappointment in Israel and among a number of foreign governments. At an emergency cabinet meeting on election day, Olmert's government declared its unwillingness to negotiate with a Palestinian government in which Hamas was a participant, citing the group's responsibility for terrorist attacks that had killed hundreds of Israeli civilians over several years. The United States similarly rejected the legitimacy of the new Palestinian government, announcing a halt in aid to the PA so long as it included Hamas, which was listed by the U.S. State Department as a terrorist organization. The EU was also skeptical, citing the need to reassess European relations with the PA in light of the election results.

The informal truce established in 2005 between Israel and the Palestinian factions at first appeared to have survived Hamas's rise to power. However, while the level of violence during the first half of 2006 was markedly lower than in the years preceding the truce, attacks continued. The PA complained of Israeli antiterrorism activities in the West Bank, and there was also a marked increase in Qassam rocket fire from the Gaza Strip into Israel. The Israeli government, having completed its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, held the PA responsible for the rocket attacks, while the PA continued to claim that the rockets were being launched by rogue militias.

Violence mounted steadily in March, April, and May, with increasing numbers of Qassam rocket attacks, several major terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians both within Israel and in West Bank settlements, and a jump in the Palestinian death toll amid intensified Israeli countermeasures. April alone saw 31 Palestinians killed by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), while a massive suicide bomb attack by Palestinian Islamic Jihad the same month killed 11 civilians in Israel and injured close to 70. Nearly 100 Qassam rockets were fired into Israel in April, and at least one longer-range Katyusha was also fired; however, damage from these attacks was minimal.

In response to the firing of an artillery shell that killed eight Palestinian civilians on a Gaza beach, Hamas declared an end to the 16-month truce and launched nearly 20 Qassam rockets into southern Israel on June 10. The PA, as well as all armed factions involved, claimed the artillery shell was fired by Israeli forces, while the Israeli government maintains that the nearest military position was out of range, and therefore Israel could not have been responsible. The event is still a source of dispute.

Hamas and other militant groups that month carried out a raid on an EDF outpost near the Gaza Strip, killing two soldiers and capturing a third, Corporal Gilad Shalit. Israel responded by invading Gaza for the first time since its September 2005 withdrawal. The IDF destroyed a large number of Qassam launchers and ammunition sites, but were unable to locate Shalit. Israel also drew condemnation from human rights groups for destroying a major Gaza power plant and causing many civilian deaths in the course of the fighting. Israeli troops detained several Hamas lawmakers on June 29, adding to accusations that the true aim of the incursion was to topple the Hamas-led PA government. While there was no stated end to the operation, Israeli military activity decreased dramatically after the initial fighting in July.

The Gaza operation was largely eclipsed by much wider fighting that began on Israel's northern border on July 12, when the Lebanese Islamist militia Hezbollah launched a cross-border attack in which eight Israeli soldiers were killed and two—Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev—were taken captive. The IDF's response was a combination of naval blockade, aerial strikes, and ground operations aimed at degrading Hezbollah's ability to attack Israel and forcing the return of the kidnapped soldiers. The first 10 days featured limited operations by IDF ground troops in the Hezbollah-controlled villages north of the border and extensive aerial bombardment of Hezbollah installations throughout Lebanon, as well as civilian infrastructure such as roads and bridges. Beirut's main airport was targeted, as were Hezbollah administrative sites, many of which were located in urban areas. Meanwhile, Hezbollah kept up a barrage of Katyusha rocket fire aimed at northern Israeli cities and towns. Israel opened a wider ground offensive on July 23, and IDF forces by mid-August pushed as far north as the Litani River.

Despite Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah's declaration of "open war" on Israel, Hezbollah soon began calling for an unconditional ceasefire, while Israel stated its preference for a conditional ceasefire that would include the return of its kidnapped soldiers and the disarming of Hezbollah in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1559. The Lebanese government pleaded from the outset for the Security Council to impose an immediate, unconditional ceasefire. Following extensive diplomatic maneuvering by the United States, Britain and other European governments, a UN-brokered ceasefire took effect on August 14. Israel was condemned throughout the engagement for the disproportionate loss of civil-

ian life on the Lebanese side, as well as the targeting of civilian infrastructure and the large-scale displacement of civilians from southern Lebanon. Israel insists that Hezbollah's deliberate use of civilians and residential areas to shield their belligerent activities made civilian casualties inevitable, and that blame for civilian deaths should lie with those who provoked the conflict. Domestically, Olmert's government, and in particular Defense Minister Amir Peretz, have been accused of mismanaging the war effort. The UN resolution that imposed the ceasefire does not ensure Hezbollah's disarmament and has therefore been labeled a diplomatic failure for Israel.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Israel is an electoral democracy. Although there is no formal constitution, a series of basic laws have the force of constitutional principles. A largely ceremonial president, elected by the unicameral Knesset for seven-year terms, serves as chief of state. The prime minister is usually the leader of the largest party or coalition in the Knesset. The Parliament is composed of 120 seats, and members are elected by party-list proportional representation for four-year terms. Parties or candidates that deny the existence of Israel as a Jewish state, oppose the democratic system, or incite racism are prohibited. The three main parties are the center-left Labor Party, the centrist Kadima, and the right-wing Likud. New special-interest parties typically emerge with each election cycle, but many of them dissolve quickly or merge with a larger bloc. All citizens aged 18 and over can vote; the Knesset roundly rejected a November 2006 proposal by a far-right party that would have required voters to take an oath of loyalty to the state.

Arab residents of East Jerusalem, while not granted automatic citizenship, were issued Israeli identity cards after the 1967 war. However, Israeli law strips such Arabs of their Jerusalem residency if they remain outside the city for more than three months. They have the same rights as Israeli citizens, except the right to vote in national elections. They can vote in municipal elections as well as PA elections and are eligible to apply for Israeli citizenship. Many choose not to seek citizenship out of solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and because they believe East Jerusalem should be the capital of an independent Palestinian state. East Jerusalem's Arab population does not receive a share of municipal services proportionate to its numbers. Under the 1948 Law of Return, all Jewish immigrants and their immediate family are granted Israeli citizenship and residence rights; other immigrants must apply for these rights.

Israel was ranked 34 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. In 2006, the political arena was hit with a wave of scandals. President Moshe Katsav was accused of rape and other offenses; Justice Minister Haim Ramon, an architect of the ruling Kadima Party, was forced to resign in August amid charges of sexual impropriety with a female soldier; and Tzahi Hanegbi, another Kadima member and chair of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, at one point faced charges of fraud, bribery, and perjury relating to appointments made during his 2001-2003 term as environment minister. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was investigated by the state comptroller for the purchase of a Jerusalem property for a sum allegedly much lower than the market price, though no charges were filed in 2006. In perhaps the highest-profile scandal in recent months, IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz was alleged to have sold off roughly \$25,000 in privately held securities shortly after fighting began with Hezbollah in July.

A grassroots corruption watchdog organization known as the Movement for Quality Government in Israel was recently recognized by Transparency International with an Integrity Award. The organization was included in an anticorruption lobby formed in 2006 by opposition Knesset members, the stated aim of which is to increase protections for whistleblowers. The lawmakers involved in the effort succeeded in June in stopping the appointment of a candidate for the directorship of the Health Ministry, due in large part to allegations of fraud and potential conflict of interest.

A public committee, set up by former Knesset speaker Reuven Rivlin and headed by retired Supreme Court justice Yitzhak Zamir, was convened in 2006 to address the issue of corruption by elected officials. The committee issued its recommendations in October. In addition to formulating a formal code of conduct for Knesset members, the panel recommended docking the monthly pay of lawmakers and banning them from plenum or committee meetings for up to six months if they are found to have violated the proposed code.

Press freedom is respected in Israel, and the country enjoys a vibrant and independent media landscape. All Israeli newspapers are privately owned and freely criticize government policy. The Israel Broadcasting Authority operates public radio and television services, and commercial television networks and radio stations are widely available. Most Israelis subscribe to cable or satellite television; internet access is widespread and unrestricted. While newspaper and magazine articles on security matters are subject to a military censor, the scope of permissible reporting is wide, and there is a broad range of published material.

Journalists are occasionally subject to official restrictions. However, the independent judiciary and an active civil society adequately protect the free media. In 2004, the Supreme Court denied a government appeal aimed at upholding a ban on granting press credentials to Palestinians. Israel's Government Press Office (GPO) had earlier ceased issuing press cards to Palestinians on security grounds; the government claimed that some Palestinians posing as journalists used the cards to gain entry into Israel to carry out or abet terrorist attacks.

While the basic laws and the Declaration of Independence designate Israel as a "Jewish and democratic state," freedom of religion is respected. Christian, Muslim, and Baha'i communities have jurisdiction over their own members in matters of marriage, burial, and divorce. In the Jewish community, the Orthodox establishment generally handles these matters, an arrangement that dates to Israel's earliest days, when then-prime minister David Ben-Gurion found the concession necessary to guarantee support for statehood among members of the religious community. As a result, civil marriages as well as marriages between Jews and non-Jews are not recognized by the state unless conducted abroad. Many Israelis choose to marry in civil ceremonies outside the country rather than submit to a religious ceremony. In addition, Orthodox definitions of Jewish identity are used to determine whether immigrants are eligible for the citizenship and residency rights awarded to Jews under the Law of Return. However, the Orthodox monopoly on Jewish religious affairs has eroded steadily in recent years. In 2004, the cabinet disbanded the Religious Affairs Ministry, effectively putting rabbinic courts under the control of the Justice Ministry and freeing up state resources to be allocated to non-Orthodox religious institutions. In March 2005, the Supreme Court ruled that the state must recognize as Jews

people who undergo non-Orthodox conversions begun in Israel but formalized abroad; previously, non-Orthodox conversions were recognized only if they were conducted entirely abroad. In addition, the courts in recent years have been solicitous of property and child-custody claims by same-sex couples. Muslim and Christian communities occasionally accuse the government of discrimination in resource allocation and upkeep of religious sites, though the official budget allocates funds according to need, regardless of faith or denomination.

K-12 education is universal, with instruction for the Arab minority based on the common curriculum used by the Jewish majority, but conducted in Arabic. Israel's universities are open to all students based on merit. Professors are appointed and curriculum is developed in universities generally free from government influence. Israel's universities have been centers for dissent and criticism of the government since the earliest days of the state. In recent years, international bodies of scholars have made several efforts to cut ties with their counterparts in Israel because of perceived human rights abuses by the Israeli government; many have charged that such efforts have curtailed academic freedom. Periodic road closures and other security measures in recent years have made it difficult for residents of the West Bank and Gaza to reach universities in Israel, particularly the high number of West Bank Palestinians who are enrolled at Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

Freedoms of assembly and association are respected. Israel hosts an active civil society that includes an array of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and demonstrations are widely permitted. In the run-up to the implementation of the disengagement plan in 2005, both opponents and supporters staged large demonstrations. In 2006, there were demonstrations against the military campaign in Lebanon, most notably on August 5, when an estimated 10,000 Israelis gathered in Tel Aviv to protest the war. The action was organized by a coalition of Jewish and Arab peace groups and included several organizations made up of current and former Israeli soldiers and officers opposed to the fighting. While Olmert initially refused to appoint a state commission to investigate the war, public pressure is credited with changing his mind. Olmert has since named retired Supreme Court justice Eliyahu Winograd to head an official committee of inquiry.

Workers may join unions of their choice and enjoy the right to strike and bargain collectively. Three-quarters of the workforce either belong to unions affiliated with Histadrut (the national labor federation) or are covered under its social programs and collective bargaining agreements. Cuts to government offices in the proposed 2007 budget have prompted the Histadrut to threaten a nationwide strike in the coming months. Legal foreign workers in the country enjoy wage protections, medical insurance, and guarantees against employer exploitation. However, foreign workers who leave their original employers are shorn of these rights, considered illegal, and subject to deportation. Illegal workers are often at the mercy of employers, and many are exploited. The government has come under increasing pressure from civil society to better regulate the status of foreign workers in Israel.

The judiciary is independent and regularly rules against the government. Israel's Supreme Court hears direct petitions from Israeli citizens, as well as from non-Israeli Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Most notably in recent years, the Supreme Court has ordered on numerous occasions that the proposed route of the security barrier under construction between Israel and the West Bank be changed

to decrease its impact on Palestinian residents. In 2006 alone, the Supreme Court heard over 100 petitions filed by NGOs and Palestinian civilians, alleging hardship resulting from the route of the barrier. The Ministry of Defense continues to alter the route of the barrier in response to Supreme Court rulings.

The Emergency Powers (Detention) Law of 1979 provides for indefinite administrative detention without trial. The policy stems from emergency laws in place since the creation of Israel. Most administrative detainees are Palestinian; there are approximately 7,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails. In 2006, there were credible reports that Palestinian detainees were subject to abuse and torture.

While extended full political rights, the roughly one million Arab citizens of Israel (about 19 percent of the population) receive inferior education, housing, and social services relative to the Jewish population. Arab Israelis, except for the Druze minority, are not subject to the military draft, though they may serve voluntarily. Those who do not join the army are not eligible for financial benefits—including scholarships and housing loans—available to Israelis who have served. An official body of inquiry called the Orr Commission was established to investigate a brief outbreak of violence among the Israeli Arab community in the initial days of the Palestinian uprising in 2000. The commission's report cited "neglectful and discriminatory" government handling of the Arab sector, which over the course of decades led to "poverty, unemployment, a shortage of land, serious problems in the education system and substantially defective infrastructure." The commission also stressed the need on the part of the Jewish majority to "respect the identity, culture and language" of the Arab minority, and reaffirmed the constitution's emphasis on equality and the prohibition against discrimination for all citizens of the state.

In January 2004, then-prime minister Ariel Sharon declared that every state-run company must have at least one Arab Israeli on its board of directors. Before being convicted of corruption, Salah Tarif, a Druze Arab Israeli, was a member of Sharon's cabinet. Twelve members of the current Knesset are Arab Israeli, most representing majority-Arab political parties. An Arab Israeli judge also sits on the Supreme Court. While the Arab population votes heavily for Arab-oriented parties, the left-leaning and centrist Zionist parties also count on strong support from the Arab community. Arab members of the Knesset have occasionally voiced support for anti-Israel factions in the Palestinian territories and abroad, including Hamas and Hezbollah. While such statements are sometimes the subject of investigation by the attorney general, they have rarely been grounds for sanction.

Some Israeli analysts, including supporters of Arab minority rights, have cautioned against the radicalization of segments of Israel's Arab population and of Arab residents of East Jerusalem. Polls conducted among Israel's Arab citizens during the Lebanon war revealed low levels of support for the Israeli military effort, with significant levels of support for Hezbollah. These results are especially notable in light of the fact that many Arab and mixed Arab/Jewish towns and villages were struck by Hezbollah rocket fire, and fully one-third of those killed by Katyusha fire during the course of the fighting were Arab Israelis. By contrast, the Bedouin and Druze minorities within the Arab Israeli community showed strong support for the war.

The state generally protects wide personal autonomy. However, the Law of Citizenship, passed in 2003, bars citizenship to Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza who marry Arab Israelis. The law would ostensibly lead to the separation of

families or to their relocation from Israel. As the law is not retroactive, it does not affect Palestinians previously granted citizenship. Some human rights groups characterized it as racist. Israel maintained that the law was necessary because some Palestinians have opportunistically married Arab citizens of Israel so that they could more easily carry out terrorist attacks or slowly shift Israeli demographics in their favor. A controversial 5-6 Supreme Court decision upheld the law as constitutional in May 2006. The justices in the majority cited the unique security concerns currently prevailing, as well as the desire to maintain Israel's Jewish character in a democratic way.

Most Bedouin housing settlements are not recognized by the government and are not provided with basic infrastructure and essential services.

Freedom of movement is affected by security alerts and emergency measures that can subject Israelis to delays at roadblocks and in public places. Israeli security forces and police sometimes carry out random identity checks of civilians. By law, all citizens must carry national identification cards. The security barrier restricts freedom of movement for some East Jerusalem residents.

Women have achieved substantial parity at almost all levels of Israeli society. They are somewhat underrepresented in public affairs; 17 women currently sit in the 120-seat Knesset, and two women, Ministers Tzipi Livni and Yuli Tamir, are members of Prime Minister Olmert's current cabinet. In the May 1999 elections, an Arab Israeli woman, Husaina Jabara, was elected to the Knesset for the first time. The current Knesset also includes an Arab woman, Nadia Hilou. Arab women and religious Jewish women face some societal pressures and traditions that negatively affect their professional, political, and social lives. The trafficking of women for prostitution has become a problem in recent years. In March 2005, a parliamentary report claimed that 3,000 to 5,000 women—mostly from the former Soviet Union—have been smuggled into the country as prostitutes in the past four years. In response to the growing problem, the Knesset passed a law in October 2006 mandating prison terms of up to 20 years for human trafficking.

Sexual minorities have made significant strides in recent years. A 2005 Supreme Court decision granted guardianship rights to nonbiological parents in same-sex partnerships, and a lesbian couple was granted permission to legally adopt each other's biological children in February 2006. Openly gay Israelis are permitted to serve in the armed forces. In recognition of the significant rights enjoyed by gays and lesbians in Israel, Jerusalem was selected as the site for the 2006 World Pride events, despite opposition from conservative Muslims and Jews within Israel. The events were postponed because of the Lebanon conflict, but went forward in November.

Italy

Population: 59,000,000

Capital: Rome

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Trend Arrow: Italy received an upward trend arrow due to increased freedom of the press following Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's exit from office.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: Romano Prodi's center-left Union bloc narrowly won parliamentary elections in April 2006, putting an end to Silvio Berlusconi's long premiership. Berlusconi, whose leadership was marred by his domination of the country's broadcast media, had overseen the longest-serving Italian government since World War II. The voting was the first to be held since electoral reforms reinstated proportional representation for the legislature. In a June referendum, voters overwhelmingly rejected a reform measure sponsored by the previous government that would have, among other things, strengthened the role of the country's 20 regions. The following month, Italy won soccer's World Cup, but its own top league was mired in a match-fixing scandal. Also in July, the lower house approved a reduction in sentences for minor crimes; a move that considerably lowered the country's prison population.

Modern Italy emerged from the mid-nineteenth-century Risorgimento, a nationalist movement that gradually united the various regions of the peninsula under the constitutional monarchy of Piedmont and Sardinia. Italy's liberal period ended abruptly in 1922 with the rise to power of Benito Mussolini and his Fascist Party, which ruled the country for more than 20 years. During World War II, Mussolini allied Italy with Germany and Japan as an Axis power, declaring war on France, Britain, and the Soviet Union and invading Greece. An Allied invasion in the south, along with anti-Fascist resistance activity in the north, forced Italy's capitulation in 1943 and the German occupiers' defeat two years later. A referendum in 1946 replaced the monarchy with a republican form of government.

The "clean hands" corruption trials of the early 1990s led to the collapse of the major political parties that had dominated postwar Italian politics—the Christian Democrats, the Communists, and the Socialists. Since that time, many new parties and coalitions have emerged.

Italian leaders in the 1990s began a number of institutional reforms to address a list of pressing problems, including revolving-door governments: the country has

had more than 50 governments since 1945. In 1993, a new electoral law replaced the existing system of proportional representation with single-member districts for most of the seats in Parliament. The move was designed to reduce the number of political parties that could obtain seats. However, in December 2005, proportional representation was restored, with a provision awarding at least 54 percent of the seats in the lower house to the winning party or coalition, no matter how small its margin of victory. A similar arrangement was made for the upper house. The measures ensured a more stable majority for the governing bloc. A 2000 law granted voting rights to Italians living abroad, and was first put into practice in 2006. Other reforms have included efforts to reduce unnecessary legislation in Parliament and modernize the court system by streamlining the prosecution of cases.

In April 2006, the country held parliamentary elections that ushered in a new government led by Romano Prodi, a former prime minister and the former president of the European Commission. His center-left Union bloc—formed in October 2004 by the parties of the Ulivo (Olive Tree) alliance, including the Left Democrats and the Daisy party, as well as Communist Renewal and various other leftist and green parties—narrowly won the election with a total of 49.8 percent of the votes for the lower house. Incumbent prime minister Silvio Berlusconi's center-right House of Freedoms coalition—consisting of his Forza Italia party, the post-Fascist National Alliance, the regionalist Northern League, and other smaller parties—garnered 49.7 percent. Voter turnout was 83.6 percent, well below the postwar average of over 90 percent.

Berlusconi contested the election results and claimed election fraud by his opponent, but conceded three weeks later. His premiership, Italy's longest since World War II, had been marred by his personal domination of the country's broadcast media through a formidable corporate empire. In November, the trial against Berlusconi and his British lawyer David Mills for fraud and money laundering opened in Milan.

In his first speech to the Italian Senate, Prodi signaled a shift in Italian foreign policy by calling the U.S.-led war in Iraq a "grave error." Berlusconi, who had been relatively supportive of the U.S. effort, had already pledged to withdraw Italy's 2,600-troop contingent from Iraq by the end of 2006.

In December 2006, prosecutors asked a judge to indict 26 alleged CIA agents who were accused of helping to abduct a Muslim cleric in Milan with Italy's permission in 2003. In April, Berlusconi's justice minister, Roberto Castelli, had refused to act on a Milan court's extradition request for the alleged CIA agents. In November, Nicolo Pollari, the head of Sisme (the Secret Service agency) was forced to resign for his alleged role in the plot. The abduction of the cleric, who was allegedly flown to Egypt for interrogation and tortured, was believed to have been an example of the controversial U.S. antiterrorism tactic known as "extraordinary rendition."

Voters in a June referendum overwhelmingly rejected a reform package, initially offered by Berlusconi's government in November 2005, that would have strengthened the role of the prime minister as well as the administrative and taxing powers of the country's 20 regions. Critics of the latter proposal had claimed that it would widen the economic divide between the wealthy north and the poor south of the country.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Italy is an electoral democracy. Although the role of the president, who is elected for a seven-year term by Parlia-

ment and representatives of the regions, is largely ceremonial, Italian presidents have not shied away from taking sides on national political issues. Giorgio Napolitano, a former Communist, was selected for the post in May 2006. The president chooses the prime minister, who is often, but not always, a member of the largest party in the 630-seat lower house, the Chamber of Deputies. The upper house is the Senate, with 315 seats. Members of both chambers serve five-year terms. The constitution also divides the country into 20 administrative regions.

In an attempt to appease the interests of smaller parties, the right-of-center government of then-prime minister Silvio Berlusconi in December 2005 reintroduced full proportional representation to the Parliament. The electoral reform gives the winning party or coalition a 54 percent majority in the lower house no matter how small its actual margin of victory. For the Senate, victory in a given region assures the winning party or coalition a 55 percent majority of that region's allotment of seats. Although the center-left opposition Union bloc had strongly opposed the changes, it reaped the benefits after a narrow election victory in April 2006. Separately, a law passed in 2000 that granted voting rights to the estimated four million Italians living abroad went into effect for the first time during the April elections. Twelve deputies and six senators were elected to represent "overseas constituencies" in Europe, North and Central America, South America, and Africa-Asia-Oceania.

The center-left Union bloc (including the Ulivo alliance, Communist Renewal, Federation of Greens, and others) and the center-right House of Freedoms coalition (including the Forza Italia party, the National Alliance, the Northern League, and others) are the main political forces in the country.

Corruption remains an issue in politics despite the changes in government over the past decade. Transparency International (TI) gave Italy a rank of 45 out of 163 countries surveyed in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index, one of the worst rankings in Western Europe. According to TI's October 2006 report on bribery, Italian firms are among the worst offenders for paying bribes in low-income countries.

An extensive match-fixing scandal enveloped the country's soccer organizations before, during, and after its July 2006 World Cup victory. A number of top teams in Italy's Serie "A" division were demoted within the national ranking system and stripped of their titles following the discovery that they paid referees for favorable rulings.

Also in July, an Italian court ruled that Berlusconi should stand trial for alleged fraud involving Mediaset, his family's media company. Having previously appeared in court at least six times on corruption charges, Berlusconi claimed that the whole affair was an attempt by left-wing judges to bring him down. The charges followed a long investigation into his business affairs and possible false accounting, tax fraud, and money laundering linked to television-rights deals during the 1990s.

In a separate corruption development, Antonio Fazio in December 2005 had resigned as governor of the central bank, the Bank of Italy, after initially refusing to do so. He had been accused of improperly favoring an Italian bank over a Dutch rival in the takeover battle for a second Italian bank. In September 2005, the government had announced plans to reform the central bank as a result of the scandal. The European Commission in November 2005 said it would take legal action against the Bank of Italy for its handling of recent mergers.

Freedom of speech and the press is constitutionally guaranteed in Italy. How-

ever, under the Berlusconi government, the country suffered from an unusually high concentration of media ownership. The former prime minister, through his private holdings and political power over state television networks, controlled 90 percent of the country's broadcast media during his 2001-2006 rule. Even out of office, Berlusconi holds a dominant share of the private media in the country. However, Berlusconi's defeat in elections in April effectively ended his control over the publicly owned RAI television channels and his dual role as the country's top legislator and lead private broadcaster. In addition, a Council of Europe report released in February 2006 demonstrated that, despite the concentration of private broadcast media, there is considerable diversity of content in the country's news and other media.

In April 2004, the Senate enacted the Gasparri law on broadcasting, which introduced a number of reforms, including preparations for the switch from analogue to digital broadcasting. However, the law has been heavily criticized for providing measures that served Berlusconi's interests. For example, antitrust limits set by the legislation enabled him to maintain his control of the private media market. In addition, the law removed a previous restriction on one person owning more than two national broadcasting stations, allowing Retequattro, one of three television stations owned by Mediaset, to continue terrestrial broadcasting. However, shortly after Berlusconi's poor showing in April 2005 regional elections, Fininvest, the company at the apex of his business empire, reduced its stake in Mediaset from 50.9 to 34.3 percent, scaling back his control of the media giant.

Italian broadcasting regulators fined Mediaset in February 2006 for giving Berlusconi extra on-air time to promote his campaign for prime minister. He was also criticized for appearing alone for a debate on the show *Liberi Tutti*. Additional fines were levied on two Mediaset stations for similar offenses just a few days before the elections.

While facing the dangers of monopoly and political interference, the Italian press has also been caught up in national security issues. In August 2006, police searched the homes and offices of newspaper reporters in connection with the investigation of the alleged 2003 kidnapping of an imam by CIA agents.

Freedom of religion is respected and guaranteed by the constitution. A revised Concordat with the Vatican in 1984 made Italy a secular state. Although Roman Catholicism is the dominant faith and the state grants some privileges to the Catholic Church, there is no official religion. The state provides support, if requested, to other sects represented in the country. The government has signed agreements with a number of religious groups but has yet to pass an omnibus religious freedom law. Academic freedom is respected and protected.

Italians are free to form social and political associations, and between 35 and 40 percent of the workforce is unionized. Shortly after current prime minister Romano Prodi's April 2006 election victory, taxi-cab drivers began organizing wildcat strikes to protest the new government's proposals to liberalize taxi licensing.

The efficacy of the country's judicial system continues to be undermined by long trial delays and the influence of organized crime. Trial delays are caused, in part, by the lack of effective limits on the length of pretrial investigations, the large number of minor offenses included in the penal code, unclear and contradictory legal provisions, and insufficient resources, including an inadequate number of judges. In July, the lower house approved a bill that reduced sentences on many minor crimes,

considerably lowering the country's prison population. The U.S. State Department's 2006 human rights report states that from June to November, the prison population dropped from 61,300 to 39,200.

Despite legal prohibitions against torture, there have been reports of excessive use of force by police, particularly against illegal immigrants. A police brutality trial with 75 defendants, including some of Italy's most senior police officers, began in October 2005 and continued through 2006. The defendants are accused of orchestrating and participating in a campaign of brutality against protesters at the 2001 Group of 8 summit in Genoa.

In July 2006, the lower house of Parliament approved a bill designed to ease the long-standing problem of overcrowding in prisons, in part by cutting the sentences of inmates convicted of nonviolent offenses. The prison system, which was intended to hold 40,000 inmates, currently holds about 60,000.

Italy is a major port of entry for undocumented immigrants trying to reach Europe; large numbers of people from North Africa, the Middle East, China, and South Asia continue to arrive on the country's shores. A 2005 report by Amnesty International alleged that illegal immigrants detained in Italy are kept in overcrowded and unhygienic holding centers and denied access to lawyers and other experts, making it impossible for them to challenge detention or deportation orders. In May 2006, Italy's new minister for immigration announced plans to grant amnesty to illegal immigrants with jobs.

Strict fertility laws, strongly supported by the Vatican and Catholic politicians, remain in effect in the country after a June 2005 referendum aimed at relaxing the statutes failed to reach the 50 percent turnout needed for the vote to be valid. The laws in question prevent sperm and egg donations and ban the screening of embryos for disease. Italian bishops and the newly elected Pope Benedict XVI had encouraged people to boycott the referendum on moral grounds.

Women benefit from liberal maternity-leave provisions and government efforts to ensure parity in the workforce. Women also have considerable educational opportunities. However, violence against women continues to be a problem. Female political representation has improved somewhat; about 17 percent of the 630 candidates elected to the Chamber of Deputies in April 2006 were women, a six-point increase over the last elections in 2001.

Italy is a destination and transit country for the trafficking of women and children for sexual and labor exploitation. However, the government did make efforts to tackle the problem, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 Trafficking in Persons report. Officials assisted victims with protection and reintegration aid, and conducted public-awareness campaigns to increase prevention.

Jamaica

Population: 2,700,000

Capital: Kingston

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F

Overview: In March 2006, Portia Simpson Miller took office as Jamaica's first female prime minister following the retirement of P.J. Patterson, who had led the country on behalf of the People's National Party for 14 years. Simpson Miller's ascension was seen as a large step forward for women in Jamaican politics, but it did little to change the policies of the ruling party.

Jamaica, a member of the Commonwealth, achieved independence from Britain in 1962. Since then, power has alternated between the social-democratic People's National Party (PNP) and the conservative Jamaica Labor Party (JLP). In 1992, the PNP elected Percival James Patterson to replace Michael Manley as party leader and prime minister. In the 1993 parliamentary elections, which were marred by irregularities and violence, the PNP won 52 seats in the House of Representatives and the JLP won eight seats. The parties largely agreed on the need to continue Jamaica's structural adjustment, begun in the 1980s to bring economic stability and growth to the country, but the JLP's electoral chances had been hurt by long-standing internal rifts.

The Patterson government confronted labor unrest and an increase in violent crime carried out largely by gangs operating a lucrative drug trade that was loosely tied to local party bosses. In 2000, Patterson promised to stanch Jamaica's "rampant criminality" by introducing new gun-control measures, creating a new police strike-force to target organized crime, and reinstating the death penalty. The pledges came after leaders of the vital tourism industry joined Jamaicans from all walks of life in demanding an end to the street crime, which had been spiraling upward over the previous two decades. The crime wave had crippled local businesses and spurred an exodus of middle-class Jamaicans from the island.

In 2002, Patterson became the only prime minister in Jamaican history to be elected to three consecutive terms. His PNP won 34 of 60 seats in the House of Representatives and retained control of the premiership for an unprecedented fourth term. The JLP remained in opposition with 26 seats. An observer delegation led by former U.S. president Jimmy Carter said that despite measures taken to restrain voter fraud, such activity remained common in areas controlled by politically linked gangs. In taking office, Patterson also became the first head of government to swear alle-

giance to the Jamaican people and constitution, rather than to the British monarch. In June 2003, the JLP won a landslide victory in bitterly contested local elections that appeared to be a referendum on the PNP's fiscal policies. The JLP secured control of 11 of the 13 municipal councils at stake; 23 percent of the candidates were women. Following the vote, 27 people, including 2 police officers, were killed during security operations in western Kingston, and 16 others died in gun battles in the eastern part of the city as gangs loyal to the two major political parties clashed. The JLP announced in November that it would not support a new antiterrorism bill that it claimed gave the government "draconian powers" to confiscate private property and suppress antigovernment protests; the party continued its opposition through 2004, but the bill eventually passed on April 8, 2005. The PNP also pushed to give the military the power to conduct searches and make arrests even in the absence of the police.

In 2006, Jamaica continued a generational transition of leadership that had commenced in 2005, when Edward Seaga's 30 years as head of the JLP ended with the selection of Bruce Golding as leader of the parliamentary opposition. In March 2006, Patterson announced that he would step down after 14 years in power, setting off a hard-fought PNP leadership battle between Minister for Local Government Portia Simpson Miller, National Security Minister Peter Phillips, and Finance Minister Omar Davies. Simpson Miller handily fended off her competition by securing 46 percent of the vote among 3,800 party delegates. Her closest rival only managed to get 40 percent support. Her victory was heralded as a major advance for the role of women in Jamaica's politics. By the end of 2006, Simpson Miller remained a popular figure with approval ratings exceeding 55 percent, and the PNP retained a plurality of support among the electorate heading into the 2007 elections.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Jamaica is an electoral democracy. The British monarchy is represented by a governor-general, who is appointed by the monarch on the recommendation of the Jamaican prime minister, the country's head of government. Following legislative elections, the governor-general appoints the leader of the majority party or coalition in the lower house, the House of Representatives, to be the prime minister, who in turn recommends the deputy prime minister. The bicameral Parliament consists of the 60-member House of Representatives, elected for five years, and the 21-member Senate, with 13 senators appointed by the prime minister and eight by the leader of the parliamentary opposition. In 2006, Parliament began to debate a new constitutional amendment that would provide a "Charter of Rights," with fierce disagreement as to whether the bill should include privacy rights and a ban on capital punishment.

Jamaica's recent political history has been characterized by an ongoing rivalry between the left-of-center PNP, long dominated by the late Michael Manley, and the more conservative JLP, whose veteran leader was Edward Seaga. In the 1970s, the two parties developed urban "garrisons" that strove to bring their preferred candidates to power by means fair and foul. In 2005, the JLP elected Bruce Golding as its new leader. In 2006, Prime Minister Percival James Patterson stepped down after more than 14 years in power, and his successor, Portia Simpson Miller, became the country's first female prime minister.

In 2006, the Access to Information Act of 2002 was fully implemented. However,

most of the state's 264 agencies were not ready to comply. Government whistleblowers who object to official acts of waste, fraud, or abuse of power are not well protected by Jamaican law, as is required under the Inter-American Convention against Corruption. Jamaica was ranked 61 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitutional right to free expression is generally respected. Broadcast media are largely state owned but are open to pluralistic points of view. There are an estimated 1.9 million radios in Jamaica—the highest per capita ratio in the Caribbean—but only 330,000 television sets. While newspapers are independent and free of government control, readership is generally low. Journalists are occasionally intimidated in the run-up to elections. Public opinion polls play a key role in the political process, and election campaigns feature debates on state-run television. The government does not restrict access to the internet.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. The government does not hinder academic freedom.

Freedoms of association and assembly are generally respected. Jamaica has a robust civil society, though the most influential nongovernmental actors tend to emanate from business interests. Labor unions are politically influential and have the right to strike. The Industrial Disputes Tribunal mediates labor conflicts.

The judicial system is headed by the Supreme Court and includes several magistrates' courts and a court of appeals. The Privy Council in London was formerly the highest appellate court for Jamaica, but it was replaced with a Trinidad-based Caribbean Court of Justice, inaugurated in April 2005. Recent Privy Council rulings against the death penalty had angered many in Jamaica.

Despite government efforts to improve penal conditions, a mounting backlog of cases and a shortage of court staff at all levels continue to undermine the judicial system, which is slow and inefficient, particularly in addressing police abuses and the violence in prisons. In May 2006, Amnesty International reported that 168 people had been killed by the Jamaican police during the preceding year, but that the persisting culture of impunity had led to only one police officer being convicted for unlawful killing during the preceding six years. Although there has been some willingness by authorities to charge police for extrajudicial killings, the system for investigating such abuse lacks personnel to pursue cases, protect crime-scene evidence, take statements from officers in a timely manner, and conduct adequate autopsies of victims. Attorney General A.J. Nicholson criticized Amnesty International's report, saying it lacked balance and underestimated the nature and severity of crime in Jamaica.

Officially, police are allowed to use lethal force if an officer's life is threatened or a dangerous felon is escaping, but its use is more widespread in practice, and officials have promised to adopt a stricter policy. Other disputed criminal justice practices include death sentences following trials of questionable fairness, corporal punishment, alleged ill-treatment by police and prison wardens, and appalling conditions in detention centers and prisons.

In 2006, Jamaica remained trapped by a vicious cycle in which violent crime helped to depress tourism and investment. The high murder rate remained a source of major concern; the country suffered nearly 1,700 homicides in 2005—a level of violence that compared on a per capita level to countries like Colombia and South

Africa. The mounting crime rate in recent years led the government to take controversial steps toward restoring capital punishment and flogging; rights groups protested both measures. In July 2004, the Privy Council struck down the Offences against the Person Act, which imposed a mandatory death sentence for certain crimes, saying that it amounted to inhuman and degrading punishment. In 2006, the murder rate declined by 20 percent to 1,340 homicides, a change mainly attributed to better policing and a drop in drug-related violence.

Jamaica is a central transit point for cocaine shipped from Colombia through the Caribbean to U.S. markets, and the drug trade is now largely controlled by Colombian crime syndicates. Much of the island's violence is the result of warfare between drug gangs known as "posses." Contributing factors include the deportation of Jamaican-born criminals from the United States and a growing illegal weapons trade. Meanwhile, civilian mobs have been responsible for numerous vigilante killings of suspected criminals, and inmates frequently die as a result of prison riots. Jamaican officials have complained that the U.S. government presses them to stop the flow of drugs into the United States but does little to stem the flow of guns into Jamaica. Improved cooperation between the United States and Jamaica has increased U.S. authority to pursue suspected drug smugglers into the island's territorial waters and airspace.

Persecution of homosexuals is rampant, with same-sex intercourse punishable by 10 years' imprisonment at hard labor. In recent years, several gay Jamaicans have been granted asylum in Britain on the grounds that they were in danger in Jamaica because of their homosexuality. Amnesty International has identified gays as a marginalized group that has been targeted for extreme harassment and violence. The antigay lyrics of Jamaican entertainers, particularly reggae singers, remain a source of contention, and many gays and lesbians do not report acts of violence committed against them because of police hostility. In June 2004, Brian Williamson, a spokesperson for the advocacy group Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG), was brutally murdered in his New Kingston apartment. The perpetrator was sentenced to life in prison in May 2006. Separately, Steve Harvey, a prominent activist on behalf of HIV/AIDS-related causes, was killed in November 2005. In 2006, Jamaica's attorney general declared that there would be "no opening of any door to same sex marriages or decriminalization of homosexuality."

In 2006, Portia Simpson Miller became prime minister with widespread popular support summed up by the campaign slogan, "It's woman time now!" Simpson Miller pledged to help improve the status of women in Jamaica, especially since violence against women remained widespread. Although the constitution and the country's employment laws give women full legal equality, workplace discrimination, including lower pay, is common. Children are also vulnerable to violence. A 2004 UNICEF report found that 119 children were murdered, 430 were shot, and 900 were sexually abused that year. In 2006, the U.S. State Department upgraded Jamaica to a Tier 2 rating on human trafficking, which meant that the country was taking steps to comply with international minimum standards on that issue.

Japan

Population: 127,800,000

Capital: Tokyo

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview: Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's term of office expired in 2006. Because the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) retained control of the Diet (parliament), the selection process for a successor took place within the various factions of the LDP. Shinzo Abe, a scion of a high-ranking political family, was selected. He immediately moved to repair relations with China and South Korea, both of which had refused to meet with Koizumi because of his annual visits to the Yasukuni shrine honoring Japanese soldiers killed in World War II, including several convicted war criminals. However, nationalism may continue to grow under Abe's leadership, as he has long supported altering Japan's "pacifist" constitution and revising school textbooks to reflect greater patriotism.

Japan has operated as a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy since its defeat in World War II. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has been in power almost continuously since 1955, having been out of power for only 10 months during the past 50 years. The LDP presided over Japan's economic ascent while maintaining close security ties with the United States during the Cold War. The so-called iron triangle—the close relationship between the LDP, banks, and big business representatives—was a major source of Japan's economic success. The LDP government mandated that corporations, specifically construction firms in charge of major public-works projects, rely on banks for capital, and the banks in turn took large equity stakes in the companies. The government was able to maintain centralized control of this operation through its influence over the banking sector. One negative result of the arrangement was that companies in debt would engage in politically expedient but financially unviable projects in order to reap governmental rewards. The iron triangle is often cited as a major source of corruption in the Japanese government, but analysts have noted that the efforts of former prime minister Junichiro Koizumi, who stepped down in 2006, alleviated the problem to some extent.

The Japanese economy ran into trouble in the early 1990s, following a crash in the stock and real-estate markets. While the fallout from this "burst bubble" was extensive, the economy has been slowly returning to a healthy state since 2002. The

profits of Japanese companies have been growing, and the banking sector, which played a role in the economy's stagnation, is in better shape now than it has been in over a decade. Furthermore, there has been job recovery; full-time employment rose dramatically in 2005. Economic recovery continued throughout 2006.

In 2005, Koizumi took a major political gamble. After the upper house of the Diet failed to pass his bill to privatize the Japanese postal system, which contained a massive, state-subsidized savings bank and life-insurance enterprise, he dissolved the lower house and called snap elections. Koizumi then barred LDP members who voted against his reform bill from participating in the elections as party candidates. His political brinkmanship proved a tremendous success when the LDP won a landslide victory, widely seen as a popular mandate to implement privatization reforms.

The LDP, in coalition with minor parties, firmly controlled the Diet. When Koizumi's term as party leader expired in 2006, the LDP was able to select a successor from within its various factions. Shinzo Abe, the son and grandson of high-ranking Japanese politicians (his grandfather had been commerce and industry minister during World War II and later served as prime minister), had risen to political prominence as a supporter of a popular movement to demand the return of Japanese citizens previously kidnapped by North Korea. Immediately on becoming prime minister, Abe traveled to China and South Korea to repair relations with those countries, which had opposed Japan's bid to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Chinese and South Korean leaders had also refused to meet with Koizumi because of his annual pilgrimages to the Yasukuni shrine, which honored Japanese soldiers killed in World War II, including a number of convicted war criminals.

Japan has continued to expand its role in peacekeeping and security, although its military is restricted, by Article 9 of the country's pacifist constitution, to a self-defense role. The debate over whether to amend Article 9 is ongoing. Since 1992, Japanese troops have participated in several *UN* peacekeeping missions. Japanese warships also provided logistical support to U.S.-led forces during the war in Afghanistan, and in 2003, the Diet approved the dispatch of 1,000 troops to Iraq to assist the U.S.-led effort there by performing noncombat functions and supplying humanitarian aid.

Disputes over Japanese nationalism may reemerge in the near future. Abe has previously questioned the legitimacy of the U.S.-organized post-World War II criminal tribunals. He has expressed support for revising the constitution, and he has argued for altering school textbooks to express a more patriotic position on various historical issues, a matter followed very closely in China and Korea. In 2006, after North Korea tested missiles capable of reaching Japanese cities and later tested a nuclear weapon for the first time, Japan reacted strongly, joining the United States in imposing sanctions and embargoes on North Korea. Prominent Japanese politicians called for a public debate on whether the country should continue to rely on the U.S. nuclear umbrella for its security, or whether, in light of North Korea's nuclear test, Japan should develop its own nuclear weapons capacity. For the time being, Abe ruled out that option and discouraged any further debate.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Japan is an electoral democracy. The prime minister—the leader of the majority party or coalition in the Diet's lower chamber, the House of Deputies—is the head of govern-

ment and appoints a cabinet of ministers. The House of Deputies (*Shugi-in*) serves four-year terms and is made up of 380 single-member constituency seats and 100 party-block seats. An upper chamber, the House of Councilors (*Sangi-in*), consists of 146 constituency seats and 96 party-block seats; members serve six-year terms, with half facing election every three years. Emperor Akihito serves as a ceremonial head of state.

Numerous political parties compete for power. Currently, the LDP leads a coalition government with New Komeito, a party with close ties to a national Buddhist organization. Major opposition parties include the Democratic Party of Japan, the Japanese Communist Party, and the Social Democratic Party.

Until leaving office in 2006, former prime minister Junichiro Koizumi focused his major reform efforts on breaking down the corruption that resulted from the iron triangle system, mostly by loosening ties between the government and big business. Japan was ranked 17 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Japan's press is private and independent, but the presence of press clubs, or *kisha kurabu*, is an obstacle to press freedom. Press clubs ensure homogeneity of news coverage by fostering close relationships between the major media and bureaucrats and politicians. Government officials often give club members exclusive access to political information, leading journalists to avoid writing critical stories about the government and reducing the media's ability to pressure politicians for greater transparency and accountability. These practices have been criticized by press freedom advocates and the European Union. Reporters outside the press club system conduct most of Japan's investigative journalism. Internet access is not restricted.

Japanese of all faiths can worship freely. Religious groups are not required to be licensed, but registering with government authorities as a "religious corporation" brings tax benefits and other advantages. There are no restrictions on academic freedom.

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly and association. The political culture in Japan is strong, and there are active civic, human rights, social welfare, and environmental groups. Trade unions are independent, and with the exception of police and firefighters, all unionized workers have the right to strike.

Japan's judiciary is independent. There are several levels of courts, and suspects are generally given fair public trials by an impartial tribunal (there are no juries) within three months of being detained. Arbitrary arrest and imprisonment are not practiced. Prison conditions comply with international standards, although some human rights groups have criticized them for being overly disciplined. Prison officials have been known to use physical and psychological intimidation to enforce discipline or elicit confessions. The government sometimes restricts human rights groups' access to prisons. According to Amnesty International, a new Penal Facilities and Treatment of Prisoners Law was adopted in May 2006, replacing the 1908 law. It provides for a monitoring body to inspect prisons, improved access to the outside world for prisoners, and human rights education for prison staff. The National Police Agency is under civilian control and is highly disciplined, though reports of human rights abuses committed by police persist. The Diet debated but did not yet decide to establish a national human rights commission. The government has announced that it would accede to the Rome Statute of the

International Criminal Court (ICC) and seek the election of a Japanese judge to the body.

Although the constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, creed, sex, and social status, certain groups of people continue to face unofficial discrimination. Japan's three million Burakumin, who are descendants of feudal-era outcasts, and the indigenous Ainu minority suffer from entrenched societal discrimination that prevents them from having equal access to housing and employment opportunities. Foreigners generally, and Koreans in particular, suffer the same disadvantages.

Women in Japan have legal equality, but discrimination in employment is particularly widespread. According to the *Times* (London), "Only one in eight lawyers is a woman, as is one in ten company managers, one in thirty ambassadors and one in seventy senior civil servants." In addition, sexual harassment on the job is common. Violence against women is a problem that often goes unreported because of "social and cultural concerns about shaming one's family or endangering the reputation of one's spouse or children," according to a U.S. State Department human rights report. The snap elections in September 2005 proved to be a major step forward for women in Japanese politics; 43 women were elected to the 480-member lower house, the highest number ever. This was the result of Koizumi's decision to invite an unprecedented number of women to run in the place of the ejected members of the LDP. Many of the women were awarded top spots on the party's list of candidates.

Survivors of Japan's system of sexual slavery during World War II, popularly known as "Comfort Women," continued to be denied legal remedy or reparations for their treatment. The Japanese courts contend that compensation claims were settled by postwar treaties.

Jordan

Population: 5,600,000

Capital: Amman

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,4PF	4,5PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	5,5PF	6,5PF	5,5PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF

Overview: Jordan struggled in 2006 to continue with political reform as set out in its comprehensive National Agenda while imposing tighter security controls through new antiterrorism legislation. The momentum of the country's political reform stalled with the renewed focus on security. There are concerns that the antiterrorism legislation will curtail civil liberties and that there will be no electoral reform before the scheduled elections in 2007.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, known as Transjordan until 1950, was established as a League of Nations mandate under the control of Great Britain in 1921 and won full independence in 1946. Following the assassination of King Abdullah in 1951, the crown passed briefly to his mentally unstable eldest son, Talal, and then to his grandson, Hussein. King Hussein's turbulent 46-year reign witnessed a massive influx of Palestinian refugees (who now comprise a majority of the population), the loss of all territory west of the Jordan River in 1967, and numerous assassinations and coup attempts by Palestinian and Arab nationalists. Although the 1952 constitution provided for a directly elected parliament, political parties were banned in 1956, and Parliament was either suspended entirely or emasculated by government intervention in the electoral process for over three decades. While political and civil liberties remained tightly restricted, Hussein proved adept at co-opting—rather than killing, jailing, or exiling—his political opponents. As a result, Jordan avoided the legacy of brutal repression characteristic of other authoritarian regimes in the Arab world.

As a result of declining oil prices, which translated into reduced aid and worker remittances from the Arab Gulf countries, Jordan was forced to implement economic austerity measures in the late 1980s. These developments led to widespread rioting and mounting internal pressure for greater freedom and representation. In response, the government launched a rapid process of political liberalization and progressively eased restrictions on civil liberties. However, the reform process ground to a halt in the mid-1990s and suffered some reversals.

By the time of Hussein's death in 1999 and the ascension of his son, Abdullah, the kingdom was again faced with severe economic problems. The "peace dividend" expected to follow from Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel, in the form of improved trade with the West Bank and increased investment from Western Europe, had not filtered down to the population at large. Faced with a crippling public debt and 27 percent unemployment, Abdullah launched a series of major economic reforms and signed one of the Arab world's first free-trade agreements with the United States.

The September 2000 outbreak of the Aqsa *intifada* (uprising) in the West Bank and Gaza inflamed anti-Israeli sentiments among Jordanians of Palestinian descent, leftists, and Islamists, who dominated much of civil society. As the violence next door continued unabated, the Professional Associations Council (PAC) formed an antinormalization committee to spearhead mass demonstrations demanding the annulment of Jordan's peace treaty with Israel. The government reacted by suppressing criticism of Jordan's relations with Israel and banning all demonstrations.

In 2001, Abdullah dissolved the Parliament, postponed parliamentary elections scheduled for November, and replaced elected municipal councils with state-appointed local committees. For more than two years, Abdullah ruled by decree, issuing more than 200 "temporary laws" that weakened due process protections and imposed new restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly.

Although the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq further inflamed popular opposition to the kingdom's foreign policy, Abdullah quickly moved to restore the country's limited democratic institutions and relax restrictions on freedom of expression. Reasonably free and transparent, though not fair, parliamentary and municipal elections were held in 2003. An informal understanding was reached between the palace and

dissident leftist and Islamist groups: in return for limited freedom to express themselves and participate in the political system, the latter reportedly agreed to curtail their efforts to mobilize public opinion against Jordan's pro-U.S. alignment as long as progress was being made at the economic level. Buoyed by an infusion of "oil grants" from the Arab Gulf states and a dramatic increase in economic assistance from the United States, Jordan's economy picked up steam.

In 2005, Abdullah appointed a 26-member National Agenda Committee to draft a framework for political, economic, and social reforms, but the committee's domination by palace loyalists indicated that its purpose was mainly to strike a consensus within the political elite, not the population at large. After returning from a visit to Washington, where his political reform program met with negative reviews from government officials and members of Congress, Abdullah replaced Prime Minister Feisal al-Fayez with Adnan Badran, a liberal academic.

Terrorist bombings struck Amman in November 2005, and Abdullah replaced his security advisers, dissolved the Senate, and appointed a new prime minister, Ma'arouf Bakhit, along with a new cabinet. The momentum of political reform was stalled with the renewed focus on security.

In June 2006, the Jordanian government ordered the arrest of four members of Parliament belonging to the Islamic Action Front (IAF) for expressing condolences to the family of slain al-Qaeda terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and praising him as a "martyr and a fighter." Two of the lawmakers were convicted of inciting sectarian tensions and jailed, but the king pardoned them in October. They nevertheless lost their membership in Parliament and will not be allowed to run for reelection in 2007.

The Parliament approved new antiterrorism legislation in August 2006 that many have criticized for curtailing political and civil liberties. The law criminalizes financing, interacting with, and recruiting for any terrorist group. It also gives military courts jurisdiction over terrorism claims, and permits surveillance of terrorism suspects and the detention of suspects for up to 30 days. There are no provisions for judicial review.

In 2006, the government released its comprehensive National Agenda reform plan. In contrast to previous efforts, the new National Agenda provides mechanisms for genuine reform, including measurable indicators and clear milestones attached to budgetary requirements. The agenda also calls for the abolition of laws that discriminate against women and an update to association laws. The plan faces opposition from entrenched interests and a skeptical public that questions the government's commitment to implement it.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Jordan is not an electoral democracy. King Abdullah holds broad executive powers and may dissolve Parliament and dismiss the cabinet at his discretion; the king appoints members of the cabinet, led by a prime minister. The 110-seat lower house of the National Assembly, elected through universal adult suffrage, may approve, reject, or amend legislation proposed by the cabinet, but is limited in its ability to initiate legislation and cannot enact laws without the assent of the 55-seat upper house, or Senate, which is appointed by the king. Regional governors are appointed by the central government, as are half of all municipal council members.

The electoral system is heavily skewed toward the monarchy's traditional support base. The single-member-district system, introduced in 1993, favors tribal and

family ties over political and ideological affiliations, while rural districts with populations of Transjordanian origin are overrepresented relative to urban districts, where most Jordanians of Palestinian descent reside. Activists have repeatedly called for a new electoral law based on proportional representation. Although the government has announced its intention to reform the electoral law before the 2007 elections, no concrete actions had been taken by the end of 2006.

The Jordanian government has been working on a revision of laws on political parties aimed at modernizing the kingdom's party system and consolidating the political landscape. The draft law guarantees parties' right to establish their own media outlets, increases the minimum membership level from 50 to 200 people and requires that parties include members from at least five different governorates. The government hopes to finalize the law by the end of 2006 but faces opposition from traditional groups that do not want their influence curtailed and some political activists who are concerned that the new law could be used to marginalize legitimate political forces. They are also concerned that they will not be able to meet the 200 mark and that proposed provisions mandating public funding for political parties could be used to unduly influence party platforms.

Corruption in the executive and legislative branches of government is widespread, though the authorities have made progress in combating it in recent years. In September 2006, the parliament approved anticorruption legislation that would create a six-member commission, appointed by the prime minister, tasked with investigating graft. Jordan was ranked 40 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is sometimes restricted. Vaguely worded portions of Article 150 of the penal code and other legislation criminalize certain types of peaceful expression, such as criticism of the royal family, slander of government officials, and speech that harms Jordanian foreign relations, enflames religious sensitivities, or undermines the state's reputation. In 2006, two newspaper editors, Jihad al-Mu'mani and Hashim al-Khalidi, were found guilty of "offending the religious sentiments of the people" for reprinting a Danish cartoon of the prophet Muhammad. Both were sentenced to two months in prison. Although the Jordanian government has repeatedly and publicly promised to reform Article 150 and suspend its application until it does so, officials continued to apply the law in 2006.

The government has officially relinquished its monopoly on television and radio outlets and issued several private broadcasting licenses, but most broadcast news media remain under state control. In June 2006, the authorities interrupted a live interview session with slain terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's brother-in-law on the Qatar-based satellite station Al-Jazeera. The station's Amman bureau chief was briefly detained. Satellite dishes are widespread, however, giving most Jordanians access to foreign media. Jordan's first private television station, ATV, was approved in late 2005 and set to launch in early 2007. There are dozens of private newspapers and magazines, but the government has broad discretionary powers to close print publications and ban books. In May 2006, the General Intelligence Department (GID) detained and interrogated the editor of *al-Majd* for an article that raised questions about the intentions behind the government's announcement of a potential terrorist incident. The GID did not serve him with a summons or warrant, and forced him to publish a retraction as a condition for his release.

Authorities are routinely tipped off about the contents of potentially offensive articles by informers at printing presses, and editors frequently come under pressure to remove such material. Government intelligence agents often telephone Jordanian journalists with warnings about their writing. While the government denies restricting access to the internet—and in fact actively promotes it—websites airing critical views have been blocked in the past.

Islam is the state religion. Sunni Muslims constitute 92 percent of the population, but Christians and Jews are officially recognized as religious minorities and allowed to worship freely. Baha'is and Druze are allowed to practice their faiths, but are not officially recognized. The government appoints Islamic clergy, pays their salaries, and monitors sermons at mosques, where political activity is banned under Jordanian law. The Senate recently amended a bill regulating mosques to require preachers to obtain written government permission to lead services or teach the Koran. Unauthorized preachers would face a month in prison and a fine. The Parliament in 2006 also approved a measure that allows only state-appointed councils to issue religious edicts, or fatwas, and makes it illegal to criticize these fatwas. Academic freedom is generally respected in Jordan. Jordanians are free to openly debate and discuss political and societal developments; however, there have been reports of a heavy intelligence presence at some university campuses.

Freedom of assembly is heavily restricted. The Law on General Assemblies bans public demonstrations lacking written authorization from the regional governor. Although opposition groups have complained that most of their requests were denied, IAF supporters were allowed to demonstrate against the detention of two IAF former members of Parliament.

Freedom of association is limited. While dozens of licensed nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) addressing political and social issues are allowed to operate freely, the government occasionally withholds licenses from NGOs deemed subversive. There is a prohibition on NGOs participating in political activity. The Ministry of Social Development registers and regulates the activities of all NGOs in the country. Workers have the right to bargain collectively but must receive government permission to strike. More than 30 percent of the workforce is organized into 17 unions. The government has threatened to dissolve the PAC, and a draft law barring professional associations from engaging in politics is awaiting decision in Parliament. In March 2006, the government banned a planned demonstration of professional unions against the draft law.

The judiciary is subject to executive influence through the Justice Ministry and the Higher Judiciary Council, whose members are appointed by the king. While most trials in civilian courts are open and procedurally sound, the State Security Court (SSC) may close its proceedings to the public. A temporary law promulgated in 2001 allows the prime minister to refer any case to the SSC and denies the right of appeal to people convicted by the SSC of misdemeanors, which can carry short prison sentences.

Jordanian citizens enjoy little protection from arbitrary arrest and detention. Under the constitution, suspects may be detained for up to 48 hours without a warrant and up to 10 days without formal charges being filed; courts routinely grant prosecutors 15-day extensions of this deadline. Even these minimal protections are denied to suspects referred to the SSC, who are often held in lengthy pretrial detention and refused access to legal counsel until just before trial. Torture and mistreatment of

individuals held in GID custody is a widespread problem. Interrogations by the GID are geared toward obtaining confessions for SSC cases. The UN Special Rapporteur on torture reported in June 2006 that "torture is systematically practiced" at the GID. Amnesty International also issued a report in July 2006 that alleged systematic torture by authorities, including prolonged beatings, extended solitary confinement, and threats of sexual abuse. Nearly every defendant before the SSC complained of torture.

Capital punishment is legal in Jordan, but the government announced in 2006 that the death penalty would no longer be imposed for a number of offenses, such as drug-related crimes. Jordanian courts that year imposed 25 death sentences, 22 of which were issued by the SSC against defendants convicted of national security offenses. Seven of the 25 sentences have been commuted.

Jordanians of Palestinian descent face discrimination in employment by the government and the military, and in admission to universities. Labor laws do not protect foreign workers. In May 2006, the National Labor Committee issued a report detailing abuse of foreign garment workers in a number of factories. After the report was issued, the government took immediate action to rectify the problem, closing five apparel factories highlighted in the report and pursuing criminal cases against several factory owners. An update to the report states that "the majority of Jordan's garment factories ... have shown substantial improvements. Conditions in these factories are far better now than they were in May of 2006." Freedom of movement and travel is generally respected, and there were no reports in 2006 of mothers being prevented to travel alone with children.

Women enjoy equal political rights, but face legal discrimination in matters involving inheritance and divorce, which fall under the jurisdiction of Sharia (Islamic law) courts, and child custody. Government pensions and social security benefits also favor men. However, new provisions within the National Agenda aim to change this and abolish laws that are discriminatory toward women. Marital rape is not illegal. A 2002 temporary law granting women the right to initiate divorce proceedings has been rejected repeatedly by the legislature, but remains in effect. Although women constitute only 14 percent of the workforce, the government has made efforts to increase the number of women in the civil service. Women are guaranteed a quota of six seats in Parliament. Article 98 of the penal code allows for lenient treatment of those who commit a crime in a "state of fit or fury" resulting from an unlawful or dangerous act on the part of the victim. In practice, Article 98 is often applied to benefit men who commit "honor crimes"—the murder or attempted murder of women by relatives for alleged sexual misconduct.

Kazakhstan

Population: 15,300,000

Capital: Astana

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF

Overview: President Nursultan Nazarbayev won a crushing victory in the December 4, 2005, presidential election against a backdrop of government pressure on the country's civil society and political opposition, charges of electoral fraud, and a critical report by poll monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The brutal February 2006 murder of opposition leader Altynbek Sarsenbayev highlighted the country's disturbing tendency toward political violence as well as serious fissures within the ruling elite ahead of Nazarbayev's scheduled departure from office in 2012. A new media minister supervised a campaign of increased state control over information and the passage of restrictive new media legislation.

Kazakhstan, a sparsely populated, multiethnic land stretching from the Caspian Sea to the Chinese border, was gradually conquered by Russia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. After a brief attempt at independence in 1917 in the wake of the Russian Revolution, Kazakhstan became an autonomous Soviet republic, in 1920 and a union republic in 1936.

The leader of the Kazakh Communist Party, Nursultan Nazarbayev, became president of the republic in 1990, and was confirmed in the post in a December 1, 1991, election, just two weeks before Kazakhstan declared independence from the Soviet Union. The country's first national legislative elections, in March 1994, were invalidated by the Constitutional Court a year later because of numerous irregularities. Nazarbayev subsequently dissolved Parliament and called a referendum on April 29, 1995, in which a reported 95 percent of voters supported the extension of his five-year term, set to expire in 1996, until December 2000. An additional referendum in August of that year, which was boycotted by the main opposition parties, approved a new constitution strengthening the powers of the presidency. Nazarbayev supporters captured most of the seats in December 1995 elections for a new bicameral Parliament.

In October 1998, Parliament approved Nazarbayev's call for the presidential election to be moved forward from December 2000 to January 1999, as well as an amendment to the constitution extending the presidential term of office from five to seven years. The key challenger, former prime minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin, was banned

from competing on a legal technicality, while two other candidates were known supporters of the incumbent. Nazarbayev was reelected with a reported 80 percent of the vote.

Otan (Fatherland), a newly formed party loyal to Nazarbayev, won the single largest number of seats in the September 1999 parliamentary elections, which marked the first multiparty balloting in Kazakhstan's history. Four opposition deputies captured seats. Despite some improvement over the controversial presidential ballot in January, the parliamentary poll was deeply flawed. In June 2000, the Parliament overwhelmingly approved giving Nazarbayev lifetime privileges when he eventually left office, including formal access to key government officials so that he could advise them on policy matters, as well as a permanent place on the country's Security Council.

Signs of a deepening split within the country's ruling elite became evident following the November 2001 founding of a new political movement, the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK). Established by prominent business leaders, some of whom held positions in Nazarbayev's administration, the DCK proclaimed its commitment to democratization, rule of law, and anticorruption efforts. However, some observers questioned the sincerity of its stated goals and maintained that the group's primary purpose was to safeguard its members' substantial political and economic interests while countering those of the president's family and close associates.

Apparently sensing that the DCK posed a growing political threat to his regime, Nazarbayev cracked down on the group throughout 2002. In what critics charged were politically motivated cases, two of the DCK's cofounders—former minister of energy Mukhtar Ablyazov and former Pavlodar governor Galymzhan Zhakiyanov—were arrested, convicted of abuse of power and corruption during their tenures in government, and sentenced to prison. Ablyazov was freed in 2003 after receiving an amnesty from Nazarbayev, and went to live in exile in Russia. Ablyazov's announcement that he would cease political activity to concentrate on his business interests led to widespread speculation that his release was made conditional on his leaving politics. Zhakiyanov was transferred from prison to a minimum security settlement colony in northern Pavlodar in August 2004 and won early release in January 2006. Meanwhile, the DCK formally registered as a political party in May 2004 but was disbanded by court order in January 2005.

The September 2004 elections for the lower house of Parliament were contested by 12 parties, of which nine supported the president. Progovernment parties captured the vast majority of the 77 seats. The three opposition parties that had been able to register for the vote—the DCK, the Communist Party, and Ak Zhol—faced intense government pressure. The only opposition candidate to win a seat, Alikhan Baimenov of Ak Zhol, refused until late 2006 to take up his position in order to protest the conduct of the elections; none of the opposition parties recognized the official results. International monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) found some improvements over previous polls, but they noted serious problems, including a lack of political balance on election commissions, media bias in favor of propresidential candidates, the exclusion of certain candidates for politically motivated reasons, and the presence of unauthorized personnel in polling stations.

The government intensified its harassment of the country's media and civil society sectors in the months leading up to the December 2005 presidential election.

The crackdown appeared in part to be a response to the recent popular movements against entrenched incumbents in nearby Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, in which civil society actors were involved to varying degrees. Five candidates were allowed to participate in the presidential poll: Nazarbayev, Zharmakhan Tuyakbai (For a Just Kazakhstan opposition alliance), Yerassyl Abylkasymov (Communist People's Party), Alikhan Baimenov (Ak Zhol), and Mels Yeleussizov (independent). Nazarbayev secured reelection with a crushing 91 percent of the vote amid opposition allegations of fraud and an OSCE report that found "numerous and persistent examples of intimidation by the authorities" and "overall media bias in favor of the incumbent."

Political violence established a disturbing presence in Kazakhstan in 2005-2006. In December 2005, the authorities ruled the death of opposition leader Zamanbek Nurkadilov a suicide, even though he was found dead in his home with two gunshot wounds to the chest and one to the head. In February 2006, Altynbek Sarsenbayev, a leading member of For a Just Kazakhstan, was found shot to death along with his bodyguard and driver. The subsequent investigation pointed to the involvement of state security officers in the killing, but left many questions unanswered. The trial, which was marred by claims that confessions had been coerced, culminated in the sentencing of Yerzhan Utembayev, former head of the Senate administration, to a 20-year prison term for organizing the murder. Prosecutors said Utembayev had been acting on a personal grudge, but conflicting theories implicating higher government officials were aired by trial witnesses and the opposition.

On the international front, Kazakhstan's relations with the United States appeared to recover from recent strains over perceived U.S. involvement in the so-called color revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. Nazarbayev visited the United States in September 2006 and met with U.S. president George W. Bush. The visit did not, however, produce a clear statement of U.S. support for Kazakhstan's bid to chair the OSCE in 2009. In early December, the OSCE postponed until 2007 a decision on Kazakhstan's bid for the chairmanship. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan's ties with Russia, which has not been critical of Astana's domestic policies or government corruption, continued to strengthen. In 2004, bilateral trade between the two countries rose 21 percent to reach \$7 billion, and Nazarbayev noted during an October 2006 meeting with Russian president Vladimir Putin that 2006 trade volume would reach \$11 billion.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Kazakhstan is not an electoral democracy. The constitution grants the president considerable control over the legislature, the judiciary, and local governments, and President Nursultan Nazarbayev continues to enjoy sweeping executive powers. The constitution currently sets the presidential term of office at seven years and also stipulates that elections are to be held on the first Sunday in December. However, a 1998 parliamentary decision to move the December 2000 election back to January 1999 led to a discrepancy in these provisions. In August 2005, the Constitutional Council ruled that the date of the next presidential election would be December 2005—a year earlier than some had argued was legally mandated. Nazarbayev won the vote, giving him a second seven-year term. Since the current constitution limits the president to two terms, he must leave office in 2012.

The bicameral Parliament is composed of an upper house (Senate), whose 39

members are chosen by directly elected regional councils; and a lower house (Mazhilis), whose 77 members are elected by popular vote (67 in single-mandate constituency contests and 10 from party lists on the basis of proportional representation). A second-round vote is held if no candidate in a single-mandate contest receives more than 50 percent of the vote. The country's presidential and parliamentary elections have been neither free nor fair.

The country's law on political parties prohibits parties based on ethnic origin, religion, or gender. A 2002 law raised from 3,000 to 50,000 the number of members that a party must have to register. National security legislation amendments signed by Nazarbayev in July 2005 prohibit the financing of political parties or candidates by foreign nationals during the electoral process. In August 2005, the government formally registered the For a Just Kazakhstan opposition alliance, composed of Naghyz Ak Zhol (which splintered from the Ak Zhol opposition party in early 2005), the Communist Party, the unregistered Alga party, and the Pokoleniye pensioners' movement.

Opposition parties, which have complained of harassment, surveillance, denial of access to the state-run media, and arbitrary bans on registering candidates, faced mounting pressures and attacks leading up to the December 2005 presidential election. Alga, which represents the remnants of the banned DCK, was unable to obtain registration in 2006. In July 2006, Zharmakhan Tuyakbai, leader of For a Just Kazakhstan, announced plans to form a social-democratic party. Also that month, Asar, a party headed by Nazarbayev's eldest daughter, Dariga, merged with the largest pro-presidential party, Otan. The move appeared to represent a further consolidation of the president's dominant position in the political arena.

The February 2006 murder of Altynbek Sarsenbayev, a former Nazarbayev ally who had joined the opposition and become a leader of For a Just Kazakhstan, laid bare a wide array of deficiencies in Kazakhstan's political and judicial system. Sarsenbayev, his driver, and bodyguard were found shot to death outside Almaty. Yerzhan Utembayev, the former head of the Senate administration, was convicted of ordering the murder, allegedly for insulting comments Sarsenbayev had made about him in a press interview. Several members of an elite National Security Committee unit were also convicted of involvement in the killing. Prosecutors' account of the killing was widely doubted, and opposition leaders charged that Sarsenbayev had been murdered for his political beliefs. Adding to the uncertainty, Utembayev and a number of other defendants recanted their initial confessions, saying they had been coerced. The trial itself also exhibited numerous procedural irregularities.

The aftermath of the killing exposed a serious conflict between two of Kazakhstan's most powerful political clans—one led by Dariga Nazarbayeva and her husband, Rakhat Aliyev; and another led by Timur Kulibayev, husband of the president's second daughter. An early victim was Nartai Dutbayev, seen as a Kulibayev ally, who resigned as head of the National Security Committee shortly after the killing. The two clans used media outlets they controlled to leak compromising materials about each other, and appeared to be positioning themselves for an eventual succession struggle. The incident showed that Kazakhstan's central political relationships remain very much in the shadows, with unofficial actors and influence groups playing far more important roles than registered parties and the public politics in which they engage.

Corruption is widespread throughout all levels of government, and businesses are forced to pay bribes in order to deal with the government bureaucracy. The U.S. Justice Department is continuing to investigate the so-called Kazakhgate scandal, in which U.S. oil companies allegedly used middlemen to pay millions of dollars to top Kazakh officials, including Nazarbayev, in exchange for lucrative contracts. Kazakhstan was ranked 111 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

While the constitution provides for freedom of the press, the government has repeatedly harassed or shut down independent media outlets through measures including politicized lawsuits and confiscations of newspapers. Libel is a criminal offense, and the country's criminal code prohibits insulting the honor and dignity of the president; self-censorship is widespread. Amendments to the country's media law passed in 2006 require news outlets to include the names of editors in their registration applications, file for reregistration in the event of even minor changes, and keep \$40,000 in reserve to cover potential libel damages. The law drew harsh criticism from journalists and the OSCE. Nevertheless, Parliament passed the law and Nazarbayev signed it in July.

Most media outlets, including publishing houses, are controlled or otherwise influenced by members of the president's family or other powerful interest groups. Dariga Nazarbayeva resigned her position as head of the state-run Khabar television station before the 2004 parliamentary election campaign, but was thought to retain significant influence behind the scenes. Newly appointed Information Minister Ermukhamet Ertysbayev led a campaign to reassert state control over Khabar after the Sarsenbayev killing, in a move that was seen as a presidential intervention to reduce Nazarbayeva's influence over the country's media.

The content of websites has been subject to libel laws, and the government at times has moved to block access to websites critical of the regime. In December 2005, the government shut down the Kazakh-registered website of British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen, drawing a protest from press freedom groups. Baron Cohen routinely mocked the country through one of his characters.

The government cracked down hard on opposition media in the last few months before the December 2005 presidential election. Harassment of independent media continued in 2006, though with somewhat less intensity. In January, for example, a printing press with links to the Nazarbayev family refused to print seven Almaty-based opposition newspapers. Nevertheless, the enactment of the repressive legislation in July signaled a general worsening of the media environment in 2006.

The constitution guarantees freedom of worship, and many religious communities practice without government interference. However, local officials sometimes harass certain nontraditional groups, and there were legislative setbacks to religious freedom in 2005. According to that year's amendments to national security legislation, all activities by unregistered religious groups are illegal. Previously, registration was required only if a religious group wished to engage in legal transactions, including buying or renting property and hiring employees. The 2005 extremism law gives the government great discretion in identifying and designating groups, including religious organizations, as extremist and in banning their activities.

The government reportedly permits academic freedom, except with respect to criticism of the president and his family. During the 2004 parliamentary elections and

2005 presidential election, there were credible reports that teachers and professors were pressured by local officials to join certain parties and vote for particular candidates. Schoolchildren and university students are sometimes coerced into participating in staged official celebrations with threats of poor grades or other penalties. Corruption in the educational system is widespread, with students frequently paying bribes to professors for passing grades.

Despite constitutional guarantees, the government imposes restrictions on freedom of association and assembly. The authorities harass nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that address sensitive issues through measures including tax investigations and surveillance by law enforcement and security agencies. As the December 2005 presidential election approached, the authorities took an increasingly hard line against both domestic and foreign-based NGOs. Complicated procedures to obtain permits for public demonstrations include a requirement that organizations apply to local authorities 10 days in advance. When opposition leaders held an unauthorized demonstration in the wake of the Sarsenbayev killing, they were arrested and jailed for a short time.

Workers have the legal right to form and join trade unions and participate in collective bargaining, and a number of unions operate throughout the country. Workers have engaged in strikes, primarily over the nonpayment of wages. In September and October of 2006, workers at mines owned by a unit of Netherlands-based Mittal Steel Co. struck for higher wages and improved working conditions after an accident on September 20 killed over 40 miners. Workers gained a pay raise, although it was not clear that all of the miners' concerns were addressed by the settlement.

The constitution significantly constrains the independence of the judiciary, which is subservient to the executive branch. Judges are subject to bribery and political bias, and corruption is evident throughout the judicial system. Police at times abuse detainees during arrest and interrogation, often to obtain confessions, and arbitrary arrest and detention remain problems. Conditions in pretrial facilities and prisons are harsh. A moratorium on the death penalty was imposed in December 2003, and Nazarbayev issued a decree in January 2004 introducing life imprisonment as an alternative.

Since Kazakhstan's independence, much of the country's large ethnic Russian population has emigrated, in part because of the enhanced status granted to the Kazakh language. Many of the remaining Russians, most of whom do not speak Kazakh, have complained of discrimination in employment and education.

While the rights of entrepreneurship and private property are legally protected, bureaucratic hurdles and the control of large segments of the economy by clan elites and government officials limit equality of opportunity and fair competition. A 2003 land code allows for private ownership of the country's vast tracts of agricultural land. However, critics have charged that the law will primarily benefit wealthy individuals with close ties to government officials. Residents of Astana whose homes have been confiscated and demolished to make way for large-scale construction projects, including housing for the elite, have complained of not receiving legally guaranteed financial compensation. Dozens were injured and a policeman was killed in July 2006 when riot police stormed an unlicensed settlement outside Almaty that the authorities had deemed illegal. The demolition of homes in a Hare Krishna community in an Almaty suburb in late November and the forced resettlement of resi-

dents prompted statements of concern from the OSCE Advisory Council on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the U.S. embassy in Kazakhstan.

Traditional cultural practices and the country's economic imbalances limit professional opportunities for women. Nine women were elected to parliament in the 2004 elections, an increase of one over the 1999 elections. Domestic violence often goes unpunished, as police are reluctant to intervene in what are regarded as internal family matters. Despite legal prohibitions, the trafficking of women for purposes of prostitution remains a serious problem. Kazakhstan serves as a place of origin, transit point, and destination country for victims of trafficking. According to the U.S. State Department's 2006 Trafficking in Persons Report, Kazakhstan does not yet meet minimal standards for eliminating trafficking, but is making progress. The country's relative economic prosperity has made it a magnet for migrant workers from neighboring countries, particularly Uzbekistan. The migrants frequently encounter poor working conditions and a lack of legal protections.

Kenya

Population: 34,700,000

Capital: Nairobi

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Trend Arrow: Kenya received a downward trend arrow because of a lack of transparency regarding government anticorruption efforts.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	4,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview: Despite a heightened level of political rights and civil liberties under the government of President Mwai Kibaki, several worrisome trends emerged in 2006. Anticorruption crusader John Githongo issued in January an authoritative report indicating that corruption had reached the highest ranks of the Kibaki government, prompting the resignation of several ministers and implicating the vice president. In March, Kenyan security forces raided an independent television network, causing significant damage. Meanwhile, international donors maintained a skeptical stance regarding the government's willingness and ability to curb corruption.

Britain gained control of Kenya in the late nineteenth century, partly in order to open and control a route to the Nile River headwaters in Uganda. Kenya achieved its independence in 1963. The nationalist leader Jomo Kenyatta was president until

his death in 1978, and then-vice president Daniel arap Moi succeeded him. Moi's ascent to the presidency kept the Kenyan African National Union (KANU) in power but gradually diminished the power of the previously dominant Kikuyu ethnic group.

In 1992, after a lengthy period of de facto single-party rule, domestic unrest and pressure from international aid donors forced Moi to hold multiparty elections. He was reelected as president in controversial polling. In the next presidential and legislative elections in December 1997, Moi again defeated a divided opposition.

KANU's election victories were cemented through political repression, massive use of state patronage, media control, and dubious electoral procedures. Physical violence, an often-docile judiciary, extensive police powers, and executive decrees were used against political opponents and in efforts to undermine the wider civil society. Moi's rule was associated with poor governance, and limits on political and civil rights were common, as was corruption in the ruling party and government. In the 1990s, government-sponsored ethnic violence heightened political polarization. The violence was perpetrated, in most cases, by Kalenjin or Maasai KANU supporters against members of the Kikuyu and Luhya ethnic groups, believed to be supporters of opposition political parties. Despite these problems, political space for opposition views continued to open, and many of the core elements necessary for the growth of a democratic political system developed.

In 2002, the opposition succeeded in uniting behind Mwai Kibaki in national elections. He was elected president, defeating Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of Kenya's first president and Moi's chosen successor. In addition, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), which supported Kibaki, won the majority of seats in the National Assembly. These elections raised the prospect of a major shift in Kenyan politics: the new leadership's ambitious reform program included tackling corruption, addressing economic and social problems, and undertaking institutional reforms designed to promote democracy.

Reform efforts have been complicated by a number of factors, including the fragility of the governing NARC coalition, a complex, controversial, and unsuccessful constitutional reform process, significant resource constraints, the threat of terrorism, and at times mixed messages sent by some major donor countries such as the United States on issues such as civil liberties and terrorism. An independent anti-corruption commission has been investigating more than 3,000 cases of alleged corruption since its inception in 2003, but its record of initiating successful prosecutions has been very modest. One of Kibaki's early appointments was John Githongo, the widely respected leader of the Kenya chapter of Transparency International, as head of the government's Office of Governance and Ethics. Githongo resigned in early 2005, frustrated by continued corruption and the Kibaki administration's failure to enact meaningful reforms. Faced with repeated threats on his life, he subsequently fled the country and gained asylum in Britain in early 2005.

A lively press and public investigative commissions have increasingly critiqued the substance and slow pace of the Kibaki administration's reforms. A number of commissions are still carrying out investigations into particular examples of corruption, such as the long-running Goldenberg foreign exchange scandal and Anglo-Leasing government contracting affair, which occurred during the Kibaki administration.

After a lengthy drafting process, a revised constitution was submitted to the voters in a referendum in November 2005. The National Assembly had voted to

amend the final draft version to reduce the powers of a proposed prime minister and reinforce those of the president. It also opted to maintain a single legislative chamber, rather than creating a bicameral legislature as originally envisaged. The revised constitutional draft made it more difficult for the National Assembly to impeach a president and raised the possibility that presidential elections could be decided through district gerrymandering by the government. These changes sparked considerable popular unrest, and the revised draft was soundly rejected by the referendum voters.

Despite the heightened level of political rights and civil liberties under the Kibaki government, several worrisome trends emerged in 2006. Githongo in January issued an authoritative report indicating that corruption had reached the highest ranks of the Kibaki government, prompting the resignation of several ministers and implicating Vice President Moody Awori. In March, after the publication of stories critical of the government, Kenyan security forces raided the independent KTN television station and disabled the printing plant of the *Standard* newspaper, in addition to burning copies of the newspaper. International donors maintained a highly skeptical stance regarding the government's willingness and ability to curb corruption. Political tensions due in part to jockeying ahead of the country's scheduled December 2007 presidential election, entrenched corruption, a lack of reform results, and questions regarding the depth of the government's commitment to reform continue to raise serious concerns about the pace and direction of Kenya's democratic development.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Kenya is an electoral democracy. The 2002 presidential and legislative elections, widely viewed as legitimate and reflective of the people's will, resulted in a peaceful transfer of power—from the long-ruling KANU party to the opposition NARC coalition, led by new President Mwai Kibaki's Democratic Party. However, the country is far from consolidating its fragile democracy and electoral processes.

The president is elected for a five-year term. The single-chamber National Assembly consists of 210 members elected for five years, with an additional 12 members appointed by the president and nominated by the parties on the basis of their shares of the popular vote. The National Assembly is the setting for much of the nation's political discourse, and a varied and energetic civil society plays an important role in public policy debates.

Political parties representing a range of ideological, regional, and ethnic interests are active and vocal, and there are no significant impediments to party formation.

Corruption continues to be a very serious problem threatening the country's nascent democracy. Political parties, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the press, as well as some official bodies, have unearthed examples of government corruption and malfeasance. The 2006 report by anticorruption campaigner John Githongo was merely the most serious of a number of credible reports of high-level corruption. Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Kenya 142 out of 163 countries surveyed. The 2006 Kenya Bribery Index states that the overall incidence of corruption has increased by approximately 20 percent from that of 2003, the first year of the Kibaki administration. It also suggests, however, that the average size of bribes has declined. In 2004, the government raised police

salaries to reduce incentives for corruption, but according to the Bribery Index, police are still the most frequently bribed public officials.

The meager results to date from investigations such as the Goldenberg inquiry emphasize the magnitude of the challenge of reducing corruption in Kenya. The Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission has made slow progress at best and has been accused of bias in its work against independent state organizations such as the Kenya National Human Rights Commission. The anticorruption panel's chairman has also been accused of seeking to deflect investigations into the massive Anglo-Leasing scandal, in which government officials attempted to defraud the treasury of hundreds of millions of dollars through payments to spurious firms for security and defense contracts. Furthermore, the commission's chief investigator looking into allegations against senior ministers was fired in June as he was preparing a report for Kibaki detailing the extent of the scandal.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and a free press. These rights have been generally respected in practice, and Kenya enjoys one of the liveliest press environments on the continent. However, the country's overall positive record was seriously marred in March 2006, when security forces sacked the independent KTN television station and stole documents and equipment. The Kenya Union of Journalists has also at times criticized the government for failing to expand media freedom in the country. Six private television stations exist, although their coverage is limited. Currently, 22 FM radio stations broadcast to many parts of Kenya. The government does not restrict access to the internet.

In general, the government has respected freedom of religion. According to the 2006 U.S. State Department's Report on International Religious Freedom, "government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion; however, some Muslim leaders continued to charge that the Government is hostile toward Muslims." The report concludes that Kenya is one of the least repressive African states in this regard, although disputes do occur between Muslims and Christians. Religious-based tension has risen in recent years in the wake of terrorist acts associated with Islamic fundamentalism that were committed on Kenyan soil in 1998 and 2002.

Academic freedom is the norm in Kenya, reflecting the country's broader respect for freedom of thought. However, Kibaki has been accused of appointing university heads, such as the vice chancellor of the University of Nairobi, based on favoritism. The 2006 Kenya Bribery Index notes that bribes are frequently paid to ensure entry into the country's most prestigious educational institutions.

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly. The Kibaki government, unlike its predecessor, has generally respected this right, although there have been cases of unnecessary use of force. One of the core strengths of Kenya's political culture is its energetic and robust civil society. The success of the 2002 elections was due in large part to the ability of NGOs in Kenya to pry open political space and gain greater freedom. In recent years, public policy NGOs have had some advocacy successes, especially in comparison to many other countries wrestling with the legacy of decades of authoritarian rule. The role of civil society in mobilizing public opinion on constitutional reform and the ability of NGOs to undertake voter education and election monitoring are examples of this progress.

All workers other than the police are legally free to join unions of their choice.

The Trade Union Act provides for a Registrar of Trade Unions, who is appointed by the minister of labor. The government may deregister a union, but the Registrar of Trade Unions must give the union 60 days to challenge the deregistration notice. While it does not have the force of law, the Industrial Relations Charter—executed by the government, the Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU), and the Federation of Kenya Employers—gives workers the right to engage in legitimate trade union organizational activities. Both the Trade Disputes Act and the charter authorize collective bargaining between unions and employers. Historically, much of the trade union movement has been subservient to the governing authorities, but this dominance has lessened somewhat under the Kibaki administration.

Although Kenya's judicial system is based on the British model, for much of the independence period its actions reflected the primacy of the executive branch. In 2002, a panel of Commonwealth judicial experts from Africa and Canada examined the court system, concluding that it was among the most incompetent and inefficient in Africa, with judges subject to political pressure and often accepting bribes to influence their decisions. The Kibaki government came to power promising that the rule of law would be upheld, and judicial independence strengthened. Kibaki has criticized the extent of corruption in the judiciary and instructed the minister of justice to establish a process to identify corrupt judges. In late 2003, Kibaki appointed new judges to replace those tainted by corruption. These actions, however, raised concerns about the criteria used and the lack of transparency in the appointment process. A 2005 report by the International Commission of Jurists concluded that corruption in the administration of justice as well as in the judiciary remains a serious impediment to the rule of law in Kenya. In 2006, the judiciary sought legislation to give it more control over its budget; the courts are understaffed and underfinanced, and Kenyans awaiting trial face long delays that violate their right to due process. The country has officially recognized Kadhi courts, which administer Sharia (Islamic law) for such issues as marriage and inheritance disputes, located in areas with a predominantly Muslim population. The government has not established a truth, justice, and reconciliation commission, although in the wake of Kibaki's rise to the presidency a high-level commission called for such an institution.

While checks against arbitrary arrest exist in the legal system, they are not uniformly respected. In 2003, the Kibaki government hastily introduced into the National Assembly the Suppression of Terrorism Bill. The bill was revised and re-introduced following protests from a wide range of advocacy and human rights organizations, but Parliament had not acted upon it by year's end. Concerns remain over the extent to which a final bill may restrict civil liberties. Amnesty International, for example, critiqued the legislation's "vague and broad definition" of terrorism and terrorist acts and the wide-ranging powers it would give authorities to search and detain persons in connection with terrorist activities.

The government announced plans in 2005 to double the number of police officers recruited annually and to increase the proportion of female recruits from 13 percent to 20 percent. While prisons are congested, the government has taken steps to try to reduce this problem. Police still use force to extract information from suspects and deny them an opportunity to get legal representation.

Kenya's population is divided into more than 40 ethnic groups, among which there are frequent allegations of discrimination and occasional violence. In a 2005

report, the Minority Rights Group stated that inequitable government spending has deepened the problems of minority and indigenous peoples. The report identified the Endorois, Maasai, Nubian, and Turkana ethnic groups as the most marginalized in the country with respect to land, resources, job opportunities, and government services, notably health care.

Land disputes frequently form the basis of ethnic tension and violence. Members of the Nubian community, most of whom are Muslim, claim that the government discriminates against them by trying to eliminate their ethnic identity. The continued presence and, at times, criminal activities of Somali refugees have exacerbated the problems faced by that minority. Factors contributing to ethnic tension include widespread firearms possession, the commercialization of traditional cattle herding, poor economic conditions, drought, and ineffective security forces.

Women in Kenya continue to face serious obstacles in the exercise of their freedom. They are denied equal property rights, which puts them at greater risk of poverty, disease (including HIV/AIDS), violence, and homelessness. In 2002, a draft gender-equity bill created considerable public controversy, with some Muslims protesting that it was too sweeping in scope. The government announced in 2004 that a revised bill would be introduced in the National Assembly. It subsequently promised that gender units would be established in all government ministries. By the end of 2006, however, 10 ministries still had no staff in charge of gender units.

Traditional attitudes limit the role of women in politics, although there are no legal restrictions and some change is occurring. The 2002 elections increased the number of women in the National Assembly to eight elected and seven appointed, along with three cabinet ministers. The Kibaki administration has explicitly listed improving women's rights as a key policy goal. This issue is also the focus of considerable attention and discussion in the constitutional review process. There is evidence of widespread violence against women, reported cases of rape, attempted rape, defilement, and incest, and assault against women rose from 11,867 in 2004 to 12,036 in 2005, according to the 2006 Kenya National Human Development Report. According to a 2006 report by Human Rights Watch, HIV/AIDS was not declared a national emergency until 2001, by which time the epidemic had claimed an estimated 140,000 lives. The number of Kenyan children who have lost one or both parents to AIDS is expected to reach 2.4 million by 2010. Kenya announced in June 2005 a system of cash grants to families caring for orphans.

Kiribati

Population: 100,000

Capital: Tarawa

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

The government of President Anote Tong faced accusations of abuse in the disbursement of government-funded university scholarships. No elections or other major policy debates occurred during 2006.

Kiribati, a constitutional republic, gained independence from Britain in 1979. The country consists of 33 atolls scattered across nearly 1.5 million square miles of the central Pacific Ocean, as well as Banaba Island in the western Pacific. Twenty atolls are inhabited, and most face possible inundation as sea levels rise. Most of the government's revenue comes from the sale of fishing licenses to foreign countries, foreign aid, remittances from workers abroad, and a trust fund established with income from phosphate mining on Banaba Island.

Chinese military ambitions in the Pacific and competing offers of development assistance from China and Taiwan have been major issues in Kiribati politics in recent years. President Teburoro Tito's refusal to release details about a land lease to China to establish a satellite-tracking facility led to a no-confidence vote against his government in March 2003. General elections in July 2003 brought opposition candidate Anote Tong to power. Tong terminated the 15-year lease to China and restored ties with Taiwan in 2004.

No elections or major policy debates occurred in 2006. The main issue for the government of President Tong was an accusation that officials had mismanaged government-funded scholarships. The opposition party alleged that students who passed the test for the scholarships were denied assistance, while those who failed obtained funds.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Kiribati is an electoral democracy. The 2003 presidential and parliamentary elections were considered free and fair. The president is popularly elected in a two-step process, with Parliament nominating candidates from its own ranks and voters then choosing one as president. Forty of the representatives in the 42-member Parliament (Maneaba ni Maungatabu) are chosen by universal adult suffrage, one is nominated by the Rabi Island Council in Fiji, and the attorney general holds a Parliament position ex officio.

(Rabi Island is a part of Fiji, but many residents there are of Kiribati origin. The British forced them to move there from Banaba Island when phosphate mining made Banaba uninhabitable.) The president, vested with executive authority by the constitution, is limited to serving three four-year terms.

The major parties are the Boutokaan Te Koaua (BTK) and the Maneahan Te Mauri, which won 17 and 16 seats, respectively, in the last elections in 2003. The other two parties are Maurin Kiribati Pati and the National Progressive Party. Political parties in Kiribati are loosely organized and lack fixed ideologies or formal platforms. Geographical, tribal, and personal loyalties are more important determinants of political affiliation.

Official corruption and abuse are serious problems, and the government has not shown a commitment to address them. Kiribati was not ranked in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech is generally respected, but the government has a record of restricting opposition criticism. For example, the Newspaper Registration Act of 2005 gives the state power to censor articles that could incite or encourage crime or disorder and to shut down any publication against which a complaint has been filed. The law was passed after embarrassing accounts of government abuses were published in a monthly political pamphlet published by BTK. The BTK pamphlet is owned by Ieremia Tabai, who is also publisher of the weekly *Kiribati Newstar* and owner of the radio station Newair FM 101, to which the government had denied a broadcast license until 2002. Tabai is also a former president and a current BTK member of Parliament. The government owns *Te Uekera*, one of the country's two newspapers, and a radio station. Churches also publish several newsletters and other periodicals. Internet access is available but not widespread due to cost and a lack of infrastructure outside the capital.

There were no reports of religious oppression or restrictions on academic freedom. The expansion of access to and quality of education at all levels, however, is seriously restricted by a lack of resources. For example, secondary education is not available on all islands, and there is a shortage of qualified teachers. A memorandum signed in August 2006 between the government and the University of the South Pacific will lead to the creation of a new campus in Kiribati.

Freedom of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively are generally respected. A number of nongovernmental groups are involved in development assistance, education, health, and advocacy for women and children. Only about 10 percent of the workforce belongs to unions, the largest of which is the Kiribati Trade Union Congress, with about 2,500 members. The law provides for the right to strike; the last such action took place in 1980.

The judicial system is modeled on English common law and provides adequate due process rights. It consists of the high court, a court of appeal, and magistrates' courts; appeals may go to the Privy Council in London. The president makes all judicial appointments. Internal security is maintained by a 260-person police force that performs law enforcement and paramilitary functions. The country has no military forces, but Australia and New Zealand provide defense assistance under bilateral security agreements. Traditional customs permit corporal punishment, and island councils on some outer islands occasionally order such punishment for petty theft and other minor offenses.

Citizens enjoy freedom of movement. The government does not use forced exile, but village councils have used this punishment.

The government is the main employer, and many residents practice subsistence agriculture. The economy also depends considerably on foreign assistance and generates a small sum from selling fishing licenses to foreign fishing fleets. The main exports are dried coconut meat and fish. Interest from a well-managed trust fund built on royalties from phosphate sales has balanced the national budget and kept the country debt free.

Economic opportunities for women are limited. Discrimination against women is common in the traditional, male-dominant culture. Spousal abuse and other forms of violence against women and children are often associated with alcohol abuse. Prostitution and sexual harassment are illegal, and neither is reported to be widespread. Growth in the number of HIV/AIDS cases, which reached 46 by the end of 2004, remains a matter of concern.

Kuwait

Population: 2,700,000

Capital: Kuwait City

Political Rights: 4

Civil Liberties: 4*

Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: Kuwait's civil liberties rating improved from 5 to 4 due to the removal of long-standing legal restrictions on freedom of assembly.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5,5PF	5,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,4PF

Overview:

In January 2006, amid much speculation, Kuwaiti leaders accomplished a smooth transition of power following the death of the emir, Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah. His ailing successor, Saad al-Abdallah al-Sabah, was removed by the Parliament and cabinet in favor of Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah. Parliamentary elections were held on June 29, a year ahead of schedule, due to a dispute over redistricting electoral constituencies. A series of powerful protests by the "Orange Movement," in favor of the redistricting, had given momentum to the opposition in Parliament and led to the early elections. Meanwhile, a court ruling removed long-standing restrictions on freedom of assembly, allowing public gatherings without a permit.

For more than 200 years, the al-Sabah family has played a role in ruling Kuwait. A year after Kuwait gained its independence from Britain in 1961, a new constitution

gave broad powers to the emir and created the National Assembly. In August 1990, Iraq attacked and invaded Kuwait. A military coalition mandated by the United Nations and led by the United States liberated the country in February 1991.

Emirs have suspended the National Assembly two times, from 1976 to 1981 and from 1986 to 1992. After its restoration in 1992, the Parliament played an active role in monitoring the emir and the government, forcing cabinet ministers out of office and blocking legislation proposed by the royal family. However, the legislature has also served as an impediment to progressive political change, rejecting measures that would have granted women the right to vote or accelerated economic reforms.

After 28 years of rule, Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah died on January 15, 2006. Despite fears of a contentious succession process, the cabinet and Parliament removed his heir, Sheikh Saad al-Abdallah al-Sabah, for health reasons, and elevated Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah as the new emir. By custom, Kuwait's leadership alternates between two branches of the al-Sabah family known as the al-Salem and al-Jaber lines. Suspicions have grown of late that the al-Jaber faction is pushing the al-Salem out of key cabinet positions, while the former retain 6 of the 16 posts, including those of energy, defense, interior, and foreign affairs.

On June 29, Kuwait held parliamentary elections. They were originally scheduled for October 2007, but were brought forward to break a deadlock over redistricting constituencies. Reformers in the Parliament had sought to reduce the 25 electoral districts to 5 in an effort to prevent corruption and political manipulation. The case was referred to the constitutional court, and the Parliament made an unprecedented request to question the prime minister on the matter, suggesting that compromise was impossible. As a result, the emir dissolved the Parliament on May 21 and set the stage for elections. Of 249 candidates competing for the 50 seats, 27 were women. In 2005, women had won the right to vote and run for office, and the new national elections were the first in which women participated.

The candidates fell into two broad groupings. The first, known as the "Kuwait Rally," included a coalition of liberals, Islamists, and nationalists campaigning against corruption. The other group consisted of government loyalists and members of the ruling family. The former won 35 seats, up from 29, with the Islamists alone winning 21. Six Shiite candidates participated in the elections, but only four were voted in, one less than in the dissolved Parliament. None of the 27 women candidates were elected.

Public participation in the elections was 66 percent of registered voters, with female participation at 35 percent. Women and youth were heavily represented in the campaign due to the emergence in May of the "Orange Movement." Seizing on the momentum to redraw the electoral districts, Kuwaiti youth had campaigned in favor of the five-district plan by organizing a series of May protests. The campaigners used the internet and text messages to effectively spread word of the events. Their activity coalesced in a May 16 demonstration at the National Assembly, where they were met by police. Lawmakers joined the protesters in defiance of the Parliament, leading to the May 21 dissolution and the call for new elections.

In July, the new Parliament approved the election reform law, cutting the number of constituencies from 25 to 5.

Kuwait, which has about 10 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, continued to enjoy strong economic growth as a result of high global oil prices. Oil domi-

nates the economy, accounting for nearly 90 percent of public revenues. The National Assembly continued to delay action on Project Kuwait, a proposed \$8 billion investment by foreign oil companies to develop oil fields close to the Iraqi border.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Kuwait is not an electoral democracy. The royal family, from which the emir is drawn, largely sets the policy agenda and dominates political life. The emir has overriding power in the government system and appoints the prime minister and cabinet.

Under the constitution, the emir shares legislative power with the 50-member National Assembly, which is elected by a limited popular vote involving only about 15 percent of the country's 900,000 citizens. The emir has the authority to dissolve the National Assembly at will, but must call elections within 60 days. The Parliament can overturn decrees issued by the emir while it was not in session, and it has exercised this power in a number of cases. It can veto the appointment of the country's prime minister, but then it must choose from three alternates put forward by the emir. It also has the power to remove government ministers with a majority vote of elected members.

Formal political parties are banned, but political groupings, such as parliamentary blocs, have been allowed to emerge. In 2005, a group of Kuwaiti Islamists announced the formation of the Umma Party, but like other political groupings, it was not granted a permit by the government. After the Umma Party announced its formation, the government imposed a travel ban on 15 of its top members and interrogated several of the party's leaders.

The Parliament has pursued cases of alleged corruption by cabinet ministers, and a desire to combat corrupt practices helped to propel the early 2006 elections. Transparency International ranked Kuwait 46 out of 163 countries surveyed in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The authorities allow some open criticism and debate on politics in the press. In March 2006, the government implemented a revised press law, under which officials are no longer permitted to close down newspapers without a court order. The law also opens the door for the licensing of new dailies. However, the changes did not abolish a prison penalty for writers who insult God, the prophets, or Islam. Kuwait has five Arabic newspapers and two English-language dailies. The state maintains a significant presence in the broadcast media, with four television stations and nine radio stations. There are also a number of private outlets, including the satellite television station Al-Rai. In 2002, the government shuttered the local office of Qatar-based satellite television station Al-Jazeera over objections to its editorial positions, which were deemed anti-Kuwaiti. However, Al-Jazeera was allowed to resume local operations in May 2005. Other foreign media outlets work relatively freely in Kuwait. In some cases during the June 2006 parliamentary elections period, the government sought to shut down satellite stations for airing allegedly biased content, but many foreign journalists were able to cover the 2006 elections without interference.

Kuwaitis have access to the internet, though the government has directed internet service providers to block certain sites for political or moral reasons. The total number of internet users is estimated at 700,000.

Islam is the state religion, but religious minorities are generally permitted to prac-

tice their faiths freely in private. The Roman Catholic, Anglican, National Evangelical, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, and Greek Catholic churches operate freely. Kuwaiti law bans missionaries from proselytizing among Muslims. Academic freedom is generally respected, though some scholars exercise self-censorship. Kuwait has a tradition of allowing relatively open and free private discussions, often conducted in traditional gatherings and usually including only men, called *diwaynyas*.

The government imposes restrictions on freedoms of assembly and association, although those rights are provided for by law. In May 2006, a court ruling removed 27-year-old restrictions on freedom of assembly that had required government approval for public gatherings. Under the new rule, Kuwaitis must notify authorities of a public meeting or protest, but no longer need a permit. The government routinely restricts the registration and licensing of associations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), forcing dozens of groups to operate without legal standing or state assistance. In August 2004, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor officially recognized the existence of the Kuwait Human Rights Society, which had been founded 10 years earlier but operated without official status. Representatives of licensed NGOs must obtain government permission in order to attend foreign conferences and gatherings on behalf of their organizations.

Workers have the right to join labor unions, but the government mandates that there be only one union per occupational trade. Kuwait has experienced labor unrest similar to that in other Gulf countries. In April 2006, Bangladeshi immigrants stormed their own embassy to protest poor working conditions.

Kuwait lacks a truly independent judiciary. The emir appoints all judges, and the executive branch of government approves judicial promotions and renewals of judicial appointments. According to Kuwaiti law, authorities may detain suspects for four days without charge. The Ministry of the Interior supervises the main internal security forces, including the national police, the Criminal Investigation Division, and Kuwait State Security. Four Kuwaiti Islamists in 2005 accused government authorities of torturing them to extract confessions in a case in which they were accused of conspiring to attack foreign forces in Kuwait and Iraq. There were no reports of arrests or torture in 2006. The government permits visits to prisons by human rights activists, who report adherence to international standards, though with some concern about overcrowding.

Stateless residents, known as *bidoon*, are estimated to number more than 80,000. They are considered illegal residents and do not have full citizenship rights. Over the year, the government granted citizenship to hundreds of *bidoon*. Kuwait is a destination country for human trafficking, with many people coming from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka. Kuwait is a majority Sunni country, with the Shia comprising about one-third of the population. Unlike in some of Kuwait's neighboring countries, Sunni-Shia relations are generally good, and while regional conflicts have brought increased attention to the issue, few if any tangible problems have resulted.

Both male and female citizens have the right to own property and establish businesses.

The 1962 constitution provides men and women with equal rights. Nevertheless, women face discrimination in several areas of law and society, and remain

underrepresented in the workforce. Regulations stemming from Sharia (Islamic law) discriminate against women in matters like divorce and inheritance. Kuwait is a destination country for the trafficking of women. Domestic abuse and sexual harassment are not specifically prohibited by law, and foreign domestic servants remain particularly vulnerable to abuse and sexual assault. In July 2006, the prime minister appointed Masouma al-Mubarak as minister of communications. She had become the country's first female cabinet minister in 2005, when she was appointed to lead the planning and administrative development ministry. Women comprise more than 60 percent of the student body at several leading universities in Kuwait. In May 2005, Kuwait's Parliament passed an amendment allowing women the right to vote and run for parliament and local elections. The change allowed women to fully participate in the June 2006 parliamentary balloting, although some female candidates faced harassment and intimidation, and at least one reportedly withdrew after receiving death threats. The fact that the balloting was held a year ahead of schedule was seen by some observers as a disadvantage to inexperienced female candidates.

↓ Kyrgyzstan

Population: 5,200,000
Capital: Bishkek

Political Rights: 5
Civil Liberties: 4
Status: Partly Free



Trend Arrow: Kyrgyzstan received a downward trend arrow due to a decline in religious freedom, including a number of violent incidents involving alleged religious extremists that took place in the country's south.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,4PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	5,4PF	5,4PF

Overview: Although Kyrgyzstan avoided serious political upheaval in 2006 after the unrest that toppled President Askar Akayev in 2005, stability remained elusive amid signs of recrudescent authoritarianism and a standoff between President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and an increasingly energized opposition. The late-December passage of a new constitution that extends presidential powers crushed hopes for constructive constitutional reform. While political change in 2005 brought improvements in media and civil society freedoms, the following year featured disturbing signs of a retreat on media freedoms and continued interpenetration between government and organized crime. On the international front, Kyrgyzstan continued to balance its rela-

tions with Russia and the United States. Relations with Uzbekistan warmed from the chill of 2005 amid indications of increased counterterrorism cooperation between the two countries, to the detriment of civil rights and religious freedom inside Kyrgyzstan.

Populated by nomadic herders and ruled by tribal leaders for centuries, Kyrgyzstan was conquered by Russia in the mid-1800s and incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1924. The country declared independence in August 1991. After Askar Akayev, a respected physicist, was elected president in the first direct presidential vote two months later, he introduced multiparty elections and pursued economic reforms. In the 1995 parliamentary elections, no single party won a clear majority, with a mix of government officials, intellectuals, and clan leaders capturing most of the seats in the legislature. Later that year, Akayev was reelected president in early elections, with more than 70 percent of the vote. In a February 1996 referendum, 94 percent of voters endorsed constitutional amendments that substantially increased the powers of the presidency.

Opposition parties, including the Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan, El Bei-Bechora, and Ar-Namys, were barred from competing in the February 2000 parliamentary elections. The rulings, based on minor technicalities, were widely regarded as politically motivated. Six candidates contested the October 2000 presidential poll, which the heavily favored incumbent won with nearly 75 percent of the vote. Ar-Namys chairman Feliks Kulov, who was widely regarded as Akayev's main challenger, was denied registration as a candidate for refusing to take a mandatory Kyrgyz language exam, a move that he charged violated election laws and the constitution (Kulov's native language was Russian). International election observers noted serious irregularities in both the presidential and parliamentary polls, such as biased state media coverage, violations in vote tabulations, and the exclusion of candidates for political purposes.

Years of simmering frustrations in the economically depressed and politically marginalized south culminated in an unprecedented series of public protests in 2002. The demonstrations were sparked by the January arrest of parliament member Azimbek Beknazarov on abuse-of-power charges; critics maintained that he had been detained because of his public criticism of a controversial 1999 border agreement ceding land to China. In the first outbreak of deadly political violence since Kyrgyzstan's independence, several protesters were killed and more than a dozen were wounded in March when police fired into a crowd in the village of Aksy. In an apparent effort to quell the protests, the authorities released Beknazarov from prison the following day. However, in May, he was convicted of abuse of office, given a one-year suspended sentence, and stripped of his seat in Parliament.

Thousands of Beknazarov supporters continued to hold rallies, demanding that the charges against him be dismissed and that those responsible for the killings in Aksy be punished. The crisis eased somewhat after an appeals court annulled Beknazarov's sentence in June 2002, allowing him to retain his seat in the legislature. Four former regional prosecutors and police officials were sentenced to prison in December in connection with the Aksy shootings, although critics charged that senior officials who had authorized the use of force had not been brought to justice. The government subsequently made conciliatory gestures toward the southern re-

gions of the country by designating the city of Osh the "southern capital" and awarding it special budgetary privileges.

Opposition parties established several political blocs and coalitions in 2004 in an attempt to improve their chances of successfully challenging progovernment candidates in the following year's parliamentary and presidential polls. With Kulov incarcerated at the time and ineligible for parole until November 2005—and recent electoral code amendments denying people with a criminal record the right to contest elections—former prime minister Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who announced his candidacy for president in June, received the backing of his supporters in a number of opposition parties. Meanwhile, growing discord in Parliament was evident throughout 2004, as a scandal over listening devices discovered in the offices of several opposition deputies erupted early in the year, and Prime Minister Nikolai Tanayev, who had the declared support of the president, narrowly survived a no-confidence vote prompted by allegations of corruption.

In the February 2005 parliamentary elections, nearly 400 candidates contested the 75 seats in the unicameral legislature, with voter turnout reported at 60 percent. Fewer than half of the constituencies saw outright victories in which a candidate received the required 50 percent of the vote, so the remaining races had to be decided in a second round of voting two weeks later. According to an OSCE assessment, the first-round poll, "while more competitive than previous elections, fell short of OSCE commitments and other international standards in a number of important areas." Irregularities that the election observers noted included multiple voting, voter intimidation, inaccurate voter lists, media bias in favor of progovernment candidates, and the presence of unauthorized persons in polling stations.

During the following weeks, thousands of demonstrators took to the streets across the country to protest election irregularities, support defeated candidates, and ultimately call for Akayev's resignation. On March 24, 2005, Akayev's 14-year rule was brought to an end in what became known as the Tulip Revolution, as protesters and opposition supporters stormed the presidential headquarters in Bishkek, taking over the seat of government; police generally did not use violence to suppress the demonstrators. Akayev fled abroad and later agreed to formally resign. After Kulov was released from prison the same day, he took control of the security forces; however, he stepped down after order had been restored several days later. Kulov was subsequently cleared of all charges by the Supreme Court, which made him eligible to contest future presidential elections. The outgoing parliament was dissolved, with the new legislature appointing Bakiyev as acting president and prime minister.

In the July 10 presidential poll, Bakiyev captured 89 percent of the vote, while his closest challenger, Erkin Kyrgyzstan party leader Tursunbay Bakir Uulu, received just 4 percent. Bakiyev's victory was regarded as largely inevitable after he and Kulov, his most serious potential rival, formed a political alliance in May: Kulov withdrew his candidacy in exchange for a guaranteed position as prime minister if Bakiyev were to become president. In contrast to the earlier parliamentary vote, OSCE observers concluded that the presidential election "marked tangible progress ... towards meeting OSCE commitments, as well as other international standards for democratic elections," though they noted that the "process deteriorated somewhat during the counting of votes." According to the OSCE mission report, the participation

of six candidates offered voters a degree of choice, and basic rights, including freedom of expression and assembly, were generally respected.

The Bakiyev-Kulov "tandem" held throughout 2006 even as an increasingly vocal political opposition to Bakiyev's presidency developed. In January, former foreign minister Roza Otunbayeva became the cochair, with Beknazarov, of the opposition Asaba Party. In February, Speaker of Parliament Omurbek Tekebayev resigned after calling Bakiyev "a dog"; Tekebayev went on to play a prominent role in opposition politics for the remainder of 2006. In late April, opposition political parties and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) held a peaceful rally in Bishkek with 10,000 to 20,000 demonstrators calling for reforms and measures to fight crime and corruption. The For Reforms movement, an umbrella opposition group that included the Asaba leaders, held a similar rally in May, and in October organized a forum urging constitutional reform, the transformation of state television into public television, the removal of Bakiyev's relatives from government posts, and other reform-oriented demands.

The Parliament established itself as a hotbed of opposition sentiment in 2006. In May, Bakiyev threatened to take "radical measures" against the body if it pursued a direct confrontation with the executive, implying that he would be willing to dissolve the legislature and call new elections. Though friction between the legislative and executive branches continued throughout 2006, neither side took any truly radical measures.

Constitutional reform, which had been an early promise of Kyrgyzstan's new leaders after the fall of Akayev, stalled in 2006. In March, Bakiyev created a task force, headed by Beknazarov, to draft a new constitution. Prime Minister Kulov sent the task force his own draft constitution in June. Later the same month, Beknazarov announced that the task force had failed to arrive at a consensus and had prepared three draft constitutions, envisaging presidential, parliamentary, and presidential-parliamentary forms of government. The task force held meetings across the country and then, in July, submitted its drafts to the president and prime minister; all three versions called for a 75-member parliament with 50 deputies elected on party slates and 25 in single-mandate constituencies (as opposed to the current system of electing all 75 on single mandates). No action followed, and a key demand of the opposition forum in October was that Bakiyev present a draft constitution to parliament within 10 days.

In early November, opposition groups held a rally in Bishkek calling for constitutional reform to expand Parliament's powers. Shortly after the rally, Bakiyev reached an apparent compromise on a new constitution with lawmakers, who passed the new basic law on November 8. On November 10, Bakiyev signed the new constitution into law. It would curtail the president's powers and strengthen the authority of Parliament, although Article 96 of the new constitution allowed for the current president to retain the powers vested in him under the old constitution until his term expires in 2010. On December 30, however, progovernment legislators passed amendments to the constitution that broadened presidential powers until the holding of new parliamentary elections, thus undermining the original intent of the constitutional reform process.

Relations with Uzbekistan, which had soured in 2005 after Kyrgyzstan allowed the airlift of 439 Uzbek political refugees to a third country, improved considerably

in 2006. Unfortunately, this came at the cost of an apparent retreat on civil rights within Kyrgyzstan. In August, the European Union, OSCE, and United Nations condemned Kyrgyzstan's refoulement of five Uzbek refugees. The Uzbeks had fled to Kyrgyzstan after their government crushed a small uprising in the city of Andijon in May 2005, reportedly killing hundreds of unarmed civilians in the process. Also in August 2006, Kyrgyz and Uzbek security forces carried out a joint operation in the Kyrgyz city of Kara-Suu in which a prominent Muslim imam was shot to death. The Kyrgyz-Uzbek rapprochement culminated in an October meeting between Bakiyev and Uzbek president Islam Karimov. An official Uzbek news report stressed that the two presidents "share the same view on the issue of the need for combining efforts ... in the fight against international terrorism and religious extremist movements." Uzbek authorities routinely used charges of terrorism or religious extremism to suppress domestic dissent.

As in past years, Kyrgyzstan balanced its strategic and economic relations with Russia and the United States in 2006. In October 2005, Washington had secured an agreement to allow the U.S. military's continued presence at the Manas air base. In July 2006, Kyrgyz and U.S. negotiators hammered out a new deal assuring Kyrgyzstan \$150 million in total compensation for the Manas air base, a significant increase from previous annual lease payments of less than \$3 million. Kyrgyz-U.S. relations were marred, however, by the tit-for-tat expulsions of two U.S. diplomats from Kyrgyzstan in July and two Kyrgyz diplomats from the United States in August. Meanwhile, Kyrgyzstan maintained warm relations with Russia, which made contradictory moves on its own air base in Kant, Kyrgyzstan, vowing in February to increase troop strength at the base but saying in October that no expansion was in the offing. One indication of closer Kyrgyz-Russian cooperation came in May, when Busurmankul Tabaldiyev, the newly appointed head of Kyrgyzstan's National Security Service, said that future hires would receive training exclusively at Russian intelligence training facilities.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Kyrgyzstan is not an electoral democracy. International election observers described the 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections and 2005 parliamentary elections as neither free nor competitive. However, the 2005 presidential elections, which followed the March popular uprising that toppled the government of President Askar Akayev, were praised for making substantial progress. The constitution has traditionally codified strong presidential rule and a weak parliament. Constitutional reforms enacted in 2006 failed to alter this basic configuration as a result of constitutional amendments passed by progovernment legislators in late December that extended broad presidential powers until the holding of new parliamentary elections.

Constitutional amendments adopted in a February 2003 referendum replaced the previous bicameral legislature (consisting of a 45-member upper house and 60-seat lower house) with a unicameral body with 75 deputies, effective following the 2005 parliamentary poll. Other amendments adopted in the referendum further strengthened the authority of the president at the expense of Parliament, abolished party-list voting in parliamentary elections in favor of the single-mandate constituency system (which could further weaken political parties), and granted immunity to former presidents and their families. Both president and Parliament serve five-year terms.

Proposed constitutional reforms could change this, but progress has thus far been slow. Following the March 2005 collapse of the Akayev government, the Parliament began to assert its independence to a greater degree, including in the handling of the president's cabinet nominees, many of whom the legislature rejected.

Most political parties continue to be weak, poorly organized, and centered on a specific leading figure.

Corruption is common throughout Kyrgyz society, and bribes are frequently required to obtain lucrative government positions. As part of the country's anticorruption campaign, the Parliament in 2004 adopted a law on income declarations for high-level officials. An anticorruption drive espoused by President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in 2005 was directed largely against members and associates of Akayev's family. Criminal cases against those figures moved slowly in 2006. Meanwhile, the opposition leveled charges of nepotism and corruption against Bakiyev and members of his family, particularly his son, Maksim. Kyrgyzstan was ranked 142 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

During Akayev's presidency, the government restricted freedom of the press. The media became more open and tolerant of diverse points of view following the March 2005 popular uprising and subsequent change in regime. But signs of increasing government pressure on the media in late 2005 were reinforced in 2006. In December 2005, the independent television station Piramida withstood a takeover attempt that the station's journalists said was masterminded by Maksim Bakiyev. Masked men attacked the station's broadcast facilities in September 2006, damaging \$200,000 worth of equipment. The NGO coalition For Democracy and Civil Society noted that the attack came after the station had been unable to broadcast for 40 days as a result of "sabotage by state agencies." Separately, in January 2006, Bishkek city prosecutor Uchkun Kerimov had cautioned journalists not to publish slanderous materials about President Bakiyev. Late the same month, journalists at the state-run Kyrgyz-language newspaper *Kyrgyz Tuusu* protested the dismissal of their editor in chief, Bakyt Orunbekov, allegedly for publishing articles critical of Prime Minister Feliks Kulov.

The government generally respects freedom of religion in this predominantly Muslim country. To obtain legal status, all religious organizations must register with the Ministry of Justice, a process that is often cumbersome. The government monitors and restricts Islamic groups that it regards as extremist and a threat to national security, particularly Hizb ut-Tahrir, an international movement calling for the creation of an Islamic caliphate spanning the Muslim world. A number of violent incidents involving alleged religious extremists took place in the country's south in the second half of 2006—including the killing of five alleged members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan militant group in Jalalabad in July and the shooting of a prominent imam in Osh in August—amid signs of increasing security cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, underscoring the danger of destabilization in the region. In particular, there were reports that Uzbek security forces were responsible for the killing of imam Muhammadrafiq Kamalov (also known as Rafiq Qori Kamoluddin) in Osh on August 6 during the course of a Kyrgyz-Uzbek joint security operation.

Teachers reportedly have been forced to subscribe to government newspapers,

and municipal authorities in some cities require schoolchildren to perform during national holidays and visits by government officials. Corruption is widespread throughout the educational system, and bribes are often required to obtain admission to schools or universities.

Freedom of assembly was respected in 2006, with a number of large-scale opposition demonstrations taking place throughout the year, most without direct interference from the authorities or police. In one instance, however, when the opposition For Reforms movement announced a demonstration in Bishkek on May 27, Defense Minister Ismail Isakov subsequently said a military parade would be held at the same time and place. Despite Isakov's remarks, the opposition rally went ahead as scheduled.

Freedom of association is generally respected, although the harassment and intimidation of NGOs appeared to be on the upswing in 2006 after a short reprieve in the period following Akayev's ouster. In January, Justice Minister Marat Kayipov said that he had ordered his ministry to investigate NGOs that receive foreign funding as a possible threat to national security, although he later backtracked on the statement. Edil Baisalov, head of For Democracy and Civil Society, suffered a head injury in an attack by unidentified assailants in April. The Kyrgyz government expelled two U.S. diplomats in July for allegedly improper contact with NGOs, prompting a group of leading NGO representatives to charge that the government was conducting a campaign to present the groups as a "fifth column."

The law provides for the formation of trade unions, and unions generally are able to conduct their activities without obstruction. Although the right to strike is not specifically codified in law, it is not prohibited. The Federation of Trade Unions is the only union umbrella organization in the country, but unions are not required to join it.

Despite various legislative reforms in the court system, the judiciary is not independent and remains dominated by the executive branch. Corruption among judges, who are underpaid, is reportedly widespread. Defendants' rights, including the presumption of innocence until proven guilty, are not always respected. Police at times use violence against suspects during arrest and interrogation, and to extract confessions.

After the fall of the Akayev regime, with which some criminal elements had developed strong connections over the years, various crime groups struggled to assert greater control and influence within the law enforcement system, as well as in the political sphere. This led to a number of violent incidents, including the murder of parliament member Tynychbek Akmatbayev during a visit to a prison in October 2005. He went to the facility to help calm inmate riots over poor conditions, but was apparently caught up in a gangland dispute between his brother, reputed mob boss Ryspek Akmatbayev, and an inmate at the prison. In 2006, Ryspek ran in a parliamentary by-election to fill his brother's vacant seat. Before his run, his acquittal on triple murder charges in January raised questions of underworld influence on the judiciary. Akmatbayev's candidacy was subsequently annulled and reinstated. He won the by-election in April, but the Central Election Commission (CEC) refused to register him because of an ongoing murder investigation, and CEC head Tuigunaly Abdraimov claimed that Akmatbayev had threatened him. The issue of Akmatbayev's candidacy, if not that of underworld involvement in Kyrgyz politics, became moot in May when he was gunned down by unknown assailants just outside Bishkek.

In another indication of the fragility of the rule of law in Kyrgyzstan, a representative of the British mining company Oxus Gold, which had been involved in a licensing dispute with the Kyrgyz government, was shot and seriously wounded in Bishkek in July 2006.

Ethnic minority groups, including Uzbeks, Russians, and Uighurs, have complained of discrimination in employment and housing. Members of the country's sizable ethnic Uzbek minority have been demanding more political and cultural rights, including greater representation in government and more Uzbek language schools. In May 2006, ethnic Uzbeks demonstrated in Jalalabad in favor of official status for the Uzbek language, an issue that arose on several occasions in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2006. In a separate example of ethnic conflict that year, police had to quell violent clashes between ethnic Dungan and Kyrgyz in the village of Iskra in February.

The government of Kyrgyzstan, which abolished the Soviet-era exit-visa system in 1999, generally respects the right of free travel to and from the country. However, certain policies complicate internal migration, including a requirement for citizens to obtain official permits to work and settle in particular areas of the country. Corruption and official incompetence marred efforts in 2006 to introduce new passports for Kyrgyz citizens, a pressing issue for many in a country where several hundred thousand citizens are seeking a better fortune abroad as migrant workers.

Personal connections, corruption, organized crime, and widespread poverty limit business competition and equality of opportunity. Conscripted soldiers have reportedly been rented out to civilian employers under illegal arrangements, with some forced to work for no pay.

Cultural traditions and apathy by law enforcement officials discourage victims of domestic violence and rape from seeking legal help. The trafficking of women and girls into forced prostitution abroad is a serious problem, and some victims report that the authorities are involved in trafficking. In response, the criminal code was amended in 2003 to punish trafficking with up to 20 years in prison, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs opened an antitrafficking police unit in 2004. The practice of bride kidnapping persists despite being illegal, and few are prosecuted for the crime. Although women are well represented in the workforce and in institutions of higher learning, declining economic conditions in the country have had a negative impact on women's professional and educational opportunities.

Laos

Population: 6,100,000

Capital: Vientiane

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview:

Choummaly Sayasone took over leadership of the ruling party in March and was appointed president in June after his party won nearly all seats in April parliamentary elections. Choummaly is seen as a staunch ally of his predecessor and is not expected to introduce significant policy changes.

Laos, a landlocked and mountainous country, won independence in 1953 after six decades of French rule and Japanese occupation during World War II. The new constitutional monarchy soon entered into a civil war with Communist Pathet Lao (Land of Lao) guerrillas, who were backed by the Vietnamese Communist Party. As the civil war raged on, Laos was drawn into the Vietnam War in 1964, when the United States began bombing North Vietnamese forces operating inside Laos. The Pathet Lao seized power in 1975 and set up a one-party Communist state under Prime Minister Kaysone Phomvihane's Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP).

By the 1980s, the Laotian economy was in tatters after years of civil war and the inept economic policies of the LPRP. Seeing the success of China's economic opening, the LPRP began to relax controls on prices, encouraged foreign investment, and privatized farms and some state-owned firms. These actions spurred much needed economic growth, but the government has rejected deeper economic reform for fear of losing its power.

General Khamtay Siphandone took over leadership of the LPRP in 1992 and the presidency in 1998. He stepped down in March 2006, leaving the party in the hands of Choummaly Sayasone, age 70. In April 30 elections, LPRP candidates won 113 of the 115 National Assembly seats, while the remaining two seats went to independent candidates. The Assembly endorsed Choummaly as the new president in June. A former vice president and defense minister, he was expected to follow the policies set by Khamtay.

Poverty is widespread, and the economy remains dependent on subsistence agriculture. The country rates poorly on the UN Human Development Index as a result of both the civil war and the inept economic policies of the LPRP. Trade, tourism, and sales of hydroelectric power to neighboring Thailand are the key sources of foreign revenue for the government. Expansion of the Nam Theun hydroelectric

dam in southern Laos will produce more electricity for export. Thailand has committed to buying 95 percent of the 1,070 megawatts of power the dam will generate beginning in 2010. The government expects to collect \$2 billion in revenue in the first 25 years of operation. The World Bank has agreed to provide \$270 million in funding and risk guarantees for the project, which critics say will threaten wildlife and displace thousands of subsistence farmers and hill-tribe populations. These two groups—who rely heavily on the illegal growth and sale of opium poppy for their economic livelihood—have also suffered recently from the government's antidrug campaign, which has been conducted with rigor in order to secure aid from Europe and the United States. Pushed into extreme poverty, some are forced to leave their land to find legitimate work elsewhere or to go deeper into the mountains to continue their illegal trade.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Laos is not an electoral democracy. The 1991 constitution makes the LPRP the sole legal political party and grants it a leading role at all levels of government. The LPRP vets all candidates for election to the rubber-stamp National Assembly, whose 115 members elect the president. Elections are held every five years. General Khamtay Siphandone succeeded Kaysone Phomvihane as head of the LPRP in 1992 and assumed the presidency from Nouhak Phoumsavanh in 1998. The National Assembly reelected Khamtay as president in March 2001. Choummaly Sayasone took over as head of LPRP in March 2006 and assumed the presidency in June.

Corruption and abuses by government officials are widespread. Official announcements and new laws aimed at curbing corruption are rarely enforced. Government regulation of virtually every facet of life provides corrupt officials with many opportunities to demand bribes. High-level personnel in government and the military are also frequently involved in commercial logging, mining, and other enterprises aimed at exploiting Laotian natural resources. The country ranks 111 out of 163 nations surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perception Index.

Freedom of the press is severely restricted. Any journalist who criticizes the government or discusses controversial political topics faces legal punishment. The state owns all media, including three newspapers that have extremely low circulations, Lao National TV (wholly government owned), Laos Television 3 (a joint venture with a Thai company), and the country's only radio station. Residents within frequency range of Radio Free Asia and other foreign broadcasts from Thailand can access these alternative media sources. Internet access is heavily restricted and content is censored.

Religious freedom is tightly restricted. Dozens of Christians have been detained on religious grounds, and several have been jailed for proselytizing or conducting other religious activities. The government forces Christians to renounce their faith, deprives them of their property, and bars them from celebrating Christian holidays. The majority Buddhist population is restricted through LPRP control of clergy training and oversight of temples and other religious sites.

Academic freedom is not respected. University professors cannot teach or write about democracy, human rights, and other politically sensitive topics. A small number of young people have been allowed to travel overseas, including to the United

States, for university and graduate-level training. However, they are carefully screened by the government and are generally children of officials and military leaders.

Government surveillance of the population has been scaled back in recent years, but searches without warrants still occur.

The government severely restricts freedom of assembly. Laws prohibit participation in organizations that use demonstrations or public protests to send their message or in any other way cause "turmoil or social stability." Persons found guilty of violating these laws could be sentenced from one to five years in jail. Laos has some nongovernmental welfare and professional groups, but they are prohibited from pursuing political agendas and are subject to strict state control. All unions must belong to the official Federation of Lao Trade Unions. Strikes are not expressly prohibited, but workers rarely stage walkouts, and they do not have the right to bargain collectively.

The courts are corrupt and controlled by the LPRP. Long delays in court hearings are common, particularly for cases dealing with public grievances and complaints against government abuses. Security forces often illegally detain suspects, and some Laotians have allegedly spent more than a decade in jail without trial. Hundreds of political activists have also been held for months or years without trial. Prisoners are often tortured and must bribe prison officials to obtain better food, medicine, visits from family, and more humane treatment.

Discrimination against members of minority tribes is common at many levels. In June 2005, four U.S. nationals were detained and three were deported by the government for "illegally liaising" with members of the Hmong ethnic minority, which allied with U.S. forces during the Vietnam War. All seven were members of the Fact Finding Commission, a U.S.-based nonprofit organization, ascertaining the safety of 170 relatives of Hmong rebels who were surrendering to the government. Thousands of Hmong refugees in Thailand were forced by the Thai government to return to Laos in 2005, despite international warnings that they could face political persecution. Laotian government actions to destroy the remnant Hmong guerilla army and alleged rebel elements have created significant hardships for these mountain people, and thousands have been forced off their land to allow for the exploitation of timber and other natural resources. In December, a group of more than 400 Hmong, mostly children, surrendered to government forces, marking the latest of several bands to do so, according to the Fact Finding Commission.

Many subsistence farmers and fishermen work for themselves, and some Laotians run small private businesses.

Although women are guaranteed many of the same rights as men under Laotian laws, gender-based discrimination and abuse are widespread. Tradition and religious practices have contributed to women's inferior position with respect to access to education, equal employment opportunities, and worker benefits. Poverty exacerbates these hardships and puts many women at greater risk of exploitation and abuse by the state and society at large. Domestic violence is a major cause of divorce, and abortion is allowed only to save the life of the mother. An estimated 15,000 to 20,000 Laotian women and girls, many lowland Laotians and an increasing number of highland ethnic minorities, are trafficked each year for prostitution.

Latvia

Population: 2,300,000

Capital: Riga

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Latvia's governing coalition was reduced to three parties after the largest party withdrew in April 2006. In the October legislative elections, the People's Party secured the largest number of votes and formed a majority four-party coalition government. Meanwhile, the country witnessed a number of corruption scandals implicating high-level government officials.

After having been ruled for centuries by Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Russia, Latvia gained its independence in 1918, only to be annexed by the USSR during World War II. More than 50 years of Soviet occupation saw a massive influx of Russians and the deportation, execution, and emigration of tens of thousands of ethnic Latvians. In 1991, Latvia regained its independence in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

In parliamentary elections held in October 2002, the newly formed center-right New Era Party, led by former central bank chairman Einars Repse, received the largest number of votes. Repse was named prime minister to lead a majority coalition government consisting of the New Era Party, Union of Greens and Farmers (ZZS), Latvia's First Party (LPP), and For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK (FF/LNNK). Running unopposed, President Vaira Vike-Freiberga was reelected to a second four-year term in June 2003 by an overwhelming majority of members of Parliament.

Almost 73 percent of Latvian voters participated in a September 2003 referendum on European Union (EU) accession, with 67 percent voting to join the body. Repse hailed the vote as one of the three most important events in the country's history, along with the brief period of independence between the two world wars and the collapse of the USSR. Latvia achieved two of its major foreign policy objectives when it became a member of NATO in April 2004 and of the EU the following month.

Repse and his ruling coalition resigned in February 2004 after the LPP withdrew its support of the government. Repse had dismissed LPP leader and deputy prime minister Ainars Slesers a week earlier, after Slesers backed the establishment of a parliamentary committee to probe Repse's allegedly corrupt real estate purchases. In March, Parliament voted in a new coalition government led by Latvian Green Party head Indulis Emsis and including the LPP, the People's Party, and one New Era deputy.

However, Emsis's government was forced to resign in October following parliament's rejection of its draft 2005 budget, which was regarded as a no-confidence vote by parliamentary rules. In December 2004, Aigars Kalvitis of the People's Party was approved as the new prime minister to lead a four-party majority coalition of the New Era, People's Party, LPP, and ZZS.

The months preceding the October 7, 2006, parliamentary elections saw more political turmoil, corruption scandals, and tensions among members of the ruling coalition. Repse resigned as defense minister in December 2005 after the country's anticorruption bureau launched an investigation into his business practices. In March 2006, Slesers, then transport minister, was forced to resign in the wake of a vote-buying scandal in the town of Jurmala during local elections in 2005; a television program aired telephone conversations indicating that Slesers had played a role in the affair. In April, New Era pulled out of the ruling coalition after the opening of an economic crimes investigation against one of the party's leaders, Economy Minister Krisjanis Karins; the unit investigating Karins was controlled by coalition member LPP. The withdrawal of New Era left the coalition with a minority of seats in Parliament, although it enjoyed the support of two other parties, FF/LNNK and Harmony Center.

In the October parliamentary poll, the People's Party secured the largest number of seats, 23, followed by the ZZS and New Era with 18 seats each, the Harmony Center with 17, LPP/Latvia's Way with 10, FF/LNNK with 8, and For Human Rights in a United Latvia with 6. The People's Party, LPP/Latvia's Way, ZZS, and FF/LNNK agreed to form the new majority government, with Kalvitis remaining prime minister. Voter turnout of 62 percent was one of the lowest in years. Although the cabinet saw few changes from the previous administration, Slesers was reinstated as transport minister just months after having been forced to resign.

On the international front, in September, the three Baltic countries proposed Vike-Freiberga as next secretary-general of the United Nations. After the South Korean foreign minister emerged as the front-runner for the post, Latvia's president withdrew her candidacy the following month. Meanwhile, Latvian relations with Russia continued to show signs of tension during the year, as the countries' border treaty remained unsigned over disagreements regarding the status of territory transferred to Russia after the USSR annexed Latvia in World War II.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Latvia is an electoral democracy. The constitution provides for a unicameral, 100-seat parliament (Saeima), whose members are elected for four-year terms by proportional representation, and who in turn select the country's president. The prime minister is nominated by the president and must be approved by an absolute parliamentary majority. The October 2006 national legislative elections were free and fair. Twenty-two members of minorities are represented in the Parliament.

The country's major parties include the People's Party, the ZZS, New Era, Harmony Center, LPP/Latvia's Way, FF/LNNK, and For Human Rights in a United Latvia. Noncitizen residents may form and join political parties.

In recent years, the government has adopted various anticorruption measures. However, Latvia witnessed a number of high-profile corruption scandals throughout 2006. In March, former health minister Aris Auders was fined nearly 20,000 euros

for cheating his patients out of money, as well as embezzling money from insurance companies. In July, the state prosecutor's office brought charges against the powerful mayor of Ventspils, Aivars Lembergs, for various corruption-related offenses, including bribe-taking and money laundering during the 1990s. Among the most high-profile corruption cases during the year was the revelation that a number of senior political figures had attempted to rig the 2005 mayoral election in the town of Jurmala; the affair led to the March 2006 resignation of Transport Minister Ainars Slesers, who was implicated in the scandal. Latvia was ranked 49 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government generally respects freedom of speech and of the press. Private television and radio stations broadcast programs in both Latvian and Russian, and newspapers publish a wide range of political viewpoints. The government does not restrict access to the internet. However, in September 2006, the daily newspaper *Neatkarīga Rita Avize* published transcripts of private mobile-telephone conversations of Latvian State Television journalist Ilze Jaunalksne. A criminal investigation subsequently launched by the prosecutor's office revealed that a Supreme Court judge had given permission for the wiretapping to the financial police, who had leaked the transcripts. Meanwhile, *Neatkarīga Rita Avize* is suspected of being controlled by Lembergs, Ventspils's mayor.

Freedom of religion is generally respected. Academic freedom is also generally respected. In May 2005, the constitutional court upheld a controversial Education Law mandating that at least 60 percent of public school classes be taught in Latvian, even in schools that cater mainly to ethnic Russian students. The law was criticized by Moscow, as well as by the Russian community and some left-wing parties within Latvia.

Freedom of assembly is protected by law, and numerous gatherings occurred during the year without governmental interference. The government does not restrict the activities of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In February 2005, the government had approved a national program to strengthen civil society and increase cooperation between NGOs and the government. However, Slesers, then transport minister, proposed legislation in January 2006 limiting the scope of operation for NGOs that receive foreign funding; most Latvian politicians were quick to denounce the proposal, which was not enacted. In July 2006, authorities refused to provide a permit for a gay pride parade, citing security concerns. Workers have the right to establish trade unions, strike, and engage in collective bargaining. However, only 16 percent of the workforce is unionized.

While the government generally respects constitutional provisions for an independent judiciary, corruption in the judicial and law enforcement systems continues to be a problem. Legal prohibitions against arbitrary arrest and detention are largely observed in practice. Prisons suffer from overcrowding and inadequate medical care, and there have been reports of security officials using excessive force against detainees.

Nearly one-fifth of Latvia's residents are noncitizens. Latvia's citizenship laws have been criticized for disenfranchising those who immigrated to Latvia during the Soviet period and who must now apply for citizenship, the majority of whom are ethnic Russians. Alleged political, social, and economic discrimination suffered by the Russian-speaking community is a subject of debate both in Latvia and in the

wider region. In May 2006, a Latvian court ruled in favor of a woman who had filed an employment discrimination suit; the woman claimed that a retail store refused to hire her because she is an ethnic Roma. The case marked the first time in the country's postindependence history that a plaintiff had won an employment discrimination suit based on ethnicity.

A gay pride parade planned for July 22 was cancelled when the Riga city council refused to grant permission for the event supposedly as a result of security-related concerns, although details were not made public. The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis and President Vaira Vike-Freiberga, denounced the ban for limiting freedom of expression and assembly. Antigay protestors physically attacked and verbally insulted participants at other gay pride events held on the same day. As a result, 14 individuals were arrested; 7 faced prosecution for inciting public disorder, and their cases were pending at year's end. However, according to gay pride participants, the police response was inadequate, with law enforcement officials failing to provide protection to those requesting it during the day's events.

In December 2005, Parliament effectively banned same-sex marriages when it adopted a constitutional amendment defining marriage as between a man and a woman. The amendment, which was introduced by the LPP, was supported by 65 members of Parliament. In a controversial postelection move, Janis Smits of the LPP was appointed the head of Parliament's human rights committee in December 2006; Smits had drawn fire for making various antigay comments, including saying that homosexuality is a sin. In September 2006, Parliament adopted amendments to the labor law banning job discrimination based on sexual orientation; the amendments bring Latvia's laws in line with EU directives.

Women possess the same legal rights as men, but they often face employment discrimination. Although the president of Latvia is a woman, there are only 19 women in the 100-member Parliament and 4 women in the 18-member cabinet. Domestic violence and sexual harassment of women in the workplace are reportedly common. Latvia is a source and transit point for women trafficked for the purpose of prostitution. The government provides shelter and funding for rehabilitation services to victims of trafficking and, along with local NGOs and international organizations, provides financial resources to the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Lebanon

Population: 3,900,000

Capital: Beirut

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	5,4PF	5,4PF

Overview: Lebanon spent much of 2006 struggling to recover from a devastating six-week war between Israel and the Shiite Muslim militant group Hezbollah in July and August. The conflict, triggered by a Hezbollah raid across the Israeli border, sidelined the promising democratic atmosphere that had prevailed for the past year. In addition to organizing a reconstruction effort, Lebanese politicians worked to form a stable government. While it is no longer under Syrian occupation, Lebanon still lacks certain elements of sovereignty, particularly a state monopoly on the use of force. Hezbollah retains its militia, based in the south, and is a powerful political player on the national level. The Lebanese political scene remains divided between the anti-Syrian, Western-aligned March 14 Coalition and the unlikely opposition March 8 Coalition of Christian parties and Hezbollah.

For more than a thousand years, the rough terrain of Mount Lebanon attracted Christian and heterodox Muslim minorities fleeing persecution in the predominantly Sunni Muslim Arab region. Following centuries of European protection and relative autonomy under Ottoman rule, Mount Lebanon and its surrounding areas were established as a League of Nations Mandate under France in 1920. After winning its independence in 1943, the new state of Lebanon maintained a precarious democratic system based on the division of parliamentary seats, high political offices, and senior administrative positions among the country's 17 officially recognized sectarian communities. As emigration transformed Lebanon's slight Christian majority into a minority, Muslim leaders demanded amendments to the fixed 6-to-5 ratio of Christian-to-Muslim parliamentary seats and to exclusive Maronite Christian control of the presidency. In 1975, war erupted between a coalition of Lebanese Muslim and leftist militias aligned with Palestinian guerrilla groups on one side and an array of Christian militias bent on preserving Christian political privileges on the other.

After the first few years of fighting, a loose consensus emerged among Lebanese politicians regarding a new power-sharing arrangement. However, following the entry of Syrian and Israeli troops into Lebanon in 1976 and 1978, the various militias and their foreign backers had little interest in disarming. The civil war lost much of its sectarian character over the next decade, with the bloodiest outbreaks of

fighting taking place mainly within the Shiite Muslim, Christian, and Palestinian communities, or between local and foreign forces.

In 1989, the surviving members of Lebanon's 1972 Parliament convened in Taif, Saudi Arabia, and agreed to a plan put forward by the Arab League that weakened the presidency, established equality in Christian and Muslim parliamentary representation, and mandated close security cooperation with occupying Syrian troops. After the ouster of General Michel Aoun from east Beirut by Syrian forces in October 1990, a new Syrian-backed government extended its writ to most of the country.

In the years that followed, Syria consolidated its control over Lebanese state institutions, particularly the presidency, the judiciary, and the security forces. In return for tacit Western acceptance of its control of Lebanon, Damascus permitted a degree of political and civil liberties in Lebanon that exceeded those in most other Arab countries. While those who openly condemned the occupation risked arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, criticism of the government was largely tolerated. Various militia chiefs, traditional elites, and nouveaux riches who held civilian political positions in postwar Lebanon were persuaded to accept continued Syrian hegemony, primarily through a system of institutionalized corruption fueled by massive deficit spending on reconstruction during the 1990s. By the end of the decade, Lebanon's economy was in deep recession. Public disaffection with the postwar political establishment rose to an all-time high, and demonstrations' against the occupation grew steadily in size and frequency.

In 2003, as U.S.-Syrian relations rapidly deteriorated amid allegations of Syrian meddling in Iraq, the U.S. government began openly criticizing the Syrian occupation of Lebanon, a policy reversal that inspired the opposition movement in Lebanon to reassert itself. By early 2004, France had also ended its official silence on the occupation and both Western powers were openly calling for a Syrian withdrawal, leading most other European governments to follow suit. Defying these calls, Damascus moved to consolidate its control by pressing the Lebanese Parliament to approve a constitutional amendment extending (on dubious legal grounds) the six-year tenure of President Emile Lahoud, a staunch Syrian ally and rival of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. In September 2004, on the eve of the parliamentary vote, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1559, calling for a constitutional presidential election, the withdrawal of all foreign forces, and the disarmament of militias. Syria's decision to push ahead with the amendment provoked an unprecedented international outcry and veiled threats by Western governments to take "further measures."

In the face of this international pressure, Hariri and many other politicians who had long been loyal to Syria began defecting to the opposition. In February 2005, four months after resigning as prime minister, Hariri was killed, along with 22 others, in a massive car-bomb explosion in Beirut. Widespread suspicions of Syrian involvement in Hariri's assassination led to overwhelming international pressure for an immediate Syrian withdrawal and to extensive anti-Syrian demonstrations in Beirut. Prime Minister Omar Karami submitted his cabinet's resignation late that month, leading to the formation of an interim government that included Hariri's allies and parliamentary opposition figures. The new cabinet was tasked with overseeing free and fair legislative elections in May and June.

Several assassinations and assassination attempts against prominent political and media figures, as well as a series of explosions in Christian areas, took place in

the months after Syria's withdrawal, none of which were effectively investigated. This campaign of intimidation brought economic growth to a dead halt for the year and led many politicians to leave the country for months at a time or confine themselves to heavily guarded compounds. Nevertheless, the new government presided over a new climate of freedom throughout Lebanese civil society, from the media to the universities, and a vigorous public debate over the country's future.

Although Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon in April, the governing coalition left in place a key pillar of the occupation—a heavily gerrymandered electoral system that embeds most Christian regions in majority Muslim districts. This enabled allies of the late Hariri, calling themselves the "March 14 Coalition," to expand their parliamentary bloc to 72 out of 128 seats and form Lebanon's first postoccupation government, though at the expense of alienating some Lebanese Christians.

The March 14 Coalition aligned itself squarely with the West and expressed a commitment to major political and economic reforms. However, it lacked the two-thirds parliamentary majority needed to overturn Lahoud's term extension and elect a new president (and was unwilling to accept Aoun as a successor in return for support from his Free Patriotic Movement party), which left the ardently pro-Syrian Lahoud in office. This division paralyzed government decision making and impeded reform of the security establishment and judiciary. The Shiite Islamist Hezbollah movement, which was allied with Syria, continued to refuse to disarm as called for by UNSC Resolution 1559.

In October 2005, the UN International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIC), charged with investigating Hariri's murder, concluded in an interim report that there was "converging evidence pointing at both Lebanese and Syrian involvement" in the crime. In September 2006, a Lebanese intelligence officer involved in the investigation, Lt. Col. Samir Shehade, was wounded when a bomb ripped through his motorcade as he was leaving the village of Rmeileh; four of his bodyguards were killed.

Lebanon began slowly to regain control of its sovereignty after the Syrian withdrawal but still did not have a monopoly on the legitimate use of force within its borders. Hezbollah retained its powerful militia and on July 12, 2006, kidnapped two Israeli soldiers from across the border and killed eight others. This action sparked a six-week war with Israel that devastated southern Lebanon and severely damaged the country's infrastructure. Some 1,500 people were killed, most of them Lebanese civilians. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis and Lebanese were displaced, and thousands more were injured. Both Israel and Hezbollah targeted civilian areas.

After the war ended with a UN-brokered ceasefire, Lebanese politicians struggled to stabilize the government. President Lahoud had appointed Fouad Siniora as prime minister at the end of June 2005; the resulting cabinet had been the first to include members of Hezbollah. However, after a brief period of unity during and immediately after the war, Lebanon was again divided. The main political factions were the March 14 Coalition and the rival March 8 group, an opposition coalition led by Hezbollah and Aoun. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah threatened street protests if Siniora did not accept his demands for a "unity" government in which the opposition would have a stronger presence. Hezbollah claims the government is in violation of the power-sharing agreement established after the end of the civil war in the 1990s. In November 2006, opposition ministers resigned from government, and in December, Hezbollah supporters staged large protests; hundreds of thousands of opposition

supporters demonstrated in Beirut demanding the resignation of the government. While Hezbollah backed down from strong rhetoric threatening to topple the government, it mounted a round-the-clock protest outside the government's cabinet office in Beirut, and street battles between progovernment and opposition supporters broke out with increased frequency at the end of 2006.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Lebanon is not an electoral democracy. Electoral districts are blatantly gerrymandered to ensure the reelection of incumbent deputies. In contrast to the last three electoral cycles, the 2005 parliamentary elections were monitored by international observers, who judged them to be relatively free of interference by the authorities. However, vote buying was reported to be rampant. The Lebanese government is currently reviewing a draft electoral law proposed in June 2006; the debate will prove contentious as politicians are deeply divided over redistricting.

The president is formally selected every six years by the 128-member National Assembly (parliament). The president and the Parliament nominate the prime minister, who chooses the cabinet, subject to parliamentary approval. The unwritten National Pact of 1943 stipulates that the president be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the National Assembly a Shiite Muslim. Parliamentary seats are divided among major sects under a constitutional formula that does not reflect their current demographic weight. Shias comprise at least a third of the population, but are allotted only 21 percent of parliamentary seats.

Political and bureaucratic corruption in Lebanon are widespread; investors routinely pay bribes to win contracts, which are often awarded to companies close to powerful politicians. Laws and regulations on corruption are loosely enforced. However, Lebanon was ranked 63 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index, marking an improvement from the previous year.

Freedom of expression is limited but far more substantial than elsewhere in the Arab world. Lebanon has a long tradition of press freedom, though nearly all media outlets are owned by prominent political and commercial elites. Five independent television stations and more than 30 independent radio stations operate in Lebanon, as do dozens of independent print publications, reflecting a diverse range of views. Internet access is not restricted. Despite the relatively open media environment, the government makes use of some legal controls. In March 2006, Dr. Muhamed Mugarby, a prominent human rights lawyer, appeared before a military court on slander charges for denouncing the authorities' use of courts to prosecute critics of the government—precisely what has since happened to him.

A number of vaguely worded laws criminalize critical reporting on Syria, the Lebanese military, the security forces, the judiciary, and the presidency. The General Security Directorate has the authority to censor all foreign magazines and nonperiodical media, though no major cases of censorship were reported in 2006. Although journalists faced little or no harassment by the authorities in 2006, the assassinations of prominent journalists in 2005 led some to practice self-censorship on matters pertaining to Syria.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed in the Lebanese constitution and protected in practice. However, the constitution and current electoral law respectively weaken the political representation of Shias and Christians. Academic freedom is long-stand-

ing and firmly entrenched. The country's universities are the Arab world's most open and vibrant.

Rights to freedom of association and assembly are relatively unrestricted. On several occasions in recent years, hundreds of thousands of Lebanese have rallied in favor of and in opposition to the government. Public demonstrations are not permitted without prior approval from the Interior Ministry, but only one unlicensed demonstration was forcibly dispersed by police during 2005, and none after the Syrian withdrawal. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including human rights groups, are permitted to operate openly. In 2005, the government ended a requirement that NGOs be licensed, but still required notification of a group's formation. The Ministry of Interior has at times transformed the notification process into an approval process and has been known to conduct inquiries into an organization's founding members. NGOs must invite ministry representatives to general assemblies where votes are held on bylaws or boards of directors. All workers except those in government may establish unions, which have the right to strike and to bargain collectively.

The judiciary, consisting of civilian courts, a military court, the Judicial Council, and a Constitutional Council, is ostensibly independent, but in practice is subject to heavy political influence. Aside from the Judicial Council, the courts remain dominated by judges carefully vetted by Syria over the past 15 years (in part because divisions within the government have precluded replacing them) and have continued to issue indictments against journalists critical of the president, though none were brought to trial. After the February 2005 assassination of former prime minister Hariri, political and judicial accountability and independence have been hotly debated by civil society activists and now seriously by parliamentarians.

International standards of criminal procedure are generally observed in the regular judiciary, but not in the military court, which consists largely of military officers with no legal training and tries most cases in a matter of minutes.

Arbitrary arrest and detention by Lebanese security forces were commonplace before the Hariri assassination, but have lessened since UN personnel were embedded with the security services to investigate his death. The use of torture to extract confessions is widespread in security-related cases. During the Syrian occupation, Lebanese security agencies routinely monitored the telephones of cabinet ministers and political dissidents alike, though the practice appeared to have ended after the Syrian withdrawal. Prison conditions are poor; overcrowding and pretrial detentions are major problems.

Nearly 350,000 Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon are denied citizenship rights and face restrictions on working, building homes, and purchasing property. The rules reflect Lebanese sensitivities about the impact of the mostly Muslim Palestinians' assimilation on the country's precarious sectarian balance.

Women enjoy many of the same rights as men, but experience some social and legal discrimination. Since family and personal status matters are adjudicated by the religious authorities of each sectarian community, women are subject to discriminatory laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. Women are underrepresented in politics, holding only three parliamentary seats (the two female ministers appointed in 2004 were not reappointed in 2005), and do not receive equal social security provisions. Men convicted of so-called honor crimes against women usually receive lenient sentences. Foreign domestic workers are routinely exploited and physically abused by employers.

Lesotho

Population: 1,800,000

Capital: Maseru

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F

Overview: Lesotho was the focus of international attention in 2006 due to government efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, including the introduction of a policy offering free, universal HIV testing, the first such program in the world. Lesotho also continued to effectively tackle corruption related to the Lesotho Highland Water Project.

Lesotho's status as a British protectorate saved it from incorporation into South Africa in the early twentieth century. After gaining independence in 1966, the country was ruled by King Moshoeshoe II and Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan of the Basotho National Party (BNP). Jonathan annulled the first postindependence elections in 1970, and the BNP ruled by decree until a 1986 military coup, after which Moshoeshoe was given executive powers. Another coup in 1990 saw the king sent into exile and replaced by his son, who became King Letsie III. Democratic elections in 1993, which resulted in an overwhelming victory for the Basotholand Congress Party (BCP), did not lead to stability. After violent military infighting, assassinations, and the suspension of constitutional rule in 1994, Letsie abdicated to allow his father's reinstatement in 1995. He resumed the throne following the accidental death of his father in January 1996. Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle left the BCP in 1997 and started a new party, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD).

Elections for the National Assembly in 1998 touched off yet another crisis of government. Although international observers described the voting as free and fair, the appearance of irregularities and the absence of opposition voices in government prompted demonstrators to reject results that gave the ruling LCD 79 out of 80 constituency seats in Parliament with 60.5 percent of the vote. After opposition supporters burned down Maseru's business district and junior military officers staged a mutiny, troops from South Africa and Botswana—under the mandate of the 14-country Southern African Development Community (SADC)—were sent to Lesotho at the request of Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili. An Interim Political Authority reached an agreement in 1998 that allowed the elected—and highly unpopular—government to retain power. However, it stipulated that new elections must be supervised by an independent election commission and include competition for 40 additional, proportionally determined seats in the National Assembly.

Elections under this new system were held in 2002 and saw a turnout of 68 percent of eligible voters. The ruling LCD captured 57.7 percent of votes cast, winning 77 of 80 constituency seats; the Lesotho People's Congress (LPC) took one seat; and two constituency elections failed. The BNP won 21 of the 40 seats chosen by proportional representation, while the National Independent Party (NIP) and the LPC garnered five each. Smaller parties won the remainder. The BNP assumed its seats but has refused to formally accept the election results, filing numerous legal challenges and boycotting several by-elections.

In May 2005, Lesotho held its first-ever nationwide municipal elections. Less than 40 percent of voters cast ballots, a low turnout that opposition parties and civic groups attributed to inadequate voter education and preparation. While the Independent Electoral Commission did not make the final vote tally available, it revealed a victory for the LCD, followed by independent candidates, the BNP, and the LPC.

Drought has plagued the country since 2001. Lesotho's 2003 winter harvest failed, and rains in early 2004 came too late to save the maize crop, estimated at 68 percent below average. In February 2004, the government declared a state of emergency in the face of the food security crisis and a dramatic rise in HIV/AIDS cases. In early 2006, however, Lesotho experienced its heaviest rainfall in almost 20 years. Because of soil damage resulting from the preceding years of drought, the heavy rains destroyed over a third of ground crops ahead of the April harvest, and flooding led to the deaths of 20 people. The UN World Food Program estimates that 200,000 to 250,000 Basotho are exposed to chronic food insecurity.

Landlocked within South Africa, Lesotho is highly dependent on its powerful neighbor. Its economy is sustained by remittances from its many citizens who work in South African mines. Retrenchments at the mines, however, have contributed to high unemployment in Lesotho. Increased growth in the textile industry, facilitated by preferential access to the U.S. market via the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), has partly offset these losses, but the end of World Trade Organization textile quotas in 2005 led to the exit of six foreign-owned textile factories from the country. Nevertheless, in 2006, government efforts to promote Lesotho's textile sector as both worker friendly and engaged with business—as well as the country's international reputation as a leader in combating HIV/AIDS—have contributed to the return of major foreign clothing manufacturers.

Lesotho is scarred by an adult HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of over 23 percent, one of the highest in the world. In November 2005, the government announced a plan to offer free HIV testing to all citizens, the first such program in the world; efforts to implement the "Know Your Status" plan by the end of 2007 continued in 2006. The plan elicited the support of high-profile philanthropy figures such as pop star and AIDS activist Bono, former U.S. president Bill Clinton, and former Microsoft Corp. chairman Bill Gates, all of whom visited Lesotho in 2006. However, nurses in the country warned that the campaign was threatened by a significant lack of healthcare workers.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Lesotho is an electoral democracy. Under its constitutional monarchy, King Letsie III serves as a ceremonial head of state and is proscribed from political activities. A mixed electoral system—introduced in the May 2002 parliamentary elections—determines the makeup of the 120-seat lower house of Parliament, the National Assembly: 80 seats

are filled by first-past-the-post constituency votes and 40 seats are filled by proportional representation. The leader of the majority party in the National Assembly automatically becomes prime minister. Elections to the National Assembly take place every five years; the next round is scheduled for the spring of 2007. The Senate, the upper house of the bicameral legislature, consists of 11 royal appointees and Lesotho's 22 traditional principal chiefs, who still wield considerable authority in rural areas. Any elected government's exercise of its constitutional authority remains limited by the military, the royal family, and traditional clan structures. In January 2006, Foreign Minister Monyane Moleleki of the LCD, a potential successor to Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili, was shot in the arm outside his home; police were unable to identify a motive for the attack.

Lesotho's major political parties include the LCD, the LPC, the BNP, and the NIP.

The government has aggressively pursued criminal charges against state officials and multinational corporations suspected of corrupt practices. In recent years, over a dozen international construction companies and government officials have been investigated—and a number of both convicted—for corrupt practices associated with the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), a multibillion-dollar dam and watershed project. In 2006, two government officials working on the LHWP were accused of accepting bribes from the German engineering consultancy Lahmeyer International. Shortly thereafter, a crack in the wall of an LHWP dam prompted civil society groups to call for an audit of the project's tender awarding process. Separately, media and civic groups in August criticized a government plan allowing civil servants to purchase automobiles at significantly discounted rates through a state-issued tender. Lesotho was ranked 79 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government generally respects freedom of speech and of the press. Several independent newspapers operate freely and routinely criticize the government, while state-owned print and broadcast media tend to reflect the views of the ruling party. There are four private radio stations, and many South African radio and television broadcasts reach Lesotho. However, government critics in the media are subject to extremely high libel penalties; 2006 saw several threats of libel and defamation suits intended to counter negative media coverage. Journalists are occasionally harassed or attacked, which leads to some self-censorship. The government does not restrict internet access.

Freedom of religion in this predominantly Christian country is widely observed. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Freedoms of assembly and association are generally respected. Several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operate openly, including the Lesotho Council of NGOs (LECONGO), an umbrella body of civic organizations. While labor rights are constitutionally guaranteed, the labor and trade union movement is weak and fragmented, and many employers in the textile sector do not allow union activity. Many miners are members of the powerful South African National Union of Mineworkers.

Courts are nominally independent, but higher courts are especially subject to outside influence. The large backlog of cases often leads to delays in trials and lengthy pretrial detention. Mistreatment of civilians by security forces reportedly continues. Prisons are dilapidated, severely overcrowded, and lack essential health services; instances of torture and excessive force have been reported. From 2001 to

2003, 90 prisoners died at Lesotho's largest prison, according to a government commission of inquiry. Citizens are protected against government infringements on their rights by an independent ombudsman's office.

Tensions between Basotho and the small Chinese business community have led to instances of minor violence.

The constitution bars gender-based discrimination, but customary practice and law still restrict women's rights in several areas, including property rights and inheritance. Lesotho's constitution perpetuates the minority status of Basotho women married under customary law; such women are considered legal minors while their husbands are alive, may not enter into binding contracts, and have no standing in civil courts. Domestic violence is reportedly widespread, but is becoming less socially acceptable. In June 2006, the government announced plans to improve medical care for victims of rape after almost 500 rape cases were reported between January and March; 501 such cases were reported in all of 2005. Women's rights organizations have highlighted the importance of women's participation in the democratic process as part of a broader effort to educate women about their rights under customary and common law. Out of 120 parliamentary seats, just 13 are held by women. A constitutional amendment reserves a third of the total seats in the new municipal councils for women.

A study released in April 2005 and commissioned by UNICEF and the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sport and Recreation found abuse of child domestic laborers—including sexual abuse—to be a significant problem. A 2002 study found that Lesotho was home to more than 70,000 AIDS orphans.

Liberia

Population: 3,400,000
Capital: Monrovia

Political Rights: 3*
Civil Liberties: 4
Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: Liberia's political rights rating improved from 4 to 3 due to gains in combating corruption and greater government transparency.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	5,6PF	6,5PF	6,6NF	6,6NF	5,4PF	4,4PF	3,4PF

Overview: In January 2006, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was inaugurated as the first female head of state in Africa following elections in October 2005 that were widely considered to be free and fair. Since assuming the presidency, Johnson-Sirleaf has embarked on an ambitious campaign to combat corruption and rebuild a country crumbling from

the impact of 14 years of war, though improvements in many areas—especially the judicial system—have been slow in coming. In March 2006, former president Charles Taylor was handed over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone to face charges of war crimes. Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission began functioning in October.

Liberia was settled in 1821 by freed slaves from the United States and became an independent republic in 1847. Americo-Liberians, descendants of the freed slaves, dominated the country until 1980, when army sergeant Samuel Doe led a bloody coup and murdered President William Tolbert. Doe's regime concentrated power among members of his Krahn ethnic group and suppressed other groups. Forces led by former government minister Charles Taylor and backed by the Gio and Mano ethnic groups—which had been subjected to severe repression—launched a guerrilla war from neighboring Cote d'Ivoire against the Doe regime on December 24, 1989. In 1990, Nigeria, under the aegis of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), led an armed intervention force, preventing Taylor from seizing the capital but failing to protect Doe from being captured and tortured to death by a splinter rebel group led by Prince Johnson.

After seven years of endemic violence that forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes, a peace accord was signed, leading to elections in 1997. Taylor won decidedly by convincing the people that a vote for him was the only way to ensure peace. Nevertheless, the peace accord was not entirely effective and violence continued. Long-standing grievances were not resolved, and Taylor made little effort to seek genuine reconciliation. Many of his rivals were forced to flee the country. Some eventually formed the rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and used neighboring Guinea as a staging ground from which to launch their uprising against Taylor. With rebels poised to overrun the capital and the United States calling for him to step down, Taylor resigned in August 2003 and accepted Nigeria's offer of asylum.

Taylor's departure from Liberia quickly ended 14 years of intermittent civil war that had spilled over into three neighboring countries and left 200,000 people dead in Liberia alone. ECOWAS helped negotiate an end to the fighting between Taylor's forces, the LURD, and another rebel force, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia. West African peacekeepers became part of a 15,000-strong UN-led force that oversaw disarmament and demobilization. Human rights abuses abated considerably following the ceasefire, but some violations have continued, especially in the countryside. Delegates to the peace talks in 2003 chose businessman Gyude Bryant as Liberia's interim president, and he ruled the country with the transitional National Assembly until the 2005 elections.

Twenty-two candidates contested the presidency in the first round of voting in October 2005. Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) candidate George Weah, who had risen from the slums of Monrovia to become an international soccer star, won 28.3 percent, followed by Harvard-educated economist and Unity Party (UP) candidate Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, with 19.8 percent. In the November runoff, Johnson-Sirleaf captured 59.4 percent of the vote, compared with Weah's 40.6 percent. Weah registered a challenge with the National Electoral Commission over the fairness of the vote, and there were fears that some of the former fighters who supported him would

resort to violence. However, in late December—under pressure from Nigerian, Ghanaian and other regional leaders—Weah officially conceded the election.

During the concurrent legislative polls, 12 parties—including those of former warlords such as Prince Johnson—were voted into office, as were a handful of independents. Weah's CDC won 18 seats, the highest number for one party; Johnson-Sirleaf's UP captured 11 seats. The multiplicity of political parties that the elections left in both houses has the potential to stall much-needed legislative progress if some party consolidation does not occur.

In March 2003, Taylor was indicted by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone on 17 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international law for his alleged role in arming Sierra Leonean rebels in exchange for diamonds. In March 2006, Nigeria finally turned Taylor over to the court upon the request of the newly elected Liberian president. Due to concerns that his presence in the region might spark further fighting, Taylor was transferred in June to The Hague, the Netherlands, where he will be tried. If convicted, he would serve the entirety of his prison sentence in Britain. Taylor is only the second head of state, after former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic, to face trial in an international court for crimes committed during his presidency.

Since her inauguration on January 16, 2006, Johnson-Sirleaf has worked to fulfill her campaign promises to repair infrastructure and combat corruption, making some noteworthy progress on both fronts. In July, electricity was turned on in selected Monrovia neighborhoods in a ceremony timed to coincide with the nation's Independence Day. A few days earlier, limited supplies of running water had also returned to the capital. Reconstruction efforts in the health and education sectors are ongoing, as are much-needed road repairs, but limited funds and low salaries for government employees have hampered progress in these and other areas. Johnson-Sirleaf's most tangible successes have come in her war on government corruption. Among other measures, she has begun laying off thousands of unqualified government employees who had been installed by previous administrations in exchange for political support.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Liberia is an electoral democracy. Presidential and legislative elections were held in October 2005. Hundreds of international observers determined that the vote was free and fair. The country's legislature consists of a 30-member Senate and a 64-member House of Representatives; senators serve nine-year terms, and representatives serve six. Presidents serve six-year terms, and are eligible for a second term. Major political parties include Johnson-Sirleaf's Unity Party; George Weah's Congress for Democratic Change Party; the Liberty Party, which fielded the third-ranking presidential candidate, Charles Brumskine; and the National Patriotic Party, the former party of Charles Taylor.

President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has said that fighting corruption, which has been at the root of many of the country's problems, will be a central goal of her administration. The average civil servant is paid barely enough to live above the poverty line (even after a 2006 salary increase), contributing to endemic graft. The transitional administration that preceded Johnson-Sirleaf's is believed to have been responsible for the theft of some \$100 million in public funds. Such practices have

proven to be significant impediments to much-needed foreign investment and ongoing reconstruction efforts. In 2006, Johnson-Sirleaf ordered audits of all government ministries as well as 300 members of the outgoing administration. The Anti-Corruption Taskforce—a group of economists and security experts assembled in January 2004—conducted the audits and discovered that fraud worth nearly \$1 million had been perpetrated at the Ministry of Finance under the transitional administration. The probes led directly to the dismissal of five mid-level finance ministry employees, as well as three high-level officials from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Civil Aviation Authority. In addition, the new administration has addressed the problem of a bloated and costly civil service by laying off thousands of employees, either for consistently failing to show up to work or for being unqualified for their positions. Many of these employees were hired for political reasons by previous administrations.

Liberia is operating under a three-year antigraft plan, the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Plan (GEMAP), that was drawn up by international donors and approved by the transitional government. It aims to install foreign experts in key revenue-generating institutions—such as the port, airport, customs office, and forestry commission—for an initial term of three years to monitor and reduce corruption. GEMAP officially began operations after completing the deployment of all international experts at the end of May 2006. In response to Liberia's reform efforts, the UN Security Council in June partially dropped the ban on arms sales to Liberia and completely lifted sanctions on Liberian timber exports. However, the Security Council extended sanctions on Liberian rubber and diamonds; this decision will be reviewed again June 2007. In April, the Liberian government established the National Diamond Task Force intended to help the country meet international diamond trade criteria set out in the Kimberly Process. However, illegal diamond mines and smugglers operate in many parts of the country because the government does not yet have the capacity to curtail this activity. Liberia was not ranked in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perception Index.

Liberia's independent media have survived despite extensive self-censorship during the civil war. Journalists suffered from constant surveillance, harassment, threats, detentions, and beatings. Since the expulsion of former president Charles Taylor in 2003, the media environment has become decidedly more open. Several private newspapers are published, and there are at least five FM radio stations. Call-in radio talk shows are very popular, and Johnson-Sirleaf herself participates in a monthly talk show, "Conversations with the President."

The animosity between the government and the media has become more obvious under the newly elected government than it had been under the transitional administration. Journalists frequently report unfavorably on government behavior, and security service personnel have, on a number of occasions, harassed reporters covering presidential events. In August 2006, Johnson-Sirleaf accused the national media of unprofessional reporting and engaging in blackmail. In response to a request by the Press Union of Liberia to investigate the causes of government agents' repeated attacks on reporters, the president appointed an investigation committee that included lawyers and members of civil society. The committee released its findings in mid-September, though the results were largely dismissed by many of the journalists involved for having a perceived progovernment bias.

Religious freedom is respected in practice. Muslims have been targeted in the past because many Mandingos, who were a key ethnic component of the LURD, follow Islam.

The government does not restrict academic freedom. Nonetheless, despite the efforts of university administrators, the University of Liberia—West Africa's oldest institution of higher education, founded 144 years ago—has yet to reopen after it was forced to close due to the violence during the Taylor era. Students have protested the reinstatement of the former university president, Dr. Al-Hassan Conteh, who has faced accusations of corruption.

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed and respected. Numerous civil society groups, including human rights organizations, operate in the country. The right to strike, organize, and bargain collectively is recognized. However, the current labor laws badly need reform, and labor conditions are often harsh because bargaining arrangements are poorly implemented. Union activity is also limited by the lack of economic activity. In April 2006, former soldiers protested in Monrovia over unpaid severance packages that they had been promised for laying down their arms. The protesters turned violent and paralyzed the city for a day until UN forces were able to disperse them. As a direct result, the president banned an upcoming demonstration by civil service workers seeking to highlight their concerns about losing their jobs.

Under previous administrations, the judiciary was subject to extensive executive influence, intimidation by security forces, and corruption stemming from low salaries. Though Johnson-Sirleaf has pledged to rebuild a functioning justice system, too little funding has been allocated to the judiciary for that promise to reach fruition in the near future.

After Taylor was extradited to The Hague in June 2006 for trial by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission began functioning in Liberia in October. The commission has the power to investigate crimes committed between January 1979 and October 2003 and to recommend for prosecution those individuals whom it believes are responsible for the most serious human rights violations.

Many of Liberia's prisons were destroyed during the war and have not yet been rebuilt. Consequently, many of those that remain are overcrowded and force inmates to live in sometimes life-threatening conditions. Delays in the judicial process further aggravate the crowding situation, causing many to be jailed for more than 90 days without trial.

The police force is being restructured under the 2003 peace accord. At least 2,000 new recruits have been trained by the United Nations, and the government is making a concerted, though largely unsuccessful, effort to recruit women. As part of the peace accord, a new national army is being formed, but funding shortages will cause the force to be much smaller than predicted. Efforts are being made to ensure that human rights abusers are not permitted to enlist in the new military. For example, in June 2006, pictures of the first 100 recruits were published in the press so that members of the public could come forward and identify any criminals. The new security forces are critically needed. Crime is on the rise in Monrovia, and former militants have destabilized a number of regions outside of the capital, particularly in rubber plantation areas like Guthrie, where they engage in extortion, theft, and general intimidation of the population. Police, mainly at checkpoints, occasionally extort money and goods from citizens.

Interethnic relations continue to be tense, since many ethnic groups fought one another during the civil war. Animosity exists primarily between the Krahn, Gio, Mano, and Mandingo ethnic groups. The return of thousands of Mandingo refugees to their homes in the northern county of Nimba has caused disputes over land ownership with the Mano and Gio who have since settled there.

The treatment of women varies by ethnic group, religion, and social status. During the civil war, women and girls were often abducted as laborers and for sex, while others joined rebel groups or militias to protect themselves. Even with the end of the civil war, many women continue to suffer from physical abuse and traditional societal discrimination, despite constitutionally guaranteed equality. In fact, in a nationwide survey conducted by the government during 2005 and 2006, 92 percent of the 1,600 women interviewed reported having experienced some form of sexual abuse, including rape. The former transitional government strengthened existing rape laws in December 2005; previously, only gang rape had been considered a crime. Nonetheless, corruption and a lack of capacity in the fledgling judicial system has meant that few prosecutions under the new law have come to fruition and many victims are paid by perpetrators before a trial is even able to begin.

According to a 2006 UN survey, Liberian orphanages housing 5,000 children were found to be in unsanitary and inhospitable condition. In March, the Ministry of Health closed two out of three orphanages for operating illegally; the shuttered institutions were accused of serving as fronts for child-trafficking operations and failing to meet minimum health standards. At year's end, the 2,800 children living in those facilities were set to be transferred to more appropriate accommodations.

Libya

Population: 5,900,000

Capital: Tripoli

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview: Despite Libya's poor human rights record, the United States and the European Union (EU) continued to develop relations with the oil-rich state in 2006. Libyan leader Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi had changed his country's foreign policies in recent years and remained focused on ending its international isolation. While Libya has taken positive steps, such as releasing some political prisoners, it remains a country where the citizens have few civil rights or political liberties.

Libya was ruled by the Ottoman Empire until the early twentieth century, when it was conquered by Italy. After a period of UN trusteeship in the wake of World War II, the country gained independence in 1951. For the next 18 years, a relatively pro-Western monarch, King Idris, ruled Libya. But in 1969, a group of military officers led by a young captain, Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi, overthrew the king while he was out of the country.

Al-Qadhafi soon seized control of the country's vast oil reserves from foreign companies, and evicted U.S. and British forces from military bases on Libyan territory. In establishing the new regime, he claimed that Libya would be ruled directly by the people. His three-volume political treatise, the *Green Book*, is supposedly the guide to leadership and governance in Libya, and explains his ideology, which is a fusion of Arab nationalism, socialism, and Islam. Al-Qadhafi currently holds no official title, and is referred to in Libyan state media as Brotherly Leader and Guide of the Revolution.

In 1981, the United States imposed sanctions on the country, which had become a leading state sponsor of terrorism. After a further deterioration in relations, the United States in 1986 bombed several targets in Libya, including al-Qadhafi's home. In 1988, a Pan Am flight exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all 259 people aboard as well as 11 residents of the town. After an exhaustive investigation, Scottish police issued arrest warrants for two Libyan men, including a Libyan intelligence agent. The UN Security Council then imposed trade sanctions on the country. For the next several years, Libya was economically and diplomatically isolated.

In 1999, al-Qadhafi set out to make amends internationally and handed over the two Lockerbie bombing suspects for trial. He accepted responsibility for past acts of terrorism and offered compensation packages to the families of victims. The United Nations suspended its sanctions, and the European Union began reestablishing diplomatic and trade relations with the country. In 2001, the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the Netherlands, found one of the Lockerbie suspects guilty of masterminding the attack. Libya agreed to pay a \$10 million compensation package to the families of each of the 270 victims in 2003. The following year, al-Qadhafi made his first trip to Europe in more than 15 years, and European leaders in turn traveled to Libya. The EU subsequently lifted its arms embargo and normalized diplomatic relations.

Libya also improved its relations with the United States. In 2004, a year after al-Qadhafi's government announced that it had scrapped its nonconventional weapons programs, the United States established a liaison office in Tripoli, and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs William Burns visited the country, making him the first U.S. official to do so in nearly three decades. The United States removed Libya from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, and established a full embassy in Tripoli in May 2006.

Libya's relations with some fellow Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia, have remained poor. Media reports in 2003 suggested the existence of a Libyan plot to assassinate then-Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz al Saud. Libya has denied the claim.

One of al-Qadhafi's seven children, Saif al-Islam, is believed to be one of the driving forces behind Libya's shift in policies. He runs a charitable organization called the Gaddafi International Foundation for Charity Associations, and has facilitated

visits by foreign human rights activists. According to press reports, his foundation has made it possible for Libyan citizens to report abuses they may have faced at the hands of authorities. Saif al-Islam has also publicly criticized current conditions in Libya and advocated changes in the leadership.

Libya's people have yet to benefit from the recent policy changes. Political rights and civil liberties are still severely restricted, and the unpredictable al-Qadhafi is still the undisputed leader of the country. In September 2006, he made worrying statements about the need to kill Libya's enemies and reasserted the overall success of the revolution.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Libya is not an electoral democracy. Although it is effectively a dictatorship that has been dominated by the same leaders for over 35 years, Libya is in theory a country ruled by the masses, a "jamahiriya" in Arabic. It is illegal for any political group to oppose the principles of the 1969 revolution, which are laid out in supreme leader Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi's multivolume political treatise, the *Green Book*. Power theoretically lies with a system of people's committees and the General People's Congress, but those structures are manipulated in practice to ensure al-Qadhafi's rule.

There are no legal opposition parties in Libya. The government monitors political activity, and people who do try to form parties can end up in jail. Many Libyan opposition leaders are active in Europe.

Libya ranked 105 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. The poor showing is consistent with the country's pervasive corruption in both government and business.

The local press is state controlled and is characterized by its praise of the leadership. Libyan journalists operate in a climate of fear and censorship, leading some to publish their critical reporting on websites based in foreign countries. The June 2005 murder of Dayf al-Ghazal al-Shuhaibi, a former journalist for the government-owned daily *Azahf al-Akhdar* and a contributor to critical Libya-focused websites based in London, had a chilling effect on independent voices in the country. In another such case, Abd al-Raziq al-Mansuri, a journalist who wrote for a London-based website, was arrested in January 2005 by security agents. He received a pardon and was released in March 2006, though the details of the pardon were not disclosed. Al-Mansuri was originally convicted of illegal possession of a weapon, which was found following his arrest, but human rights activists maintain that the real reason behind his detention was his writing critical of the government.

Libya is overwhelmingly Muslim, and the government closely monitors mosques for any Islamist political activity. The few religious minorities, comprised mostly of foreigners living in Libya, are permitted to practice their faiths with relative freedom. Academic freedom is restricted, and like journalists, Libyan academics avoid controversial or politically sensitive topics.

Free assembly, demonstrations, and public events are discouraged and limited by the government. Civil society groups are largely powerless, and those that do have any clout, like the al-Qadhafi Foundation for Development, have connections to the government. Independent labor unions are virtually non-existent.

The People's Court, which had been used to jail political dissidents, has been closed, but Libya's judiciary remains beholden to the government. The courts do

not make decisions that run counter to the opinions of al-Qadhafi and his close associates, and arbitrary detentions and imprisonment are fairly routine. However, Libya's desire to rejoin the international community has driven it to make some concessions. Over the last three years, the government has allowed teams from respected international human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International into the country to conduct research missions. In January 2006, Human Rights Watch released a report based primarily on the findings of its June 2005 trip. While the organization praised the leadership's steps toward ending its international isolation, it was pointedly critical of Libya's judiciary, its restriction of free speech and assembly, and its treatment of political opponents. In a positive note, Libya in March 2006 pardoned over 130 political prisoners, many of whom had spent more than seven years in prison. The government still faced scrutiny for the case of five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian physician who were arrested in 1999 after being accused of deliberately injecting 400 hospitalized Libyan children with HIV. The defendants were eventually convicted and sentenced to death. Nevertheless, they maintain their innocence and have blamed the HIV outbreak on the poor conditions at the hospital. They also allege that they have been tortured, and two of the nurses claim they were raped. A retrial is currently being conducted, with a verdict expected on December 19. The retrial confirmed the sentence in December 2006. The nurses and the Palestinian physician are appealing the verdict.

Libya has an enormous force of migrant workers, largely illegal laborers from Africa, many of whom hope to end up in Europe. Human Rights Watch has criticized Libya for arbitrary detention of migrants in poor facilities. As Libya cracks down on undocumented migrant workers, the likelihood of abuse by authorities has increased.

Libyan women enjoy more legal protections than women in many other Arab countries, and Libyan girls enjoy greater access to public education. However, women still face many social and legal hurdles to equality, particularly in areas such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance.

Liechtenstein

Population: 40,000

Capital: Vaduz

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In 2006, Liechtenstein celebrated the 200th anniversary of its independence. However, the tiny principality's bank-

ing-secrecy laws, and its attendant status as a tax haven, continued to act as an irritant in its relations with other countries.

Liechtenstein was established as a principality in 1719 after being purchased by Austria's Liechtenstein family, and gained its sovereignty when the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved in 1806. Native residents of the state are primarily descendants of the Germanic Alemanni tribe, and the local language is a German dialect. From 1938 to 1997, the principality was governed by a coalition of the Progressive Citizens' Party (FBP) and the Fatherland Union, now the Patriotic Union (VU). The FBP was the senior coalition partner for most of this period. Otmar Hasler, the current leader of the FBP, became prime minister after the party won a majority of seats in parliament in the February 2001 elections.

In 2000, the Financial Action Task Force of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) labeled the principality "noncooperative" on money laundering because of its traditional banking-secrecy laws. Liechtenstein then passed a law ending anonymity for account holders, and it was removed from the list of noncooperative states in June 2001. However, after the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, concerns reemerged that Islamist terrorists could be laundering money there. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported in September 2003 that Liechtenstein had made progress in updating its banking regulations, but it expressed concern that the government and banks might not have enough staff to fully enforce regulations.

In a March 2003 referendum, voters approved a constitutional amendment that concentrated significantly more power in the hands of the monarch, Prince Hans-Adam II. The prince had threatened to leave Liechtenstein for Austria if the measure failed to pass. The amendment, which made Liechtenstein's monarchy the most powerful in Europe, gives the prince the power to dismiss the government, veto legislation, and appoint judges. However, it removes the prince's right to rule by emergency decree. The Council of Europe, which monitors democracy among its member countries, has decided not to pursue formal monitoring of Liechtenstein.

On August 15, 2004, Prince Hans-Adam handed his constitutional powers to his son, Hereditary Prince Alois, though Hans-Adam retained his title as head of state. Alois, born in 1968, studied at Britain's Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst and has training in law and accounting. He is expected to be somewhat less confrontational with Liechtenstein's other political institutions than was his father.

In two-stage elections in March 2005, the two main parties—the VU and the FBP—split most of the vote, winning 10 and 12 of the Parliament's 25 seats, respectively. However, since a small third party, the Free List, captured three seats, the two larger parties were forced to form a grand coalition. Hasler remained prime minister, and his FBP took three of the five cabinet seats.

In 2006, Liechtenstein marked its 200th year of independence with a large celebration in Vaduz, the capital. Leaders of neighboring Austria and Switzerland attended.

Prince Alois reiterated in 2006 that Liechtenstein would not make further changes to its banking-secrecy laws. Though it had been criticized by the OECD as a tax haven, the prince claimed that given the principality's dependence on banking, no major change would survive a necessary referendum.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Liechtenstein is an electoral democracy. However, the unelected monarchy won greater powers in 2003, and Liechtenstein's ruling family is now perhaps the most politically powerful in Europe. The unicameral legislature (Landtag) consists of 25 deputies chosen by proportional representation every four years. These freely elected representatives determine the policies of the government, but the monarch, currently Hereditary Prince Alois, has the power to veto legislation, dismiss the government, and appoint judges.

Political parties are able to freely organize. Two parties—the VU and the FBP—have dominated Liechtenstein's politics over the last half-century; however, the small Free List won three seats in the 2005 elections. Switzerland and Austria, the two countries that surround Liechtenstein, have a substantial measure of influence on the tiny principality.

Liechtenstein's politics and society are largely free of corruption, and the country continues to work to build sufficient capacity to fight money laundering in its banking system. Although Liechtenstein has a reputation as a tax haven, it signed an agreement with the European Union (EU) in 2005 promising to impose withholding taxes on savings income earned by EU nationals. (The withholding would not apply to nationals of other countries, leading to further complaints from the OECD.) Liechtenstein was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression and of the press. One private television station competes with the state broadcaster, and the only radio station is in private hands. The two daily newspapers are aligned roughly with the two major political parties. Broadcasts from Austria and Switzerland are available and popular in the country, as are foreign newspapers and magazines. Internet access is unfettered.

The constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion but protects freedom of belief. Catholic or Protestant religious education is mandatory, but exceptions are routinely granted. All religious groups are tax exempt. The government respects academic freedom.

The right to assemble freely is not infringed. The right of association is protected, and the principality has one small trade union.

Judges are appointed by the prince. Due process is respected, and conditions in prisons are acceptable. Following the controversy over the monarch's new powers, the Council of Europe's secretary-general sought to reassure those concerned about democracy that "Liechtenstein's status as a law-based state is unarguable." The IMF has rated the financial services regulators, important to a country so reliant on banking, as capable but too understaffed to fully police all banks and account holders. Crime is rare. Switzerland is responsible for Liechtenstein's customs and defense.

A third of Liechtenstein's population is foreign born. While the majority come from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, a growing proportion are from more distant countries and do not speak German. Some native Liechtenstein citizens have expressed concern over the number of immigrants in the country. The government has responded by seeking to teach newcomers the language and culture of Liechtenstein in formal integration programs.

Liechtenstein has been a member since 1995 of the European Economic Area, a free-trade area that links non-EU members Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein with the EU. Liechtenstein's currency is the Swiss franc. Living standards are high, and the country has a large number of small businesses and a strong financial sector.

A restrictive abortion law was liberalized in November 2005, and abortion is now legal in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. A 2003 court decision upheld the principle of equal pay for equal work for women, but Liechtenstein's society remains conservative—women did not receive full voting rights until 1986—and practice lags behind principle. Women are underrepresented in upper levels of business and government, but have equal rights in family law. Liechtenstein's five-person cabinet includes one woman.

Lithuania

Population: 3,400,000
Capital: Vilnius

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	2,2F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: In May 2006, Lithuania's government resigned following a prolonged political crisis and the withdrawal of two parties from the ruling four-party coalition. Prime Minister Gediminas Kirkilas formed the country's first ever minority government in July from a coalition of center-left parties. Meanwhile, the country was rocked by a series of corruption scandals, including those involving several high-level government officials.

Lithuania merged with Poland in the sixteenth century and was subsequently absorbed by Russia in the eighteenth century. After gaining its independence at the end of World War I, Lithuania was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 under a secret protocol of the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact. The country regained its independence with the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

Lithuania became a member of the European Union on May 1, 2004, having joined NATO a month earlier. However, these accomplishments were marred by a series of high-profile political corruption scandals, including the impeachment of President Rolandas Paksas on charges of corruption and violating his oath of office and the constitution. In March of that year, the Constitutional Court had ruled that Paksas was guilty of unlawfully granting citizenship, leaking classified information, and

meddling in private business affairs. Arturas Paulauskas, the parliamentary chairman, took over as acting president following Paksas's impeachment.

Elections to select a new president were held simultaneously with the vote for the European Parliament. In a tight runoff contest, Valdas Adamkus defeated Kazimiera Prunskiene, the leader of the Union of Farmers and New Democracy (VNDS), and was sworn in as president in July 2004.

Parliamentary elections held over two rounds in October 2004 resulted in a right-wing coalition of the Homeland Union/Lithuanian Conservatives (HU) and the Liberal and Center Union (LCU) capturing 43 seats (25 for HU and 18 for the LCU). The Labor Party won 39 seats; the ruling leftist coalition parties of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (SDP) and New Union (Social Liberals), 31 seats (20 seats and 11 seats, respectively); the VNDS, 10 seats; the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), 10 seats; the Electoral Action of Lithuanian Poles, 2 seats; and independent candidates, the remaining 6 seats. After negotiations between left- and right-wing parties broke down, a ruling center-left coalition emerged in November, with the Labor Party and VNDS joining the SDP and New Union (Social Liberals).

Political scandals, including those involving several high-level government officials, marred the Lithuanian landscape in 2005. In January, Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis admitted to having once served in the Soviet KGB reserves. Consequently, parliament set up an ad hoc commission to investigate his past and look into similar allegations about two other senior officials. The commission, which was also charged with determining whether any laws were violated when the officials were appointed to their present posts, ascertained that the former reservists are exempt from a Lithuanian law requiring former KGB agents to disclose their past to the public. In April, Finance Minister Algirdas Butkevicius resigned following a disagreement with the government over proposed tax reforms introduced to shift the balance of taxation from labor to capital; he was replaced the following month by Zigmantas Balcytis. In June, Labor Party leader Viktor Uspaskich was forced to resign as economy minister over allegations that his business dealings had breached ethics rules. He was accused of using his position to gain advantages in Moscow for several companies in which he holds a stake, as well as of making false claims about his level of education. Uspaskich was replaced by Kestutis Dauksys of the Labor Party.

The year 2006 was marked by continued political instability, including the collapse of the ruling coalition. On April 11, the right-wing opposition initiated a no-confidence vote in Speaker of Parliament Paulauskas of the New Union (Social Liberals) over revelations of abuse of authority in the parliament's chancellery. The vote was supported by fellow coalition members from the Labor Party, who reportedly hoped to increase their overall influence in the government. The New Union (Social Liberals) responded by immediately pulling out of the government, which survived for several weeks as a three-party coalition. However, on May 31, the Labor Party withdrew all of its ministers shortly after prosecutors launched an investigation into misuse of the party's finances; Uspaskich resigned his position as the party's leader and subsequently left for Russia. Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas of the SDP stepped down on June 1, saying that he did not wish to be responsible for putting together a new government under the current circumstances; his departure triggered the collapse of the government. After coalition talks between the HU and SDP to form a broad-based, left-right "rainbow" coalition failed, a new government was formed

in July consisting of the SDP, LCU, National Farmers' Union (NFU) (formerly the VNDS), and Civil Democracy (formed following a split within the Labor Party). The four parties together held fewer than 60 seats in Parliament—which marked this as the first time since Lithuania regained its independence that the country had a minority government. Defense Minister Gediminas Kirkilas of the SDP was chosen to be the new prime minister.

Several corruption scandals involving senior government officials made headlines at the end of 2005 and in 2006. In late 2005, a parliamentary commission concluded that Arturas Zuokas, mayor of Vilnius and leader of the LCU, had received bribes in exchange for ensuring that city government decisions favored particular business interests. Zuokas refused to resign his post, which led to a split in the LCU in early 2006. The Supreme Court, in late 2005, cleared former prime minister Paksas of criminally leaking state secrets to a Russian businessman, although the decision did not annul his 2004 impeachment. In November 2005, the Vilnius prosecutor's office launched an investigation into Brazauskas's role in the privatization of a hotel in the mid-1990s with which his future wife had been involved. Prosecutors closed the investigation in January 2006 after concluding that Brazauskas had not influenced the privatization process and finding no evidence of criminal action. Two advisers to President Adamkus resigned in March amid allegations that they had engaged in suspicious real estate deals. In September, the prosecutor-general's office issued an international arrest warrant for former Labor Party leader Uspaskich on charges of tax fraud. Uspaskich, who was now living in Russia, requested political asylum there; the case was pending at year's end.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Lithuania is an electoral democracy. The 1992 constitution established a unicameral, 141-member Parliament (Seimas), in which 71 seats are selected in single-mandate constituencies and 70 seats are chosen by proportional representation, all for four-year terms. The prime minister is chosen by the Parliament, and the president is directly elected for a five-year term. While the 2004 parliamentary and presidential elections were largely free and fair, there were reports of irregularities, including a lack of transparency in campaign financing. In 2005, three deputies were found guilty of vote buying in the 2004 legislative poll. Six members of ethnic minorities are represented in the Parliament.

The country's political parties include the SDP, NFU, HU, Civic Democracy, New Union (Social Liberals), and the Labor Party. In 2005, the number of members necessary to register a political party was increased from 400 to 1,000. The Communist Party is banned.

Corruption scandals, including ones involving a former prime minister and the mayor of Vilnius, continued to plague Lithuanian politics during the year. According to a 2006 public opinion survey, about three-quarters of those polled believe that there are no or very few honest deputies in parliament. On December 5, 2006, Lithuania's Parliament ratified the UN convention against corruption; Lithuania had signed the document three years earlier. Lithuania was ranked 46 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government generally respects freedom of speech and of the press. There is a wide variety of privately owned newspapers, and several independent, as well

as state-run, television and radio stations broadcast throughout the country. Libel is punishable with a fine or a prison sentence. In September 2006, State Security Department agents briefly detained the editor of the *Laisvas Laikrastis* newspaper, seized the entire print run of the paper, and confiscated computers from the newsroom and the editor's home. Government agents maintained that the issue, which included a story about alleged political corruption, contained information classified as a state secret. President Valdas Adamkus, the Lithuanian Journalists Union, and press advocacy groups condemned the action. The government does not restrict access to the internet.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by law and largely enjoyed in practice in this predominantly Roman Catholic country. Academic freedom is respected.

Freedom of assembly and association are generally respected. There are no serious obstacles to the registration of nongovernmental organizations, and there were no reports of police abuse against demonstrators during the year. Workers have the right to form and join trade unions, to strike, and to engage in collective bargaining. According to the U.S. State Department's 2006 human rights report, only 10 percent, approximately, of the workforce is unionized.

The country's constitution guarantees an independent judiciary, which is respected in practice. The Constitutional Court serves as a powerful and independent body, and its rulings have become central arguments in political debates. Defendants generally enjoy rights of due process, including the right to be informed of the charges against them and the presumption of innocence. There have been credible reports of police abuse of suspects and detainees, although there were fewer such reports in 2006 than in 2005. While the government continued to upgrade prisons to meet international standards, overcrowding, poor sanitation, and inadequate access to health care remained problems. There were complaints during the year of prolonged pretrial detentions and corruption within the law enforcement system.

The rights of the country's ethnic minorities, who constitute approximately 16 percent of the population, are generally protected in practice. After regaining its independence, Lithuania extended citizenship to all those born within its borders, and more than 90 percent of nonethnic Lithuanians, mostly Russians and Poles, became citizens. Members of the country's small Roma (Gypsy) community have complained of discrimination in areas including education, housing, and employment. The state prosecutes offenders under laws that prohibit intolerant acts against any national, racial, ethnic, or other group. In November 2006, Mindaugas Murza, a member of the Siauliai city council, was found guilty of inciting ethnic and racial hatred for founding a political party with an anti-Semitic agenda and for making verbal and written anti-Semitic remarks; he was fined \$1,760.

Although men and women in Lithuania enjoy the same legal rights, women remain underrepresented in management positions and earn lower average wages than men for the same work. Of the 141 members of Parliament, 35 are women. Police are sometimes reluctant to act in cases of domestic violence, which remains a serious problem. Lithuania continues to be a source, transit point, and destination for the trafficking of women and girls for the purpose of prostitution. To help address the problem, the government conducts training programs for law enforcement officials and partially funds centers that assist victims of trafficking.

Luxembourg

Population: 500,000
Capital: Luxembourg

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: Luxembourg's coalition government, which remained popular in 2006, proposed some modest measures to cut the budget deficit and took steps to rein in inflation.

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg was established in 1815, after the Napoleonic wars. Following a brief merger with Belgium, it acquired its current borders in 1839. The country has always faced the possibility of domination by its neighbors—it was occupied by Germany during both world wars—and it abandoned neutrality in favor of joining NATO in 1949. After joining an economic union with Belgium and the Netherlands in 1948, Luxembourg became one of the six founding members of the European Community (now the European Union [EU]) in 1957. Because it has a small, open economy, Luxembourg's relationship with the EU is highly important to its politics; it adopted the euro as its currency in 1999. A former prime minister, Jacques Santer, served as president of the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, from 1995 to 1999.

Over the course of 2003, the opinion-poll ratings of the ruling center-right Democratic Party (PD) fell, while those of the opposition Socialist Worker's Party of Luxembourg (POSL) rose. The PD did poorly in the general elections of June 2004, losing 5 of its 15 seats in Parliament. The POSL gained 1, taking 14 seats and replaced the PD as the junior coalition partner of Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker's Christian Social Party (PCS), which captured 24 seats. The Green Party won 7 seats, and the Action Committee for Democracy and Pension Justice (ADR) took 5 seats. In 2004, the 25 member states of the EU finalized a new draft constitution for the bloc and simultaneously chose a new president for the European Commission. Juncker's name was often mentioned as a candidate for that job, but he kept his promise to remain prime minister if his party won the 2004 elections.

For the first six months of 2005, Luxembourg held the EU's rotating presidency, which is responsible for guiding new policy initiatives. The term was extremely difficult for integrationist countries such as Luxembourg, however. The draft constitution failed decisively in referendums in both France and the Netherlands, two founding EU members. Juncker continued to push the referendum process, saying that other countries should ratify the charter while some way was found to seek French and

Dutch approval in later referendums. However, though Luxembourg itself voted yes on the constitution in a July 10 referendum, many other countries delayed the ratification process indefinitely, leaving the constitution effectively dead.

In 2006, Juncker's coalition government remained relatively popular, while the opposition PD chose a new parliamentary leader in an attempt to reinvigorate its fortunes. The government introduced modest economic reforms in May. These included measures to cut the budget deficit and to battle inflation by reforming the system of wage indexation, in which wages increase automatically as prices increase. While critics of the system said it created a vicious circle, with the wage hikes driving further price increases, the reform package was criticized by employers as too timid.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Luxembourg is an electoral democracy. The head of state is the unelected Grand Duke Henri, whose powers are largely ceremonial. The unicameral legislature consists of 60 deputies elected by proportional representation to five-year terms. The legislature chooses the prime minister. Voting is compulsory for all who are registered. Citizens of EU countries may vote after six years' residency but are not obliged to do so; residents from non-EU countries may not vote. Foreigners constitute a third of Luxembourg's population.

The political party system is open to the rise of new parties, as demonstrated by the growth of the ADR; originally a one-issue party focusing on higher pensions, it first had deputies elected in 1989 and is now a significant party. There are three traditionally strong parties in Luxembourg's politics: the PCS, traditionally aligned with the Catholic Church; the PD, which favors free-market economic policies and a smaller welfare state; and the POSL, a formerly radical but now center-left party representing the working class. The current government, elected in 2004, is a coalition of the PCS, which has taken part in almost all governments in Luxembourg's modern history, and the POSL.

The government is largely free from corruption. Luxembourg was ranked 11 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is guaranteed by the constitution, and Luxembourg has a vibrant media environment. A single conglomerate, RTL, dominates the broadcast radio and television market, and its programming is popular in neighboring countries. Newspapers represent a broad range of opinion. Internet access is unrestricted.

Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion, but there is no state religion, and the state pays the salaries of ministers from a variety of sects. Students may choose to study either the Roman Catholic religion or ethics; most choose the former. Protestant education is available on demand. Academic freedom is respected.

Freedoms of assembly and association are protected. Civic groups and non-governmental organizations operate freely. Luxembourgers may organize in trade unions, and a large proportion of the workforce does so. The right to strike is constitutionally guaranteed.

The judiciary is independent, but judges are appointed by the grand duke. Detainees are treated humanely in police stations and prisons.

Luxembourg's Muslim minority, mainly of Bosnian origin, faces no official hostility but does experience some mild social discrimination. Muslim clerics have applied to receive the same government support enjoyed by religious leaders of other faiths.

In part because of Luxembourg's conservative social mores, women comprise just under 40 percent of the labor force, and there remains a significant gap between men's and women's wages. Though abortion law does not technically provide for abortion on demand, a woman who has had an abortion while under "distress" is considered not to have violated the law, and "distress" is interpreted liberally. Women are underrepresented in the highest levels of government; 13 of 60 members of parliament, and three of 14 cabinet members, are women.

Macedonia

Population: 2,000,000

Capital: Skopje

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4.3PF	3.3PF	3.3PF	4.3PF	4.4PF	3.3PF	3.3PF	3.3PF	3.3PF	3.3PF

Overview: Macedonia held parliamentary elections in July 2006, resulting in a change in government from the left-of-center Social Democratic Party of Macedonia (SDSM) to the right-of-center Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE). The electoral campaign was marred by significant irregularities and some violence, and a major ethnic Albanian political party staged demonstrations throughout the country to protest its exclusion from the new ruling coalition. Separately, Macedonian police again arrested a cleric for his ties to the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Macedonia, formerly a republic in the Communist-era Yugoslav federation, gained international recognition as an independent state in 1992. It subsequently suffered from a number of disputes with its neighbors. Greece objected to the country's name, arguing that it referred to a northern Greek region, while Bulgaria assailed the status of the Macedonian language and Serbia contested its northern border. Most of these external quarrels have been successfully resolved, and the most serious threat to Macedonia's existence now comes from the poor relations between the Macedonian Slav majority and the ethnic Albanian minority.

Parliamentary elections in 1998 resulted in the country's first peaceful transfer of power, as the left-of-center coalition that had ruled Macedonia since independence—led by the Social Democratic Party of Macedonia (SDSM)—yielded to a grouping of right-of-center parties led by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE). In 2000, ethnic Al-

banians launched an insurrection, demanding greater use of the Albanian language in official institutions, an increase in the number of ethnic Albanians in the civil service, and a transfer of certain powers from the central government to municipalities. As the country veered dangerously close to the brink of all-out civil war, an agreement reached in the town of Ohrid in August 2001 produced a precarious lull in the conflict, which was estimated to have cost the fragile Macedonian economy more than \$800 million.

Parliamentary elections held in September 2002 returned the SDSM to power, this time led by Branko Crvenkovski, who became prime minister. As in previous governments, ethnic Albanian parties were included in the new ruling coalition. Crvenkovski allied his party with the Democratic Union for Integration (BDI), headed by the leader of the ethnic Albanians' armed uprising, Ali Ahmeti.

By 2004, the government had implemented all but one of the major reforms required by the Ohrid accords—a plan devolving powers from the government in Skopje to local municipalities, along with a redrawing of the capital's boundaries to increase the number of ethnic Albanians living in the city. Macedonian Slavs reacted to the proposed changes by calling for a referendum on the issue. In November 2004, just days before the tension-filled vote, the United States announced that it would recognize the country under its constitutional name to reassure Macedonians that the international community would continue to support its existence and territorial integrity. Although the referendum did not pass (only 26 percent of a required 50 percent of the electorate turned out), ethnic tensions in the country increased significantly during the political debates preceding the balloting, prompting officials to postpone local elections from October 2004 until 2005. A report released by the Macedonian Helsinki Committee in January 2005 claimed that in the aftermath of the Ohrid accords, Macedonian party leaders had increasingly used private bargaining rather than open legislative debate to arrive at key decisions, leading to a reduction in the democratic legitimacy of many policies.

The latest parliamentary elections, which were held on July 5, 2006, resulted in Macedonia's second peaceful change of power—this time from the SDSM-BDI coalition to a government led by the VMRO-DPMNE. However, international observers reported serious flaws in the electoral process. Preelection violence—including bombings, shootings, and fist fights—was followed by significant irregularities on election day, such as ballot box stuffing, proxy voting, and intimidation at voting places. The elections were then followed by weeks of protests and demonstrations by BDI supporters, who were unhappy that the VMRO-DPMNE's leader and prime minister-designate, Nikola Gruevski, had decided to form a coalition with a rival Albanian group, the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA). Most violent incidents involved clashes between supporters of the BDI and the DPA. In a positive sign, however, the BDI changed course in September and ended its protests and boycott of Parliament, apparently realizing that its tactics were alienating both the international community and its own constituency. Another cause for optimism is the fact that the results were tabulated and accepted—at least by the major Macedonian Slav parties—in record time; five hours after polling stations closed, outgoing SDSM Prime Minister Vlado Buckovski conceded to Gruevski.

The international community has sought to bolster Macedonia in a number of ways. In April 2002, the European Union (EU) signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement (considered the first step towards full EU membership) with Skopje, and,

in December 2005, the EU officially granted Macedonia candidate status, although no definite date was given for its accession. There is concern, however, that the Macedonian government's weak administrative capacity will inhibit its ability to implement reforms needed for EU entry or even to manage properly any funding it may receive from the bloc. Despite these problems, Macedonian officials hope to receive an official accession target-date sometime in 2007.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Macedonia is an electoral democracy. Despite the existence of serious flaws in the electoral process, international monitors deemed the July 2006 elections for the 120-seat, unicameral Sobranie (Assembly) to be "largely in accordance with ... international standards for democratic elections." Approximately 56 percent of registered voters turned out, a significant decrease from the 70 percent recorded at the last parliamentary elections in 2002, and the lowest voter turnout for parliamentary elections since Macedonia became independent. Legislators are elected to four-year terms. The president of the republic is elected to a five-year term through a direct popular vote. In the two rounds of the April 2004 presidential election, international organizations also found the balloting "generally consistent" with international standards. However, both domestic opposition parties and some international observers, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, reported significant irregularities. The presidential election was held several months early after the incumbent died in a plane crash; then-prime minister Crvenkovski won the vote to replace him.

There are dozens of registered political parties in Macedonia, but only a handful have been serious players in national politics. The major parties include Crvenkovski's center-left SDSM; the right-leaning VMRO-DPMNE, led by newly elected Prime Minister Gruevski; and the primarily ethnic Albanian BDI, led by former guerrilla commander Ahmeti.

As in other countries in the region, corruption continues to hamper economic growth and political transparency in Macedonia. Campaign financing reform remains a serious issue, as current rules provide numerous loopholes for corruption. Macedonia also suffers from the politicization of its civil administration. Within months of coming to power, the new VMRO-DPMNE government had dismissed over 500 state employees from various ministries and state-owned enterprises, claiming that it was tackling corruption and streamlining a bloated bureaucracy. Critics, however, charged that the new government was simply rewarding its political supporters with government jobs. Macedonia was ranked 105 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of the press, the media are often aligned with particular political interests that render them less than independent. Political appointees, rather than professional journalists, are frequently named to senior positions in state-owned media, from which the majority of the population obtains its information. The media in Macedonia have been criticized for their lack of professionalism and unwillingness to uphold recognized journalistic standards. Libel, defamation, and slander remain punishable by fines, but a law passed in May 2006 decriminalized these offenses, and they are no longer punishable by imprisonment. The profession as a whole suffered a significant blow to its reputation when it was revealed in 2006 that journalists at several leading media outlets secretly worked

for a public relations firm that shaped reports to favor SDSM government activities and officials. Media experts blame the poor quality of Macedonian journalism on its size; though a relatively small country, Macedonia has 48 television stations, 160 radio stations, and nine daily and eight weekly newspapers. Political parties either own or are closely linked to three of the five television stations that are licensed to broadcast nationwide.

Macedonian Radio Television (MRTV) provides ethnic minorities with programming in Albanian, Turkish, Vlach, Romany, and Serbian. Media outlets, however, are strongly divided along ethnic lines, significantly affecting how important political issues are covered. Albanian print media have had difficulties turning a profit recently, and several have gone out of business over the past five years. There were no reports of restrictions of access to the internet during the year.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief and practice. A number of religious sites were destroyed or damaged during the fighting in 2001, but vandalism has decreased significantly since then. In 2002, a serious rift developed within the Orthodox Church in Macedonia when part of the church split off from the so-called Macedonian Orthodox Church, which remains unrecognized by any other church in the Orthodox world, and agreed to come under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The leader of the pro-Serbian branch, Bishop Jovan Vraniskovski, began serving an 18-month prison sentence in July 2005 for allegedly inciting "ethnic or religious intolerance." The charge was loosely based on the fact that he had performed a baptism and held church services in his apartment. Amnesty International has declared him a prisoner of conscience. Bishop Vraniskovski was again arrested in August 2006. Considerable tensions also exist in Macedonia's Muslim community, primarily involving allegations that some clerics are becoming increasingly fundamentalist and receive financial support from extremists in the Middle East. Academic freedom is not restricted.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, which generally are respected by the authorities. Over 4,000 domestic and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate in Macedonia, and there were no reports of the government restricting their work or activities during the year. The constitution recognizes the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively. They have little leverage given the poor state of the Macedonian economy, but strikes and work stoppages are frequent occurrences. More than 50 percent of the legal workforce is unionized. A new labor law passed in 2005 legalized temporary and part-time workers.

The judiciary is widely seen as corrupt and incompetent. The EU is demanding a number of reforms as part of Macedonia's accession bid, including measures to strengthen the independence of judges and reduce the backlog of court cases. A number of international watchdog groups have charged Macedonian police forces with ill-treatment and torture of prisoners, though observers noted a decrease in charges of police abuse and corruption in 2005. Prison conditions in Macedonia generally conform to international standards. However, the February 2006 double suicide of two inmates in the country's largest penitentiary, coming on the heels of four suicides in Macedonian prisons in 2005 (NGO officials believe the actual numbers are higher), revealed the strains prisoners feel due to overcrowding, staff corruption, and drug trafficking within the system. Separately, in April 2006, EU officials expressed their unhappiness with Macedonia's handling of charges that govern-

ment officials had cooperated with the CIA in the rendition of suspected terrorists to secret prisons in Afghanistan.

Macedonia's most important political and social challenge is satisfying the demands of the ethnic Albanian minority for a more privileged status within the country. References in the constitution to Macedonia as the "land of the Macedonian people" have been eliminated, and the Albanian language has been made an "official" language in municipalities where ethnic Albanians constitute at least 20 percent of the population. Other reforms attached to the 2001 Ohrid accords granted more self-government to municipalities, increased the number of ethnic Albanians in the police force, and granted amnesty to ethnic Albanian insurgents. Ethnic Albanians employed in the police force increased from 2 percent in 2001 to 16 percent in 2006; in the Defense Ministry from 2 percent to 14 percent; and in the Economics Ministry from 5 percent to 24 percent. Despite these overall improvements, Albanian rebel groups remain active in the country, and some have been accused by Macedonian officials of having ties to Islamist groups in other parts of the world.

Women in Macedonia enjoy the same legal rights as men, although societal attitudes limit women's participation in nontraditional social roles, in the economy, and in government. Women currently hold 3 out of the 20 positions in Macedonia's new cabinet and 29 out of 120 seats in Parliament. Women account for 42 percent of Macedonia's laborforce. Violence against women is considered a particular problem within the ethnic Albanian and Roma (Gypsy) communities. Domestic violence and trafficking of women from former Soviet republics remain serious problems. In Albanian Muslim areas, many women are effectively disenfranchised through proxy voting by male relatives and are frequently denied access to education.

Madagascar

Population: 17,800,000
Capital: Antananarivo

Political Rights: 4*
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: Madagascar's political rights rating declined from 3 to 4 due to irregularities during the presidential elections, including the disqualification of an opposition candidate and the use of multiple ballots.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

Overview:

Incumbent president Marc Ravalomanana won reelection, in a crowded field of contenders, to a second five-year term in December 2006. While most observers agreed that the

vote reflected the will of the Malagasy people, the campaign was marred by opposition claims of biased administration and electoral irregularities, which, if not addressed, raise concerns for the legitimacy of future elections.

Madagascar, the world's fourth-largest island, lies approximately 250 miles off Africa's southeastern coast. A political cleavage has traditionally existed between the coastal *cotier* and the highland *merina* peoples, of continental African and Southeast Asian origins, respectively. After 70 years of French colonial rule and episodes of severe repression, Madagascar gained independence in 1960. A leftist military junta seized power from President Philibert Tsiranana in 1972. A member of the junta, Admiral Didier Ratsiraka, emerged as leader in 1975 and maintained power until his increasingly authoritarian regime bowed to social unrest and nonviolent mass demonstrations in 1991.

Under a new constitution, opposition leader Albert Zafy won the 1992 presidential election with more than 65 percent of the vote. He failed to win reelection after being impeached by the Supreme Court in 1996. Ratsiraka won a narrow victory in a December 1996 presidential runoff election that was deemed generally legitimate by international and domestic observers.

Legislative elections in May 1998 were viewed as more problematic than previous polls. The Malagasy Council of Christian Churches and several political groups noted that the balloting was marred by fraud and other abuses. The ruling Association for the Rebirth of Madagascar (AREMA) party won 63 of 150 parliamentary seats and emerged as the leading force in a coalition government.

A decentralization plan was narrowly approved in a 1998 referendum that was boycotted by the country's increasingly fractious opposition. November 1999 municipal polls resulted in overall success for independent candidates. Elections were held in December 2000 for provincial councils, the next step in the government's decentralization policy. In 2001, the first-ever Senate elections, part of a policy to extend democratic governance, finally took place after a long delay.

In the December 2001 presidential election, opposition candidate Marc Ravalomanana claimed that he had been denied an outright victory by polling irregularities. He declared himself president in February 2002, having refused to take part in a postponed second-round runoff vote. After considerable violence between supporters of the two rival candidates, the High Constitutional Court announced in April that Ravalomanana had indeed won the election in the first round, and he was sworn into office in May. The incumbent, Ratsiraka, refused to acknowledge the result. Sporadic clashes continued until July 2002, when Ratsiraka left the country and the last of his forces surrendered. The extended crisis had a seriously negative effect on the Malagasy economy.

Parliamentary elections took place in December 2002, and Ravalomanana's I Love Madagascar (TIM) party won a large majority. Observers from the European Union said the conduct of the poll was "generally positive" despite a few reported "lapses," while the International Francophone Organization said it was "credible and transparent." Local elections held in 2003 further strengthened Ravalomanana's position.

In 2004, army reservists demanded better compensation for their efforts during the country's political crisis in 2002. A series of grenade attacks that resulted in

numerous injuries and arrests were believed to have been linked to growing frustration over ongoing economic problems. A heated debate continued on a proposed amnesty law for people who were detained following the 2002 political unrest; an attempt by opposition parties to have the law adopted had failed in late 2003.

Madagascar enjoyed a relatively peaceful year in 2005, especially compared with the previous years of political uncertainty and protest. Positive economic reform policies and good governance resulted in increased support from international financial institutions and individual donor countries. A leading opposition figure, former deputy prime minister Pierrot Rajaonarivelo, who had been convicted of corruption and sentenced in absentia to five years in prison in 2003, had his sentence reduced to three years. However, he received a separate, 15-year sentence in August 2006. His supporters maintained that the prosecutions were politically motivated.

Political tensions heightened in 2006 in the run-up to Ravalomanana's reelection bid. Speaker of the National Assembly Jean Lahiniriko was expelled from TIM and removed from his post after finding himself at odds with the party and expressing support for Iran's nuclear program; he later ran for president as an independent candidate. Rajaonarivelo attempted to return to Madagascar to run for president, but he was ruled ineligible by the High Constitutional Court after the government barred him from entering the country. An international preelection assessment mission cited serious concerns about the use of multiple ballots, the role of government authorities in electoral administration, the voter registration and vote tabulation processes, and limited access to media by opposition parties and candidates. Ravalomanana successfully secured a second five-year term in the December balloting, taking about 55 percent of the vote in the first round. Lahiniriko placed second with nearly 12 percent.

In recent years, Madagascar has experienced overall economic growth, though the World Bank estimates that per capita income is still only around \$300. Poverty and the competition for agricultural land have put pressure on the island's dwindling forests, which are home to much of Madagascar's unique wildlife and key to its nascent tourist industry. Multilateral and bilateral donors, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), are active in Madagascar. In late 2005, the IMF announced that it would extend 100 percent debt relief to Madagascar, under its Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative, having determined that the country was making progress in poverty reduction and public expenditure management.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Madagascar is an electoral democracy. However, the 2001 presidential election demonstrated that peaceful democratic succession is not yet fully enshrined in the country's political culture. The 2006 election represented an improvement, but further advances could be made by reforming the election administration structure, switching to a multiple ballot system, and improving transparency in the voter registration process, especially in rural areas.

The head of state is the president, who is directly elected to a five-year term by universal adult suffrage. The National Assembly, the lower chamber of the bicameral legislature, has 150 members directly elected to five-year terms. The upper chamber, the Senate, has 90 members serving six-year terms. Two-thirds of the senators are chosen by an electoral college, and the rest are nominated by the president. The

president has the power to appoint or dismiss the prime minister, who may come from a party that has a minority of seats in the Assembly.

Approximately 150 parties are registered amid a welter of shifting political alliances, although only a few have a national presence. Parties tend to suffer from internal divisions and a lack of clear ideology and resources. The largest parties represented in the National Assembly are TIM, with 103 seats, and the opposition National Front (SPDUN), with 22 seats.

Some observers have expressed concerns about the extent of and trends in corruption in Madagascar. It was ranked 84 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution provides for freedom of the press. A 1990 Law on Press Freedom was followed by the creation of privately owned FM radio stations and more critical political reporting by the print media. However, subsequent governments have at times curbed press freedom in practice. Some current officials, for example, reportedly have sought to limit critical media coverage of alleged government malfeasance. State radio and television came under the control of President Ravalomanana in March 2002 during his contested electoral victory over incumbent Ratsiraka. Ravalomanana also owns the private Malagasy Broadcasting System, which operates the MBS TV and Radio MBS networks. Many private radio stations in the capital are owned by Ravalomanana supporters.

Madagascar has six daily newspapers and a number of weeklies and monthlies. Because of the low literacy rate, the print media are mostly aimed at the French-speaking urban elite. Some formerly pro-Ratsiraka radio stations, which operated like "hate radio" during the 2001-2002 presidential election crisis, subsequently switched to more mainstream programming formats. Internet use, although not widespread, is becoming more popular.

While the Malagasy people have traditionally enjoyed religious freedom, in late 2005, the government shut down a popular Protestant charismatic church that was winning followers from the more traditional Protestant movement, to which Ravalomanana belongs. The law strongly recommends, but does not require, religious organizations to register with the Ministry of Interior. More than half of the population belong to traditional Malagasy religions and coexist with Christians and Muslims. There are no limitations on academic freedom.

The right to freedom of assembly is generally respected, and hundreds of non-governmental organizations, including legal and human rights groups, are active. Interest groups have conducted advocacy efforts on a wide variety of issues, and political and civic organizations generally exercise their right to affect the public policy process without government interference.

Workers' rights to join unions and to strike are exercised freely. In 2005, for example, the judges' union went on strike. The Ravalomanana administration has endured a series of demonstrations and work stoppages, mainly over the high rate of inflation. Some of the country's labor organizations are affiliated with political groups. More than 80 percent of workers are employed in agriculture, fishing, and forestry at a subsistence level.

A lack of training, resources, and personnel hampers judicial effectiveness, and case backlogs are prodigious. The judiciary remains susceptible to corruption and executive influence. Most of the 20,000 people held in the country's prisons are pre-

trial detainees, who suffer extremely harsh and sometimes life-threatening conditions. In many rural areas, customary-law courts that follow neither due process nor standardized judicial procedure often issue summary and severe punishments.

Race and ethnicity are important factors in Madagascar's politics. Due to past military conquest and long-standing political dominance, the status of the *merina* (highland people) tends to be higher than that of the *codier* (coastal people). The former tend to be of Asian descent, while many of the latter have African origins. As a result of these disparities, ethnicity, caste, and regional solidarity often are factors that lead to discrimination.

Approximately 45 percent of the workforce is female. Malagasy women hold significantly more government and managerial positions than women in continental African countries. However, they still face societal discrimination and enjoy fewer opportunities than men for higher education and employment.

Malawi

Population: 12,800,000

Capital: Lilongwe

Political Rights: 4

Civil Liberties: 3*

Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: Malawi's civil liberties rating improved from 4 to 3 due to a decline in police and government excesses against the political opposition.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,3F	2,3F	3,3PF	3,3PF	4,3PF	4,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,3PF

Overview: Malawi's political life remained contentious in 2006. While an effort to impeach President Bingu wa Mutharika dissipated, his government remained at loggerheads with the former governing party, the United Democratic Front, and its key members. Attempts to dismiss Vice President Cassim Chilumpha were overshadowed by his arrest on treason charges in April 2006. Former president Bakili Muluzi, who was out of the country for the first six months of the year, was arrested shortly after his return to Malawi in July. The case against him was then abruptly discontinued when the director of the Anti-Corruption Bureau was fired. Government intimidation of opposition members (especially rank and file) was less apparent in 2006 than in previous years.

After the country gained independence from Britain in 1963, President Hastings Kamuzu Banda ruled Malawi for nearly three decades, acquiring the title of presi-

dent for life in 1971. Banda exercised dictatorial and often eccentric rule through the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and its paramilitary youth wing, the Malawi Young Pioneers. Facing an economic crisis and strong domestic and international pressure, Banda accepted a popular referendum approving multiparty rule in 1993. Bakili Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF) won the presidency in a 1994 election that was beset by irregularities but seen as largely free and fair.

In the June 1999 presidential poll, Muluzi won 51 percent of the vote, compared with 44 percent for leading opposition candidate Gwanda Chakuamba of the MCP and the Alliance for Democracy (MCP-AFORD). Chakuamba and two other presidential candidates sued the electoral commission, contending that Muluzi failed to win votes from more than half of the eligible electorate; the Supreme Court upheld the results of the election. In polls for the National Assembly in 1999, the ruling UDF retained a slim majority.

During Muluzi's second term, politics revolved around the question of whether he would attempt to amend the constitution to stand for a third term. An unpopular campaign in favor of such a move ended when Muluzi handpicked Bingu wa Mutharika, a relative political outsider, as his successor for the May 2004 elections. Mutharika went on to win the presidency on an anticorruption platform with 35 percent of the vote; his closest rival, John Tembo of the MCP, captured 27 percent. Contrary to expectations, the MCP won the most seats, 59, in the 193-seat parliament, while the UDF finished second with 49. The UDF regained its majority status shortly after the elections, however, when it merged with its former rival, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), and benefited from the recruitment of 23 independent legislators.

In early 2005, a very public dispute between Mutharika and former president Muluzi, who remained the UDF chairman, reached a crescendo. The main cause was the investigation and arrest of several powerful UDF figures—including Muluzi—as part of Mutharika's anticorruption campaign. Mutharika resigned from the UDF and formed a new political party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), widening the rift with Muluzi and depriving the UDF of a parliamentary majority.

The falling-out between Mutharika and the UDF set the stage for the contentious patterns that continue to characterize Malawian politics. The clearest sign of this has been conflict between Mutharika and his opponents (the UDF and the MCP) in the legislature. In June 2005, the UDF lodged a motion in the National Assembly to impeach Mutharika, provoking protests in Malawi's major cities and towns. During the heated debate on the issue, the Parliament's Speaker suffered a stroke, dying days later. While this brought the impeachment push to a temporary halt, in October 2005, the opposition accused Mutharika of various crimes and ordered him to appear before the body. The motion to impeach was later delayed by the High Court and the Constitutional Court. By January 2006, talk of impeachment had died down. But relations between the branches remained hostile, as seen in a lengthy struggle to pass the budget in July 2006.

Mutharika has also clashed with leading individuals in the UDF. In the latter part of 2005, for example, Muluzi was summoned before Malawi's Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) to answer questions about millions of dollars in aid money received during his presidency. The High Court later ruled that Muluzi did not have to appear before the ACB. Although he was out of the country for the first half of 2006, Muluzi

was arrested soon after his return and charged by the ACB with 42 counts of public theft. Curiously, only hours after arresting Muluzi, the head of the ACB was fired by Mutharika. The case against Muluzi was then discontinued by the director of public prosecutions, who was also fired weeks later. Vice President Cassim Chilumpha, a Muluzi backer, has also been embroiled in such struggles. Chilumpha was charged with corruption in November 2005. Then, in February 2006, he was fired by Mutharika, despite the latter's lack of clear constitutional authority to do so. Chilumpha was restored to his position by the courts, which subsequently ruled that he could not be dismissed on the grounds put forward by the government. However, in April, he was arrested and charged with treason over an alleged assassination plot against Mutharika. Under house arrest for much of the year, he was freed in November when the High Court ruled that such conditions were too stringent and a violation of his human rights.

In some respects, the political situation in 2006 seemed to bode well for Mutharika. The DPP handily won by-elections in six constituencies in late 2005, its first test at the polls. In January, the original impeachment motion against the president was withdrawn by a UDF member of Parliament (MP), who later left the party. In the wake of this, an increasing number of MPs defected from other parties to the DPP. By April, the party and its allies could boast 74 seats in the 193-seat parliament. Moreover, when Muluzi was out of the country in the first part of the year, the UDF was beset by leadership squabbles; similar problems afflicted the MCP.

Mutharika has also benefited from amicable relations with international donors, who account for 80 percent of Malawi's development budget. Past accusations of corruption and mismanagement had dried up donor support and led the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to freeze fund distributions in 2000. However, Malawi has recently been lauded for its efforts to curtail corruption and public spending. Mutharika's government also received some credit for effectively coordinating an international relief effort to address the drought and food crises that afflicted the country in 2005 and 2006. In September 2006, the World Bank and the IMF agreed that Malawi had made sufficient progress to reach the "completion point" under the Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. As a result, Malawi will receive \$3.1 billion in total nominal debt relief on principal as well as interest payments.

At the same time, problems remain for Mutharika. Section 65 of the constitution forbids MPs from changing parties after they have been elected. The UDF attempted to use this against MPs who switched to the DPP, asking the Speaker of Parliament to declare their seats vacant in October 2005. Mutharika then referred the case to the Constitutional Court for interpretation. In November 2006, the Court ruled that the Speaker could declare such seats vacant, raising the prospect that up to 70 DPP members could lose their seats. Subsequent by-elections would then determine the balance of power in Parliament, most importantly, whether the opposition MCP and UDF would have enough support to proceed with impeachment efforts. In addition, Mutharika has proved a somewhat clumsy and heavy-handed manager. In 2006, he fired his attorney general, the director of public prosecutions, and the director of the Anti-Corruption Board. He has also estranged certain members of his own party in Parliament by declaring that he will not support their reelection in 2009.

Political Rights**and Civil Liberties:**

Malawi is an electoral democracy. The president is directly elected to a five-year term and exercises considerable executive authority. The unicameral National Assembly is composed of 193 members elected by popular vote to five-year terms. Suffrage is universal except for serving members of the military.

Elections are generally free from overt manipulation, but some have questioned how free and fair the voting has been. In both the 1999 and 2004 polls, voter registration represented a significant challenge. Moreover, both of these contests, as well as certain by-elections, were marked by irregularities, often leading to legal challenges of the results. Perhaps the most troubling factor in presidential races has been the apparent bias that the country's electoral commission has displayed toward the formerly ruling UDF party. Opposition parties, including the UDF, lost six by-elections to the DPP in December 2005, but they did not challenge the results in court.

Opposition parties are allowed to function freely, although political violence has occasionally flared during election periods, mostly in the form of intimidation of party rallies or canvassing. Police and ruling party thugs frequently used overt violence, intimidation, and harassment against opponents during the third-term debate and in the lead-up to the 2004 elections. However, such government excesses against the opposition have been less apparent recently. The opposition has repeatedly charged that the government uses bribery and intimidation to exploit party divisions and encourage defections. The major opposition party is now the UDF, which cooperates with the MCP. There are few ideological differences among the major political parties. For the most part, Malawian political divisions are based on ethno-regional loyalties and personality rather than policy, leading to frequently shifting alliances and parliamentary floor-crossings.

Vowing "zero tolerance" of corruption, President Mutharika has moved to fulfill campaign promises to crack down on state corruption. At least 11 senior members of the administration of former president Muluzi have been investigated by the Office of Public Prosecutions. Most notable among these have been Vice President Chilumpha and Muluzi himself. Others include former finance minister Friday Jumbe; UDF ranking official and former Blantyre Mayor John Chikakwiya, convicted of corruption-related charges in 2005; and UDF stalwart and former presidential hopeful Sam Mpasu, who was charged with abuse of office for tenders he awarded during his time as minister of education in the mid-1990s.

The opposition has charged that the anticorruption drive amounts to little more than a political witch-hunt through which Mutharika has attacked his enemies. While most of the investigations and arrests have targeted Mutharika opponents, some within the government have also been singled out. In 2006, Education Minister Yusuf Mwawa was convicted after being accused of using a special account in the ministry to pay for his wedding. For his part, Mwawa maintained that the money was spent, with the president's approval, on efforts to lobby MPs to switch to the DPP. While rumors have circulated about other government ministers being investigated, to date no others have been charged.

While international donors have applauded the anticorruption drive, delays in prosecuting cases and the lack of truly high-profile prosecutions have led to some frustration.

Notably, the World Bank and IMF, while authorizing debt relief for Malawi,

singled out fighting official corruption as one area where the country had failed to make significant progress. A study conducted by the Anti-Corruption Bureau in 2005 reported that 70 percent of Malawians believe that corruption has increased over the last 10 years. Malawi was ranked 105 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and of the press is legally guaranteed and generally respected. Despite occasional restrictions and harassment, a broad spectrum of opinion is presented in Malawi's two dozen newspapers. Nevertheless, the state controls the majority of broadcast media: Television Malawi is the country's only television station, and the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation's two radio stations dominate the market. The government and the then-ruling UDF restricted opposition access to state-controlled media and became increasingly intolerant of coverage of opposition activities during Muluzi's bid for a third term and the run-up to the May 2004 elections. However, the situation improved afterward, with the new information minister calling for dissenting views in state-controlled media. Journalists are still subject to harassment and detentions. In March 2005, two journalists were arrested after writing unflattering articles about Mutharika; both were later released on bail. In May 2006, three journalists from the *Chronicle* newspaper were arrested on criminal libel charges for publishing a story that implicated fired Attorney General Ralph Kasambara in the theft of a laptop computer. There are no restrictions on access to the internet, although it is not widely used.

Religious freedom is usually respected, and the government does not restrict academic freedom.

The government generally respects freedoms of association and assembly. Many human rights organizations—including the constitutionally mandated Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC)—and other nongovernmental organizations operate openly and without interference. The right to organize labor unions and to strike is legally protected, with notice and mediation requirements for workers in essential services. Unions are active but face harassment and occasional violence during strikes. As only a small percentage of the workforce is employed in the formal sector, union membership is low; however, collective bargaining is practiced.

The judiciary has demonstrated independence in its decisions, although more so at the High Court than the Supreme Court. The Muluzi administration sought to influence Supreme Court judges by retaining private contacts with members of the bench and rewarding some with patronage. Such practices have apparently been less common under Mutharika.

Due process is not always respected by the overburdened court system, which lacks resources, personnel, and training. Resource mismanagement is also a problem. Police brutality and excessive force is reportedly common, as are arbitrary arrests and detentions. However, the government has enlisted civil society and foreign donors in helping to combat human rights abuses and corruption among police. Appalling prison conditions lead to many deaths every year, mostly from HIV/AIDS. Overcrowding and poor health care are serious problems.

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on language or culture, and such discrimination is not a major problem. There are no laws limiting the participation of ethnic minorities in the political process.

Since coming to power, Mutharika has targeted informal settlements and the

informal economy. In August 2005, authorities ordered residents of informal settlements in Lilongwe to vacate their homes or risk forced removal. The government contended that the homes were built illegally on land earmarked for industrial development and ruled that affected residents would not be compensated. Some residents claimed to have received permission to occupy the land from local chiefs, municipal officials, or the Malawi Housing Corporation. In April 2006, government efforts to remove informal vendors generated a considerable degree of tension as the vendors vowed to defy government orders to vacate; they ultimately complied as police threatened to use force.

Despite constitutional guarantees of equal protection, customary practices maintain de facto discrimination against women in education, employment, and business. Traditional rural structures deny women inheritance and property rights, and violence against women is common, though in recent years there have been greater media attention on and criminal penalties for abuse and rape. In 2003, the MHRC issued a report documenting the revival of the customary practice of *kupimbira*, in which young girls are sold by their parents or grandparents to pay off debts or secure loans of cattle or money. Trafficking in women and children is a problem, and penalties for the few successfully prosecuted traffickers have been criticized as far too lenient.

↓ Malaysia

Population: 26,900,000

Capital: Kuala Lumpur

Political Rights: 4

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Trend Arrow: Malaysia received a downward trend arrow due to a decline in religious freedom and restrictions on press coverage and public discussion of issues relating to race or religion.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF

Overview: Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's anticorruption and police-reform efforts largely stalled in 2006, and a cabinet reshuffle in February brought few concrete changes. The political scene was dominated by the rise of sharp divisions within the United Malays National Organization (UNMO) and, specifically, a series of harsh attacks by former prime minister Mahathir Mohamed on Prime Minister Abdullah. Meanwhile, Anwar Ibrahim, a former deputy prime minister whom Mahathir had controversially deposed, returned to Malaysia and suggested that he might run for public

office. Religious freedom declined significantly with a series of court rulings that denied certain religious and legal rights for non-Muslims, sparking a national debate on the role of Islam in Malaysia and constitutional guarantees of religious freedom. The government took action to suppress related civil society activism, public discussion, and press coverage, citing the need to prevent national unrest. Heightened racial and religious divisions were compounded in September by the release of a think-tank study that challenged the calculations used to justify the country's continued affirmative-action policies, which lay at the heart of the government's New Economic Policy, renewed in December 2005, and the Ninth Malaysia Plan, a development program launched by Abdullah in March 2006. The year's developments came to a head at the UMNO national party congress in November, when several ministers issued racist comments and threats in defense of Malay supremacy and Islam, making clear that all affirmative-action quotas would be maintained.

Malaysia gained independence from Britain in 1957 and, in 1963, merged with the British colonies of Sarawak, Sabah, and Singapore (Singapore left in 1965). The ruling Barisan Nasional (National Front, or BN) coalition (known as the Alliance before 1969) has won at least a two-thirds majority in all 11 general elections since 1957. The BN consists of 14 mainly ethnic-based parties, dominated by the conservative, Malay-based United Malays National Organization (UMNO).

Racial tensions between the country's indigenous Malay majority and Chinese and Indian minorities have played a central role in Malaysian politics and economics since the country's founding and were especially prominent through the early 1970s. Independence was premised on a social contract between these groups, enshrined in the constitution, that grants Malaysian citizenship to the non-Malay population in exchange for special rights and privileges, especially in education and economics, for all *bumiputera* (Malays and other indigenous peoples). Tensions culminated in the Race Riots of 1969, in which thousands of Chinese homes and businesses were destroyed and more than 180 people were killed. In response, the government declared an 18-month state of emergency and tightened restrictions on free speech, assembly, and political organizations.

Modern Malaysia has been shaped by Mahathir Mohamed, one of the key architects of efforts to shift economic power from the Chinese to the Malays, first as education minister and then as Malaysia's prime minister from 1981 to 2003. Through his "Look East" policy for economic development, he transformed Malaysia from a sleepy backwater, dependent on tin, rubber, and palm-oil exports, into a hub for multinational corporations and local firms exporting high-tech goods. At the same time, he stunted democratic institutions, weakened the rule of law by curtailing the press and political opponents, and fostered allegations of cronyism with his state-led industrial development. Mahathir was a polarizing figure who criticized Malaysia's conservative Muslim leaders for failing to promote a more modern brand of Islam and, at the same time, pushed through a gradual Islamization of UMNO as part of an effort to co-opt Islamist opposition forces, which had begun gaining ground with the *dakwah* movement of the 1970s. Mahathir's anti-Western and anti-Semitic views rankled outsiders as well.

In October 2003, Mahathir stepped down after more than two decades in office,

paving the way for the political ascent of his deputy, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who sought early on to establish his own leadership style. Many countries and international organizations with hopes of reform regarded Abdullah's appointment as prime minister with enthusiasm.

The BN, led by Abdullah, won 198 of the 219 seats in the lower house of Parliament (Parlimen) in the March 2004 legislative elections, which were generally regarded as transparent. However, the three main opposition parties—the Democratic Action Party (DAP), the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), and the People's Justice Party (PKR)—challenged the results on the grounds that the BN had engaged in vote rigging and other irregularities. Most specific challenges were rejected in court or withdrawn, although allegations of vote buying and problems with the electoral roll were substantiated.

Despite a strong popular mandate in 2004 and signs of renewed momentum on police reform and anticorruption efforts in 2005, little concrete reform has actually been achieved since Abdullah took office. In 2006, the prime minister's efforts were undermined by police resistance and his need to maintain the backing of his own increasingly fractious party. A long-overdue February 2006 cabinet reshuffle saw few changes largely for this reason; the large cabinet was not reduced in size, and the most controversial ministers retained their positions. In an effort to cut government subsidies, fuel prices were significantly increased in late February, sparking tremendous public resistance and a series of protests in March.

Escalating divisions within UMNO rocked the political scene for much of the year. Motivated at least in part by his own waning influence in the party, Mahathir harshly criticized Abdullah and his policies following the cancellation of plans to build a bridge between Malaysia and Singapore in April. By late August, Mahathir's attacks had developed into a wide-ranging campaign to discredit and depose Abdullah. In a series of dramatic statements, Mahathir accused Abdullah of undermining his legacy and failing to live up to campaign promises. While Abdullah's lackluster responses added to perceptions that he was ineffective, Mahathir's failure to curtail his criticism in the interest of preserving party strength and unity discredited him among many UMNO members by year's end. The UMNO division in Kubang Pasu, a constituency Mahathir had represented for decades, rejected him as their delegate to the national party congress in the fall (although the nomination process was called into question for irregularities). After Mahathir had a heart attack in November, the conflict ebbed. During the UMNO congress later that month party members reaffirmed their support for Abdullah.

Party divisions earlier in the fall led the UMNO Supreme Council to postpone internal party elections (scheduled for 2007) until after the next general elections required to be held before April 2009. Observers speculated that Abdullah might call early general elections, however, in light of his need for a renewed public mandate after the pummeling of his policies and leadership capacity this year.

Malaysian politics were further complicated that year by the return to Malaysia of Anwar Ibrahim, a former deputy prime minister deposed by Mahathir in 1999 on questionable charges of sodomy and corruption. Anwar began playing an active role in the opposition PKR's rejuvenation and suggested that he might run for public office, although his corruption conviction prohibited him from doing so until 2008, meaning he would not be able to participate if early elections were called.

By far the most important issue in the country in 2006 was what has generally been termed the "Islamization" of Malaysia, a phenomenon encompassing a crystallized racial divide and a sharp downturn in religious tolerance. A series of court cases raised concerns among non-Muslim minorities regarding their religious and legal rights. The ongoing case of Lina Joy, a former Muslim convert fighting to be recognized as a Christian by the state, emerged as a test of the state of religious freedom in the country. Wary of the sensitivity of the issues of race and religion, the government suppressed public and political discussion of religious rights along with related press coverage. UMNO's refusal to entertain discussion of minority rights culminated at the party congress in November, where ministers demonstrated unrestrained racism and Islamic zeal, warning Chinese and Indian minorities (represented by UMNO's BN partners) against continued questioning of the special status of Malays and Islam.

Racial and religious tensions were compounded by developments on the economic front. The New Economic Policy (NEP) and its affirmative-action quotas favoring the Malay population were renewed at the urging of UMNO Youth, the party's youth wing, in December 2005. In April 2006, Abdullah launched the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP), the latest in a series of short-term plans to fully develop the country by the year 2020, with an emphasis on nurturing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and meeting the 30 percent target for bumiputera corporate equity share, a primary justification for the NEP's continued affirmative-action policies. In September, the Center for Public Policy Studies (CPIS) affiliated with the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI), a Kuala Lumpur-based think tank, published a study arguing that bumiputera owned 45 percent of corporate equity, not 18.9 percent as stated in the 9MP, sparking tremendous national debate over the policy and assessment of ethnic wealth. UMNO ministers came out in strong support of the calculations of the Economic Policy Unit (EPU), the government agency behind the 9MP, and the ASLI was forced to apologize and withdraw its report. UMNO ministers insisted that the affirmative-action entitlements would be upheld. Fearing the incitement of racial tensions, Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak ordered an end to the discussion altogether. Opposition leaders, including Anwar as well as a growing number of Malays, have called for the abolishment of racial preferences in recent years, arguing that they fostered Malay dependence while not really improving their standing.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Malaysia is not an electoral democracy. The country has a parliamentary government within a federal system. The party that wins a plurality of seats in legislative elections names its leader prime minister. Executive power is vested in the prime minister and cabinet. Former prime minister Mahathir's 22-year tenure, which ended in 2003, was marked by a steady concentration of power in the premiership.

The Malaysian Parliament is divided into two houses. The nonelected members of the upper house are comprised of political appointees. The paramount ruler is the titular head of government and is elected by fellow hereditary rulers or sultans in nine of Malaysia's states. Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin al-Marhum Sultan Mahmud al-Muktafi Billah Shah was elected the new paramount ruler in December 2006. The lower house, with 219 seats, is elected every five years.

In general, powers of parliamentary oversight have increased under Prime Minister Abdullah. The Parliament's role as a deliberative body, however, has deteriorated since the 1970s as opinions expressed by opposition parties tend not to be given serious consideration. Malaysia's ruling BN is a coalition of roughly 15 parties, most with an ethnic or regional foundation, including the dominant UMNO as well as the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). The means by which the new Family Law was passed in December 2005 (although subsequently not implemented) reflects UMNO's continued strength in Parliament; 16 female BN senators opposed to the law were forced to vote for it against their will.

The same month, pressure from Abdullah forced non-Muslim cabinet ministers to withdraw a memorandum aimed at upholding the principles of religious freedoms as articulated by Article 11 of the federal constitution.

Prominent opposition parties include the DAP, PAS, and PKR. They face serious obstacles, such as unequal access to the media and restrictions on campaigning and freedom of assembly, that leave them unable to compete on equal terms with the BN. The BN currently controls 12 out of 13 state parliaments; state elections in Sarawak and by-elections in 2006 brought both notable gains and losses. UMNO won an additional seat in Kelantan, the only state in Malaysia controlled by an opposition party, PAS, leaving PAS with a majority of just one seat. Opposition numbers increased from one to nine in the Sarawak state assembly, sending an alarming blow to the BN. The political balance in this region has been maintained by the long-serving BN chief minister on his way out, with no clear successor. The future prospects of the opposition in general could hinge on the ability of Anwar Ibrahim, the leading opposition political figure, to unite a diverse group of parties, including the DAP and PAS, with different ideological foundations.

Malaysia was ranked 44 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. Corruption in the country is mostly limited to elite circles. There is marked graft in the police force, and political corruption, particularly bribery and cronyism, is common in the ruling BN coalition. Abdullah followed through to some extent on his anticorruption campaign pledges by launching a National Institute for Ethics and a National Integrity Plan in 2004. Progress has been slow in subsequent years, however. Federal Territories Minister Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad finally resigned in October 2005 after being found guilty of buying votes in UMNO's party elections in 2004. The police inspectorate general's refusal to establish an independent police complaints and misconduct board in March 2006, coupled with resistance from several BN members of parliament, undermined progress on reducing police corruption. A long-anticipated cabinet reshuffle, finally implemented in February 2006, retained many of Mahathir's ministers, including the controversial minister of international trade and industry, Rafidah Aziz, who was tainted in 2005 by favoritism in allocation of state contracts and licenses. While 2006 saw the disclosure of a number of corruption scandals under the Mahathir administration, many of these did not receive decisive responses. Abdullah pointed to the large increase in the number of arrests and prosecutions for corruption since he entered office and pledged that anticorruption efforts would be strengthened under the Ninth Malaysia Plan, yet his record in 2006 on corruption did little to inspire confidence.

The constitution provides for freedom of expression, but the government restricts this right, particularly in cases of perceived security concerns. Under the 1984 Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA), publications and printers must obtain annual operating permits from the government, causing most print media outlets to practice self-censorship and limit investigative journalism. The law also gives the prime minister—as the minister of internal security—the authority to revoke licenses at any time without judicial review. The PPPA was invoked in early 2006 to indefinitely suspend the *Sarawak Tribune* and temporarily suspend the *Guang Ming Daily* for reproducing infamous Danish cartoons of the prophet Muhammad. Abdullah invoked the act in mid-February to prohibit the publication, distribution, or possession of any materials relating to the Danish caricatures. Fearing a selective crackdown after the government's handling of the cartoon issue, the media self-censored their coverage of major fuel price hike protests in April, some of which were brutally suppressed by the police.

In July 2006, the prime minister banned public discussion of the status of Islam, religious freedom, and interfaith issues, as well as all reporting on the issues of race and religion. The information minister then issued a sharp warning that the government would take action against all media outlets that did not comply. Internet editions of newspapers are not currently required to obtain permits, but some government harassment of online newspapers occurs. The recent debate over Islam and minority rights prompted some government ministers to call for extending the PPPA to cover online media in 2006. While Abdullah pledged to uphold media freedom in November 2006, his administration's actions that year reflect the extent to which the government attempts to suppress public discussion of divisive and potentially explosive issues through control of the press.

Privately owned television stations have close ties to the BN, illustrating a larger pattern of media manipulation that often takes the form of biased news production, rather than outright censorship. Nevertheless, the government directly censors books and films for profanity and violence, as well as certain political and religious material. In 2006, a number of books on Islam and religion were banned on the grounds that they might "disrupt peace and harmony." The number of banned books has risen sharply under the Abdullah administration. Television stations censor programming according to government guidelines.

While Abdullah continues to promote *Islam Hadhari* or "civilizational Islam," a tolerant and inclusive form of the faith, religious freedom is restricted in Malaysia in practice and declined significantly in 2006. Traditionally, Muslim worship is governed by Sharia (Islamic law), and practicing a version of Islam other than Sunni Islam is prohibited. Muslim children are required to receive religious education that conforms to a government-approved curriculum, and Muslim civil servants must take Islamic classes taught by government-approved teachers. Proselytizing by other religious groups to Muslims is prohibited, and non-Muslims are not able to build houses of worship as easily as Muslims. The state retains the right to demolish unregistered religious statues and houses of worship. In 2006, a number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) condemned a controversial campaign by local councils to demolish Hindu temples, justified by the need to make way for new state development projects. Many of the temples were built prior to national independence but retain large numbers of worshippers.

Religious freedom has recently declined more broadly with a series of court rulings that threatened non-Muslim minorities' right to self-identify and to practice freely, as guaranteed by Article 11 of the constitution. In December 2005, a religious court ruled that Maniam Moorthy, a former army officer, died a Muslim and thus must be buried according to Islamic rites, while his wife insisted he was a practicing Hindu and had never converted. Non-Muslims were outraged when the High Court invoked Article 121B of the Constitution, a measure introduced during the Mahathir administration stipulating that only Sharia courts can deal with matters related to Islam, and refused to hear the case. Essentially concluding that non-Muslims have no means for redress in religious matters, the Moorthy ruling led nine non-UMNO ministers to file a memorandum in mid-January calling for a repeal of Article 121 and a review of constitutionally guaranteed religious freedoms. Widespread demonstrations by both non-Muslims and Islamic activists followed, prompting Abdullah to pressure the ministers to withdraw the memorandum.

Lina Joy, a Muslim who converted to Christianity in 1998, continues to fight for state recognition of her new religion so that she can marry a Christian man. She has fought her battle for the last five years in civil courts on the basis of Article 11 and argued that, since she renounced her Muslim faith, Sharia courts do not apply to her in marriage, property, and divorce. After a series of civil court decisions against her, which maintained that Malays cannot renounce Islam because the constitution declares Malays to be Muslims, her case was brought before the national Court of Appeals on the grounds that the national registration department, which lists the official religion of all Malaysians on identity cards, cannot force her to contest this matter in the Shariah courts. The case, with the verdict still pending at year's end, has largely polarized the nation, with many Muslims viewing conversion as apostasy. A number of anti-apostasy campaigns and Islamic defenders groups have emerged in response, and this issue has raised racial tensions. In November, a large mob of Muslims organized outside a church in Ipoh in response to a false report that Muslims were being converted within the church. The government was forced to call on the state's hardline religious leader or mufti Harussani Zakaria, who was conspicuously absent, to intervene to prevent violence. Still highly politicized, apostasy is predicted to remain a primary issue of contestation in the relationship between Islam and the state.

The government restricts academic freedom to the extent that teachers or students espousing overtly antigovernment views may be subject to disciplinary action under the University and Colleges Act of 1971. In February 2006, five students were accused of distributing leaflets and protesting against campus electoral processes. In July, the Ministry of Higher Education published a historical textbook addressing ethnic relations, which was met with immediate objections by non-Malay NGOs, human rights groups, and politicians. Abdullah quickly had the book withdrawn and rewritten. An effort by the minister of higher education to review the draconian restrictions on students at universities was rebuffed by year's end.

Freedom of assembly and association are limited on the grounds of maintaining security—particularly with respect to ethnic conflict—and public order. A police permit is required for all public assemblies except for picket lines, and the granting of permits is sometimes politically influenced. The Societies Act of 1996 defines a society as any club, company, partnership, or association of seven or more people (exclud-

ing schools, businesses, and trade unions). Societies must be approved and registered by the government, and the government periodically has refused to register organizations or revoked the registration of existing societies, generally for political reasons. Numerous NGOs operate in Malaysia, but some international human rights organizations are not allowed to form Malaysian branches. The activities of Article 11, a coalition of NGOs that advocate for freedom of religion, were inhibited in July 2006 when protesters interrupted their forum, arguing that it was an insult to Islam. Many claimed that the Malaysian police allowed for the interruption. Alarmed by increasing religious and racial tensions, the prime minister ordered an end to all public forums organized to discuss freedom of religion that month. A peaceful protest against the fuel price hike was forcefully broken up by the police in late May.

Most Malaysian workers can join trade unions, but Malaysian law contravenes International Labor Organization (ILO) guidelines by restricting trade unions to representing workers in a single or similar trade, industry, or occupation, thus preventing the formation of broad-based unions. Unions may organize in workplaces and associate with national federations, of which there are currently two. Collective bargaining is widespread in sectors with organized labor. Labor laws restrict strikes by requiring that unions in essential services—the government's list of such services includes several not deemed essential by the ILO—give advance notice of planned strikes and by imposing conditions so stringent that strikes are effectively impossible.

Judicial independence has been significantly compromised over the past two decades by the increasing influence of the executive. Many instances of arbitrary or politically motivated verdicts, selective prosecution, and preferential treatment of lawyers and litigants have occurred. The most prominent of these was the conviction of Anwar Ibrahim in 1999 and 2000 for corruption and sodomy. Anwar was arrested in 1998, beaten while in custody, held under the Internal Security Act (ISA), and sentenced in two trials to consecutive prison terms of six and nine years. The arrest was widely regarded as having been politically motivated, as Anwar, then the deputy prime minister, had political differences with then-prime minister Mahathir. Both trials, as well as Anwar's appeals, exhibited serious violations of due process.

In a landmark step in September 2004, which Human Rights Watch considered a signal of "a renewed commitment to judicial independence," the High Court overturned Anwar's sodomy conviction and released him from prison, although the corruption charge was upheld. In another significant development in September 2006, Lord President Salleh Abas, who had been sacked by Mahathir as the country's top judge along with five other senior judges in the "1988 scandal," led the call for an investigation into Mahathir's deliberate efforts to prohibit the courts from interfering in a major political battle 18 years ago. The highly politicized case against Abdul Razik Baginda, a prominent political analyst close to the deputy prime minister, will draw attention to the workings of the judiciary. Abdul was charged with abetting the murder of Altantuya Shaaribuu, a Mongolian who was shot and blown up in November 2006.

Malaysia's secular legal system is based on English common law. However, Muslims are subject to Sharia, the interpretation of which varies from state to state, and Article 121 stipulates that all matters related to Islam be dealt with in Sharia courts.

Law enforcement is the responsibility of the Royal Malaysia Police, under the jurisdiction of the Home Ministry. There is no constitutional provision specifically

banning torture, and the police have been known to torture prisoners and use excessive force in conducting searches. Leaked video footage of a naked woman forced by police to perform squats in June 2005 caused public outrage that led an independent panel to issue a report in January 2006, recommending that this fairly routine technique be stopped. Separately, a frank and critical report issued by the Royal Commission to Enhance the Operation and Management of the Royal Malaysia Police in April 2005, hailed by human rights groups worldwide, was undermined in 2006 when the minister of police's refusal to form the recommended investigatory commission was supported by several UMNO ministers, essentially bringing the effort at police reform to a halt.

Individuals may be arrested without a warrant for some offenses, and they may be held for 24 hours without being charged. The ISA, in force since 1960, gives the police sweeping powers to hold any person acting "in a manner prejudicial to the security of Malaysia" for up to 60 days (extendable to two years). It has been used in recent years to jail mainstream politicians, alleged Islamist militants, trade unionists, suspected Communist activists, ordinary criminal suspects, and members of "deviant" Muslim sects, among others. Human Rights Watch continues to decry the denial of due process and systematic abuse of detainees held under the ISA at the Kamunting Detention Center, where more than 700 prisoners are reportedly being held indefinitely without trial or charge. The government has initiated some measures to reform the state's internal security apparatus.

Although the constitution provides for equal treatment of all citizens, the renewal of the NEP means that Malaysia continues to maintain an official affirmative-action policy intended to boost the economic status of ethnic Malays and other indigenous people, known collectively as the bumiputera. Bumiputera receive preferential treatment in many areas, including property ownership, higher education, civil service jobs, and business affairs. Findings published in September 2006 challenging the calculations used to justify the ongoing affirmative-action quotas generated national debate about continuing the policy, but UMNO ministers made it clear that no changes would be made in the near term.

Foreign domestic workers are not covered by the Workmen's Compensation Act and are thus subject to economic exploitation and abuse by their employers. Malaysians officially employ about 240,000 domestic workers, 90 percent of whom are Indonesian, representing roughly 20 percent of the national work-force. There are an estimated two million illegal workers in Malaysia. In part because these people are often blamed for crime, the government initiated a series of programs to expel migrant workers in 2004—although it offered an amnesty for Indonesian workers—and began an immigration crackdown in March 2006. If arrested and found guilty, the workers can be caned and detained indefinitely pending deportation. Malaysia remains on the U.S. Trafficking Report watchlist for treatment of foreign labor and failure to protect the rights of trafficking victims within its borders.

Despite government initiatives and continued gains, women are still underrepresented in politics, the professions, and the civil service. Violence against women remains a serious problem. Muslim women, whose grievances on family matters are heard in Sharia courts, receive unequal treatment because Islamic law favors men in matters such as inheritance and divorce, and does not give equal weight to the testimony of women. A new family law was passed by the Parliament in December 2005

that would further inhibit women's rights by eliminating the requirement that men prove their ability to financially provide for multiple wives prior to engaging in polygamy and giving men the right to a spouse's assets after divorce. The government has delayed implementation of the law, however, in light of widespread objections.

📍 Maldives

Population: 300,000

Capital: Male

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Trend Arrow: Maldives received an upward trend arrow due to increased space for political parties to operate legally, as well as to legislation that reduced the influence of the executive over the judiciary.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview: Despite positive changes to the Maldives' legislative, judicial, and media frameworks, the country in 2006 experienced continuing political tension and occasional bouts of unrest as the government, headed by President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, faced sustained pressure from the reformist Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) and its supporters. Although Gayoom has promised to undertake extensive political reforms, his government has continued to restrict freedom of speech and assembly, detain political prisoners, and commit various human rights violations. Several rounds of talks between the government and the opposition led to a July agreement under which the MDP promised not to engage in violence while authorities agreed to release political detainees and speed up the reform process. However, a tense November standoff led to further detentions and backtracking on key promises, such as the opening of the broadcast media sector to private ownership, by year's end.

Consisting of a 500-mile-long string of nearly 1,200 islands in the Indian Ocean, the Maldives achieved independence in 1965 after 78 years as a British protectorate. A 1968 referendum set up a republican government, ending centuries of rule by the Ad-Din sultanate. The Maldives's first president, Amir Ibrahim Nasir, introduced a number of changes to the political system, abolishing the post of prime minister in 1975.

President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom has held power since 1978, when he won his first five-year term under the country's tightly controlled presidential referen-

dum process. Gayoom escaped the most serious threat to his political survival in 1988, when Indian commandos crushed a coup attempt by a disgruntled businessman reportedly backed by Sri Lankan mercenaries. In the aftermath, the autocratic Gayoom strengthened the National Security Service (NSS) and named several relatives to top governmental posts.

The current cycle of unrest was sparked in September 2003, following an altercation at Maafushi prison in which prison guards beat an inmate to death. Security forces opened fire on other prisoners, killing three and wounding more than a dozen. Meanwhile, protesters attacked government buildings in the capital, setting several on fire. In response, Gayoom ordered an inquiry, which led to five NSS officials being sentenced to life imprisonment in 2005, as well as a reorganization of the prison system and the establishment of a prison oversight committee.

Gayoom's reelection to a sixth presidential term was approved in a 2003 referendum by just over 90 percent of participating voters. In May 2004, elections were held for a People's Special Majlis (PSM)—composed of the 50 members of Parliament, 50 members elected or appointed specifically to the PSM, and the cabinet—that was tasked with amending the constitution. The following month, Gayoom presented wide-ranging proposals for constitutional and judicial reform to the Parliament, including instituting a directly elected presidency subject to term limits, abolishing appointed members of Parliament, allowing political parties, establishing a Supreme Court and human rights commission, and separating the judiciary from the executive.

Nevertheless, in August 2004, several thousand people demonstrated in support of demands by the opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) that the reform process be expedited. In the violent unrest that followed, four policemen were stabbed and hundreds of protesters, including several reformist ex-lawmakers and government officials, were arrested and mistreated while in custody. Gayoom declared a state of emergency, during which a number of civil liberties were suspended, and imposed a curfew on the capital city of Male. Some rights were restored in October, and the majority of the detainees were released by year's end. Criminal charges, including treason, were filed against at least 17 people who took part in the August demonstrations, but these were also "suspended" at the end of 2004.

Legislative elections originally scheduled for December 2004 were postponed until January 2005 as a result of the Indian Ocean tsunami, which had devastated many low-lying atolls. In total, 149 candidates stood for the 42 available seats. In an indication of the MDP's growing popularity, candidates affiliated with the party won 18 seats, while government-backed candidates won 22 and independents took two. In addition, three top government officials—the ministers of fisheries, labor, and tourism—were defeated in their races.

In June 2005, the Maldivian Parliament unanimously passed a law allowing political parties to register and contest elections. Then, in a promising July 2005 reshuffle, several reform-minded ministers were brought into the cabinet. However, around the anniversary of the August 2004 disturbances, hundreds of peaceful protesters, including journalists and MDP politicians and supporters, were again arrested, and more than 150 activists were detained for longer periods of time. Mohammed Nasheed, the chairman of the MDP, was detained and charged with terrorism and sedition; he spent most of 2006 under house arrest. In October 2005, Jennifer Latheef, councilor and human rights coordinator of the MDP, was sentenced

to 10 years' imprisonment on terrorism charges for her alleged involvement in the September 2003 civil unrest; four others were also given lengthy sentences.

As in 2005, the Maldives in 2006 experienced several steps towards greater openness interspersed with crackdowns on the opposition and infringements on freedom of expression. Many Maldivians remain skeptical that the government is committed to enacting meaningful and far-reaching reform, and the government and opposition continue to trade accusations of obstructionism and insincerity. The main points of contention are the timing and implementation of the proposed reform "road map." Three rounds of talks between the MDP and government, facilitated by the British High Commission, were held in the summer of 2006. In the resulting "Westminster Agreement," reached in July, the MDP pledged not to engage in violent street protests, and the government said it would release political prisoners and speed up the reform process, with the goal of completing a draft of the new constitution by November 2007. The government did release a number of detainees in July and dropped criminal charges against 19 more. Dozens of detainees remained incarcerated or under house arrest, but thanks to concerted international pressure, Latheef was pardoned in August after serving 10 months of her sentence, and Nasheed was released from house arrest in September.

In August 2006, the Majlis voted unanimously in favor of amendments to the Human Rights Commission Act that would empower the Maldives Human Rights Commission (MHRC) to visit prisons and detention facilities without prior permission from authorities; Gayoom ratified the measure later in the month. However, government allies won an October Majlis vote over who would oversee an upcoming referendum to determine the Maldives' new form of government. (The MDP favors a parliamentary republic, while the pro-Gayoom faction unsurprisingly favors a presidential system.) The MDP expressed concern that the referendum would not be conducted fairly if overseen by the commissioner of elections, as he is a pro-Gayoom political appointee. After the MDP planned nationwide demonstrations for November 10, the government began a preemptive crackdown in which more than 100 people were arrested, travel restrictions prevented free movement into the capital, and the media's freedom to report on unfolding developments was curtailed. Relations between the government and opposition remained strained at year's end.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The Republic of Maldives is not an electoral democracy. Under the 1968 constitution, the People's Majlis (parliament) chooses a single presidential nominee from among a list of candidates. The nominee is then approved or rejected by a national referendum for a five-year term. A 1998 constitutional amendment allowed citizens to declare their candidacies but not campaign for the presidential nomination. Forty-two members of the 50-seat Majlis are directly elected for five-year terms; of these, two are elected from Male and two from each atoll. The constitution allows the president to appoint the other eight Majlis members, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Majlis, and the atoll chiefs, who are responsible for local government matters. While the president controls most government decisions, the Majlis has in recent years held livelier policy debates and passed reform legislation.

The January 2005 elections to the Majlis were relatively free of violence, with the exception of one clash between police and angry voters outside a Male polling

booth after the close of voting. However, a number of MDP activists were arrested prior to and on election day. Reformist candidates alleged that the government intimidated voters by threatening to withhold post-tsunami reconstruction aid to islands that did not vote for progovernment candidates. In addition, there were some reports of corruption and irregularities, including bribery, intimidation, and the stuffing of ballot boxes, mostly from the more remote islands. The report of the Commonwealth Expert Team that observed the elections noted that the state-controlled media did not provide equal coverage to reformist candidates.

Until June 2005, when the Majlis voted unanimously to allow multiparty politics, political parties were officially discouraged and candidates for the Majlis were required to run as individuals. The opposition MDP, formed in 2001, was initially denied permission to register and operated from exile in Sri Lanka until it was officially registered under the new legislation. Three other main parties were also registered in the months following the Majlis vote: President Gayoom's Maldivian People's Party (DRP), the Islamic Democratic Party (IDP), and the Islam-oriented Adaalath (Justice) Party (AP). Winning the legal right to register, operate within the country, and field candidates in elections was an important step; however, it remained difficult for opposition parties to carry out some basic political activities in 2006. MDP leader Mohamed Nasheed, who had returned to the Maldives in June 2005, was arrested in August and remained under house arrest until September 2006. MDP activists and supporters have been able to organize more regular rallies and other forms of political activity; nevertheless, activists are frequently subject to arrest and temporary detention prior to planned protests. Parties were prevented from fielding their own candidates in the December 2005 by-elections for three constituencies, according to the New Delhi-based Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR).

Government accountability is limited by the fact that the executive exercises almost complete control over both the legislative and judicial branches. Nepotism and corruption are reportedly rampant, with many prominent positions held by Gayoom's relatives and friends. However, an anticorruption board investigates allegations of official corruption and refers cases to the attorney general's office. The Maldives was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Over the past several years, a modest easing of restrictions on the media has been offset by official crackdowns and harassment of journalists. The legal environment remains harsh, although a July 2005 law liberalized the registration process for newspapers. Since then, six daily newspapers and 11 other publications, some with an opposition slant, have been registered. The Information Ministry, which is spearheading reform efforts, submitted four media-related bills to Parliament in February 2006, including measures on freedom of information, press freedom, a proposed media council, and registration of print media. However, the government announced in November that it was retracting previously announced plans to allow private broadcasting.

Many journalists practice self-censorship and do not scrutinize official policies. All broadcast media are government owned and operated, and while they have recently provided more diverse coverage, they generally continue to reflect progovernment views. Most major print outlets are also owned by those connected to the government, but some publications, such as the weekly *Aduvas* and the newly registered

Jazeera and *Hamma*, have adopted a critical, balanced tone. *Minivan News*, which started as an online publication, began publishing a print version in the Maldives in July 2005, but after the August protests, the printing house refused to continue publishing it under pressure from the authorities. Groups of Maldivian exiles run independent news outlets in Britain and Sri Lanka and attempt to transmit news into the Maldives via shortwave radio stations and websites. However, the websites of the MDP and other antigovernment groups have been blocked by the authorities and are inaccessible from internet cafés in Male. Internet connectivity has occasionally been suspended altogether in the wake of political disturbances.

Journalists, particularly those who cover political events or write critical stories, remain subject to arrest or other forms of harassment. On May 3, 2006, riot police and NSS personnel assaulted international monitors and arrested local journalists during celebrations to mark World Press Freedom Day. In November, foreign journalists covering the arrests of MDP activists were forced to leave the country. Due to *Minivan's* overtly antigovernment stance, its management and employees have faced the brunt of official intimidation. A number of staff have been detained or placed under house arrest for extended periods, and others face criminal charges; journalist Abdullah Saeed was convicted of drug possession and trafficking in May, while his colleague Mohamed Yushau was held on terrorism charges from May to July.

Freedom of religion is severely restricted by the government's requirement that all citizens be Sunni Muslims, a legal ban against the practice of other religions, and a constitutional provision making Islam the state religion. Non-Muslim foreigners are allowed to practice their religions only privately, according to the U.S. State Department's 2006 International Religious Freedom Report. Ostensibly to prevent fundamentalist beliefs from spreading, imams must use government-approved sermons, and no one is allowed to publicly discuss Islam without official permission. There were no reported restrictions on academic freedom, but general restrictions on freedom of speech limit scholars' ability to express themselves freely without fear of reprisal.

The government limits freedoms of assembly and association. In recent years, authorities have imprisoned political dissidents under broadly drawn laws, and police occasionally use excessive force to break up demonstrations. According to the ACHR, local nongovernmental organizations that focus on rights issues have thus far not been allowed to register. Some international human rights groups have been barred from entering the Maldives, but Amnesty International conducted a visit to the country at the government's request in November 2004.

Workers lack the legal right to form trade unions, stage strikes, or bargain collectively. In practice, no unions exist, but some workers have established informal associations that address labor issues. The Maldives has about 32,000 foreign workers out of a total workforce of 88,000. Most workers are in the informal (unorganized) sector, though some work in the country's high-end tourism industry, which provides 70 percent of foreign exchange revenues.

Because the president can review high court decisions, the judiciary remains "subject to executive influence," according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report. However, Gayoom's power to appoint and dismiss judges was curbed in November 2005 by the establishment of a judicial services commission, which assumed these responsibilities. Civil law is generally used in civil and criminal cases,

but it is subordinate to Sharia (Islamic law), which is used in matters not covered by civil law and in cases involving divorce or adultery. Punishments such as flogging and banishment to a remote island, which are provided under the country's interpretation of Sharia, are sometimes carried out.

Human rights groups allege that the NSS, which encompasses both the security and intelligence services, acts with virtual impunity. However, the police service, which had previously functioned under NSS direction, was formally separated from the agency in September 2004. Incidents of torture or other forms of ill-treatment at police stations or prison facilities continue to be reported.

Arbitrary arrest and prolonged detention, particularly of opposition supporters, remain a concern. However, judges must authorize the continued detention of suspects on a monthly basis, and detainees are now allowed access to a lawyer at all stages of their detention and trial. After the September 2003, August 2004, and August 2005 street protests, authorities arrested hundreds of people. The government has in recent years detained or confined a number of political prisoners under house arrest for months at a time, and some have been sentenced to long prison terms. Authorities have also carried out preventive arrests prior to planned MDP-sponsored rallies.

In response to the September 2003 disturbances, the government established, in December of that year, the MHRC, whose members are appointed by the president and report directly to him. The government attempted to remove the security forces from the purview of the MHRC and otherwise limit its investigative powers through legislation passed in July 2005, which led to the resignation of three commissioners. However, in August 2006, the Majlis voted unanimously in favor of amendments to the Human Rights Commission Act, which would empower the MHRC to visit prisons and detention facilities without prior permission from the authorities. Although it was reconstituted in November, it was not yet operational by year's end.

The government exercises pervasive influence over access to health care, employment, and educational opportunities for most Maldivians, and it dominates both the public sector and many civil society groups, particularly in the outer atolls. As noted in a December 2004 report by the National Democratic Institute, these widespread networks of patronage have also been used to influence voting behavior and control political activity.

More women are entering the civil service, increasingly receiving pay equal to that of men. Women enjoy a 98 percent literacy rate, compared with 96 percent for men. However, traditional norms that oppose letting women lead independent lives outside their homes continue to limit educational and career opportunities for many women. Moreover, the testimony of two women in a Sharia court is equal to that of one man, and men are favored in divorce and inheritance matters. Nevertheless, the government has in recent years sponsored programs to help make women aware of their rights. Children's rights are incorporated into law, and government policy provides for equal access to educational and health programs for both male and female children.

Mali

Population: 13,900,000

Capital: Bamako

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,3F	3,3F	3,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview: Mali's government signed a new peace agreement with ethnic Tuareg rebels in 2006 following attacks on government barracks and rebel demands for economic concessions and greater local autonomy. Meanwhile, the U.S.-funded Millennium Challenge Corporation approved a five-year, \$460.8 million compact to fund Mali's poverty reduction efforts, and political parties regrouped in advance of a presidential election scheduled for 2007.

Following independence from France in 1960, Mali was ruled by military or one-party regimes for more than 30 years. After soldiers killed more than 100 demonstrators demanding a multiparty system in 1991, President Moussa Traore was overthrown by his own military. He was sentenced to death in 1993 for ordering the troops to fire on protesters, and in January 1999, both Traore and his wife received death sentences for embezzlement. The sentences for the couple were later commuted to life imprisonment.

After the 1991 coup, a national conference organized open elections that most observers judged to be credible, with Alpha Oumar Konare of the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA) winning the presidency in 1992. He won reelection in 1997, fending off a weak challenger who had been alone in breaking an opposition boycott of the contest. Little more than a quarter of registered voters participated.

Konare declared his intent to leave office at the end of his second term, despite efforts by his supporters to set aside constitutionally mandated term limits. In the May 2002 presidential election, Amadou Toumani Toure, a popular former general who had led Mali during the transition period following Traore's overthrow, ran as an independent with the backing of numerous civic organizations and smaller political parties, facing 23 other candidates. In the second round of voting, Toure secured 64 percent of the vote, compared with 36 percent for ADEMA candidate Soumaila Cisse. The coalition "Espoir 2002" gained 66 seats in the July 2002 National Assembly elections, while an ADEMA-led coalition won 51 seats. Smaller parties captured the remainder. Communal elections in May 2004 were orderly and transparent, with ADEMA winning nearly 30 percent of seats in the more than 700 communes.

The Malian government had negotiated a peace agreement with ethnic Tuareg

rebels in 1991 that included efforts to integrate rebel fighters into the military and step up development initiatives. In May 2006, after over a decade of peace, a group of Tuareg army deserters attacked government barracks in the northeastern region of Kidal, seizing weaponry and publicly demanding increased economic assistance and greater local autonomy for the Tuareg population. Tensions abated in July after the signing of a new peace agreement in Algiers that restated the government's commitment to providing economic incentives for the region.

One of the world's least developed countries, Mali has undergone significant political and economic reforms since the early 1990s, and recently launched a decentralization program that has given more authority and financial resources to local communities. Mali has benefited from considerable international debt relief. In October 2006, the U.S.-funded Millennium Challenge Corporation approved a five-year, \$460.8 million compact to fund poverty reduction projects. Approximately 65 percent of the country is desert or semidesert, and approximately 80 percent of the labor force is engaged in farming or fishing. Hundreds of thousands of Malians live as economic migrants across Africa and Europe, and many have been disadvantaged by the ongoing conflict in Cote d'Ivoire.

Toure earned international praise for his efforts to promote regional peace and development as a UN envoy before standing for office in 2002, while Konare's service since 2003 as chairman of the African Union is a source of national pride. Since 2004, Mali has worked closely with the United States on programs intended to stem the growth of terrorist organizations across the vast desert region.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Mali is an electoral democracy. Despite irregularities noted by international observers, the 2002 presidential election was regarded as credible, as were the legislative elections that followed. The president is elected by popular vote to a five-year term, with a limit of two terms. The president is both chief of state and commander in chief of the armed forces and appoints the prime minister as head of government. Members of the 147-member, unicameral National Assembly also serve five-year terms, with 13 seats reserved to represent Malians living abroad. Fourteen members represent historically marginalized pastoralist and nomadic ethnic minorities in the National Assembly, and the cabinet includes two representatives from these northern communities.

Sixteen political parties, aggregated into five parliamentary groups, are represented in the legislature. Additional parties are active in local government structures. Mali's constitution includes a prohibition against parties based on ethnic, religious, regional, or gender affiliations. A figure of both national and international stature, President Toure portrays himself as politically independent. This strategy has weakened Mali's nascent multiparty system, as many parties are reticent to criticize Toure's administration or offer opposing points of view. In advance of the 2007 elections, however, several parties have begun to mobilize supporters in anticipation of challenging Toure for the presidency.

The eradication of corruption is a priority of Toure's government, and a number of initiatives have been launched since he took office, such as the creation of the Office of the General Auditor. Although several civic associations are engaged in building public awareness of corruption, it continues to be a problem and is especially evident in public procurement and contracting. Mali was ranked 99 out

of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Mali's broadcast and print media are considered among the freest in Africa. Over a dozen different newspapers are regularly published in Bamako, some appearing daily or weekly. The government controls the only television station and one of the more than 125 radio stations. State-controlled and private broadcast media present a wide range of views, including those critical of the government. In addition to commercial radio stations, private or community radio outlets provide a critical link for isolated rural populations. Libel is considered a criminal offense, and press laws include punitive presumption-of-guilt standards, but these laws are rarely invoked. In 2005, unidentified persons kidnapped a private radio talk-show host as he left his radio station. He was severely beaten but released several hours later. Despite a government investigation, no charges were ever filed. The government does not restrict access to the internet.

Mali's population is predominantly Muslim, though the state is secular, and minority and religious rights are protected by law. Religious associations must register with the government. Sectarian violence occasionally flares between Muslim groups.

Academic freedom and freedoms of assembly and association are respected. Many civic groups and nongovernmental organizations, including human rights groups, operate without interference. Workers are guaranteed the right to join unions, and nearly all salaried employees are unionized. Citing the prohibition of associations deemed immoral, the governor of the District of Bamako refused official recognition to a homosexual association in 2005.

Although the judiciary is not independent of the executive, it has shown increased autonomy in rendering antiadministration decisions that have been respected by the government. Local chiefs decide the majority of disputes in rural areas. Detainees are not always charged within the 48-hour period set by law, and there are lengthy delays in bringing defendants to trial.

Mali's human rights record is generally good, although there are reports of police brutality. The government permits human rights monitors to visit prisons, though at least one group has complained that cumbersome administrative procedures make investigating and reporting on possible human rights abuses difficult. Prison conditions are harsh.

No ethnic group predominates in the government or the security forces. Long-standing tensions between the marginalized Moor and Tuareg pastoralist groups on the one hand and the more populous nonpastoralist groups on the other were a main cause of political instability and violence in the past, including during the Tuareg rebellions of the early 1990s.

. Domestic violence against women, including spousal abuse, is tolerated and common. Women have limited access to legal services, and family law favors men, leaving women at a disadvantage in cases involving divorce, child custody, and inheritance rights. Despite legislation giving women equal property rights, traditional practice and ignorance of the law prevent women from benefiting. Female genital mutilation is common despite being banned in publicly financed health centers. The practice has been carried out on an estimated 95 percent of adult women but is reportedly declining in urban areas. The government is pursuing measures, such as a countrywide educational campaign, to eliminate the practice by 2008.

Abortion is prohibited except in cases of rape or incest. A number of women's rights groups are active in highlighting and advocating solutions for the legal and socio-economic problems facing women in Malian society.

Although the constitution prohibits forced labor, Mali is a source, transit point, and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced domestic, agricultural, and commercial labor. Mali now requires children under 18 to carry travel documents. A law that made child trafficking punishable by up to 20 years in prison was enacted in 2001, though there have been no prosecutions under the statute.

Malta

Population: 400,000

Capital: Valletta

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: A migrant crisis gripped the country when 51 Africans, mostly from Eritrea, were rescued and brought to Malta in July 2006. The rescue vessel was barred from docking until other countries agreed to take in most of the migrants. Separately, a March report by the Council of Europe's Commission for Human Rights noted that Malta had done away with an administrative practice in which irregular migrants, including asylum seekers, were subject to unlimited detention.

Malta is a small island group with ties to both the European and Arab worlds. After gaining independence from the British in 1964, the country joined the Commonwealth and became a republic in 1974. From 1964 to 1971, Malta was ruled by the Nationalist Party (PN), which pursued a pro-Western foreign policy. In 1971, the Labor Party (MLP) took power and moved the country toward nonalignment and a special friendship with leftist governments in Libya and Algeria. The PN returned to power in 1987, and in 1990, the country submitted its application for full membership in the European Union (EU)—then the European Community.

After a brief interlude of MLP rule from 1996 to 1998, Malta continued on a pro-European path that culminated in March 2003 with a national referendum on EU accession. Malta was the first of that year's 10 candidate countries to hold such a referendum, and the measure was approved by a vote of 54 percent. The country formally joined the EU in May 2004 as part of the bloc's largest expansion since its

founding in the years after World War II. In July 2005, the Maltese parliament ratified the proposed EU constitution.

National elections in 2003 returned the incumbent PN to power with around 52 percent of the vote and 35 seats in Parliament. The MLP came in second with about 48 percent of the vote and 30 seats. The smaller Alternativa Demokratika (AD) lost support compared with the elections in 1998.

In March 2004, the House of Representatives elected a new president of the republic, Edward Fenech Adami, the outgoing prime minister and veteran leader of the ruling PN. Lawrence Gonzi, the deputy prime minister, took over the premiership.

A migrant crisis gripped the country in July 2006 when 51 Africans, mostly from Eritrea, were rescued by a Spanish trawler in Libyan waters and brought to the islands. Maltese officials refused to allow the ship to dock for several days, saying they were already overrun with African immigrants and arguing that the rescue had taken place outside their jurisdiction. After the intervention of the EU and a decision by Spain to take most of the migrants, Malta allowed the vessel to dock and took in three Africans who needed medical treatment. Between January and September 2006, some 1,700 migrants landed on Malta, making the country a major destination for irregular immigrants.

Separately, in a March 2006 follow-up report on an earlier assessment, representatives of the Council of Europe's Commission for Human Rights noted that the country had done away with an administrative practice in which irregular migrants, including asylum seekers, were detained indefinitely. However, the country had not yet passed any legislation to back up the changes. The report also cited concerns about overcrowding in prisons and the treatment of sex offenders and homosexual inmates.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Malta is an electoral democracy. Members of the 65-seat unicameral legislature, the House of Representatives, are elected through a national system of proportional representation with a single-transferable-vote (STV) arrangement. Unlike traditional proportional representation systems, in which voters choose a party list, the STV mechanism allows the voter to rank-order competing candidates by preference. Parliament is elected for a five-year term, and lawmakers in turn elect the president, who also serves for five years. The president names the prime minister, usually the leader of the majority party or coalition. Elections are generally free and fair.

The ruling PN and opposition MLP dominate party politics, but the smaller Alternativa Demokratika also competes.

The EU's 2003 monitoring report, which sought to determine whether candidate countries were adopting the union's body of law, criticized Malta for lacking a specific anticorruption program, which remained the case through 2006. The issue of corruption emerged in the country after a chief justice in 2003 was forced to resign because of a bribery scandal over a prison sentence appeal. Malta was ranked 28 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. According to the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) and the U.S. State Department, instances of government corruption are rare.

The constitution guarantees freedom of speech and of the press. There are

several daily newspapers and weekly publications in Maltese and English, as well as radio and television stations. The islands also have access to Italian television, which many Maltese watch. The government does not block internet access.

The constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion, and the state grants subsidies only to Catholic schools. While the population is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, other religious groups are tolerated and respected. There are small communities of Muslims, Jews, and Protestants, the latter being mostly British retirees. There is one Muslim private school in the country. Construction on a government-approved Muslim cemetery began in 2005.

Academic freedom is respected, and there is generally free and open discussion in the country. However, an amendment to the criminal code makes incitement to racial hatred a crime punishable by a prison term of six to eight months.

The constitution provides for freedoms of assembly and association, and the government generally respects these rights. International and domestic nongovernmental organizations investigating human rights issues are able to operate without government interference. The law recognizes the right to form and join trade unions, and limits on the right to strike were eased in 2002. However, a compulsory arbitration clause in the country's Employment and Industrial Relations Act allows the government to force a settlement on striking workers. This clause, which permits compulsory arbitration to be held even if it is requested by only one of the parties involved, contravenes the International Labor Organization's Convention 87. According to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the government insists that it rarely invokes this clause, which is used only when all other channels for arbitration have been exhausted. In 2005, the government froze the assets of the General Workers' Union (GWU) following a dispute between the GWU and a government-owned shipyard.

The judiciary is independent, and the rule of law prevails in civil and criminal matters. The Police Ordinance Act, which took effect in 2003, provides a number of reform measures related to policing and criminal justice, including the establishment of a witness protection program and a mechanism for handling both internal and external complaints directed toward the police. Prison conditions generally meet international standards, although the Council of Europe's Commission for Human Rights has objected to prison conditions for irregular migrants and asylum seekers. An independent report on the military's violent January 2005 suppression of a protest by detained immigrants was released in December 2005. The report raised concerns about the use of excessive force by soldiers and recommended an internal inquiry by the armed forces and better training for soldiers to deal with such situations.

The government respects personal autonomy and freedom. However, divorce is illegal and violence against women continues to be a problem. Malta prohibits all abortions, even if the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest; in November 2004, a UN committee urged Malta to reconsider this strict policy. Women occupy only 6 of the 65 seats in Parliament. However, women now hold two cabinet posts: minister of Gozo (the second-largest island in the group) and minister for Family and Solidarity. These women are the first to attain such high-ranking government positions.

Malta, which is a destination for men and women trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, remains on Tier 2 in the U.S. State Department's 2006 Trafficking in Persons report. The placement indicates that Malta does not fully comply with

minimum antitrafficking standards but is making significant efforts to do so. Although the authorities have prosecuted several cases and cooperated with investigations by foreign governments, they have not screened for victims among incoming migrants or launched public-awareness programs.

Marshall Islands

Population: 100,000

Capital: Majuro

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: The government in 2006 moved to tighten immigration laws to cope with an influx of illegal migrants, particularly from China. Proposed measures would give the police expanded powers to detain suspects and deport foreigners who are married to islanders.

The atolls and islands that constitute the present-day Republic of the Marshall Islands were claimed by Germany in 1885 and then occupied by Japan during World War I. U.S. forces ousted the Japanese during World War II, and in 1947, the group was placed under U.S. trusteeship. In 1986, the republic gained full independence. Rising sea levels present the greatest threat to the future of the Marshall Islands—two islets, Tebua Tarawa and Abanuea, disappeared in 1999.

Kessai Note in 2000 became the first commoner to hold the post of president after his United Democratic Party (UDP) won the December 1999 general elections. In the November 2003 parliamentary elections—the seventh national election since independence—the UDP won a majority in the 33-seat House of Representatives. Note was elected to a second term in the subsequent presidential elections held in the same month.

The country maintains close relations with the United States under a Compact of Free Association, which came into force in 1986 and was renegotiated in 2003. Under the agreement, the Marshall Islands grants the United States the right to establish military facilities, including a base and a missile range on the Kwajalein atoll, in exchange for U.S. defense guarantees and development assistance. The amended compact, which came into force in 2004, promises the transfer of \$57 million from the United States over 10 years and another \$62 million over the following 10 years. Marshalllese also retain visa-free entry to the United States to live, work, and study, as well as access to education and medical services in the United States during the

20-year period. The Marshall Islands in turn promise to crack down on illegal passport sales, which have been a problem since the mid-1990s. An oversight body with representatives from both countries ensures that funds are spent effectively. Compact funds represent nearly half of the Marshall Islands' government budget.

The amended compact extends use of the Kwajalein missile-testing range through 2066 in exchange for \$2.3 billion and an \$800 million trust fund, which will replace direct U.S. assistance after the compact expires in 2024. However, landowners on Kwajalein atoll—which has been the primary U.S. testing ground for long-range nuclear missiles and missile defense systems since 1964—want \$19 million in annual rent, \$4 million more than what the U.S. has offered. The two countries also have to reach agreement on compensation for damage caused by nuclear weapons tests on the Bikini and Enewetak atolls some 50 years ago. Bikini remains uninhabitable, while Enewetak is partly contaminated. The original compact provided a \$75 million trust fund for health and environmental restitution, but personal injury awards alone exceeded the fund by more than \$10 million.

In 2006, the government considered several measures to stop Chinese nationals from overstaying 30-day tourist visas and working without permits. One proposal would give immigration officials the power to arrest and detain an alien for deportation without the need to first obtain a warrant. Other measures would require alien workers to carry photo identification cards, and those lacking the documents would be subject to arrest; foreign nationals suspected of fraudulent marriages with Marshallese would also be deported.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The Republic of the Marshall Islands is an electoral democracy. The president, who is the chief of state and head of government, is chosen for a four-year term by the unicameral House of Representatives (Nitijela), from among its members. The members of the 33-seat Nitijela are directly elected to four-year terms. An advisory body, the Council of Chiefs (Iroji), consists of 12 traditional leaders who are consulted on customary law. The UDP is the current ruling political party. The other major party is Ailin Kein Ad (Our Islands), which counts more traditional leaders among its members. Both groups are relatively informal in structure and organization.

The republic's constitution requires the Nitijela to review the constitution once every 10 years, and the last review was held in 1994. A vote to hold a constitutional convention requires the support of two-thirds of the lawmakers, and two attempts to pass the bill have failed. Opponents say improving the terms of the Compact of Free Association with the United States and winning additional compensation for health and environmental damage resulting from U.S. military tests are more urgent matters. Unable to secure the necessary majority, the ruling UDP has proposed a national referendum to decide whether or not to hold a constitutional convention. The government wants to introduce 30 amendments to the constitution, including a switch to a system of direct elections for the president, a clear separation between the executive and legislative branches, tightened immigration rules, and the elimination of four constitutional rules on search and seizure in order to make it easier for the police to gather evidence in criminal investigations.

Corruption is a considerable problem. Public dissatisfaction with official abuses has led to calls for change, but international watchdog groups and domestic critics have

reported little progress on reform and improving transparency. The country was not surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government generally respects freedom of speech and of the press, although journalists occasionally practice self-censorship on sensitive political issues. A privately owned newspaper, the *Marshall Islands Journal*, publishes articles in English and Marshallese. The government's *Marshall Islands Gazette* contains official news but avoids political coverage. Two radio stations, one government owned and one church owned, carry news broadcasts from overseas and offer diverse views. The government station carries public service announcements and live broadcasts of legislative sessions, and cable television offers foreign news, entertainment, and occasional reports on local events. U.S. armed forces radio and television broadcasts can be received in some areas. The government does not restrict internet access, but penetration rates are low owing to cost and technical access difficulties outside the capital.

Freedom of religion and academic freedom are respected in practice. College education is rare among Marshall Islanders. Of the country's 55,000 people, only a small number have completed four-year college programs in the country and overseas, while several hundred attend two-year programs in teacher training, nursing, computing, and a few other areas at College of the Marshall Islands. Recent surveys and studies found the country's education system in serious trouble: only 18 percent of its 900 teachers passed both the reading and writing sections of the high school English test. Most high school graduates have only elementary school-level math proficiency, and less than half have elementary school-level English proficiency. Very few incoming freshman university students score high enough on entrance tests to qualify for credit courses. The government wants to introduce reforms, but resources are limited, and some of the most talented individuals do not return after going overseas for higher training.

Citizen groups operate freely in the country. Many are sponsored by or affiliated with Christian church organizations to provide social services. The government broadly interprets constitutional guarantees of freedom of assembly and association to cover trade unions. There is no formal right to strike or engage in collective bargaining, but there are no formal prohibitions against such activities.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, although past governments have tried to influence the courts. The government raised judges' salaries in recent years to attract and retain more qualified jurists. Nearly all judges, prosecutors, and public defenders are foreigners because there is not enough local expertise. There were no reports of police abuse of suspects or prisoners in 2006. Detention centers and prisons meet minimum international standards.

Social and economic discrimination against women are widespread despite the country's matrilineal heritage, in which traditional rank and property are passed through female bloodlines. Domestic violence against women is often alcohol related. The country has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the region. Each year since 2000, nearly one-fifth of all babies have been born to teenage mothers.

Mauritania

Population: 3,200,000

Capital: Nouakchott

Political Rights: 5*

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: Mauritania's political rights rating improved from 6 to 5 due to changes to the electoral framework, including the creation of an independent electoral commission, as well as increased political pluralism and government transparency.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6.6NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	5.5PF	5.5PF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.4PF	5.4PF

Overview: Since taking power in an August 2005 coup, the Military Council for Justice and Democracy (MCJD) has continued to make progress toward returning the country to elected civilian rule. Mauritanian voters overwhelming passed a constitutional referendum in June 2006 that will limit future presidential terms. Election observers acknowledged the positive role played by Mauritania's independent electoral commission to ensure the credibility of legislative and municipal elections held in November and December 2007. Mauritania began producing oil in 2006, and the transitional government took steps toward ensuring that oil revenues are managed transparently.

Mauritania became an independent country in 1960 after nearly six decades of French colonial rule. A 1978 military coup ended President Moktaar Ould Daddah's one-party state and was followed in 1984 by another coup, in which Colonel Maaouya Ahmed Taya ousted President Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidallah. Taya introduced a multiparty system in the early 1990s, but the absence of an independent election commission, harassment of independent print media, and the use of state resources to promote his candidacy devalued his presidential victories in 1992 and 1997. The main opposition parties boycotted legislative elections in 1992 and 1996.

More than a dozen political parties participated in the 2001 municipal and National Assembly elections. The ruling Democratic and Social Republican Party (PRDS) was the only party to present candidates in every constituency for the National Assembly's 81 seats, and the electoral law was modified to ban independent candidates. The PRDS won 64 assembly seats, while opposition parties won 17.

In June 2003, a failed coup attempt triggered two days of fighting in the capital. Escaped leaders of the uprising later announced the formation in exile of an armed rebellion.

Though a number of electoral reforms were implemented in advance of the

November 2003 presidential election, numerous irregularities characterized the electoral period. Media coverage favored Taya, even though the six candidates—including the country's first female candidate and the first candidate descended from slaves—were each allocated equal time on state-run broadcast media. Civil society groups were barred from monitoring the polls, and most foreign observers declined to participate after the main challenger, former president Haidallah, was briefly detained on the eve of the election. Taya was declared the winner with 67 percent of the vote.

In September 2004, the government accused Burkina Faso and Libya of backing disgruntled soldiers in another foiled coup attempt. Three opposition leaders, including Haidallah, were detained in November. Accused of plotting a coup, they were put on trial with approximately 170 military personnel in late 2004. Although most, including Haidallah, were acquitted in February 2005, four soldiers received life sentences. One of the defense lawyers dismissed the case as a political farce and accused the government of torturing the defendants.

On August 3, 2005, military officers led by Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vail overthrew Taya's government. Although the action was initially condemned by the international community, public support for the coup was strong within the country. Soon after taking power, the Military Council for Justice and Democracy (MCJD) issued a sweeping amnesty for those charged with political crimes. Approximately 100 political prisoners, including a number of Islamists, were issued pardons and released from prison, while dozens of political activists returned from exile. In October 2005, the MCJD published a series of reports intended to lead the country to elections within a two-year period, and created an independent electoral commission to administer the process. The MCJD also convened a five-day public debate with representatives from political parties and civil society to discuss the path set forward in the reports. In preparation for the presidential election in 2007, voters overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment to limit presidential terms in a referendum held in June 2006.

Legislative and municipal elections were held in November and December 2007. International and domestic election observers judged them generally free and fair, despite technical and administrative problems. Because of a ban on Islamist parties, a number of Islamist candidates ran as independents, many of them successfully. A coalition led by the Rally of Democratic Forces (RDF), whose leader, Ahmed Ould Daddah, was repeatedly jailed for criticizing the Taya regime, gained 41 of 95 seats in the lower house.

Under Taya, Mauritania had cultivated closer ties with the United States. The MCJD government has continued to work closely with the U.S. government on programs intended to promote security and stem the growth of terrorist organizations across the region.

An incident over land and grazing rights ignited a border dispute between Mauritania and Senegal in 1989 that led to widespread ethnic violence and the exodus of some 65,000 black Africans to Senegal and Mali. About 20,000 refugees remain outside the country. In April 2006, Mauritania and Senegal took steps toward improving relations by signing a protocol on cattle migration.

Mauritania is one of the world's poorest countries, and more than half of the population depends on subsistence agriculture and livestock production. The rural

population suffers the effects of recurrent droughts and locust invasions, and instances of chronic malnutrition have risen in some areas. Mauritania is a source and transit point for economic migrants seeking access to Europe. In 2006, the government signed an agreement with Spain to improve border controls. The European Union resumed aid that year in response to the MCJD's progress toward returning the country to elected civilian rule, and the International Monetary Fund has acknowledged progress on budget management and transparency.

Mauritania began producing oil in February 2006, though the start-up was delayed as the government renegotiated a production sharing agreement with the oil project operator to obtain more favorable terms than those reached with the Taya government. Mauritania joined the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2005 and has formed a broad-based committee to oversee oil revenues, which could reach as much as \$200 million per year.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Mauritania is not an electoral democracy. However, the country is taking steps toward democracy, and the military-led transitional government has promised to complete the shift following presidential elections in 2007. Important steps to foster a more democratic and open political environment included the creation of an independent electoral commission to supervise the 2007 elections. Elections were held in November and December 2007 to fill 3,688 municipal council seats as well as seats in the 95-member lower house of the National Assembly. Approximately 25 parties competed along with a large number of independent candidates. The Coalition for Forces for Democratic Change (CFCD), which includes the RFD, won 41 assembly seats, while a coalition of independent and mainly Islamic candidates won 38. Members of the National Assembly are elected by popular vote every five years. Senators are elected by municipal leaders to serve six-year terms, with a portion coming up for election every two years. Presidential elections are scheduled for March 2007.

There were approximately 21 registered political parties at the time of the coup; since that time, additional parties have registered, though several remain banned. The MCJD has outlawed meetings characterized by religious, regional, or ethnic affiliations.

Under the transitional government, a number of measures have been adopted to reduce corruption, including the creation of an inspector general's office. The government also raised civil service salaries and lowered taxes in December 2005. Steps have also been taken to develop a transparent framework for the management of Mauritania's oil revenues. Mauritania was ranked 84 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Under Taya, prepublication censorship, arrests of journalists, and seizures and bans of newspapers limited freedom of expression. The transitional government has relaxed censorship rules and allowed the resumption of Radio France International broadcasts, which had been banned since 2000. Journalists continue to practice self-censorship, however, and newspapers may be banned for publishing material seen as undermining Islam or threatening national security. The government does not impede internet access.

Islamic law limits religious freedom, but in practice, non-Muslim communities observe their religions without fear of social ostracism and are not targeted by the

government. Muslim extremists are monitored. Academic freedom is not restricted, although security forces have cracked down violently on student demonstrations in the past.

Freedom of association is generally respected by the transitional government. Under Taya, however, public meetings were restricted and infrequent demonstrations were often violently suppressed.

The constitution provides for the right of citizens to unionize and bargain for wages. All workers except members of the military and police are free to join unions. Approximately one-fourth of Mauritania's workers serve in the small formal (business) sector. The right to strike is limited by arbitration.

Mauritania's judicial system is heavily influenced by the government. Many decisions are shaped by Islamic law, especially in family and civil matters. Prison conditions in Mauritania are harsh, and security forces suspected of human rights violations operate with impunity.

Mauritania's citizens are divided into three main groups: the politically dominant, light-skinned Maurs of Arab and Berber extraction; black descendants of slaves, also known as Haratines or black Maurs; and black Africans closer in cultural and linguistic heritage to the peoples of neighboring Senegal and Mali. Slavery has existed in Mauritania for centuries, and despite passage in 2003 of a law prohibiting the practice, several thousand black Mauritians are believed to still live in conditions of servitude. Racial and ethnic discrimination persists in all spheres of political and economic life, generally to the disadvantage of members of both the Haratine and black African classes. Much of the country's wealth is concentrated in the hands of the light-skinned Maur elite, who control iron-ore exports and fishing.

However, a quota system established during the transition that required women to comprise at least 20 percent of candidates on political party and independent lists led to the election of 17 representatives to the National Assembly, while women won approximately 30 percent of the municipal council seats. In 2003, a female candidate competed in a presidential election for the first time, and afterward the first Haratine female was appointed to the cabinet. Still, discrimination against women persists. Under Sharia (Islamic law), a woman's testimony is given only half the weight of a man's. Legal protections regarding property and equality of pay are usually respected only in urban areas among the educated elite. At least one-quarter of girls undergo genital mutilation; the government has produced intensive media and education campaigns against this practice. Abortion is prohibited.

Mauritius

Population: 1,300,000

Capital: Port Louis

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2*

Status: Free



Ratings Change: Mauritius's civil liberties rating declined from 1 to 2 because of an increase in crime and the government's failure to address it.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,2F

Overview: Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam's Social Alliance coalition government, elected in July 2005, further consolidated its position in 2006. However, rising prices for a wide range of products and concerns about growing criminal activity contributed to voter demands for government action.

Mauritius's ethnically mixed population is primarily descended from immigrants who were brought as laborers from the Indian subcontinent during the island's 360 years of Dutch, French, and British colonial rule. Since gaining independence from Britain in 1968, Mauritius has maintained one of the developing world's most successful democracies. In 1992, the island became a republic within the Commonwealth, with a president as head of state.

In August 2000, President Cassam Uteem dissolved the National Assembly and called early elections, in large part because of a series of corruption scandals that had led to the resignation of several cabinet ministers. Some 80 percent of eligible voters went to the polls. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, the outgoing prime minister, had served since 1995. The opposition alliance, led by the Mauritian Socialist Movement (MSM), won the elections. Its leader, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, returned to the prime minister's office, a position he had previously held between 1982 and 1995. The MSM was allied with the Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM).

In a planned power shift, MMM leader Paul Berenger assumed the premiership in September 2003, becoming the first person from outside of the island's Indian-origin majority to hold the post. As part of the same pact, Jugnauth moved to the largely symbolic presidency.

Mauritius has been a peaceful and stable democracy for many years, although labor unrest has occasionally flared. For example, hundreds of civil servants stormed a government building in August 2004 to protest a decision to set up a body to oversee revenue collection. The demonstrators feared that the oversight action would lead to the retrenchment of 2,000 civil servants. There is also an ongoing dispute

with Britain over the sovereignty of the Chagos Islands, which include the strategically important island of Diego Garcia. Previous governments have threatened to pull the country out of the Commonwealth.

Parliamentary elections in 2005 resulted in Berenger's defeat and a victory for the opposition Social Alliance, led by Ramgoolam. Growing frustration with rising unemployment and inflation, which had followed the loss of preferential trade deals with the United States and the European Union, apparently contributed to the election outcome. The Social Alliance coalition, which includes the Labor Party and the Mauritian Party, draws most of its support from the majority ethnic Indians. Municipal elections in October 2005 further cemented the Social Alliance's hold on power. In 2006, however, rising prices for a wide range of products and concerns about increased criminal activity helped to end the new government's "honeymoon period" among voters. The Ramgoolam government adopted a number of policies designed to further liberalize the economy, including the sale of government assets and reforms of the labor market, pension system, social security, taxation and facilities for foreign investors. The World Bank estimates that gross domestic product grew 3.5 percent in the 2005-2006 fiscal year, down slightly from the previous year's 4.5 percent.

Mauritius has achieved a level of political development enjoyed by few other African states. For years, the country's stability was underpinned by generally steady economic growth and improvements in the island's infrastructure and standard of living, while the country's integrated, multiethnic population has provided a capable and reliable workforce. However, the loss of preferential European and U.S. market access for sugar and garment exports has recently begun to adversely affect the country's economy and cause rising inflation and unemployment.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Mauritius is an electoral democracy. The head of state is a largely ceremonial president elected by the unicameral National Assembly for a five-year term. Mauritians are considering abolishing the position of vice president. Executive power resides with the prime minister, who is appointed by the president from the party or coalition with the most seats in Parliament. The second-largest party or alliance forms the official opposition. The National Assembly has 62 members who are directly elected by universal adult suffrage as well as a maximum of eight (currently four) members appointed from among unsuccessful parliamentary candidates who gained the largest number of votes. National Assembly members serve for five-year terms, and the next elections are due in 2010.

Since independence, Mauritius has regularly chosen its representatives in free, fair, and competitive elections. In 2002, the National Assembly appointed two separate committees to examine recommendations submitted by a constitutional and electoral reform commission. In 2003, constitutional amendments that modestly strengthened presidential powers were adopted; these deal with the duties of the president, the appointment of the president and members of the electoral commission, the dissolution of the National Assembly, and the exercise of the prerogative of clemency. Decentralized structures govern the country's small island dependencies. The largest of these is Rodrigues Island, which has its own government, local councils, and two seats in the National Assembly.

There have been a number of corruption cases in recent years, and efforts to market Mauritius as an international financial center have been impeded by a series of domestic banking scandals. Credible reports of corruption in the police force have recently surfaced. Mauritius was ranked 42 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and several private daily and weekly publications are often highly critical of both government and opposition politicians and their policies. The state-owned Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) operates radio and television services and generally reflects government viewpoints. A small number of private radio stations have been authorized, but the state-run media enjoy a monopoly in broadcasting local news. The government is reportedly planning to introduce a media commission that would supplant the current Independent Broadcasting Authority. Stricter penalties for libel, sedition and civil disobedience may be enacted. A Broadcasting Compliance Committee would be empowered to suspend or even cancel licenses.

Freedom of religion is respected, as is academic freedom, although recent reforms designed to make education more competitive have proven controversial.

The rights to freedom of assembly and association are respected, but police occasionally refuse to issue permits for demonstrations. Numerous nongovernmental organizations operate freely, as do trade unions. The island's nine labor federations include 300 unions.

The generally independent judiciary, headed by the Supreme Court, administers a legal system that is an amalgam of French and British traditions. Civil rights are for the most part well respected, although cases of police brutality have been reported. There are no known political prisoners or reports of political or extrajudicial killings. In 2006, the National Commission on Human Rights issued a report that criticized prison conditions.

Various ethnic cultures and traditions flourish in peace, and there is general respect for constitutional prohibitions against discrimination. However, Mauritian Creoles, descendants of African slaves who comprise about a third of the population, live in poverty and complain of unfair treatment. In addition, tensions between the Hindu majority and Muslim minority persist, constituting one of the country's few potential political flashpoints.

Women make up approximately 20 percent of the paid labor force and generally occupy a subordinate role in society. Domestic violence against women, particularly spousal abuse, has continued to be a major problem. In 1997, Mauritius became the first country in the region to pass a Protection from Domestic Violence Act. Mauritius has succeeded in increasing the percentage of women in the National Assembly, from 5.5 percent in 2000 to 17 percent in the current Parliament. Only 5 percent of the senior positions in the 100 top companies are held by women.

Mexico

Population: 108,300,000
Capital: Mexico City

Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 3*
Status: Free



Ratings Change: Mexico's civil liberties rating declined from 2 to 3 due to a deterioration in press freedom, including increasing violence against journalists.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,3F

Overview: Presidential and legislative elections were held in July 2006 and resulted in a disputed finish, with leftist presidential candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and conservative Felipe Calderon engaged in a legal battle until early September, when Calderon was declared the official winner. Lopez Obrador refused to accept the results, setting up encampments of supporters in the capital and declaring himself the "legitimate" president. Meanwhile, social disruption shook the southern city of Oaxaca, where a teachers strike turned into a showdown that was still not resolved by year's end, even though federal troops, who entered the city in October, returned control to state officials in late December. Shortly after taking office, Calderon offered support for some of Lopez Obrador's proposals in an apparent attempt to end the postelection crisis. Drug-related crime continued to rise, and cross-border tensions grew as the U.S. Congress approved a bill calling for the construction of a fence along the border.

Mexico achieved independence from Spain in 1810 and established itself as a republic in 1822. Seven years after the Revolution of 1910, a new constitution was promulgated under which the United Mexican States became a federal republic consisting of 31 states and a federal district (Mexico City). From its founding in 1929 until 2000, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) dominated the country by means of its corporatist, authoritarian structure, which was maintained through patronage, corruption, and repression. The formal business of government often took place in secret, and the rule of law was frequently compromised by arbitrary power. In 1999, the PRI nominated, in its first-ever open-party competition, former interior minister Francisco Labastida to run for president; the nomination was described by some as signaling politicians' return to the helm of a party ruled by technocrats during the three previous administrations. In September, the National Action Party (PAN) nominated Vicente Fox Quesada, the governor of Guanajuato. Cuauhtemoc Cardenas resigned the Mexico City mayoralty and announced that he would again lead the

Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) national ticket. In July 2000, Fox won Mexico's presidency with 42.5 percent of the vote, with Labastida capturing 36 percent, and Cardenas just 16.6 percent. The PAN also came close to becoming the largest party in the lower house of Congress and increased the number of state governorships it held.

After his election, Fox selected an eclectic cabinet that included businessmen and leftist intellectuals. He announced plans to overhaul the notoriously corrupt and inefficient law enforcement agencies, breaking political ties between the police and the presidency. In his inaugural address, Fox pledged to make Mexico an international leader in human rights.

By 2003, Fox's greatest achievements remained his defeat of the long-ruling PRI in the 2000 presidential contest, providing for more open and accountable government and arresting leaders of the country's vicious drug cartels. The most popular decision of his presidency—to oppose the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq—contributed to his own popularity but did little to enhance his party's standing with the electorate. Washington's refusal to engage Fox on migration issues, despite early assurances that it would, deprived the president of a policy victory on the most important issue in U.S.-Mexican relations.

Solutions to the problems of poverty, corruption, crime, and unemployment, all of which the charismatic rancher-politician had promised to address, remained elusive. Elections held in July 2003 resulted in the PAN losing the governorship of the prosperous industrial state of Nuevo Leon, long a party stronghold, and reaffirmed the PRI as the dominant opposition party both in Congress and in many statehouses. The PAN's congressional vote dropped from 38 percent in 2000 to 30.5 percent, while the PRI won 38 percent and the PRD received 18 percent.

The year 2004 marked a resurgence of hard-line factions of the PRI as the party swept to power in the states of Oaxaca, Veracruz, and Baja California and took the mayoralty in Tijuana by running as its candidate a highly controversial gambling tycoon who had been linked in the press to drug lords. Legal challenges to the outcome of gubernatorial contests in Oaxaca and Veracruz and the mayoral election in Tijuana were mounted but did not succeed. Public discontent grew in response to the persistence of poverty, corruption, and both organized and street crime, as well as to the perceived power vacuum brought about in part by a long-standing partisan logjam in Congress. On the foreign policy front, relations with former allies Cuba and Venezuela became strained in 2004 and 2005 as Mexico concurred with U.S. criticisms of those countries.

Meanwhile, attention focused increasingly on the 2006 presidential election, with Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, the mayor of Mexico City and a member of the PRD, emerging as the apparent front-runner after overcoming several corruption scandals involving top aides. In 2005, Fox had to fend off charges that he was behind efforts to impeach Lopez Obrador over a legal dispute involving an obscure land case that the PRD called "a technical coup d'etat." The spat energized Lopez Obrador's political base, and the prosecution was dropped. Fox's perceived political weakness led the PAN to select Felipe Calderon, a candidate whom he did not favor, to succeed him in the July 2006 election. After a bitter internal struggle, Roberto Madrazo, the president of the PRI, secured the nomination as the candidate of Mexico's former ruling party.

In June 2005, half a million people protested in Mexico City against rampant kidnappings and crime in general. In November, anger over the seemingly unstoppable crime wave sweeping much of the country appeared to have been at least partly responsible for the lynching of three federal police officers by an angry mob in Mexico City. A climate of insecurity gripped various areas, particularly along the U.S. border.

The year 2006 was dominated by political and social strife that shook Mexico to its core. The presidential contest quickly became a close-fought battle between Calderon and Lopez Obrador, as the Madrazo campaign never gained substantial traction. Calderon's campaign sought—with Fox's help—to paint Lopez Obrador as a danger to Mexico, making thinly veiled references to him as a populist in the mode of Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez. The lead swung back and forth between the two, although Lopez Obrador appeared to have the momentum going into election day. As predicted, the election was extremely close, with Calderon prevailing by a mere 244,000 votes in the initial count.

Seizing on perceived irregularities, Lopez Obrador claimed that the result was fraudulent and declared himself the winner. Between July 2 and September 5, the nation was on edge as legal and social maneuverings ensued. Lopez Obrador presented the PRD's evidence of fraud to the Federal Electoral Tribunal (TEPJF), while also mobilizing his supporters and setting up encampments throughout downtown Mexico City. He demanded the annulment of the election and a full recount, while simultaneously preparing to initiate an "alternative presidency" and speaking of revolutionary conditions in the country.

However, many Mexicans—and most international observers—were not impressed with the evidence of fraud and resented Lopez Obrador's seeming lack of respect for Mexican institutions. On August 5, the TEPJF announced that there would be only a partial recount, encompassing 9 percent of the ballots. Exactly one month later, after the recount was complete and the results analyzed, the TEPJF formally declared Calderon the winner. As it became clear throughout August that the tribunal was unlikely to issue a verdict favorable to his cause, Lopez Obrador walked a fine line, attempting to remain sympathetic to the concerns of the larger public while maintaining morale among his more militant backers. The most significant confrontation occurred on September 1, when Fox was blocked from giving his annual State of the Union address before Congress. Splits among the left also widened as many members of the PRD wanted to focus on their new role as the second-largest force in the newly elected Congress; though the PAN won the most seats with 206 deputies and 52 senators, the PRD elected 127 deputies, thus overtaking the PRI, which elected 106 deputies, for the first time.

Several incidents of social unrest also occurred in 2006. In April, a large demonstration in the town of San Salvador Atenco led to clashes between police and protesters that left one person dead and nearly 200 arrested. The most serious incident occurred in Oaxaca, where the annual teachers' strike spiraled out of control in mid-June, after PRI Governor Ulises Ruiz attempted to forcefully disperse protesters occupying the central plaza and police killed several demonstrators. Tension increased in the following months as radicals of varying stripes converged on Oaxaca, forming the People's Assembly of Oaxaca (APPO), denouncing Ruiz's governing style—widely perceived as repressive and corrupt—and demanding his resigna-

tion. The protesters shut down the city, destroying Oaxaca's tourism-based economy, while paramilitaries associated with the governor engaged in occasional shootouts with APPO militants, resulting in several deaths. Fox avoided sending in federal police until late October, when the situation reached a boiling point with the death of a U.S. journalist and several others.

The problem of crime only worsened in 2006, as shootouts shook cities from Nuevo Laredo, on the Texas border, to the Pacific resort city of Acapulco. The public dumping of severed human heads increased apace, adding a particularly macabre element to the ongoing crime wars. The number of drug-related killings in 2006 topped 2,100, easily exceeding the figure registered in an already bloody 2005. The violence along the border contributed to rising tensions with the United States, which were already increasing as a result of the combative and occasionally xenophobic debate over U.S. immigration reform. The U.S. Congress's passage of a bill in early October authorizing construction of a fence along the U.S.-Mexican border ensured that the immigration issue would continue to be a sensitive one as the Calderon administration began.

Within days of taking office on December 1, Calderon ordered the arrest of some 130 protest leaders and banned marches. Meanwhile, the new president began speaking and acting in ways suggesting that he was seeking to accommodate, or perhaps co-opt, the leftist opposition. He cut his own salary, as well as those of other top officials—one of Lopez Obrador's key campaign promises—and redirected the savings toward social programs; he presented a budget calling for reduced spending on the presidential office and considerably increased expenditures for public security and health care; and during his first trip outside the capital, he proposed more federal funds for the country's 100 poorest towns. Though Governor Ruiz remained in power, federal police were withdrawn from Oaxaca in mid-December. Also in December, Calderon ordered the military into the state of Michoacan in an attempt to take the offensive against the murderous drug cartels.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Mexico is an electoral democracy. The president is elected to a six-year term and cannot be reelected. The bicameral Congress consists of the 128-member Senate, elected for six years by a mix of direct and proportional representation, with at least one minority senator from each state, and the 500-member Chamber of Deputies, with 300 elected directly and 200 through proportional representation, all for three-year terms. Members of Congress are also barred from reelection, which decreases accountability to constituents and increases reliance on party functionaries for subsequent employment. Each state has an elected governor and legislature.

Mexicans living overseas were permitted for the first time to cast absentee ballots by mail in the 2006 elections, though only a small number did so. Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), which supervises elections and enforces political party laws, has come to be viewed as a model for other countries, and the 2006 elections were considered free and fair, despite claims to the contrary by defeated PRD presidential candidate Lopez Obrador. However, a perceived lack of control during the hard-fought presidential campaign led to many complaints, especially by the PRD, centered on negative advertising and campaigning on behalf of victorious PAN candidate Calderon by President Vicente Fox as well as business groups. Addition-

ally, the decision by the IFE's tribunal arm (the TEPJF) to forgo a full recount was controversial, though most observers considered it legally justified.

Mexico has a multiparty system, but three parties—the center-right PAN, the center-left PRD, and the PRI—garner the lion's share of the vote. Minor parties often ally themselves with one of the major parties.

Official corruption remains a serious problem. Corruption at the state-owned petroleum giant Pemex alone is estimated to cost the country more than \$1 billion per year. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration estimates that billions of dollars in illegal drug money is laundered each year in Mexico and says that the country's financial, political, military, and judicial institutions facilitate those crimes. Transparency Mexico estimates that bribes consume up to 24 percent of the earnings of lower-income Mexicans. Mexico was ranked 70 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Mexico's legal and constitutional guarantees of free speech have been gradually improving, while the security environment for journalists has declined markedly. With the opening of the Mexican political system in recent years, elements of the press became much more vigorous and competitive, particularly the print media. No longer dependent on the government for advertising and subsidies, the press has taken the lead in denouncing official corruption and irregularities, although serious investigative reporting is scarce. Broadcast media remain dominated by two corporations that control over 90 percent of Mexican stations. In 2006, the so-called Televisa law, named after the largest broadcast company, granted additional broadcast spectrum to the two giants at the expense of potential competitors.

Violence against journalists worsened dramatically in 2006, with reporters probing police issues, narcotics trafficking, and public corruption at particular risk. In 2006, at least eight journalists were killed, including six in the period between October 27 and December 8. The Inter-American Press Association declared that "journalism is becoming more and more dangerous" in the country. On the positive side, a new special prosecutor's office devoted to investigating crime against journalists was opened.

In 2002, Mexico enacted its first freedom of information law. Considered a "gold standard" worldwide, it expressly prohibits the government from withholding for any reason information about crimes against humanity or gross human rights violations. Mexicans can request government documents through a centralized website, overseen by an independent agency, and public offices have 20 days to respond or face possible sanctions. In addition, Congress has used the expanded access to public information in its oversight of the executive branch. The government does not restrict internet access, which is widely available across the nation.

The constitution provides for religious freedom, and the government generally respects this right in practice. However, the free practice of religion is limited in some areas of the country's south, particularly in Chiapas state, and there are frequent reports of harassment of evangelicals and Jehovah's Witnesses. In order to operate legally, religious associations must register with the Under Secretariat of Religious Affairs of the Federal Secretariat, although the registration process is routine. The constitution was amended in 1992 to restore the legal status of the Roman Catholic Church and other religious institutions. Priests and nuns were allowed to vote for the first time in nearly 80 years. Religious discourse is gradually becoming less taboo in the public square. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Constitutional guarantees regarding free assembly and association are generally respected in the urbanized northern and central parts of the country. Political and civic expression, however, is restricted in some parts of rural Mexico, in poor urban areas, and in poor southern states. Civil society participation has grown in recent years; human rights, prodemocracy, women's, and environmental groups are active. Dozens of labor and peasant leaders have been killed in recent years in ongoing land disputes, particularly in the southern states, where indigenous groups constitute close to half the population. In February, 65 miners were killed in an accident; subsequent efforts to assign blame served to highlight shortcomings in labor conditions and the ineffectiveness of Mexican trade unions, which have long faced government interference. In April 2006, protests related to this tradition of interference led to the deaths of three striking steelworkers.

The Mexican justice system remains plagued by problems of slowness and unpredictability. There is virtually no body of law governing juvenile justice. In rural areas, respect for laws by official agencies remains tenuous. Lower courts and law enforcement in general are undermined by widespread bribery, despite efforts at reform by the Fox administration. Torture, arbitrary arrest, and abuse of prisoners persist in many areas, although somewhat less so in recent years. Over a dozen women reported being raped by police after being arrested during the unrest in San Salvador Atenco in May 2006. Prisons are violent and overcrowded, and pretrial detainees account for up to 40 percent of prisoners. In July 2006, the centerpiece of the Fox administration's modest attempt to prosecute notorious past human rights abuses ended when charges against former president Luis Echeverria were dismissed.

In Mexico City, approximately 80 percent of crimes go unreported because the notoriously underpaid police are viewed as either inept or in league with criminals. Residents report that over half of all interactions with police lead to abuse, most often in the form of a bribe solicitation. With over 3,000 cases a year, kidnapping is epidemic, and it is on the increase, particularly in Tijuana and other northern cities. Attempts in 2001 and 2005 to clean up the law enforcement system met with little success, as citizens still place little trust in the police.

Of some 385,000 police officers in Mexico, only 21,000 are federal officers assigned to the fight against drugs and other organized crime, with the rest belonging to as many as 2,300 different forces outside central government control—a result of constitutional clauses governing state sovereignty. Many local police are given a uniform and a weapon without having to face any serious background checks.

Presidential authority over the armed forces is extensive. However, the military, which operates largely beyond public scrutiny, serves mainly as an auxiliary police force and acts as the country's main antinarcotics force. In places such as the states of Chiapas and Guerrero, army counterinsurgency units continue to commit numerous rights violations. Human rights groups say that more than 100 people have "disappeared" and hundreds more have been tortured by the Mexican army in the conflict-ridden state of Guerrero in the past decade. The military justice system allows for soldiers accused of rights violations to be tried in secret, and the outcomes of their trials are only occasionally made public. Over the last several years, the role of former Mexican and Guatemalan soldiers in drug gangs they were trained to combat has received much media attention.

In June 2003, Fox signed legislation that banned all forms of discrimination, in-

cluding those based on ethnic origin, gender, age, and religion. Nevertheless, Mexico's indigenous peoples remain largely outside the political and economic mainstream as a result of social and economic discrimination. Their ability to participate in decisions affecting their lands, cultural traditions, and allocation of natural resources is usually negligible, and most are relegated to extreme poverty in rural villages lacking roads, running water, schools, and telephones. During 2006, the government maintained troops in selected areas of Chiapas and Guerrero, and those states and others were the sites of numerous allegations of excessive force and violations of international humanitarian law.

The *maquiladoras* (export-processing zones) have fostered substantial abuses of workers' rights. Most maquiladora workers are young, uneducated women who accept lower pay more readily; the annual labor turnover averages between 200 and 300 percent. Workers have no medical insurance, paid holidays, or profit sharing, and female employees are frequently the targets of sexual harassment and abuse.

Domestic violence and sexual abuse remain serious problems. The government has pledged to fight these problems, which have been reported to affect nearly 50 percent of all women. In 2006, Human Rights Watch issued a report on the severe difficulties that rape victims encounter when seeking access to abortions, which are legal for victims of rape and in cases where the mother's life would be at risk or severe birth defects are probable. Mexico is both a source and a transit country for trafficked persons. Internal trafficking is also a problem. Rights groups continue to pressure Mexican authorities to make further progress in investigating the murders and disappearances of numerous women in Ciudad Juarez over the last decade.

Micronesia

Population: 100,000

Capital: Palikir

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In 2006, the government of the Federated States of Micronesia developed justice guidelines and a training handbook for law enforcement personnel to use in protecting the rights of juveniles. Officials also continued efforts to improve the country's education system.

The United States administered Micronesia, which included the Marshall Islands and other Pacific island groups, between 1947 and 1979 as a UN Trusteeship

Territory. In 1970, the Northern Marianas, Marshall Islands, and Palau demanded separate status from Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk, and Yap; these latter four territories, representing 607 islands, became the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). The FSM adopted a constitution and became self-governing in 1979 as the trusteeship expired and status negotiations with the United States continued.

In 1986, the independent FSM signed its first Compact of Free Association with the United States, acquiring U.S. economic assistance and external defense and granting the United States the right to establish military bases in the islands. A new compact extending the same core commitment for another 20 years came into effect in December 2003. In the first three years of the new pact, the FSM received \$76 million in economic assistance for education, health, the environment, capacity building, infrastructure, and private sector development; another \$16 million goes to a trust fund that is overseen by a joint board of U.S. and FSM trustees. Beginning in the fourth year, an annual decrement of \$800,000 from sectoral grants will be reallocated to the trust fund until 2023. FSM citizens will also continue to enjoy visa-free entry to the United States, access to health services and education, and the ability to work without employment visas in the United States.

Compact funds represent one-third of the country's national income, and the division of those funds has been a source of serious tension in federal-state relations. In 2003, the people of Faichuk island in the state of Chuuk threatened to leave the federation and seek a separate bilateral treaty with the United States unless Chuuk received a larger share of the compact funds; Faichuk is home to 30 percent of Chuuk's population. Other states soon followed with similar demands. In response, the federal government agreed to increase the share of compact funds provided to the four states.

In May 2003, the legislature elected Joseph Urusemal, a former governor of Yap, over former president Leo Falcam to be the sixth president of the FSM. Redley Killion, who had been vice president in Falcam's administration, was again chosen as vice president. In the March 2005 congressional elections, most incumbents were re-elected. Proposed constitutional amendments to allow direct election of the president and vice president obtained support from more than 50 percent of the voters but fell short of the three-quarters majority required to pass.

The Department of Justice in 2006 developed guidelines and a training workbook to aid law enforcement personnel in protecting the rights of young people. The government also continued to struggle with limited resources to improve the delivery of education and other public services. The need to improve education and training was particularly emphasized, since foreign workers are imported when the native population is unprepared to take advantage of job opportunities, and unemployment among the native population creates tension with the foreign workers.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The FSM is an electoral democracy. The unicameral, 14-member legislature has one representative from each of the four constituent states, directly elected for four-year terms, and 10 representatives from single-member districts, directly elected for two-year terms. Holding nearly half of the country's population, Chuuk has the largest number of congressional seats, a fact that has been a source of resentment among the three smaller states. The president and vice president are chosen from among the

four state representatives in the legislature to serve four-year terms. By informal agreement, these two top offices are rotated among the representatives of the four states. Each state has its own constitution, elected legislature, and governor. State governments have considerable power, particularly in budgetary matters. Traditional leaders and institutions exercise significant influence in society, especially at the village level. There are no formal political parties, although there are no restrictions on their formation.

Political corruption and abuse of office are serious problems and a source of voter discontent. The FSM was not ranked in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The news media operate freely. In addition to government-published newsletters, there are several small private weekly and monthly newspapers. Television stations operate in three of the four states. Each state government runs its own radio station, and the Baptist church runs a fifth station. Cable television is available in Pohnpei and Chuuk. Satellite television is increasingly common. While the low levels of internet use are growing, the country's small population and limited income makes it difficult for service providers to expand coverage and bandwidth.

Religious freedom is respected in this mainly Christian country. There are no reports of restrictions on academic freedom, but a lack of resources impedes efforts to upgrade access to and quality in education.

Citizens are free to organize civic groups, and there are a few student and women's organizations. No labor unions exist, but there are no laws against their formation. The economy is dependent on fishing, tourism, assistance from the United States, and subsistence agriculture. No specific laws regulate work hours, recognize the right to strike and bargain collectively, or set workplace health and safety standards.

The judiciary is independent, but a lack of funds hinders improvements in the functioning of the courts. Cultural resistance to using the courts, particularly for sex crimes, results in many offenders not being brought to justice. In April 2006, the Justice Department completed guidelines and a training workbook for the police in dealing with juvenile offenders and victims. The action was meant to support implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which the FSM is a party.

Women hold equal rights under the law, including those regarding property ownership and employment. Women generally receive equal pay for equal work and are well represented in the lower and middle ranks of the state and federal government. However, social and economic discrimination against women persists in the male-dominated culture of these islands. Domestic violence is common, and cases often go unreported because of family pressure, fear of reprisal, or an expectation of inaction by the authorities. Offenders rarely go to trial, and those found guilty usually receive light sentences.

Moldova

Population: 4,000,000

Capital: Chisinau

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,4PF	2,4PF	2,4PF	2,4PF	2,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF

Overview: Moldova's relations with Russia deteriorated in 2006 due to a natural gas pricing dispute in January and a Russian ban on Moldovan wine and meat imports imposed between March and November. Meanwhile, the country continued to strengthen ties with the European Union, and has made an effort to improve laws relating to corruption and press freedom. Settlement talks in January made little progress toward resolving the dispute over the breakaway region of Transnistria.

The Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, and the country's first free and fair popular elections took place in 1994. While the Communist Party of Moldova (PCR) won a plurality of votes in the 1998 parliamentary elections, three centrist parties united to form a majority coalition. Subsequently, Moldova undertook much-needed economic reforms and drafted a new constitution. In 2000, constitutional changes made Moldova a parliamentary republic, with the president chosen by Parliament instead of by popular vote. In the 2001 parliamentary elections, the PCR won a landslide victory on the promise of a return to Soviet-era living standards, and Vladimir Voronin was elected president.

Two alliances and nine parties competed in the March 2005 parliamentary elections. The only parties that captured seats were the PCR, the opposition Democratic Moldova Bloc (BMD), and the Christian Democratic Popular Party (PPCD). The PCR took 56 seats, a majority, but fell short of the 61 votes required to elect the president. The party built a broad coalition to secure the votes to reelect Voronin, gaining the support of the right-wing PPCD and two constituent groups from the centrist BMD. The only opposition group that did not back Voronin was the Our Moldova Alliance, which had entered Parliament as part of the BMD. Election monitors highlighted a number of flaws during the campaign, including police searches of opposition offices and harassment of opposition representatives. The PCR was also accused of manipulating state-controlled media and using state funds to support its electoral prospects.

While the PCR's victory was a testament to its continuing popularity—in large part due to high spending on social programs—it unquestionably repositioned

itself in the run-up to the vote. Previously aligned with Russian interests and promising to make Russian an official language, the PCRM began to reject Russia in favor of the European Union (EU). This switch has been evident in conflicting policies over Moldova's breakaway region of Transnistria, situated between the Dniester River and Ukraine. Russian forces maintain a presence in the region, and Voronin has increasingly demanded their unconditional withdrawal. Tensions heightened in January 2006, when a dispute over increased natural gas prices led Russia to cut off gas supplies to Moldova for 16 days. A Russian ban on Moldovan wine and meat imports—a trade that brings in more than \$250 million annually for Moldova—further soured the relationship during the year. However, in November Russia agreed to lift the restrictions after Moldova refused to support Russia's entry into the World Trade Organization while the ban was in place.

A new round of multilateral talks on the Transnistria issue convened in January 2006, marking the second time the EU and the United States participated as observers in discussions between Russia, Ukraine, the Moldovan government, Transnistria's separatist leaders, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The talks ended days later with no reported breakthroughs. Ukraine and the EU took a more active role in the dispute that year. In a blow for the Transnistrian regime, a new trade agreement between Ukraine and Moldova in December 2005 had stipulated that Ukrainian authorities would stop accepting Transnistrian goods not accompanied by Moldovan customs documents. An EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM), put in place in November 2005 to combat smuggling across the Ukraine-Moldova border (including the long Transnistrian-controlled portion), had some success in 2006. Partly in response to the mounting trade pressure, Transnistrian authorities held a September referendum in which voters reportedly endorsed the region's independence and an eventual merger with Russia. However, most governments did not recognize the poll's legitimacy, and Russia has expressed no ambition to absorb the enclave. In December, Igor Smirnov was reelected as president of Transnistria. The elections were not recognized by Moldova or the international community.

Moldova will share a border with the EU after Romania's expected entry in 2007, and support for joining the bloc is strong in the country. A Moldova Action Plan with the EU was signed in February 2005. The first of its kind between the EU and a neighbor, the plan is designed to increase economic integration and deepen political cooperation between the two sides. In April 2006, Moldova became part of the GSP Plus, the EU equivalent of most-favored-nation trade status, but EU officials cautioned that any hopes for EU membership were premature.

Moldova has not made the kind of substantial progress toward stable democracy that has been seen in some of its western neighbors. Unemployment rates in Moldova, Europe's poorest country, are very high. It has had strong economic growth since 2000, reaching 6.2 percent in 2006. However, according to the International Monetary Fund, the growth is mostly the result of expatriate worker remittances, and money is not being invested in the country; as much as a quarter of the country's population may be working abroad.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Moldova is an electoral democracy. In 2000, the country ended direct presidential elections. Voters elect members

to the 101-seat unicameral Parliament by proportional representation for four-year terms; Parliament then elects the prime minister and president. The presidency, also held for four-year terms, was traditionally an honorary post, but it has taken on significant power under President Voronin's leadership. The electoral code is generally considered to provide a sound framework, but some regulations favor the incumbent.

The electoral law in practice discourages the formation of ethnic or regional parties. The Roma (Gypsies) are particularly underrepresented.

Corruption is a major concern in Moldova, and officials have used anticorruption efforts against political opponents. Despite laws to promote governmental transparency, access to information remains limited, and corruption is prevalent in areas such as health care, education, customs, and law enforcement. Defense Minister Valeriu Pasat, who was accused of defrauding the Moldovan government in the sale of Soviet-era fighter planes to the United States in 1997, was sentenced to five years in prison in 2006. The sentence is viewed as politically motivated due to Pasat's ties to the previous Moldovan administration. However, a national anticorruption strategy adopted in December 2004 has led to some improvements. A "Guillotine law" passed in 2004 eliminated over 100 business regulations considered obsolete, making opportunities for graft less common. Recent reforms in the Police and Customs Service have also had a positive impact. Moldova was ranked 79 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Print media present a range of opinions. However, there is little access to newspapers in rural areas, and only the public service broadcasters have national reach. In March 2006, the government released a draft of the Audiovisual Code of Moldova, designed to regulate the entire broadcast sector. Media groups expressed optimism that the code would improve press freedom in the country, but they voiced concerns that some aspects were not in line with European standards. Prison sentences for libel were abolished in 2004, but journalists are subject to crippling fines, and self-censorship is common. Provisions still present in the criminal code prohibit the "profanation of national and state symbols" and the defamation of judges and criminal investigators. Despite the legal transformation of the state-owned broadcasters into public service stations, the government continued to exercise tight control in the run-up to the 2005 elections.

Although Moldova's constitution guarantees religious freedom, there have been some legal impediments to the functioning of various religious groups. All religious groups are required to register with the government, and unregistered groups are not allowed to buy property or obtain construction permits. No Muslim groups have been granted registration. The Moldovan Orthodox Church receives some favored treatment from the government. Moldovan authorities do not restrict academic freedom.

Citizens may participate freely in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). However, private organizations must register with the state, and some NGOs have complained of government interference. NGOs are generally poorly funded, unless they receive support from outside the country. Demonstrations require permits from local authorities. In May 2006, the government refused to grant permission for a lesbian and gay rights demonstration. Authorities exert pressure on unions and their members, and employers violate trade union rights.

Moldova's constitution provides for an independent judiciary. However, there is evidence that some prosecutors, judges, and law enforcement officials accept bribes

and are subject to pressure from governmental figures. Some courts are inefficient and unprofessional, and many court rulings are never carried out. Laws passed in 2005 relating to the appointment of members of the Supreme Court of Justice and the Superior Court of Magistrates have had some success in strengthening judicial independence. Although torture was declared a criminal offense in June 2005, abuse and ill-treatment in police custody are still widespread and are often used to extract confessions. In March 2006, Amnesty International reported that an inmate in a Chisinau prison was beaten and subjected to electric shocks. Conditions in prisons and detention facilities are exceptionally poor. The government has reportedly handed over Moldovan citizens for trial by the authorities in Transnistria, where human rights are not respected. The death penalty was abolished in July 2006.

Members of the Roma community suffer the harshest treatment of the minority groups in Moldova. They face discrimination in housing and employment and are targets of police violence. In July 2005, police raided a Roma community and, according to Amnesty International, beat and detained residents.

Women are underrepresented in public life, though the 21 women elected to parliament in the 2005 elections mark a substantial increase over previous polls. Moldova remains a major source for women and girls trafficked to other countries for the purpose of forced prostitution. In February 2006, the government adopted the Law on Ensuring Equality for Women and Men, which addresses inequalities in education, employment, and health care.

Monaco

Population: 30,000

Capital: Monaco

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F

Overview: In April 2006, Monaco's Prince Albert II reached the North Pole with seven others in a dog-sled expedition conceived to raise awareness about global warming. In June, the prince admitted to fathering a second child out of wedlock.

The Principality of Monaco is an independent and sovereign state, although it remains closely associated with neighboring France. The princely Grimaldi family has ruled for the past 700 years, except for a brief period of French occupation from 1793 to 1814. Under a treaty ratified in 1919, France pledged to protect the territorial integrity,

sovereignty, and independence of the principality in return for a guarantee that Monégasque policy would conform to French political, military, and economic interests.

Prince Rainier III, who led the country from 1949 to 2005, is often credited with achieving its impressive economic growth. During his reign, Monaco ended its dependence on gambling and nurtured other sources of revenue—principally tourism, financial services, and banking. In February 2002, Monaco adopted the euro currency despite the fact that it is not a member of the European Union (EU).

Legislative elections in February 2003 led to a major upset for the National and Democratic Union (UND), which had dominated national politics for several decades. The opposition Union for Monaco (UPM) received 58.5 percent of the vote and 21 of the 24 seats in the Conseil National, while the UND received 41.5 percent of the vote.

On April 6, 2005, Rainier, the longest-reigning monarch in Europe, died at the age of 81. He had been suffering from heart and lung problems since at least 2003. His son and successor, Prince Albert II, admitted in June 2006 to fathering a second child out of wedlock, this time a girl born to a California woman in 1992. The revelation came after a similar disclosure in 2005, in which the prince admitted to fathering a boy born in 2003 to an Air France flight attendant from Togo. Neither child is in line for the throne.

Monaco is one of five countries listed as uncooperative tax havens by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The EU Savings Taxation Directive, which provides a way to tax revenue from savings accounts held by EU citizens in a member state other than their country of residence, or in certain non-EU countries, came into effect in July 2005. Monaco agreed to participate in the directive, which is intended to prevent harmful tax practices.

In April 2006, Albert reached the North Pole with seven others in a dog-sled expedition. The prince, who made the trip to raise awareness of global warming, became the first sitting head of state to make the trip. According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the prince's great-great-grandfather had made four Arctic trips a century earlier.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Monaco is an electoral democracy. However, the prince has the sole authority to initiate legislation and change the government. The 24 members of the unicameral Conseil National are elected every five years: 16 are chosen through a majority electoral system and 8 by proportional representation.

The head of state is not elected but inherits the position. Prince Rainier III, who died in April 2005, ruled the country for 55 years and was succeeded by his son, Prince Albert II. Rainier changed the constitution in 2002 to allow for Princess Caroline and Princess Stephanie, Albert's sisters, to follow their brother if he fails to produce a legitimate heir. Previously, the law had stated that the principality would become a part of France in the absence of a male heir.

The head of government, known as the minister of state, is traditionally appointed by the monarch from a list of three candidates, all French nationals, presented by the French government. The current minister of state, Jean-Paul Proust, has held the post since June 2005. In addition to the minister of state, the prince appoints five other ministers (counselors) who collectively make up the cabinet. All legislation and the budget require the assent of the Conseil National.

Because of a lack of available financial information, the country's level of corruption is difficult to measure. Monaco was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. Monaco remains on the OECD's list of uncooperative tax havens. However, the country is one of five non-EU tax havens that have agreed to adopt measures to combat harmful tax competition. Since July 2005, the government has applied a withholding tax to accounts in Monaco held by citizens of EU member states. Most of the revenue from the tax goes back to the EU member state where the account holder resides.

The media in Monaco are free and independent. The constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press, although the penal code prohibits denunciations of the ruling family. Internet access is not restricted.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion. However, Roman Catholicism is the state religion, and Catholic ritual plays a role in state ceremonies. There are no laws against proselytizing by formally registered religious organizations, but it is strongly discouraged. Academic freedom is not restricted. The country has only one institution of higher education, the private University of Monaco, which offers degrees in business administration only. Monegasque students are eligible to enter French and other postsecondary educational institutions on the basis of specific agreements. The government provides grants for higher education students to study foreign languages abroad.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, which is generally respected by the authorities. No restrictions are imposed on the formation of civic and human rights groups. Although outdoor meetings require police authorization, there have been no reports that the government withheld authorization for political reasons. Workers have the legal right to organize and bargain collectively, although they rarely do so. Only 10 percent of the workforce is unionized. All workers except state employees have the right to strike.

The legal right to a fair public trial and an independent judiciary is generally respected. The justice system is based on French legal code, and the constitution requires that the prince delegate his judicial powers to the courts. The prince names the five full members and two judicial assistants to the Supreme Court on the basis of nominations by the Conseil National and other government bodies. Jail facilities generally meet international standards. Once criminal defendants receive definitive sentences, they are transferred to a French prison.

The constitution differentiates between the rights of Monegasque nationals and those of noncitizens. Of the estimated 32,000 residents in the principality, only about 7,000 are actual Monegasques, who alone may participate in the election of the Conseil National. Monegasques also benefit from free education, unemployment assistance, and the right to hold elective office. As long as they secure a residence permit, noncitizens are free to purchase real estate and open a business in Monaco.

A woman can lodge criminal charges against her husband for domestic violence, and women generally receive equal pay for equal work. Although naturalized male citizens in Monaco can transfer citizenship to their offspring, naturalized female citizens cannot. Women who become naturalized citizens by marriage cannot vote or run as candidates in elections until five years after the marriage. There were no reports of trafficking in persons into, from, or within Monaco during the year.

Mongolia

Population: 2,600,000

Capital: Ulaanbaatar

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview: A new coalition government was formed by the MPRP, defectors from the Democratic Party (DP), and several other smaller parties in early 2006. Corruption concerns remained important during the year; several journalists were beaten and detained at an anticorruption demonstration, and other journalists were sued for covering corruption under the country's defamation laws. Meanwhile, the government continued its pursuit of closer trade relations with both Russia and China.

Once the center of Genghis Khan's sprawling empire, Mongolia later experienced three centuries of domination by its neighbors. China controlled Mongolia for two centuries until the early 1920s. In 1924, a Soviet-backed Marxist revolt led to the creation of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) and the world's second single-party Communist state.

Beginning in 1990, however, Mongolia undertook a relatively rapid transition from Soviet satellite state to democratic republic. In response to persistent antigovernment protests, the ruling MPRP legalized opposition parties and held the country's first multiparty elections. Facing a poorly prepared and underfunded opposition, the MPRP easily won parliamentary elections that year and again in 1992. According to U.S. State Department descriptions, the 1992 constitution established a hybrid presidential-parliamentary system of government.

In 1996, the MPRP was voted out after 72 years in office, and power was transferred peacefully to the Democratic Union Coalition (DUC). The core policies of the DUC, which consisted of the Democratic Party (DP) and the Social Democratic Party, were the implementation of political and economic reforms in the post-Communist period. After an economic downturn the following year, however, the MPRP regained power with victories in both the 1997 election for the largely ceremonial presidency and the 2000 parliamentary vote.

In June 2004, a new Parliament was chosen in elections that were marred by violations and irregularities. A coalition government was formed in September 2004 after the voting gave neither party a majority. Under the compromise deal, Tsakhilganiin Elbegdorj of the Motherland Democracy Coalition (MDC) was named to a second term as prime minister while Natsagiin Bagabandi of the MPRP carried

on as president. The MPRP's Nambaryn Enkhbayar, Speaker of Parliament and a former prime minister, won the presidential election in May 2005 despite street demonstrations by protesters who accused him of corruption and challenged the 2004 poll results.

Mongolia's first coalition government, formed between the MPRP and the MDC, broke down in January 2006. The MPRP, defectors from the DP, and several other smaller parties joined to form the current government. Miyegombo Enkhbold of the MPRP was elected as prime minister. With the defection of a formerly Motherland Party parliamentarian to the MPRP, it now holds 50 percent of the seats in Parliament, known as the State Great Assembly, Ulsyn Ikh Khural. In April 2006, the former coalition prime minister was elected as chairman of the DP.

The pace and extent of economic reform has been Mongolia's primary political issue since the transition to democracy. Market reform began in the early 1990s with the establishment of a fledgling private sector through the privatization of small businesses and the end of collectivized herding. However, these reforms have been ineffective in compensating the economy for the loss of heavy Soviet subsidies; the result has been high unemployment and rampant poverty. Although economic growth is helping to raise living standards for some Mongolians, poverty remains the reality for the majority in both rural and urban areas; some 36 percent of the population lives on less than 75 cents a day.

Building on the progress it made in 2004 by signing agreements on cooperation in trade and banking with China, Mongolia in 2005 and 2006 continued efforts to boost trade with Russia. New economic opportunities have emerged following the settlement of Mongolian debts to the former Soviet Union in 2004, including the expansion and modernization of Mongolia's railways, the development of a natural gas network in the country, the construction of an electrical power line from Russia to China through Mongolia, and the creation of new mining and processing plants.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Mongolia is an electoral democracy. However, election rules are not firmly established and have often been changed.

While the 1992 constitution created a hybrid presidential-parliamentary system, several of Mongolia's parliamentary elections have been conducted under different electoral systems, varying between multimember and single-member districts. There is concern that rewriting the rules before each election makes it difficult to stabilize the expectations of political elites or enhance popular confidence in democratic government. The 76-member Parliament (the State Great Hural), with the agreement of the president, selects the prime minister, who is nominated by the party or coalition with the most seats. There is no requirement that the prime minister be an elected member of parliament. Most executive powers are vested in the prime minister. The president, however, can veto legislation, subject to a two-thirds parliamentary override. Both the president and the parliament are directly elected for four-year terms.

Corruption is a problem in Mongolia. The U.S. State and Commerce departments both have identified "corruption in the [state] bureaucracy" as one of the obstacles affecting economic and political development in Mongolia. Transparency International ranked Mongolia 99 out of 163 countries surveyed in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

While the government generally respects freedom of speech and of the press, it has been slow to implement a 1999 law requiring the transformation of state broadcasters into public corporations. The government in October 2005 announced plans to convert Mongol TV and Radio into a public entity, and the outlets remaining in state hands are generally free of political control. The implementation of the plan has been slowed by numerous disputes. Independent print media outlets are common and popular in cities, but the main source of news in the vast countryside is the state-owned Radio Mongolia. Mongolians also have access to local, privately owned television, English-language broadcasts of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Voice of America on private FM stations, and, in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, foreign television programming via cable and commercial satellite systems. According to U.S. State Department reports, access to the internet is available, and the government does not interfere with its use.

The government monitors all media for compliance with antiviolenence, antipornography, and anti-alcohol content restrictions, as well as with tax laws. The government has at times filed libel suits against media outlets or launched tax audits against publications in the wake of critical articles. Mongolian libel law places the burden on the defendant to prove the truth of the statement at issue. To avoid being sued, many independent publications practice a degree of self-censorship. In 2006, two journalists lost court cases brought by plaintiffs named in their articles, but were spared fines due to an amnesty. Another journalist lost a suit brought by a bank after writing that the bank's president might own shares in the bank. In October 2006, two journalists and two photographers from newspapers were beaten and detained while covering a protest demonstration in Ulaanbaatar. The State Secrets Law inhibits freedom of information to some extent, as many archived historical records have been given a classified status.

Since the fall of communism in 1990, freedom of religion has been guaranteed by the constitution. The new openness has sparked a growth in Mormonism, Russian Orthodoxy, and other Christian sects, as well as a revival of Mongolia's traditional religions—Buddhism and a native shamanism. The Kazakh Muslim minority, whose population of approximately 100,000 is concentrated in the western part of the country, generally enjoys freedom of religion. However, the government monitors the Kazakh community closely for potential political separatism and has not allowed it to construct a mosque in Ulaanbaatar.

Academic freedom is respected. Mongolian professors and other teachers generally can write and lecture without interference, and access to higher education is relatively free of discrimination.

Freedoms of assembly and association are observed both in law and in practice. A number of environmental, human rights, and social welfare groups, while largely reliant on foreign donors, operate without government restriction. At the invitation of the government, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture has made a fact-finding visit, as has the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in North Korea. (Small groups of North Koreans continue to enter the country from China. The government does not encourage North Korean refugee inflows, but generally cooperates in sending North Korean refugees who reach Mongolia to safe haven in South Korea.)

Mongolian trade unions are independent and active, though the government's downsizing or sale of many state factories has contributed to a sharp drop in union

membership. Collective bargaining is legal, but with Mongolia's poor economy, employers enjoy considerable power and often set wages unilaterally. The government prohibits strikes in the utilities, transportation, and law enforcement sectors.

The judiciary is independent, but corruption among judges persists, according to the U.S. State Department's human rights reports. In a holdover from the country's Communist past, defendants are not presumed innocent. Although the constitution prohibits unlawful arrest and detention, Mongolia's police force, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs, has been known to make arbitrary arrests, hold detainees for long periods of time, and beat prisoners; such actions have been more prevalent in rural areas. Both Amnesty International and the U.S. State Department reported on the 2005 case of a prisoner who died eight days after being released from the Gants Hudag detention center with evidence of severe bruising on his body. Relatives claim he was beaten by guards, but the police claim he was beaten by other prisoners. Prisons have in recent years been outfitted with video monitoring systems, decreasing the incidence of beatings by guards. Nevertheless, deaths in prisons continue to be reported; these are due largely to disease—often tuberculosis—exacerbated by poor conditions like insufficient food, heat, and medical care. A prison reform program centered on training guards and upgrading facilities is ongoing. The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture noted the continued impunity enjoyed by those responsible for torture and other, ill-treatment.

With UN Development Program assistance, a local representative in each provincial assembly is responsible for monitoring human rights conditions in that province. Mongolia has a National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR) consisting of three senior civil servants nominated by the president, the Supreme Court, and the Parliament for terms of six years. The NCHR reports directly to Parliament and is responsible for monitoring human rights abuses, initiating and reviewing policy changes, and coordinating with human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The NCHR has criticized the government for police abuses, poor prison conditions, lengthy detentions without trial, and other failures to implement laws related to human rights.

The constitution prohibits arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home, or correspondence, and these provisions are generally respected. In addition, the government recognizes all citizens' rights to travel freely within the country and abroad. Mongolia has what the United Nations terms a "reverse gender gap," as women now make up 60 percent of all students at Mongolian universities. This trend, noted by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, has been largely attributed to the fact that "[in] this predominantly agricultural country, parents often pull their sons out of school so that they can help with herding duty, long considered a male responsibility." Although the phenomenon has not carried over into politics—of the 76 parliamentary seats in Mongolia, only 5 are occupied by women—it does indicate "a large pool of highly educated and motivated women," according to the Alliance for International Women's Rights. The emphasis on education for Mongolian women represents the improving opportunities available in a country that, under Communist rule, largely excluded women from public life.

Domestic violence has been a serious concern in Mongolia. Although there are no reliable statistics regarding the extent of domestic abuse, the U.S. State Department's human rights report noted that as much as one-third of the female population may be affected, a situation associated with the high rate of alcohol abuse.

Since early 2005, a sweeping new law has prohibited spousal abuse defined as "any intentional act or failure to act by a person . . . with respect to another person that infringes upon the latter's human rights, freedom, or any act that causes threat or contains a threat to cause harm." The law empowers central and local government to investigate complaints and impose a variety of sanctions on offenders, including prohibitions on meeting victims, training aimed at behavioral changes, and treatment for alcoholism. According to U.S. State Department, as of August 2006, 37 cases were prosecuted under the law and all resulted in convictions.

Montenegro

Population: 600,000

Capital: Podgorica

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Note: The ratings through 2002 are for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, of which Montenegro was a part, and those from 2003 through 2005 are for the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,6NF	6,6NF	5,5PF	4,4PF	3,3PF	3,2F	3,2F	3,2F	3,2F	3,3PF

Overview: Montenegro, formerly a republic within the Communist-era Yugoslav federation, and most recently a republic within the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, held a May 2006 referendum in which a 55 percent majority voted in favor of independence. The country duly declared independence the following month, but still faces ethnic divisions, economic problems, and concerns over the extent of official corruption. Pro-independence parties won parliamentary elections held in September.

In 1878, European powers gathered at the Congress of Berlin first recognized Montenegro as an independent state. Historically, a majority of Montenegro's Slavic and Orthodox Christian population has considered itself to be a branch of the larger Serbian nation in the Balkans, and in 1918, Montenegro voted to join the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. After World War II, Montenegro was declared a constituent republic in what would eventually become Marshal Josip Broz Tito's Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. As that state collapsed amid ethnic conflict, Montenegro in 1992 voted to maintain its ties to Serbia as part of the truncated Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, dominated by Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic. In 1997, however, a younger generation of politicians in Montenegro, led

by then-prime minister Milo Djukanovic, broke ranks with Milosevic and set Montenegro on a slow course toward independence.

Milosevic's ouster in October 2000 did not significantly improve relations between Montenegro and its larger federal partner. In March 2002, under strong pressure from the European Union (EU), the two republics signed an agreement that loosened their bond, and federal Yugoslavia was formally replaced with the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2003. However, the new state suffered from numerous problems, due largely to the great disparity in size between the two republics. Montenegro was only one-tenth the size of Serbia in population and accounted for a negligible part of the overall economy, but it enjoyed parity representation in most institutions of government. The union preserved some vestiges of a common state but also provided each republic with its own central bank, currency (the EU's euro is the official currency in Montenegro), and customs and taxation system. Furthermore, the union's charter stipulated that each state could hold an independence referendum after three years.

Djukanovic, Montenegro's leading politician, has served as either president or prime minister of the republic since 1991. After he left the presidency to reclaim the premiership in 2002, two attempts to elect a new Montenegrin president failed because voter turnout fell below the required 50 percent threshold. In February 2003, a new law on presidential elections that dropped the 50 percent rule came into force, allowing Filip Vujanovic, a Djukanovic ally, to win the post in a May 2003 vote. Vujanovic took 64 percent of the ballots, with 48.3 percent of eligible voters participating. The turnout and results were skewed somewhat by the main opposition parties' failure to agree on a candidate.

Montenegro is split between a large segment of the Orthodox Christian population that declares itself to be Serb and supports strong ties with Belgrade, and another segment that declares itself to be Montenegrin. The latter is supported by the country's ethnic Albanian, Muslim Slav (or Bosniak), and Roman Catholic minorities, all of which generally back Montenegrin independence. Despite these divisions, however, Montenegro under Djukanovic has been able to avoid the ethnic conflicts that have plagued the region over the past 15 years.

During Montenegro's independence referendum on May 21, 2006, voter turnout was high at 86 percent, with most citizens voting according to their ethnic loyalties. Nevertheless, the referendum campaign and the announcement of its outcome proceeded smoothly, offering a rare example of a state disintegrating in the Balkans without violence. The country formally declared independence in June, and voters confirmed their choice by giving the pro-independence coalition a majority in September parliamentary elections.

Montenegro's ultimate stability is still in doubt, however, given its ethnic divisions, weak economy, and endemic corruption. Adding to the uncertainty, Djukanovic announced in October that he was leaving office after 16 years at Montenegro's helm. Although he will likely continue to wield considerable power behind the scenes, there is some concern that his successors lack the political skills to manage Montenegro's problems with the same steady hand.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Montenegro is an electoral democracy. International observers reported that both the May referendum and the Sep-

tember parliamentary elections were conducted freely and fairly, albeit with some minor irregularities. Voter turnout for the September parliamentary elections was 71 percent, according to officials. The Montenegrin National Assembly is a unicameral, 81-seat legislature, with deputies serving four-year terms. Seventy-six seats are allotted according to polling results in all of Montenegro, while five seats are allotted according to results in majority Albanian areas. Group voting, in which the head of a household votes on behalf of all members of the family, was reported in 8 percent of polling places, generally those in majority Albanian areas. The president of Montenegro, directly elected for a five-year term and eligible for a second term, nominates the prime minister, who must be approved by the legislature.

Numerous political parties compete for power in Montenegro. The main pro-independence parties have been Djukanovic's Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP), led by parliamentary speaker Ranko Krivokapic. The pair took a combined 41 seats in the latest elections. The main opposition pro-Serbia parties have been the Socialist People's Party (SNP), the People's Party (NS), and the Serbian People's Party (SNS). Pro-Serbian factions won a combined 23 seats in September. Predominantly ethnic Albanian parties in Parliament are the Democratic Albanian Union (DUA) and the Democratic Alliance. Bosniaks are represented by the Democratic Union of Muslims-Bosniaks. Although most minorities have traditionally voted for major parties and not these small parties catering to their ethnic groups, there are indications that this may change in the postindependence period. Separately, a former nongovernmental organization (NGO) called the Group for Changes, led by the economist Nebojsa Medojevic, is playing an increasingly prominent role as a political party, capturing 11 seats in the latest vote.

Corruption is a serious problem in Montenegro. The country was not ranked in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index, but some international officials believe that corruption is an even greater problem in Montenegro than in neighboring Albania, which was ranked 111 out of 163 countries surveyed. By comparison, Serbia was ranked 90. Djukanovic himself has been accused by Italian prosecutors of involvement in cigarette smuggling, and since 2000, three high-ranking Montenegrin police officials have been assassinated.

Freedom of the press is generally respected, but journalists face some infringements. In May 2004, the publisher of a major opposition daily, Dusko Jovanovic, was assassinated, and his killers have never been found. During the September 2006 parliamentary elections, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) found that broadcast media, particularly public television, concentrated on the ruling parties and the activities of the government. Libel remains a criminal offense in Montenegro, but is punishable by fines rather than prison terms; nevertheless, there are frequent reports that the threat of fines forces journalists to engage in significant self-censorship. In 2005, government officials reportedly threatened media outlets that covered state corruption. Access to the internet has not been restricted.

According to the constitution, all citizens enjoy freedom of religious belief. Restitution of church property nationalized by the Communists remains a point of contention between church and state. This is a particularly complex problem in Montenegro, where the canonically recognized Serbian Orthodox Church frequently struggles with a self-proclaimed Montenegrin Orthodox Church over many church properties.

Montenegro's independence drive has also had implications for academic freedom. A group of professors in the city of Niksic were dismissed in 2005 for refusing to teach language courses named "mother tongue" in place of what had been called Serbian. The Djukanovic government claimed the professors were fired because they had illegally gone on strike, while the professors said their dismissal was politically motivated.

Citizens enjoy freedom of association and assembly. Foreign and domestic NGOs are able to pursue their activities without state interference. Although Montenegro's labor law was reformed in 2003 to make job dismissals easier, economists believe firing procedures are still inflexible and costly, deterring foreign investment. The country's General Collective Agreement, also passed in 2003, extends a long list of benefits to all employees, including generous provisions for holidays, housing, transport and meals, and seniority premiums. World Bank analyses suggest that such labor laws hinder the efficient allocation of labor and encourage informality in the economy. A large number of Montenegro's workers—75,000, or 45 percent of all employees—belong to various types of unions. The ability of workers in Montenegro to engage in collective bargaining is considered to be relatively strong.

The Montenegrin judicial system lacks independence from political authorities, and judicial corruption remains a significant problem. In a case filed in October 2003, Djukanovic claimed that an opposition party member had committed libel by claiming that he was engaged in human-trafficking operations. The judge fined the opposition leader in question, Miodrag Zivkovic, several thousand euros after prohibiting him from submitting any evidence in his defense. The judge refused to accept reports from the OSCE and the U.S. State Department as evidence. Defense requests for access to earlier investigations into the human-trafficking scandal were also turned down. Prison conditions generally meet international standards.

Cultural and ethnic minorities have their own political parties, access to media in their own languages, and other types of associations. Ethnic Albanians, however, claim that they are underrepresented in the civil service, particularly in the police and the judiciary. In September 2006, over a dozen ethnic Albanians were arrested by Montenegrin security services for their involvement in an alleged terrorist plot. Several of those arrested were tortured or severely beaten. Now that Montenegro has become independent, it is likely that ethnic minorities, and particularly Albanians, will begin increasing their demands for proportional representation in government and administrative reorganization to create more Albanian-majority municipalities.

Although women are legally entitled to equal pay for equal work, traditional patriarchal attitudes prevalent throughout the Balkans often limit women's roles in the economy. In general, women are underrepresented in higher levels of government. Only 14.6 percent of the candidates in September's parliamentary elections were women. Currently, 11 women serve as deputies in the 81-member Parliament.

Morocco

Population: 31,700,000

Capital: Rabat

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5,5PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF

Overview: In January 2006, after two years of work and public hearings, Morocco's Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER)—a government-mandated body that was unprecedented in the Arab world—submitted its final report to King Mohamed VI. It recommended several significant legal and institutional changes designed to prevent any repetition of the human rights violations witnessed under King Hassan II, Mohamed's father. The IER also incorporated a reparations program to offer compensation to the victims of state violence between 1956 and 1999.

Morocco gained independence in 1956 after more than four decades of French rule. The first postindependence monarch, King Mohamed V, reigned until his death in 1961. His son, King Hassan II, ruled Morocco until 1999. Most of Hassan's years in power, often referred to as the "years of lead," were marked by intense state repression. He was preoccupied with maintaining power, particularly after two failed coup attempts by renegade army officers in 1971 and 1972. Thousands of his opponents were either killed, tortured, exiled, imprisoned, or "disappeared." Also during his reign, Moroccan forces marched into Western Sahara and annexed the former Spanish territory, prompting the Algerian-backed Polisario Front to launch a pro-independence guerrilla campaign that became one of Africa's longest-running conflicts. A planned referendum on the future of Western Sahara, attached to a UN-monitored ceasefire agreement in 1991, has yet to take place. In the last few years of his life, Hassan made moves aimed at opening Morocco politically. Several political prisoners were released, independent newspapers began publishing, and a new bicameral parliament was established in 1997.

King Mohamed VI inherited the throne at age 35 following his father's death. Human rights and civil society activists, as well opposition leaders, had high hopes that the young king would expand the small measure of political freedom that his father had offered. However, the prospects for reform were limited by the country's serious economic and social ills. The majority of the population lived in poverty, and opportunities for economic growth and employment were slim. As in many other Arab states, Islamist groups gained public support by filling the vacuum and providing services to the poor.

Nevertheless, Mohamed won support by firing the feared Interior Minister Driss Basri, who had led much of the political repression under King Hassan. Exiled dissidents such as Abraham Serfaty were allowed to return to Morocco within months of Hassan's death.

Parliamentary elections held in 2002 were considered the most authentic since independence. At least a dozen political parties, including Islamist-affiliated factions, won seats in the legislature. While the elections were praised, critics of the king, including independent journalists, were harassed and detained, and the country made little headway in solving the Western Sahara dispute.

In May 2003, local Islamist militants with links to al-Qaeda rocked Casablanca with a series of suicide bombings that targeted symbols of Morocco's Jewish community. The victims were mostly Moroccan civilians, and the government's response was immediate and harsh. An antiterrorism law was passed, but it has since been used to prosecute nonviolent opponents of the king. Local and international human rights groups charged that the authorities were using the opportunity of the attacks to pursue vocal government critics.

King Mohamed took a dramatic, unprecedented step in January 2004, when he inaugurated the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER). As the first truth commission in the Arab world, it was mandated with addressing the human rights abuses perpetrated against Moroccan citizens by the authorities from 1956 to 1999 and providing the victims with reparations. The commission held public hearings in which victims were given an opportunity to speak about the abuse they suffered. The IER was headed by Driss Benzekri, a political prisoner who spent 17 years in jail. In January 2006, the commission submitted its final report to the king, which included a series of recommendations for legal and institutional reforms designed to prevent a repetition of past abuses. Some critics of the IER have complained that even though victims have been given a chance to publicize their suffering and receive compensation, the perpetrators are not being held to account for their actions.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Morocco is not an electoral democracy. Although its parliamentary and municipal elections have been praised for being representative, most of the power in Morocco still lies in the hands of the king and his close advisers. The monarch can at any moment dissolve Parliament, rule by decree, and dismiss or appoint cabinet members. He sets national and foreign policy, commands the armed forces, and presides over the judicial system. One of the king's constitutional titles is "commander of the faithful," giving his authority a religious dimension.

The 1996 constitution reintroduced a bicameral legislature, which had existed briefly after independence but was replaced by a single chamber for the next 40 years. The lower house, the House of Representatives, has 325 directly elected members who serve for five-year terms. Members of the 270-seat upper house, the House of Advisers, are chosen by an electoral college to serve nine-year terms. The next parliamentary elections are slated for September 2007.

Morocco's opposition parties are not able to assert themselves given the king's extensive power. The strongest opposition to the monarch comes from moderate Islamist parties, particularly the Justice and Development Party (PJD), which has a large representation in Parliament. The Justice and Charity Association, a more overtly

antimonarchical Islamist group, is banned from fielding candidates, as are all groups that challenge the ultimate authority of the king. Nadia Yassine, the de facto spokeswoman for the organization and the daughter of its leader, is currently on trial for saying that Morocco would survive if it did not have a king.

Corruption remains a serious problem in Morocco. The kingdom was ranked 79 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. Moroccan authorities have pledged to end the culture of impunity that pervades the security forces, and several senior security officials were fired in 2006 after being linked to drug dealers.

Morocco's independent journalists have carved out a space for critical journalism and are constantly attempting to break political and social taboos, but the authorities often have responded harshly. Morocco's 2002 press law amendments contain serious sentences for defamation and other press offenses. The government has promised to ease the restrictions, but has taken no action to date. The broadcast media, both radio and television, are dominated by the state and reflect the official government line. The authorities do not place specific restrictions on the internet, but it is not a major news medium in Morocco.

One of the pioneering publications of Morocco's independent press, *Le Journal Hebdomadaire*, run by publisher Aboubakr Jamaï and editor Ali Amar, suffered several attacks by the government or its supporters in 2006. In April, a Rabat appeals court upheld a 3 million dirham (\$330,000) defamation judgment against the weekly. The plaintiff in the case was the head of a Brussels-based think tank who had published a report on the status of Western Sahara. *Le Journal Hebdomadaire* had questioned the independence of the report, which largely mirrored the views of the Moroccan government on the issue. As was the case in many Arab and Muslim states, Morocco experienced fallout from the publication in Denmark of cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad. In February, after *Le Journal* and its weekly Arabic sister publication *Assahifa al-Ousbouiya* printed a photograph of a French newspaper that had republished the cartoons, the authorities bussed protestors to *Le Journal's* offices, and state television ran segments attacking the weekly. In other press cases, the independent weeklies *Tel Quel*, *Al-Ayam*, and *al-Ousbouia al-Jadida* were ordered by courts to pay crippling fines or damages for articles about a former parliamentarian's profession, the king's family, and an Islamist who questioned the need for a monarchy, respectively. The publications' editors also faced prison time.

Morocco's population is almost entirely Muslim. The small Jewish and Christian communities, which compose less than 1 percent of the population, are free to practice their religions without state interference.

University officials practice self-censorship when discussing sensitive topics like Western Sahara, the monarchy, and Islam. Islamist-dominated student unions, the best-organized groups on campuses, have worked to Islamize the curriculum, drawing complaints from secular and liberal professors.

While several independent human rights and civil society groups function in Morocco without much government interference, the authorities place limits on freedom of association in order to restrain Islamist groups. Morocco also regularly responds to protests in Western Sahara with arrests and alleged excessive force. In September 2006, 56 people were arrested, having been accused of being dangerous Islamists.

The law allows workers to establish and join trade unions. A new labor law

enforced in June 2004 prohibits antiunion discrimination and prescribes limits the government's authority to intervene in strikes, which are allowed by the constitution but subject to a subsequent law requiring compulsory arbitration.

Morocco's judiciary, which has been criticized by local and international human rights groups, does not operate independently and rarely opposes the government or the king. Arbitrary arrests and torture still occur, but are not as common as during the reign of King Hassan II. The final report of the IER recommended several legal and institutional reforms, but it remains to be seen whether the changes will be adopted by the leadership. According to press reports, Morocco cooperates with the United States in its extraordinary rendition program, allowing accused terrorists to be brought into the country and interrogated. In a positive development, Morocco's security forces disbanded the riot police unit in October 2006 and planned to reassign its members to other formations. The antiriot unit, created in 2004, had been accused of abuse of power and implicated in the deaths of demonstrators and rioters in Western Sahara in 2005. The head of the security service was replaced in September 2006. The government is reportedly considering a bill that would abolish the death penalty.

Even though the Jewish community was the target of the May 2003 terrorist attacks in Casablanca, Moroccan Jews are well integrated into the larger society. One of the king's most trusted advisers, Andre Azoulay, is a Moroccan Jew who also served King Hassan. The government has also recognized the language and culture of the Berbers of the Rif region, in the northern part of the country.

Morocco has made positive steps toward removing legal barriers against equality for women, although women face a great deal of discrimination at the societal level. The constitution guarantees equality for women, and the 2004 family code gives women more rights in the area of marriage and divorce. The law also bans marriage for women younger than 18. In 2006, a woman was appointed as governor of a district outside Casablanca, marking the first such posting for a woman since independence.

Mozambique

Population: 19,900,000

Capital: Maputo

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF

Overview:

The government of President Armando Guebuza made limited progress in 2006 on its pledges to combat corruption and improve the police system. It also entered a dialogue

with the main opposition party, the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO), to reform the overly politicized National Electoral Commission, though no final agreement was reached by year's end. Meanwhile, a Mozambican newspaper re-published controversial Danish cartoons of the prophet Muhammad, causing large but peaceful Muslim demonstrations in the capital, Maputo.

Portuguese traders and explorers arrived in Mozambique in the late fifteenth century, and active colonization began in the seventeenth century. The Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), established in 1962, launched a guerrilla campaign to oust the Portuguese. After a 1974 coup in Portugal, Mozambique gained independence in 1975. FRELIMO was installed as the sole legal political party, and its leader, Samora Machel, became president. Independence was followed by 16 years of civil war, pitting the Soviet-allied government against the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO), which was supported first by Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and later by South Africa. In 1986, Machel died in an airplane crash, and Joaquim Chissano, a political moderate, succeeded him as leader of FRELIMO and president of Mozambique. Three years later, FRELIMO formally abandoned Marxism-Leninism for democratic socialism. A peace accord was signed in 1992, and RENAMO agreed to forego military resistance and operate instead as an opposition political party.

The first multiparty elections, held in 1994, brought 90 percent of voters to the polls. The balloting was deemed a resounding success by the international community, despite a brief election boycott by RENAMO, which accused FRELIMO of fraud. Chissano captured 53.3 percent of the presidential vote, versus 33.7 percent for RENAMO leader Alphonse Dhlakama. FRELIMO won a narrow, but workable, majority in the Assembly of the Republic in concurrent legislative polls.

Chissano and FRELIMO were reelected in the 1999 general elections, despite a strong showing by the opposition, logistical and administrative difficulties, and fraud allegations from RENAMO. In protest, RENAMO deputies repeatedly walked out of the Assembly or interrupted proceedings in 2000 and 2001. At one point, RENAMO threatened to form its own government in six northern and central provinces. However, many Mozambicans and the international community concluded that the elections had expressed the people's will.

Since the end of the civil war, FRELIMO has dominated Mozambican politics, but Chissano's authority within the party has deteriorated due to highly publicized allegations of corruption. In January 2003, six men were found guilty of murdering prominent journalist Carlos Cardoso, who was gunned down in 2000 while investigating a corruption scandal at the state-controlled Commercial Bank of Mozambique. However, no charges were lodged against the president's son, Nyimpine Chissano, who was alleged by some of the accused to have ordered the assassination.

Voter turnout declined to only 36 percent in the December 2004 presidential and legislative elections, which saw an overwhelming victory for Armando Guebuza, the new head of FRELIMO and a political hard-liner. Guebuza, pledging to tackle Mozambique's enduring problems of corruption, crime, and poverty, captured 63.7 percent of the presidential vote, and RENAMO's Dhlakama took 31.7 percent; FRELIMO won 160 seats, and RENAMO 90 seats, in the 250-seat Assembly. Independent monitors cited an array of serious flaws in the voting process, particularly the lack of observer access to the final stages of the vote tabulation by the National

Electoral Commission (CNE). Nevertheless, monitors agreed that none of the irregularities would have significantly altered the results; they concluded that 85 percent of polling stations had functioned correctly and reluctantly declared the elections to be generally free and fair.

RENAMO once again claimed massive fraud and initially rejected the election results, filing a formal complaint with the CNE. While the commission rejected the complaint on technical grounds, it did admit that 1,400 vote summary sheets favoring RENAMO had been stolen, accounting for 5 percent of the total. As a result, the CNE shifted an Assembly seat from FRELIMO to RENAMO. Unsatisfied, RENAMO announced a boycott of the incoming Assembly and appealed to the Constitutional Court to further correct the elections' irregularities. The court rejected RENAMO's appeal but called for observer access to the final stage of the vote count in future elections; RENAMO later ended its legislative boycott.

The two main parties in 2006 began discussions about reforming the bloated and overly politicized CNE. The panel in charge of the 2004 elections consisted of 19 members: 10 appointed by FRELIMO, 8 appointed by RENAMO, and 1 chairman selected by the other 18 members. Reform proposals ranged from reducing the number of members to eliminating political appointees completely. However, there was little agreement at year's end between RENAMO, which wanted to maintain political appointees, and FRELIMO, which was looking to increase the body's efficiency and independence. Each province also has its own election commission, complete with overpaid party appointees.

Mozambique boasts one of Africa's best-performing economies, thanks partly to extensive foreign aid. The lack of progress on Guebuza's promises to combat government corruption have caused many donors to reassess their financial support for the Mozambican budget. Nevertheless, the Norwegian government recently pledged approximately \$80 million in direct budget aid over the next three years, and the Japanese have canceled all of Mozambique's bilateral commercial debt, totaling \$60 million. With some 14 percent of Mozambicans stricken with HIV/AIDS, the economy faces challenges ahead, including a shrinking agricultural labor force in subsistence farming. In addition to regular donor aid, Mozambique in 2006 was also in need of more serious emergency relief. In February, the most powerful earthquake in a century hit a remote part of the country, killing four people, injuring 36, and destroying 288 homes. In March, persistent flooding along the Zambezi River forced more than 2,000 people to resettle on higher ground, and heavy rains killed at least 31 people over the course of the year.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Mozambique is an electoral democracy. Presidential and legislative elections in December 2004, despite some serious irregularities, generally reflected the will of the people.

The president, who is elected to a five-year term by popular vote, appoints the prime minister. Officials in provincial assemblies have also traditionally been appointed by the central government, leading the ruling FRELIMO party to dominate local administration even in regions considered to be strongholds of the opposition RENAMO party. The unicameral national legislature, the Assembly of the Republic, recently approved a constitutional amendment to allow for the election of provincial assemblies starting in 2008. The national Assembly has 250 seats and plays an important

role in the political process, but it is overshadowed by the executive branch. Procedural changes in 2001 increased the legislature's effectiveness, although the animosity between FRELIMO and RENAMO has often impeded progress.

Relations between the two parties have become increasingly acrimonious since 2004, when President Guebuza was elected. Former president Chissano was known for promoting political pluralism and interparty reconciliation. Guebuza, however, is a FRELIMO stalwart who has sought to revive the traditional hegemony of his party; he has proven reluctant to compromise with an opposition party that has yet to win a presidential election. RENAMO's chances have been further diminished by the drive of its leader, Dhlakama, to maintain tight control over his party and suppress talented young politicians who could threaten his authority. One such upstart, Raul Domingos, formerly Dhlakama's heir-apparent, left in 2003 and formed a small opposition group known as the party for Peace, Democracy, and Development (PDD). However, it is unlikely that Domingos's party will be able to threaten the two main parties' seats in the legislature.

Corruption in government is pervasive. Guebuza has made tackling the problem a top priority, and journalists and civic groups have reported a marked increase in government attention to the daily activities of civil servants. In 2003, the Assembly passed a law that compels high-ranking civil servants to declare their incomes upon assuming their posts, and the Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) in the attorney general's office has investigated several public figures. The director of the National Social Security Institute and several staff members were dismissed in 2005 due to allegations of corruption. In late April 2006, the Assembly unanimously passed the anticorruption conventions of the African Union and the United Nations, and in September, the interior minister released the results of an internal audit of his own ministry that he had requested soon after taking office. The audit exposed unexplained financial losses of \$356,000 and the presence of over 70 "ghost workers" on the ministry payroll. Nonetheless, the progress made in combating corruption has not been ideal. Several years have passed since an anti-money laundering bill was enacted, but there have been no prosecutions under the statute to date. Furthermore, no political party has complied with laws requiring them to make their accounts public. Mozambique was ranked 99 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution provides for press freedom, but the state controls nearly all broadcast media and owns or influences the largest newspapers. In August 2005, agreement on a draft Freedom of Information Bill was reached at a media seminar in Maputo, but no progress has been made on it since. The government press office (GABINFO) in 2006 conducted a review of the 1991 press law and suggested possible "improvements." The draft amendments include provisions for mandatory licenses for working journalists and omit the much-needed freedom of information legislation. The existing press law has long been considered one of the more progressive of its kind in Africa. Although a number of press associations, such as the Mozambican Editors' Forum and the Media Institute of Southern Africa, were involved in working on the draft amendments, there was little to no discussion of the proposals in the rest of the media.

Investigative reporting suffered greatly in the years following the 2000 murder of eminent investigative journalist Carlos Cardoso, and few are now willing to exam-

ine sensitive topics. The government was accused of complicity in Cardoso's murder after it refused to investigate former president Chissano's son, Nyimpine Chissano, who had been implicated in the testimony of a few of the men convicted of the murder in 2003. However, in 2006, the authorities finally put Nyimpine Chissano under investigation for his alleged role in orchestrating the crime. Criminal libel laws promote self-censorship, and in May 2006, three journalists with a community paper in Manica province were arrested as a "preventive measure" against criminal libel. While coverage of the 2004 general elections was more evenhanded than that of previous polls, the opposition received inadequate attention in state-run media, especially radio and television. Only a fraction of the population has access to the internet because of a scarcity of electricity and computers.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government respects this right in practice. Even during the civil war, Mozambique maintained its tradition of religious tolerance. Registration of religious organizations is required by law, but the government did not refuse registration to any applicants in 2006. In February, *Savana*, a local newspaper, republished controversial Danish cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad. Unlike Muslim communities in many other countries, where protests against the cartoons turned violent, the Muslim community in Mozambique—accounting for 18 percent of the population—remained remarkably peaceful. Immediately following the cartoons' publication in *Savana*, a group of 650 Muslims spontaneously demonstrated outside the newspaper's office, and a week later, 2,000 Muslims organized a march through Maputo to show their disapproval. Both events were carried out without violence or confrontation.

Academic freedom is generally respected. However, according to the U.S. State Department's 2006 human rights report, teachers at all levels, particularly those in the central and northern provinces, felt compelled to align themselves with FRELIMO. In fact, political affiliation has been reported to be a factor in the hiring of some teachers.

Freedom of assembly, though broadly guaranteed, is limited by notification and timing restrictions. In 2001, the law on public demonstrations was amended to reduce some of these restrictions and make it harder for police to legitimately use force to break up a demonstration. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including the Mozambican Human Rights League, operate openly, as do international human rights and humanitarian groups; all NGOs must register with the government.

The Organization of Mozambican Workers, the major trade confederation, is now nominally independent and has been critical of the government's pro-market reforms; it has yet to exert significant influence over actual government policy. All workers in nonessential services have the right to strike. The right to bargain collectively is legally protected. However, only 2 percent of the workforce is in collective bargaining contracts.

The criminal justice system is hobbled by a dire shortage of staff as well as endemic corruption at all levels, including among police, attorneys, judges, and prison personnel. Mozambique's judicial system has improved since the end of one-party rule in 1994, but judicial independence is still elusive, and the executive branch continues to maintain ample influence over rulings. Following a September 2005 riot in the town of Mocimboa da Praia in which eight people died and over 50 were injured, 14 RENAMO militants were arrested but have since been held in prison without trial or a foreseeable court date; political interference is the primary factor blamed for stalling progress.

Detainees often wait months, sometimes years, before appearing in court without any formal defense. They are tried only in Portuguese, which many Mozambicans speak poorly. Prisons are severely overcrowded, with appalling health conditions. Prisoners generally receive one meal per day and are subject to beatings, extortion, and fatal disease. The 1995 law on prisons is regularly disregarded, and many detainees overstay their sentences due to a lack of proof of time served. In June 2006, a court ruled in favor of 15 inmates who brought a case against the government demanding access to antiretroviral drugs in prison; the government appealed the decision.

Human rights abuses by security forces—including extrajudicial killings, torture, beatings, extortion, and arbitrary detention—are serious problems. The government has begun to provide human rights training to police officers. As a part of his effort to shake up the police force, Guebuza in 2006 also fired the police chief and the head of the Presidential Guard and has established 12 new police units. According to official data, there was a 24 percent decrease in the number of reported violent crimes in 2006, but many civilians would contest this result. The high incidence of violent crime in Mozambique continues to be a major problem and has led to occasional mob and vigilante killings. Between August and November 2006 alone, vigilante groups were responsible for the deaths of more than 20 people. However, unlike in previous years, no violence erupted between the main political parties in 2006.

Women occasionally enter the male-dominated political arena, but only 20 percent of all teachers and 9 percent of all education civil servants are women. Legal and societal discrimination against women is common, as is domestic violence. In August 2004, a revised Family Law raised the minimum marriage age to 21, although persons between the ages of 18 and 20 can marry with the consent of their parents; ended husbands' formal status as heads of families; and legalized civil, religious, and common-law marriages alike. The law also prohibits rape, which is punishable by two to eight years if the victim is more than eight years old and by a minimum of eight years if she is younger than that. Spousal rape, however, is not covered under the law. Many women know little about their rights, and continue to be subject to customary law. In August, the government released a survey conducted jointly with the United Nations and a number of NGOs on violence against women, in which 54 percent of women interviewed admitted to being subject to an act of physical or sexual violence by a man.

While the government has made children's welfare a priority, child prostitution continues to be legal except when parents are instrumental in the practice. Limited access to education, child abuse, child labor, trafficking in children, and the presence of street children in Maputo remain serious problems.

Namibia

Population: 2,100,000

Capital: Windhoek

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview: Internal divisions continued to rock the ruling South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) party in 2006 as former president Sam Nujoma retained control over the party leadership, defying those who wanted current President Hifikepunye Pohamba to take charge. Local and regional party branches, unions, and parastatals have all been sites of struggle between the rival SWAPO camps. Meanwhile, land reform remains a major political issue. Although some in government have voiced admiration for Zimbabwe's aggressive redistribution of agricultural land, the official position emphasizes that land reform will proceed within constitutional and legal frameworks.

Namibia, formerly known as South West Africa, was claimed by German imperial forces in the late nineteenth century. Efforts to consolidate German colonial rule and expand white farming settlements resulted in the massacre of thousands of indigenous Herero, Nama, and Damara during a series of wars with German troops in the early twentieth century. German forces were expelled during World War I, and the League of Nations made the territory a South African protectorate in 1920. South West Africa was ruled under the apartheid system after 1948. In 1966, South Africa's mandate was revoked by the United Nations, and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) began a guerrilla campaign to secure the territory's independence. After 14 years of war, a UN-supervised transition led to independence for Namibia in 1990, and SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma was chosen as president. The previous year, SWAPO had won 57 percent of the ballots in a free and fair vote for the Constituent Assembly, which became the National Assembly on independence.

Nujoma was reelected in 1994 with more than 76 percent of the vote, and SWAPO the same year won a major victory in the first legislative elections under the new constitution. However, Nujoma adopted an increasingly authoritarian governing style. Before the 1999 presidential election, SWAPO succeeded in passing a bitterly contested constitutional amendment allowing Nujoma to seek a third term. He was easily returned to power with 77 percent of the vote; his closest rival, former trade union leader Ben Ulenga of the Congress of Democrats, won only 11 percent. In legislative polls in 1999, SWAPO retained its two-thirds majority in the 72-member National Assembly, increasing its number of seats from 53 to 55.

Secessionist fighting in Namibia's Caprivi region flared in October 1998 and continued into 1999. The region is geographically and ethnically distinct from the rest of the country. In the wake of the uprising, Nujoma declared a state of emergency in Caprivi, giving security forces wide-ranging powers. The resulting violence led some 2,400 refugees to flee to neighboring Botswana. A mass trial of 120 defendants involved in the separatist rebellion opened in October 2003 and is ongoing. Another 12 alleged Caprivi secessionists were brought to trial in September 2005; the trial is expected to conclude in 2007.

Although rumors indicated that Nujoma might try to amend the constitution to stand for a fourth term in 2004, this ultimately did not come to pass. His imminent departure set off a bitter contest within SWAPO over who would be the party's new presidential candidate. Nujoma backed his longtime ally Hifikepunye Pohamba to succeed him. He was challenged by SWAPO stalwarts Nahas Angula and Hidipo Hamutenya, the latter representing the more definitive threat. In the wake of the struggle, Nujoma stripped Hamutenya of his portfolio as minister of foreign affairs. Pohamba ultimately won the nomination at the party convention. However, clear divisions emerged in the party, and Nujoma loyalists began an effort to weed out Hamutenya supporters from key positions. These dynamics continue to shape Namibia's politics today.

In the November 2004 elections for the National Assembly, SWAPO maintained its overwhelming majority in the legislature by winning 55 seats; the Congress of Democrats won 5 seats, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance won 4, the United Democratic Front took 3, and other parties took the remaining 5 seats. In the presidential election, SWAPO's Pohamba easily defeated six other candidates, taking 76 percent of the vote. Turnout was approximately 85 percent, compared with 61 percent in 1999. Despite criticizing the vote tabulation system and the opposition's unequal access to media and campaign resources, observer missions deemed both elections free and fair. After successfully petitioning the high court to allow a review of official election documentation in December 2004, the Congress of Democrats and the Republican Party (RP) secured a court-ordered recount of all ballots in March 2005. The recount did not result in any changes in the allocation of seats in the National Assembly.

As president, Pohamba has emphasized combating corruption and adopted a more conciliatory tone than his predecessor. His central political challenge has been divisions within his party as it approaches the 2007 convention, where senior party officers will be chosen. The divisions stem from Nujoma's ongoing control of the party presidency, which critics say undermines Pohamba's authority. In late 2005, Nujoma received unwanted scrutiny after a newspaper report implicated him in a corruption scandal and a mass grave was discovered containing the remains of SWAPO fighters killed by South African forces in April 1989. The latter discovery generated a debate about whether Nujoma had ordered the offensive that led to the massacre of the fighters. Responding to the criticism, Nujoma supporters aggressively pushed a bill through Parliament that declared him the father of the nation.

During 2006, conflict between rival SWAPO camps escalated. Nujoma opponents, especially former Hamutenya supporters, were removed from key positions in government, parastatals, and labor unions. Several leading party members privately appealed to Nujoma in early 2006 to step down from his role as party presi-

dent; he angrily refused. By August, Pohamba and Nujoma had allegedly fallen out over the former's tolerance of anti-Nujoma elements in positions of power, the anti-corruption drive that had implicated Nujoma and some of his supporters, and a campaign by Nujoma backers to make him life president of SWAPO. The divisions, which follow ethnic lines, played out significantly at regional levels as different camps sought to put supporters in place ahead of the 2007 convention. The extent of open dissent in the party, historically one of the most cohesive in Africa, is as high as it has been in recent memory.

The small white minority owns just under half of Namibia's arable land, and land reform remains a big issue. Although the government initially pursued a "willing-buyer, willing-seller" program, frustrations with the slow pace led to the passage of legislation in 2003 to speed up redistribution. In 2004, the government declared that all Namibian landholders were susceptible to expropriation. Officials have hoped to use proceeds from a land tax, implemented in 2004, to help pay for the land program. In 2005, 18 farms were targeted for expropriation. Several farmers filed court cases to challenge the prices to be paid for the land. In April 2006, the government announced that it had successfully taken three farms since 2005. That month, three farmers filed lawsuits challenging the planned expropriation of their farms. Several leading government and party officials have continued to criticize the pace of reform, and a few have applauded the more aggressive approach taken in Zimbabwe. However, the Namibian government insists that its own process will remain within the existing constitution and legal framework.

Capital-intensive extractive industries, such as diamond and uranium mining, have drawn significant foreign investment and are the centerpiece of Namibia's economy. Most Namibians, however, continue to live as subsistence farmers, and many lack basic services. The expiration of the U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act in 2005 and the end of textile quotas mandated by the World Trade Organization significantly affected the competitiveness of Namibia's textile industry. In May 2006, the controversial Malaysian-owned Ramatex textile factory threatened to shut down operations, placing 6,000 jobs in jeopardy. The government prevented the closure by offering incentives and financial support to the company. The country is also a recipient of substantial foreign aid. In November 2005, Namibia was one of three lower-middle-income countries granted eligibility to apply for support from the U.S. government's Millennium Challenge Account. The government submitted project proposals in September 2006.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Namibia is an electoral democracy. Despite a court-mandated recount, the 2004 presidential and legislative elections were judged to be free and fair. The bicameral legislature consists of the 26-seat National Council, whose members are appointed by regional councils for six-year terms, and the 72-seat National Assembly, whose members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms. National Assembly seats are allocated by proportional representation, based on a party-list system. The president is directly elected and serves as the head of state for a five-year term.

The ruling SWAPO party has dominated both the legislative and executive branches since independence. Significant opposition parties include the Congress of Democrats, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, and the United Democratic Front.

While Namibia has a legislative and institutional framework to combat corruption, it remains a significant problem in government and parastatals. In August 2005, Paulus Kapia, a deputy minister and secretary of the SWAPO Youth League (SYL), resigned after a judicial inquiry implicated him in a fraud scandal involving the Social Security Commission, which had invested N\$30 million (US\$4.6 million) in a company associated with key SYL leaders. He was then suspended from all activities by the SWAPO Politburo, but remained on the SYL payroll. Results of an SYL inquiry on the matter have not become public.

President Pohamba has made anticorruption efforts a major theme of his presidency and routinely raises the issue in his public speeches. Enabled by anticorruption legislation passed in 2003, the president in February 2006 officially installed the officers of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). The ACC is answerable only to the National Assembly and can recommend cases to the prosecutor general, who has final say on whether to proceed. In March, the ACC received an allocation of N\$6.5 million in the national budget, up N\$2.5 million from the previous year. Despite these efforts, many observers have expressed concern about the slow progress in investigating and prosecuting major cases. Namibia was ranked 55 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees the right to free speech and a free press, and Namibia's press is considered one of the freest on the continent. Private radio stations and critical independent newspapers usually operate without official interference. Reporters for state-run media have been subjected to indirect and direct pressure to avoid reporting on controversial topics. In September 2006, SWAPO leader Nujoma brought a suit against the largest independent daily, the *Namibian*, for a September 2005 article alleging his connection to the social security fraud scandal. The legal fees alone threaten to put the newspaper out of business.

While many insist that the state-run Namibia Broadcasting Corporation enjoys freedom to criticize the government, others believe that it is biased toward the ruling party. There are at least 11 private radio stations and two private television stations that broadcast in English and other languages, and international broadcasts are available to those who can afford access. Although then-president Nujoma appointed himself minister of information and broadcasting for a period in 2004, no significant problems were experienced during his tenure. There are no government restrictions on the internet, and several publications have popular websites.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed and respected in practice. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Freedoms of assembly and association are guaranteed by law and permitted in practice, except in situations of national emergency. Local and international human rights groups operate freely without government interference, though some officials have verbally attacked nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that criticize the government.

Constitutionally guaranteed union rights are respected. Although collective bargaining is not practiced widely outside the mining and construction industries, informal collective bargaining is increasingly common. Essential publicsector workers do not have the right to strike. Domestic and farm laborers remain the country's most heavily exploited workers, in part because many are illiterate and do not know their rights.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the separation of powers is observed in practice. Judicial decisions regarding the recount of the No-

vember 2004 elections underscored this independence. Access to justice, however, is obstructed by economic and geographic barriers, a shortage of public defenders, and substantial trial delays caused by a lack of capacity in the court system. In rural areas, traditional courts often ignore constitutional procedures.

After nearly four years of delays, the mass trial of 120 defendants accused of high treason and other crimes related to the separatist rebellion in Caprivi opened in October 2003. The trial of another 12 alleged Caprivi separatists began in September 2005; these defendants have argued unsuccessfully that they have been denied due process by both the Namibian and Botswana governments. The main trial is expected to stretch into 2007.

Police and military forces are under civilian control. Pohamba's administration includes the newly created Ministry of Safety and Security, which supervises both the police and the national intelligence services. Allegations of police brutality persist. Human rights groups have called for independent investigations into the 1999 arrest and detention of suspected Caprivi separatists and the deaths of 13 suspects in police custody. In January 2006, the National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) alleged that torture and ill-treatment had been used against suspects and witnesses in the treason trial. Conditions in prisons and military detention facilities are harsh but generally meet international standards.

Human rights are for the most part well respected in Namibia. Nevertheless, several minority ethnic groups, including the Herero and Damara, claim that the government favors the majority Ovambo in allocating development funding and providing local services. In May 2005, a group representing the Khoisan people became the latest group to demand reparations from Germany for colonial-era atrocities; Herero leaders have already filed a US\$2 billion lawsuit in the United States seeking reparations from Germany for similar abuses. In 2004, the German government had apologized for atrocities committed against the Herero people but had ruled out reparations, promising increased development aid instead.

Despite constitutional guarantees, women continue to face discrimination in customary law and other traditional societal practices. In July 2005, the government announced plans to introduce an inheritance bill to protect the property rights of widows and orphans, who are often stripped of their land and livestock in rural areas. Violence against women is reportedly widespread, and despite the existence of progressive legislation—including a domestic violence act—rights groups have criticized the government for failing to prosecute the majority of cases or provide compensation to the victims. Women are increasingly involved in the political process but remain underrepresented in government and politics.

Homosexuals are discriminated against and have been accused by government officials of causing HIV/AIDS; in 2001, then-president Nujoma called on police to arrest, deport, and imprison homosexuals. In February 2005, the government launched a national policy intended to assist orphans and vulnerable children by supporting community groups, NGOs, and faith-based institutions. In addition, the government has been praised for its programs providing antiretroviral drugs to Namibians infected with HIV/AIDS.

Nauru

Population: 10,000

Capital: Yaren

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: Nauru in 2006 pressed Australia to resolve the status of Mohammed Sagar, who was for a time the last inmate at an Australian-funded detention center for asylum seekers on the island. Most other detainees had been transferred to Australia or allowed to go free, but Canberra considered Sagar a security risk. A Scandinavian country agreed to grant him asylum in December. Meanwhile, Nauru continued to struggle with the economic vacuum left by the decline of phosphate mining.

Nauru, located 1,600 miles northeast of New Zealand, is the world's smallest republic. It was a German protectorate from 1888 until Australian troops seized it during World War I. The League of Nations granted a joint mandate to Australia, Britain, and New Zealand to govern the island in 1919. The Japanese occupied Nauru during World War II, and in 1947, the United Nations designated it as a trust territory under Australia. Nauru gained independence in 1968, became an associate Commonwealth member in 1969, and joined the United Nations in 1999. Rising sea levels threaten the future of the island and its people.

Nauru's once-plentiful supplies of phosphate, mined by Australia for use as fertilizer, are almost entirely exhausted, and the mining industry has left behind severe environmental problems. More than 80 percent of the 8-square-mile island is uninhabitable. Phosphate mining had made Nauru one of the richest countries in the world in per capita income, but the government squandered much of this wealth through financial mismanagement. The country is now saddled with a large foreign debt, and the trust fund built on phosphate mining royalties is diminishing rapidly.

Recent governments have tried different ways to generate income, with little success. The island's remote location limits its attraction to travelers, and a passport-sales scheme resulted in corruption scandals. Money laundering tied to Nauru's offshore banking operations put the country on international blacklists and restricted its access to international loans, forcing it to crack down on the industry. With few viable economic alternatives, foreign development assistance has become a major source of income for the government. Since 2001, Nauru has served as a refugee-processing and detention center for Australia in exchange for millions of dollars in financial aid. The island provided temporary housing for hundreds of mainly Middle

Eastern refugees seeking asylum in Australia, but the program was phased out amid criticism by human rights groups, and by the end of 2005 only two detainees remained. Nauru also receives financial aid from the United States in exchange for the establishment of an intelligence listening post in the country. Finally, the country has switched diplomatic recognition between China and Taiwan to maximize the financial aid it receives from the two competitors. The last switch was in May 2005, when Nauru broke off relations with China to restore official ties with Taiwan.

Intense political rivalry and the use of no-confidence votes have toppled several recent governments. However, elections in October 2004 produced a clear parliamentary majority for Ludwig Scotty, giving his government a strong mandate for economic reforms. Reform measures have included a complete review of employment levels and pay scales for all public servants, increased import duties for most goods, and higher government fees and charges. The government also began to trace \$1.3 million in missing funds from the \$7.4 million generated from passport sales. In 2005, the government launched a constitutional review to assess whether amendments are needed to improve political stability. One change under consideration would restrict the use of no-confidence votes to dismiss governments.

Nauru in 2006 sought to resolve the status of the last detained asylum seekers on the island, Mohammed Sagar and Mohammad Faisal, both Iraqis whom Australia had deemed security threats. Faisal was moved to a hospital in Australia in August due to concerns that he was suicidal, leaving Sagar, who had spent five years on the island, on his own. To pressure Canberra to decide on his future, Nauru asked the Australian government to pay \$75,000 per month for his 30-day visa renewals. An undisclosed Scandinavian country agreed to accept him in December, apparently resolving the matter. However, Australia in September had transferred seven new Burmese refugees to Nauru.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Nauru is an electoral democracy. The 2004 elections were deemed free and fair by international observers. The 18-member unicameral legislature is elected from 14 constituencies by popular vote for three-year terms. The parliament chooses the president and vice president from among its members. The president is the head of state and chief executive. Suffrage is universal and compulsory for all citizens age 20 and older. The political party system is relatively informal, but notable factions include the Nauru First Party and the Democratic Party.

There were no new reports of serious or widespread corruption in 2006. Nauru was not rated in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government does not restrict or censor the news media. Local journalists produce a number of weekly and monthly publications, and foreign dailies, most of them in English, are freely admitted and widely available. The government publishes occasional bulletins, and the opposition publishes its own newsletters. Radio Nauru and Nauru TV, which are owned and operated by the government, broadcast content from Australia, New Zealand, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and other international sources. Internet service began in 1998, but access is constrained by cost and a lack of infrastructure outside the capital.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, which the government generally respects in practice. There have been no reports of government suppression

of academic freedom. The school system, like other public services, is starved for funds. In 2006, New Zealand offered assistance to acquire new school materials, improve infrastructure, and develop the curriculum.

The government respects freedom of assembly and association. There are a small number of advocacy groups for women, development-focused groups, and religious organizations. The country lacks trade unions and labor protection laws, partly because there is little large-scale, private employment.

The judiciary is independent, and defendants generally receive fair trials and representation. The Supreme Court is the highest authority on constitutional issues, and the parliament cannot overturn court decisions. Appeals in civil and criminal cases can be lodged with the high court of Australia. Traditional reconciliation mechanisms, rather than the formal legal process, are used in many cases, usually by choice but sometimes under communal pressure. A civilian official controls the 100-person police force. Police abuse is rare, although foreign workers have complained that the police are slow to act on cases filed against native employers. Nauru has no armed forces; Australia provides national defense under an informal agreement.

The law provides equal freedom and protection for men and women, but societal pressures limit the ability of women to exercise their legal rights. Sexual harassment is a crime, but spousal rape is not. Domestic violence is frequently associated with alcohol abuse. Production of illicit alcohol spiked dramatically in 2006 after a major tax hike on beer in 2005; the government has since cut the tax.

Nepal

Population: 26,000,000

Capital: Kathmandu

Political Rights: 5*

Civil Liberties: 4*

Status: Partly Free



Status Change: Nepal's political rights rating improved from 6 to 5, its civil liberties rating rose from 5 to 4, and its status improved from Not Free to Partly Free, due to the return of Parliament and the end of King Gyanendra's direct rule following April protests, along with improvements in the rule of law, and media and NGO freedoms.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	5,4PF	5,5PF	6,5NF	5,4PF

Overview:

Ail April 2006 protest movement, inspired by an alliance of mainstream political parties and a Maoist-organized general strike, brought thousands of ordinary Nepalis into

the streets in a powerful display of civic resistance. Bowing to the pressure, King Gyanendra that month ended his direct rule and restored parliamentary government, now led by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. The Maoist rebels agreed to a ceasefire following parliament's return, and in November they signed a peace deal with the multiparty government, in which they agreed to disarm and join the parliamentary system. Despite these developments, however, a wide range of human rights abuses were reported in Maoist-controlled areas. Elections to a constituent assembly, tasked with writing a new constitution, are tentatively scheduled for mid-2007.

King Prithvi Narayan Shah unified the Himalayan state of Nepal in 1769. Following two centuries of palace rule, the left-leaning Nepali Congress (NC) party won Nepal's first elections in 1959. King Mahendra abruptly dissolved parliament and banned political parties in 1960, and in 1962 he began ruling through a repressive *panchayat* (village council) system. Many parties went underground until early 1990, when the NC and a coalition of Communist parties organized prodemocracy rallies that led King Birendra to lift the ban on political parties. An interim government introduced a constitution that vested executive power in a prime minister and cabinet responsible to parliament but retained the monarch as head of state.

In Nepal's first multiparty elections in 32 years, Girija Prasad Koirala, a veteran dissident, led the NC to victory and formed a government in 1991. Torn by intraparty conflicts, the NC was forced in 1994 to call early elections, which it lost to the Communist Party of Nepal/United Marxist-Leninist, or CPN-UML. The Communists, however, failed to win a majority in Parliament. Separately, the more militant Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) launched a guerrilla insurgency in 1996 that eventually engulfed much of the countryside. Hopes for a more stable government rose after the NC won a majority in elections held in 1999.

In June 2001, King Birendra's brother Gyanendra ascended the throne after a bizarre palace incident in which the crown prince apparently shot and killed Birendra and nine other members of the royal family before killing himself. After Sher Bahadur Deuba became interim prime minister in July, the rebels agreed to a ceasefire, but when they broke the agreement in November, Gyanendra declared a state of emergency. The government's subsequent decision to use the army to fight the Maoists marked a sharp escalation in the conflict; an estimated 5,000 people were killed in 2002, and Nepal's infrastructure and economy were severely damaged.

Political instability increased in May 2002, when Deuba dissolved parliament and called for fresh elections to be held in November. After Deuba, then acting as caretaker prime minister, asked the king in October to postpone the elections because of the worsening security situation, Gyanendra dismissed him and assumed executive powers himself. Postponing elections indefinitely, he installed an interim administration headed by Lokendra Bahadur Chand, a former prime minister and the leader of a small royalist party. Mainstream parties termed his decision undemocratic and organized antigovernment protests calling for a return to parliamentary rule. The subsequent June 2003 appointment of Surya Bahadur Thapa, a member of a right-wing royalist party, as prime minister also lacked legitimacy. In June 2004, Deuba, who enjoyed somewhat more support than his predecessors, was reappointed as prime minister with a mandate to hold elections and reestablish peace. However, the

NC and three other parties refused to join the government, and parliament remained dissolved.

Peace with the Maoists proved elusive. After the collapse of a ceasefire between the rebels and government forces in August 2003, the rate of killings on both sides once again rose sharply. The Maoists continued their policy of staging bombings, assassinating local government officials, and attacking key economic targets. Periodic strikes and blockades crippled the economy and caused further hardship for Nepali civilians and business interests.

The equation changed dramatically on February 1, 2005, when King Gyanendra dismissed the government, assumed executive powers, and imposed a state of emergency. His officials detained politicians, arrested thousands of party activists, outlawed demonstrations, and shut down numerous media outlets and other means of communication, such as telephone and internet services. Although the state of emergency was lifted in April, restrictions on travel, assembly, and media stayed in place, and many politicians and others remained in detention or under house arrest. Civil society groups continued to protest against the restrictions placed on their activities, while the parties themselves struggled to overcome their divisions and form a united front against the palace. The seven main parties banded together in support of a "road map" for a return to democracy that included as a first step the restoration of Parliament. Antigovernment protests and agitation became a regular feature of life in Kathmandu. In response, official pressure on civil society and the media was stepped up; the government amended six media laws to increase controls on both content and ownership, and a 15-point code to regulate nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) was introduced in 2005. Despite the king's justification that a royal takeover of the government was needed to crush the Maoist insurgency and improve the security situation, there is little evidence that either occurred during the latter half of 2005.

Realizing that their attempts to engage the king were unlikely to bear fruit, the seven party alliance (SPA) entered into talks with the Maoists in October 2005. Their efforts culminated the following month in a 12-point agreement that called for an end to absolute monarchy and the restoration of democracy. Despite the inclusion of an option to accommodate the monarchy in a revised political structure, the royal government refused to recognize the agreement, leaving little room for a future settlement between the palace and the Maoist-SPA coalition.

The Maoist leadership, which had been shaken by an internal dispute between leaders Bhattarai and Prachanda during 2005, demonstrated a more coherent and effective military and political strategy in early 2006. In January, the Maoists ended a ceasefire declared in September 2005, launching a set of coordinated attacks in and around Kathmandu and mounting at least 50 bombings that month alone. The SPA continued to organize protests, including a demonstration in Janakpur that drew 100,000 people in January. Amid increased tensions, the government cracked down on opposition groups on January 19, disrupting plans for rallies on the following day. All telephone services were cut off for a time in Kathmandu, and roughly 100 SPA leaders were arrested. An indefinite ban on protests was imposed.

The Maoists and the SPA both opposed municipal elections that took place in February. Although the government claimed that they were a democratic step forward, the polls' legitimacy was undermined by a widespread lack of participation by

mainstream parties and voters and by the compromised independence of the election commission. Many of the posts at stake had no candidates at all, while others attracted only a single candidate who ran unopposed.

In March 2006, the SPA and Maoists reaffirmed their commitment to the November 2005 deal and began planning a series of strikes and rallies scheduled for April. Although the parties maintained executive control over the planning of the demonstrations—a request by the Maoists for a joint appeal was rejected by SPA leaders—the Maoists played an integral role in the movement, rallying their rural base and deploying political workers in Kathmandu to direct protesters. When the strikes came into effect on April 4, however, public response was far greater than either the Maoists or the SPA had expected.

The initial plan was for a four-day strike, and after it proved successful, the SPA called for an extension and a tax boycott. Maoist leaders also publicly supported the continuation of the movement. In the following days, the scale of the protests increased dramatically, despite curfews and a government crackdown. Thousands took part in demonstrations across the country on a daily basis. The general public, led by professionals, civil society leaders, human rights leaders, and the civil service, formed the core of most demonstrations and marches; party cadres and leaders were initially rarely seen in the streets, and the vast majority of protesters were neither hard-core Maoists nor party loyalists. Domestic radio and television coverage helped encourage and organize protesters. Violent responses from the government fueled the marches; a major clash between security forces and protesters at Gongabu on April 11, in which the police fired live ammunition at crowds, only helped to draw more people into the streets. Meanwhile, in the early weeks of the movement, the king remained aloof. He did not mention the protests in an April 14 address to the public, seemingly confident that security forces could quell the unrest.

By April 21, however, it had become apparent that the king had to respond to the mounting pressure. Fourteen people had died in the protests, which showed no sign of slowing, and several government ministers had gone into hiding. The king issued an April 21 proclamation stating that "executive power of the kingdom of Nepal, which was in our safekeeping, shall from this day forward be returned to the people." He then called on the SPA to recommend a candidate for prime minister. The SPA and Maoists dismissed the offer as insufficient, however, noting that the king was only agreeing to return to the status quo before January 2005; he would retain power to dismiss the prime minister and exercise article 127 of the constitution, which had been central to his use of unilateral powers. The groups demanded that the king acquiesce to their demands for the restoration of parliament and empower a constituent assembly to write a new constitution. Gyanendra's proclamation also raised the ire of the public, who took to the streets of Kathmandu on April 22 in greater numbers than before, with estimated crowds of 200,000 to 300,000 people.

The firm rejection of the king's proposal convinced the palace that significant change was necessary. Reading a text approved by the SPA leadership, the king on April 24 agreed to reinstate Parliament and follow the SPA road map in accordance with the November 2005 agreement. The SPA formed a new Parliament led by G. P. Koirala. It was quick to pass several measures limiting the palace's power, including resolutions removing the king's immunity from prosecution and making him liable to income tax, amending the national anthem to remove references to the king, and

giving the cabinet the sole right to appoint the chief of the army. While the Maoists objected to the king's capitulation to the SPA, stating that it did not fully meet their demands for the end of the monarchy, they agreed to a three-month truce and began negotiations with the Parliament on disarmament and their entrance into the formal political sphere. In November, the two sides agreed to peace accords that stipulated that the Maoists would lay down their weapons, which would be placed under UN monitoring, and join the transitional Parliament. However, the Maoists were unable to follow the ambitious disarmament timetable set in the agreement and did not join parliament on December 1st as originally planned. They are expected to enter the government in early 2007.

Ongoing Maoist-SPA tensions were apparent in late December, when Maoists threatened a general strike following the appointment of several foreign ambassadors without their consultation. Although the issue was resolved, the episode underlined the fragility of Maoist-SPA relations. While Constituent Assembly elections are scheduled for June 2007, the interim government will also be forced to confront growing ethnic unrest in the southern planes, continued hostility from Maoist splinter-groups, and frequent strikes and protests in the capitol in the run up to the summer elections.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Nepal is not an electoral democracy. The 1990 constitution provides for a 205-seat lower house of Parliament that is directly elected for a five-year term, and a 60-seat upper house whose members are either elected by national or local government bodies or appointed by the monarch. King Gyanendra ruled from 2002 to 2005 through interim prime ministers and cabinets that had limited powers and little legitimacy; in February 2005 he dispensed with this facade, ruling by decree until protests in April 2006 led to the reinstatement of parliament. The current Parliament is comprised of members elected in 1999. The government is operating under the 1990 constitution, but some lawmakers have asserted that recent resolutions regarding the power of the king override the constitution. A new, interim constitution was signed in December and is expected to be promulgated in early 2007. The monarchy was pushed into the political background after the April protests; in May, the king was stripped of his power to veto laws and his control over the army. The Parliament is now the focal point of all legislative functions, and executive power is vested in the cabinet. After the return of parliament, the formal designation of the government was changed from "His Majesty's Government of Nepal" to simply "the Nepal government."

A wide range of political parties have been allowed to operate since 1990, although the constitution bans parties that are formed along religious, caste, ethnic, tribal, or regional lines. Representation in state institutions of ethnic minorities, lower castes, and women remains inadequate, although a resolution passed by the lower house in April called on the government to reserve 33 percent of all public positions for women. Several arrests of party activists took place early in 2006, but after the April protests, political parties have operated with far greater freedom.

Government institutions have all but fallen apart in much of rural Nepal. Municipal elections in February 2006 were neither free nor fair; only 20 percent of voters cast ballots, and voting took place in just 36 out of 58 towns and cities due to individuals running unopposed or because seats had no candidates. Local army offic-

ers act as de facto governors of districts, while higher-ranking officers and retired generals have been appointed to a number of influential posts.

Elected governments have made few reforms to Nepal's bloated, inefficient civil service, and ministries continue to operate with little openness or accountability. Corruption is perceived to be endemic in politics and government administration. Legislation passed in 2002 disqualifies those convicted of corruption from running in political elections for five years and places the burden of proof in corruption cases on the accused. However, compliance with anticorruption regulations remains weak, and the prosecution of high-level officials is rare, which contributes to a climate of impunity. After its return to power, the Parliament made some effort to prosecute corrupt officials from the king's government. In July 2006, Chief Election Commissioner Keshav Raj Rajbhandari and Nayan Bahadur Khatri, the head of the National Human Rights Commission, were impeached for incompetence and corruption. In February, the Supreme Court dissolved the much-criticized Royal Commission for Corruption Control, deeming it unconstitutional. Former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, who had been imprisoned by the commission in 2005, was released shortly after the ruling. The government later formed a panel to probe possible abuses by the body. Nepal was ranked 121 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although several press freedom problems remain, the media have been allowed greater liberty to operate since the transfer of power in April. The government has declared several media controls to be defunct. In May 2006, the Supreme Court discarded Article 8 of the 1992 National Broadcasting Act and Article 15 (1) of the 1991 Publications and Newspapers Act, deeming them incompatible with a 1990 constitutional provision guaranteeing press freedom. The first article gave the government the right to cancel the licenses of radio and television stations that broadcast news. The second allowed the government to restrict or censor coverage of sensitive issues. A restrictive media ordinance passed in October 2005 was also annulled, as was a 2005 decision to ban official advertising in private news outlets. A high-level media commission was formed in June to further review media laws and practices. The interim constitution signed in December provides for press freedom and specifically prohibits censorship. Authorities are also forbidden to close, or cancel registrations for, print and media outlets due to content.

The media now function in a less dangerous environment than during Gyanendra's rule, when harassment, intimidation, and violence toward journalists was commonplace. However, journalists still face threats from Maoists and government forces. There were several reports of journalists being threatened, kidnapped, or attacked in Maoist-controlled areas in the second half of 2006. Although cases involving government forces were less frequent, police and soldiers have mistreated journalists in some instances. Members of the press have also been attacked by independent groups or mobs when addressing sensitive topics; reporters covering the treatment of minority groups in rural areas have been threatened or attacked in the past year.

The government maintains control of both the influential Radio Nepal, whose political coverage is supportive of official policies, and Nepal's main television station. The issuing of new licenses for media outlets was halted under King Gyanendra's direct rule, but in October 2006 it was reported that the government had awarded

licenses to six new television channels and 50 FM radio stations across the country. A ban on FM news reporting had been lifted by the king in December 2005.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion. In 2006, the parliament proclaimed that Nepal would be recognized as a secular, rather than a Hindu, country. Although religious tolerance is broadly practiced, proselytizing is prohibited, and members of some religious minorities occasionally complain of official harassment, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 Report on International Religious Freedom. Christian groups have considerable difficulty registering as religious organizations and thus are unable to own land on which to build churches or cemeteries.

The government does not restrict academic freedom. More than 100 teachers were killed by security forces and Maoists during the civil conflict, and Maoists regularly targeted private schools in rural areas, often abducting and forcibly conscripting school children. Since the April 2006 truce, the number of attacks on schools has dropped, although there were reports of school kidnappings in Chitwan District in November 2006.

The government imposed curfews and an indefinite ban on demonstrations in 2006 following a crackdown in January. During the April demonstrations, government forces put in place a shoot-to-kill curfew in Kathmandu; 14 protesters were slain during the two weeks of protests, with several reports of live ammunition being fired into unarmed crowds. Following Parliament's return to power, curfews and restrictions were lifted, although several protests by Maoists and workers were forcibly dispersed later in the year in Kathmandu. A protest by pro-Maoist demonstrators demanding information concerning missing rebels on September 5 was dispersed by police with batons, and at least 30 people were injured. Dozens of Maoist protesters were arrested later in the month.

NGOs played an active role in the April protests, and conditions for the groups improved somewhat following the transfer of power. Organizations working in Maoist-controlled areas, however, continued to face restrictions on their work. In May, the government repealed the November 2005 "NGO code of conduct," which had barred the groups from work that would disturb social harmony. Hundreds of NGOs currently work on a variety of issues in Nepal, and there have been no reports of government restrictions in the second half of 2006. NGOs operating in western Nepal were forced to put work on hold in August after Maoist forces warned them not to work without their permission. Earlier in the summer, Maoists had banned all NGOs from one western district.

Until the April protests, labor rights were severely restricted, with union rights suspended and meetings banned. However, since Parliament's return to power some improvements have been made. By law, workers in certain essential services cannot stage strikes, and 60 percent of a union's membership must vote in favor of a strike for it to be legal. In 2004, the government expanded the list of "essential industries" to cover the transport, tourism, telecommunications, and public utilities sectors. Under pressure from labor unions, the lower house in May 2006 endorsed a proposal to ensure basic trade union rights for professionals and civil servants, guaranteed by International Labor Organization conventions. The draconian labor ordinance put in place by Gyanendra's government was repealed, and restrictions on civil service members forming unions were lifted. Although bonded labor was out-

lawed in 2000, it persists in rural areas, and the incidence of child labor has increased due to conditions created by the insurgency.

Although the Supreme Court has been viewed as largely independent of the executive, this status was increasingly threatened during the latter stages of Gyanendra's rule, as court orders were routinely flouted by the government and the court itself repeatedly delayed issuing habeas corpus writs. Following parliament's restoration, the Supreme Court reasserted its independence by ordering the release of three ministers who had been held on charges of plotting to repress the April demonstrations. The court found that there was insufficient evidence for their prosecution. Lower courts remain subject to political pressure and endemic corruption, and many Nepalese have only limited access to justice. Because of heavy case backlogs and a slow appeals process, suspects are often kept in pretrial detention for periods longer than their prospective prison sentences. Prison conditions are poor, with overcrowding common and detainees sometimes remaining handcuffed or otherwise fettered.

In ordinary criminal cases, police at times commit extrajudicial killings and cause the disappearance of suspects in custody. They also occasionally torture and beat suspects to punish them or to extract confessions. The government generally has refused to conduct thorough investigations or take serious disciplinary measures against officers accused of brutality. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), set up in 2000 to investigate human rights abuses but slowly co-opted by the king's political allies, has been defunct since the return of Parliament.

Both the government and the Maoists have been accused of an array of human rights violations in the context of the insurgency, which affected the entire country and has claimed nearly 13,000 lives since 1996. Prior to April 2006, the army and the poorly equipped police force were regularly implicated in extrajudicial killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detentions, rapes, and the torture of suspected Maoists and their alleged supporters. The NHRC recorded several thousand extrajudicial executions since 2001 and several hundred disappearances in each of the last few years, giving Nepal the highest number of recorded disappearances worldwide. Nevertheless, a March 2005 Human Rights Watch report detailing the phenomenon noted that the incidents may have been underreported.

Throughout the insurgency, the Maoists killed, tortured, or kidnapped civilians, including suspected informers, landowners, local officials, teachers, and members of mainstream political parties. The rebels—estimated at 5,000 well-trained guerrillas supported by some 15,000 fighters who control perhaps 75 percent of Nepal's territory—also set up "people's courts" in some districts that hand down summary justice and "people's governments" that levy taxes on inhabitants' income and landholdings. Villagers have regularly been coerced into providing food and lodging for traveling Maoist cadres and forced to attend political programs in which they are indoctrinated in Maoist ideology. Guerrillas have funded their operations in part through extortion and often closed schools and forcibly recruited children as soldiers, human shields, and couriers.

Conditions have improved markedly since the April ceasefire. Hundreds of Maoist prisoners were released in May, and the rebels agreed to lay down their arms in November. However, Maoists have faced criticism for continued human rights abuses in the second half of 2006. A UN report in September 2006 documented nu-

merous cases of murder, abduction, torture, extortion, and the abuse of captives in Maoist-controlled areas. Reports also criticized the Maoists for continued policies of child recruitment, and "people's courts" still function in many districts. Continued abuses have meant that few of the estimated 200,000 people displaced by the conflict have returned to their homes. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center reported in 2006 that the Maoists are actively opposing the return of displaced residents whom they consider "antirevolutionary."

Members of the Hindu upper castes dominate government and business, and low-caste Hindus, ethnic minorities, and Christians face discrimination in the civil service and courts. Despite constitutional provisions that ban caste-based discrimination, *dalits* (untouchables) continue to be subjected to particularly severe exploitation, violence, and social exclusion. Ethnic tensions mounted following the return of parliament, and violence broke out in late 2006 in the southern plains region, known as Terria, where several groups began campaigns for greater autonomy and freedom from upper caste domination. In December, a strike called by Nepal Sadbhawana Party-Anandidevi, the political party representing the largest group, the Madhesis, turned violent and led to several injuries when Madhesis clashed with the Pahades, a rival group. Some 2,000 to 3,000 Tibetans escape into exile via Nepal each year, with most ending up in India. In a bid to improve relations with China, the Nepalese government closed all offices related to the Tibetan refugees in January 2005, according to Agence France-Presse. Nepal also provides asylum to more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees.

Women rarely receive the same educational and employment opportunities as men, and there are relatively few women in government and the civil service. Although a 2002 law legalized abortion and broadened women's property rights, many other laws relating to property, divorce, marriage, and citizenship discriminate against women. Domestic violence and rape continue to be serious problems. The government has taken few steps to curb violence against women or to assist victims, and authorities generally do not prosecute domestic violence cases. Amnesty International and others have documented a number of cases of custodial rape of women and girls by both security forces and state-sponsored village militias. Thousands of women and girls are trafficked annually, many to Indian brothels; while the majority are lured by false promises of work or sold by a family member, some are abducted by organized gangs. Because most prostitutes who return to Nepal are HIV-positive, nearly all returnees are shunned and find it difficult to rebuild their lives. In December 2005, the Supreme Court ruled that women under 35 would no longer need their parents' or husbands' permission to apply for a passport. The ruling came after petitions from two women claiming that the law—which had been intended to curb trafficking of women—was discriminatory and violated the constitution. In May 2006, the Parliament voted unanimously in favor of a resolution under which children born to Nepalese women would be given full citizenship.

Netherlands

Population: 16,400,000

Capital: Amsterdam

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: The center-right government resigned in June 2006 after an internal dispute involving the immigration minister and Somali-born Member of Parliament Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a collaborator of slain filmmaker Theo van Gogh. Early elections were held in November, and talks on a new ruling coalition were ongoing at year's end. Nine members of a radical Islamic terrorist cell known as the Hofstad group, which had been linked to Van Gogh's death, were convicted in March. Also in November, the Netherlands signed an agreement that would break up the Netherlands Antilles in 2007, granting autonomy to the Caribbean islands of Curacao and St. Maarten and making three smaller islands Dutch municipalities.

After the Dutch won their independence from Spain in the sixteenth century, the princely House of Orange assumed the leadership of the United Provinces of the Netherlands. A constitutional monarchy with a representative government emerged in the nineteenth century. The Netherlands remained neutral in both world wars but was invaded by Nazi Germany in 1940. The occupation ended after five years of harsh rule, during which Dutch Jews were deported to concentration camps and Dutch civilians were forced to work in German factories. The Netherlands ended its neutrality when it joined NATO in 1949; it then became, in 1952, one of the founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community, a precursor to the European Union (EU).

Following the shooting death of right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn in May 2002, his newly formed party, the Pim Fortuyn List (LPF), won second place on an anti-immigrant platform in national elections that month. The good fortunes of the LPF were short lived, however, as party infighting led to the collapse of the new government in October, and new elections were called for 2003. In November 2004, Dutch television viewers voted Fortuyn the greatest Dutchman of all time, ahead of William of Orange, the sixteenth-century founder of the modern Dutch state, and Anne Frank, the World War II diarist and Holocaust victim.

During the January 2003 elections, 80 percent of registered voters turned out, and nine parties won seats in Parliament. The Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA)

received more than 28 percent of the vote and 44 seats, just ahead of the Labor Party (PvdA), which captured around 27 percent and 42 seats, and the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VD), which secured 18 percent and 28 seats. The LPF dropped to fifth place with only about 6 percent of the vote and 8 seats. Following four months of talks and a failed attempt to form a broad, center-left coalition with the PvdA, the CDA brought the VD and Democrats-66 (D66) into a center-right coalition with a slim majority of only 6 seats. Jan Peter Balkenende was named prime minister for a second term.

Nearly 62 percent of Dutch voters rejected the proposed European Constitution in a national referendum in June 2005, following a similar response by voters in France in May. The two votes effectively scuttled the EU charter for the foreseeable future.

In December 2005, 14 men went on trial for allegedly belonging to a radical Islamic terrorist cell known as the Hofstad group. The trial was seen as the first test of new antiterrorism legislation that created charges for "membership of a criminal organization with terrorist intent." One of the accused was Mohammed Bouyeri, a radical Islamist who killed the controversial filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004 and was sentenced to life imprisonment in July 2005. The October 2005 decision by a Dutch court to make Bouyeri stand trial a second time on terrorism charges was criticized by some as a source of further ethnic tensions in the country. Nine of the defendants, including Bouyeri, were convicted in March 2006.

The coalition government resigned in June 2006 over an internal dispute about the immigration and integration minister, Rita Verdonk. In May, the minister had moved to annul the citizenship of a fellow VD member of Parliament, the Somali-born Ayaan Hirsi Ali, after it was discovered that she had lied in her 1992 asylum application. Ali has received death threats for being an outspoken critic of Islam and for her film, *Submission*, which she made in collaboration with Van Gogh. D-66, a minor party, quit the government over the handling of the incident, causing the coalition to fall apart. Although the government said in July that Ali could keep her Dutch citizenship, she had already announced plans to relocate to the United States and join a conservative think tank.

In November, the country held elections for a new parliament in the wake of the ruling coalition's collapse in June. The CDA led the voting with 41 seats, followed by the PvdA with 32, the Socialist Party with 26, and the VD with 22. Coalition talks were still underway at year's end.

A political party with a pro-pedophilia agenda registered in the Netherlands in June, causing outrage and pressure on the government to block it. The group advocates lowering the age of sexual consent to 12 from 16, as well as legalizing child pornography and sex with animals.

The Netherlands signed an agreement in November granting autonomy to the Caribbean territories of Curacao and St. Maarten. The islands, which were part of the Netherlands Antilles at the time, would each be self-governing as of July 2007 except in the areas of defense, law enforcement, and foreign policy. Meanwhile, the smaller islands in the Netherlands Antilles—Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius—were set to strengthen their Dutch ties by gaining the status of Netherlands municipalities.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The Netherlands is an electoral democracy. The 150-member lower house of Parliament, or Second Chamber, is elected

every four years by proportional representation and passes bills on to the 75-member upper house, or First Chamber, which is elected for four-year terms by the country's provincial councils. Foreigners resident in the country for five years or more are legally eligible to vote in local elections.

The leader of the majority party or coalition is usually appointed prime minister by the monarch, currently Queen Beatrix. The vice prime ministers are also appointed by the monarch. Mayors are not elected in the Netherlands but appointed from a list of candidates submitted by the municipal councils. The monarch appoints the Council of Ministers (cabinet) and the governor of each province on the recommendation of the majority in Parliament.

The country has few problems with political corruption. The Netherlands was ranked 9 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The news media are free and independent. Restrictions on insulting the monarch and royal family exist but are rarely enforced. Despite a high concentration of newspaper ownership, a wide variety of opinion is expressed in the print media. Internet access is not restricted.

The Dutch constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and religious organizations that provide educational facilities can receive subsidies from the government. Members of the country's Muslim population have encountered an increase in racist incidents in the recent past, including vandalism, arson, defacing of mosques or other Islamic institutions, harassment, and verbal abuse. According to the U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom Report for 2006, the government launched a comprehensive outreach program to counter growing anti-Muslim sentiments in the wake of the Ayaan Hirsi Ali controversy. In November, the Dutch cabinet backed a proposal by the immigration minister, Verdonk, to ban the burqa, the full face and body covering worn by some Muslim women, from public places. The government took no further action on the law during the rest of the year.

In order to curb undesired foreign influence in the affairs of Dutch Muslim groups, the government has begun to require all imams and other spiritual leaders recruited from Muslim countries to take a one-year integration course before practicing in the Netherlands. An all-party parliamentary report issued in January 2004 concluded that the country had failed to create an integrated, multiethnic society. The report suggested a reversal of the country's 30-year-old policy of multiculturalism, arguing that Muslims resident in the Netherlands should "become Dutch." The government does not restrict academic freedom.

People have the right to assemble, demonstrate, and generally express their opinions. National and international human rights organizations operated freely without government intervention during the year. Workers have the right to organize, bargain collectively, and strike. In November, Parliament enacted legislation that outlaws organizations considered terrorist groups by the EU and the United Nations.

The judiciary is independent, and the rule of law prevails in civil and criminal matters. The police are under civilian control, and prison conditions meet international standards.

The population is generally treated equally under the law, although human rights groups have criticized the country's recent asylum policies for being unduly harsh and violating international standards. In September, amid growing criticism by

nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and refugee groups for not expediting the asylum requests for 32,000 people, the government finally granted resident permits to about half and ordered the rest to leave the country. The U.S. State Department reports that several thousand left the country voluntarily and another few thousand were involuntarily repatriated. In December, the country instituted a general moratorium on expelling any more people from the group of 32,000 asylum seekers. In October 2006, the Dutch government instituted a moratorium on repatriating failed asylum seekers from Iran who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. The government recognizes gay and lesbian Iranians as a "special group" who may face persecution at home and deserve protection in the Netherlands. The Dutch are known for their liberal values and laws; among these are tolerant attitudes toward so-called soft drugs, such as marijuana, and the legalization of euthanasia and same-sex marriage. The country passed a law in June 2004 that abolished anonymity in sperm donations so that the children of artificially inseminated women can identify their biological fathers.

The country is a destination and transit point for trafficking in persons, particularly women and girls for sexual exploitation. New legislation came into effect in January 2005 that expanded the legal definition of trafficking to include forced labor and increased the maximum penalty for traffickers to 12 years in cases of serious physical injury and 15 years in cases of death. According to the U.S. State Department's 2006 Trafficking in Persons report, the Dutch government that year continued its strict controls and licensing for legal brothels as a way to combat trafficking. The government also continued its support of NGOs assisting trafficking victims, and the Justice Ministry began its second assessment (since 2000) of the prostitution sector, in part to determine the number of women trafficked into the profession.

New Zealand

Population: 4,100,000

Capital: Wellington

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Dame Te Atairangikaahu, the Maori queen, passed away in August 2006. Her eldest son, Tuheitia Paki, succeeded her. Separately, Major General Jerry Mateparae was appointed defense chief in March, becoming the first Maori to hold the post. In June, a Saudi national was deported for suspected ties with terrorists.

British sovereignty in New Zealand was established in 1840 under the Treaty of Waitangi, a pact between the British government and Maori chiefs that also guaranteed Maori land rights. New Zealand became a self-governing parliamentary democracy in 1907 and gained full independence from Britain in 1947, though the British monarch remained as head of state.

General elections held on September 18, 2005, gave the Labour Party—which has been in office since 1999—a slim majority with 50 parliamentary seats over the National Party, which took 48 parliamentary seats. A 66-seat majority is necessary for a party to form its own government in the 121-seat Parliament. The Green Party, part of the existing Labour-led coalition, captured 6 seats. The Maori Party—the country's first ethnic party, formed in 2004—took 4 seats, while four other parties secured the remaining 13 seats. Both the Greens and the Maori Party pledged to support a Labour-led coalition government.

Dame Te Atairangikaahu, the Maori queen, passed away at the age of 74 in August 2006. Her eldest son, Tuheitia Paki, was chosen as her successor by the tribes. The new king is 51 years old and has been a university manager and adviser on Maori cultural affairs. The March 2006 appointment of Major General Jerry Mateparae as the new chief of New Zealand's defense force was another milestone for the Maori; he is the first Maori to hold the post.

Concerns about how immigration is changing demographics in New Zealand have led the government to tighten immigration requirements in recent years. British immigrants now represent about one-third of all new residents, while the numbers of Chinese, South African, Indian, and Pacific Islander immigrants continue to increase. A new law requires residents to live in New Zealand for five years before they can apply for citizenship. Another measure restricts automatic citizenship for persons born in Samoa between 1924 and 1948, when the country was under New Zealand's rule. Concerns about immigrants as threats to national security have also grown. In June 2006, the government expelled a Saudi national who arrived in New Zealand in February on a student visa. The government suspected him of having ties to those responsible for the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States. He was deported under a rarely invoked section of the Immigration Act that requires the consent of the governor-general and provides no avenue for appeal.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: New Zealand is an electoral democracy. A mixed-member electoral system combines voting in geographic districts with proportional-representation balloting. New Zealand is a member of the Commonwealth, and Britain's Queen Elizabeth II is the chief of state, represented by a governor-general. The prime minister, the head of government, is the leader of the majority party or coalition and is appointed by the governor-general. The unicameral Parliament, or House of Representatives, has 120 members, of which 69 are elected in single-member constituencies, and 51 are chosen by party list. All Parliament members serve three-year terms. The proportional representation system replaced the "first past the post" system in 1983.

The two main political parties are the center-left New Zealand Labour Party and the moderate conservative National Party. Current prime minister Helen Clark of the Labour Party took office in 1999.

For more than 130 years, the native Maori population has held seven reserved

seats in Parliament. Maori constitute 11 percent of the voting population and around 10 percent of the country's four million people. The Maori Party, the country's first ethnic party, was formed in 2004 in reaction to a government bill declaring all foreshore and seabed areas as state property held in perpetuity for all peoples of New Zealand, a possible infringement on Maori land rights. The Maori Party won a by-election in 2004, taking more than 90 percent of the votes for a North Island seat and secured almost 2 percent of the overall vote in the September 2005 general elections, ahead of many other small parties. In August 2006, the government reported an additional 14,914 persons enrolled in the Maori electoral roll, bringing the total to 385,977 persons.

New Zealand is one of the least corrupt countries in the world. The country was ranked first out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The media are free and competitive. Newspapers are published nationally and locally in English, as well as in Filipino, Hindi, and Chinese for the growing immigrant populations. The broadcasting sector was deregulated in 1988. In addition to the state-run Television New Zealand, there are three private channels and a Maori-language public network that was launched in March 2004; a Maori-language radio station has been broadcasting since 1996. A stronger movement among the Maori population to celebrate their language, arts, and history have increased demand for Maori-language media products. The government does not control or censor internet access, and competitive pricing promotes large-scale diffusion.

Freedom of religion is provided by law and respected in practice. Only religious organizations that intend to collect donations need to register with the government. Although New Zealand is a secular state, the government has fined businesses that operate on the official holidays of Christmas Day, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. A 2001 law granted exemptions to several categories of stores in response to demands from the non-Christian population. Academic freedom is enjoyed at all levels of instruction. The Education Act of 1964 bans religious education and observations during normal hours in primary schools. A recent attempt by the government to enforce this law was abandoned to avoid political backlash. Some parents had complained about prayers and religious blessings at a number of primary and intermediate schools, but bishops, opposition members of Parliament, and school principals all felt that enforcement would be difficult and unworkable. Government attempts to remove references to key principles in the Treaty of Waitangi in a new draft national curriculum in 2006 sparked criticism from the Maori Party and other Maori groups.

The government respects freedom of assembly and association. Nongovernmental and civil society groups are active throughout the country, working to promote community health, minority rights, education, children's welfare, and other causes. Many receive considerable financial support from the government, in addition to private donations.

The New Zealand Council of Trade Unions is the main labor federation. Fewer than 20 percent of the country's wage earners are union members. Membership has been in decline since the adoption in 1991 of the Employment Contracts Act (ECA), which ended compulsory union membership and prohibited certain types of strikes. The Labour-led government replaced the ECA with the Employment Relations Act (ERA) in 2001. The new law promotes collective bargaining; amendments passed in 2004 provide additional protections to workers when company ownership changes.

The ERA also allows unions to charge bargaining fees to nonunion workers who enjoy union-negotiated wages and conditions.

The judiciary is independent, and defendants can appeal to the Privy Council in London. Police discrimination against the Maori, who comprise more than half of the prison population, has been reported. Some Maori groups opposed police plans to begin trial use of Taser stun guns in 2006 due to concerns that Maori suspects would be unfairly targeted with the weapon.

Although no laws explicitly discriminate against the Maori, and their living standards have generally improved, most Maori and Pacific Islanders continue to lag behind the rest of the population in social and economic status. In recent years, the Maori have become more assertive in their claims for land, resources, and compensation from the government. A special tribunal hears Maori tribal claims tied to the Treaty of Waitangi. Recent Maori claims for rights to gas and oil fields in the Marlborough Sounds off the South Island have caused tensions with the non-Maori population and become a major issue in national politics. The assertions of ancestral rights were prompted by the government's plans to nationalize all beaches and seabed.

Violence against women and children is a major problem, particularly among the Maori and Pacific Islander populations. Many governmental and nongovernmental programs work to prevent domestic violence and provide support to victims, and special programs target the Maori community. However, the situation has not significantly improved. New Zealand has a high child murder rate, and Maori children suffer most, dying at the rate of 1.5 per 100,000 children under 15 years of age; this compares with 0.7 in Australia, 0.6 in Japan, 0.4 in Britain, and 0.1 in Spain. New Zealand has taken a progressive stance in the treatment of same-sex couples. The legislature passed the Civil Union Bill by a 65-55 vote in December 2004, granting same-sex partnerships recognition and legal rights similar to those of married couples; the law took effect in April 2005.

Nicaragua

Population: 5,600,000

Capital: Managua

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,3PF	2,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

In 2006, the alliance between the two dominant political parties in Nicaragua—the left-leaning Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) and the right-leaning Liberal

Constitutional Party (PLC)—continued throughout the presidential election campaign, which featured an attempt to discredit their chief rival, Eduardo Montealegre of the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance. FSLN candidate Daniel Ortega won the balloting in November, returning to the presidency for the first time in 16 years. Also in 2006, the country confronted an energy crisis and a slowdown in economic growth.

The independent Republic of Nicaragua was established in 1838, 17 years after the end of Spanish rule. Its subsequent history has been marked by internal strife and dictatorship. The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), a leftist rebel group, overthrew the authoritarian regime of the Somoza family in 1979. The FSLN then moved to establish a Marxist government, leading to a civil war. The United States intervened indirectly, supporting irregular forces known as the *contras*, which established bases in neighboring Honduras and Costa Rica. The FSLN wrote a new constitution in 1987.

In 1990, National Opposition Union presidential candidate Violeta Chamorro defeated the FSLN's Daniel Ortega in free and open elections. Before leaving power, the Sandinistas revised laws and sold off state property to party leaders, guaranteeing that they would have political and economic clout in the evolving political climate. Chamorro oversaw a transition of power, with the Sandinista military finally coming under civilian rule in 1995, and the amendment of the 1987 constitution to provide for a more even distribution of power among the three branches of government.

In the 1996 elections, former Managua mayor Arnoldo Aleman of the Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC) captured the presidency, soundly defeating Ortega. Throughout his presidency, Aleman was accused of corruption, although he never faced formal legal proceedings while in office. In 1999, the PLC government agreed to a governing pact with the FSLN opposition, led by Ortega. The pact was translated into a package of constitutional and legal reforms and guaranteed Aleman a seat in both the Nicaraguan and the Central American parliaments, thus assuring him immunity from prosecution. Moreover, the reforms included more than nine changes to the constitution, including a reform to the electoral law, which established constraints on the formation of political parties. Two of the most damaging reforms were the lowering of the percentage of votes required to win an election in a first round from 45 to 40 percent (or to 35 percent if the leading party has a 5 percent lead over the other parties), and the new requirement that aspiring political parties garner 3 percent of loyal endorsement from registered voters in order to register for an election.

In the November 2001 elections, PLC candidate Enrique Bolanos, a conservative businessman respected for his personal integrity, defeated Ortega. Although Bolanos was elected president under the PLC banner, he vowed to prosecute corrupt members of the Aleman administration, including the former president himself, who was accused of giving his family, friends, and political supporters as much as \$100 million siphoned from state coffers. Bolanos's vow to fight corruption caused a break with the PLC, and the president went on to form his own party, the Alliance for the Republic (APRE). The effort to convict Aleman of fraud and embezzlement was protracted but eventually successful, and in 2003, he received a 20-year prison sentence for money laundering. However, since his conviction, Aleman has used his political alliance with Ortega to petition the FSLN-controlled courts to allow him

to enjoy fewer penalties of his sentence, and his case is currently being reviewed by the Supreme Court.

Aleman and Ortega strengthened their political cooperation to thwart Bolanos's political initiatives. Since his election in 2001, the PLC- and FSLN-controlled National Assembly has blocked virtually all proposed legislation, and the FSLN-controlled courts have upheld the actions of the National Assembly. In 2005, the National Assembly passed legislation to strip Bolanos of several presidential powers and replace his political appointees, including directors of autonomous institutions such as state utilities. Bolanos attempted to block the replacement of his officials and appealed the case to the Central American Court of Justice, which ruled in his favor and ordered the National Assembly to repeal the legislation. After a long stand-off, the two sides agreed to postpone implementation of the reforms until after Bolanos left office.

Political activity in 2006 focused on the November presidential election. Ortega, again the FSLN candidate, and Eduardo Montealegre of the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN)—a prominent businessman and former finance minister under Bolanos—led in the polls ahead of the voting. PLC candidate and former Bolanos vice president Jose Rizo Castellon and Edmundo Jarquin of the Sandinista Renewal Movement (MRS), who had been appointed after initial MRS candidate Herty Lewites's death in July, held steady behind the two front-runners.

During the campaign in late July, PLC officials had alleged that Montealegre was directly involved in Nicaragua's internal debt scandal, known as the CENIS scandal, and demanded that he be prosecuted. Montealegre denied the claims, which held that the renegotiation of interest rates of CENIS bonds while he was finance minister had added \$1.7 million to his personal fortune. The National Assembly's Transparency Committee and the comptroller-general's office opened an investigation into the allegations, and the FSLN and PLC used the issue to damage Montealegre's presidential campaign.

Nicaragua's energy crisis represented another critical issue in 2006. Power cuts were routine in the capital and across the country, prompting protests against Union Fenosa, the Spanish utility company responsible for the distribution of electricity. In response to the crisis, the comptroller-general's office proposed a nullification of Union Fenosa's contract, and the Bolanos administration proposed an Energy Emergency Law that would reform electricity rates; however, the measure failed in the National Assembly. The FSLN proposed that the best solution was to accept Venezuela's offer to provide oil to Nicaragua on preferential terms. Party officials maintained that if Ortega were elected president, such a deal would be brokered and ties between Ortega and leftist Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez would be strengthened. The FSLN's discussion of a future relationship between Ortega and Chavez elicited concern from the United States, whose ambassador stated that a leftist leader in Central America would undermine U.S. interests.

On election day, November 5, Ortega won the presidency in the first round of voting, with 38 percent of the popular vote. He had needed at least 35 percent and a five-point lead on his closest opponent to avoid a runoff. Although the win raised some concerns about the return of the Sandinista leader, Ortega stated after his victory that he would not introduce radical changes to economic policy and would support national reconciliation. He also called on business and political leaders to

work together to maintain economic stability. Although Ortega had previously agreed to approve the constitutional reforms that had been postponed in December 2005 and forced against Bolanos, making them effective on January 20, 2007, he stepped back and argued that these reforms needed further scrutiny.

The presidential and legislative elections were regarded as free and fair. The FSLN obtained 38 percent of the vote, the PLC obtained 27 percent, the ALN 28 percent, and the MRS 6 percent. The FSLN obtained 37 out of 91 seats in the National Assembly, while the ALN secured 30, the PLC 18, and the MRS 6. Regional elections held in the Atlantic Coast region on March 5, highlighted concerns about Nicaragua's Supreme Electoral Council (CSE). The Atlantic Coast, which is populated primarily by indigenous and Afro-Caribbean communities, is the poorest region in the country and is often neglected by the central government. Since the passage of the Autonomy Law in 1987, the Atlantic Coast populations have elected regional authorities who are meant to respond directly to local needs. Although the elections were declared free and fair, the winning candidates were members of the allied PLC and FSLN, which raised doubts about whether they would represent local concerns. Since the PLC and FSLN controlled the CSE, the elections also called into question the partisan nature of the country's electoral institution. CSE voting rules limited voter participation and many voters abstained, further undermining confidence in the results and in the CSE's ability to function independently. The election results showed a total of 100,000 votes, of which the PLC obtained 41 percent, and the FSLN (27 percent) and Yatama (16 percent) ran in an alliance.

The Nicaraguan economy slowed again in 2006 after its initial slump in 2005. The growth in gross domestic product dropped to 2.5 percent, from 4 percent the previous year, and remittance transfers lagged compared with the 2005 amount. Unemployment fell from 7 percent to 5.6 percent in 2005, although many of the recently employed were thought to have entered the informal sector. Since 2003 and the International Monetary Fund's classification of Nicaragua as a heavily indebted poor country (HIPC), the country has benefited from debt forgiveness and assistance to pay its external debt.

The Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) with the United States came into effect in 2006. As the United States is Nicaragua's primary trading partner, proponents of the trade agreement predicted that it would spur further investment in several sectors of Nicaragua's lagging economy. To date, DR-CAFTA has led to a 20 percent increase in exports from Nicaragua. However, reactions to the treaty have been mixed, and complaints that small businesses and national production would suffer under the export-oriented model of DR-CAFTA have recently arisen. The country's trade deficit with the United States widened from \$555 million to \$771 million from 2005 to 2006.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Nicaragua is an electoral democracy. The constitution provides for a directly elected president and a 92-member, unicameral National Assembly. Both presidential and legislative elections are held every five years. The 2006 presidential and legislative elections were both regarded as free and fair by the Electoral Council as well as by the international community. Currently, the FSLN holds 37 out of 91 seats in the Assembly, the ALN holds 30, the PLC holds 18, and the MRS holds 6; the current Assembly has 92 seats.

The climate for political and civic activities is often affected by corruption, political pacts, violence, and drug-related crime directed by street gangs. Nicaragua was ranked 111 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution calls for a free press but allows some government censorship. Although the government has not invoked these powers recently, there has been no movement to change the constitutional provisions. Journalists have received death threats and some have been killed in recent years, in what some observers consider politically motivated attacks, some of which are alleged to be the work of FSLN sympathizers. Various judges, aligned with the FSLN, have ordered restrictions on the reporting of particular legal stories. Radio remains the main source of information. Before leaving office in 1990, the Sandinistas privatized some radio stations which were handed to Sandinista loyalists. There are six television networks based in the capital, including one government-owned network. Many of the stations slant the news in favor of various partisan factions. Three national newspapers based in the capital cover the news from a variety of political views. There is unrestricted access to the internet. Investigative journalism played a predominant role in raising political issues. The investigation of corruption and political party conduct during the election was critical to informing public opinion and balancing the debate.

Freedom of religion is respected, and academic freedom is generally honored.

Freedoms of assembly and association are recognized by law and largely upheld in practice. Nongovernmental organizations are active and operate freely. Generally, public demonstrations are allowed. The Sandinistas control many of the country's labor unions and, while in opposition, used them to stage rallies and to protest against government policies. However, the legal rights of non-Sandinista unions are not fully guaranteed, and there are allegations of violations of the right to organize, often in the form of employers firing employees who attempt to form bargaining units. Although the law recognizes the right to strike, unions must receive approval from the Ministry of Labor, which has declared only one strike legal since 1996. Citizens have no effective recourse when labor laws are violated by the government or by the Sandinista organization, and child labor continues to be a problem.

Nicaragua's judiciary remains dominated by Sandinista appointees. Many judges are susceptible to political influence and corruption. Concessions granted to former president Aleman in 2005 after his money-laundering sentence was handed down are the most recent example of this susceptibility. Because of long delays in trials and a large backlog of cases, the National Assembly has investigated ways to reform the judiciary, but no reforms have been enacted of late. The FSLN and the PLC have used their influence over the judicial system and their political appointees on the bench to uphold laws that make it difficult for minor parties to form and get their candidates on ballots. Judicial backing for these laws has also served to keep splinter groups from breaking away from Nicaragua's two major parties.

The Ministry of Government oversees the National Police, the agency that is formally charged with internal security; in practice, the police share this responsibility with the army in rural areas. The conduct of security forces continues to improve, reflecting enhanced civilian control, although abuses of human rights still occur. Forced confessions to the police remain a problem, as do cases in which security forces arbitrarily arrest and detain citizens. Insufficient funding of the National Po-

lice also affects police performance and has led to a shortage of officers. Prison and detention center conditions continue to be poor, and the facilities remain underfunded.

Although gang violence is increasing in Managua and other Nicaraguan cities, the crisis of drug gangs threatening national security elsewhere in the region has not come to Nicaragua. Although the gangs, or *maras*, do have members in the country, Nicaragua has not felt the need to call out troops to quell them. Nicaragua remains an important transshipment point for drugs making their way north from South America. The Pan-American Highway in Nicaragua's southwest region is a primary route for narcotics traffickers, although smuggling by air is increasing.

Nicaragua nominally recognizes the rights of indigenous communities in its constitution and laws, but those rights have not been respected in practice. Approximately 5 percent of the population is indigenous and lives mostly in the Northern Autonomous Atlantic Region (RAAN) and Southern Autonomous Atlantic Region (RAAS). In 2005, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled that the government had violated the rights of the Miskito and Sumo groups in 2000 when the electoral commission prevented the majority-indigenous Yatama party from competing in municipal elections held that year. The court ruling stipulated that the government must acknowledge the rights violation and pay damages to the two indigenous groups. The government has agreed to abide by the ruling, but no known steps have been taken to do so. Subsequently, during the 2006 autonomous regional elections, Yatama (the only regional party) won 16 percent of the vote.

Violence against women and children, including sexual and domestic abuse, remains a widespread and underreported problem. Nicaragua is also a source and transshipment point for the trafficking of women and children for purposes of prostitution. In order to combat Nicaragua's growing problem with trafficking, various government ministries and civil society groups have been working together to carry out awareness campaigns, to improve the repatriation of victims, and to conduct a major survey to provide reliable statistics on the extent of trafficking in Nicaragua.

Niger

Population: 14,400,000

Capital: Niamey

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,5NF	7,5NF	5,5PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

Niger's government attempted to introduce reforms in 2006 to improve the country's social infrastructure, but

efforts to raise and collect taxes drew protests from unions and other civic groups. A program aimed at expelling Chadian Arab migrants stoked tensions between Arabs and ethnic Tbareg and Toubou populations.

After gaining independence from France in 1960, Niger was governed for 30 years by one-party and military regimes dominated by leaders of the Hausa and Djerma ethnic groups. After 13 years of direct military rule, General Ali Seibou transformed Niger into a nominally civilian, one-party state in 1987. International pressure and pro-democracy demonstrations led to the formation of an all-party national conference and the adoption of a new constitution by popular referendum in 1992. Mahamane Ousmane, of the Alliance of Forces for Change, won a five-year term as the country's first democratically elected president in 1993. Colonel Ibrahim Bare Mainassara overthrew Ousmane in January 1996 and became president in a sham election six months later. Most opposition parties boycotted parliamentary elections in November 1996.

Mainassara was assassinated by members of his presidential guard in April 1999. Following his death, guard commander Major Daouda Mallam Wanke led a transitional government that organized presidential and legislative elections that year. Retired Lieutenant Colonel Mamadou Tandja, supported by the National Movement for a Developing Society (MNSD) and the Democratic and Social Convention (CDS), was elected president in a second round of polling, defeating former president Ousmane. The MNSD and the CDS obtained a majority in the National Assembly, and the elections were deemed credible by international observers.

In July 2004, Niger held nationwide municipal elections. Some 3,700 people were elected to local governments in 265 newly established communes. The ruling MNSD party won the most positions, though opposition parties made significant gains.

In December 2004, Tandja won a second term in office, defeating opposition leader Mahamadou Issoufou with 65.5 percent of the vote. In the legislative elections that year, four parties joined the ruling MNSD and the CDS to win 88 of the 113 seats in the National Assembly.

Tandja is credited with returning Niger to relative economic and political stability after years of turbulence, though the country remains at the bottom of the UN's 2006 Human Development Index. Desert covers about 80 percent of Niger's land area. Recurrent drought, devastating locust invasions and other chronic difficulties increase the fragility of poor rural households. During the severe 2005 food crisis, the government distributed food aid at subsidized prices that were still higher than most rural residents could afford. Officials initially downplayed the extent of the crisis, blaming opposition parties and others for "politicizing" the issue. Journalists were harassed for criticizing the slow and insufficient response to the famine, which affected a quarter of Niger's population.

A record harvest in late 2005 improved Niger's economic outlook, though an estimated 1.8 million people remain vulnerable to food shortages. The government has introduced reforms intended to improve agricultural production, upon which the majority of the population depends. Tax revenue is the lowest in the region, but government efforts to raise and collect taxes on basic goods and services faced obstacles from the country's unions and civic groups, which mounted strikes and demonstrations throughout 2006.

In April, the government passed legislation to make health care free for pregnant women and children under age five and drew up guidelines on the treatment of malnutrition, which affects over 50 percent of the country's population annually. By year's end, however, neither the funding nor the infrastructure for these programs had been put in place, even though government expenditures on health care amount to roughly 12 percent of Niger's gross domestic product, making the country one of the highest spenders on health care in West Africa.

The government in October 2005 began implementing an economic assistance program for Tuareg ex-combatants, the final phase of a peace accord that ended fighting between ethnic Tuareg and government forces across the Sahel region over a decade ago. Niger works closely with the U.S. government on programs intended to promote security and stem the growth of terrorist organizations in the region.

Ethnic tensions flared in October 2006, following the government's decision to forcibly repatriate thousands of nomadic Mahamid Arabs from Chad, many of whom had fled drought and warfare to settle in eastern Niger beginning in the 1970s. Residents had accused the group of introducing illegal firearms and depleting water supplies and pasture land with their livestock. Hundreds of residents demonstrated peacefully in the regional capital of Diffa after the government suspended the operation and created a commission to review the decision.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Niger is an electoral democracy. Presidential and legislative polls held in 1999 and 2004 were considered to be free and fair. Niger's president, who is directly elected every five years, chooses the prime minister from a list of three candidates presented by the majority party or coalition in the National Assembly. Members of the unicameral, 113-seat body are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms. The next presidential and legislative elections will be held in 2009.

There are 24 registered political parties in Niger, and nine are currently represented in the National Assembly. Leaders have made efforts to include minorities, especially members of the northern Tuareg ethnicity, in positions of authority.

Corruption is a continuing problem, though appointments were made to the government's anticorruption commission in 2005—the first such development since the commission's creation in 2003. The ministers for health and education were fired in June 2006 after auditors issued a report accusing them of embezzlement and finding that \$8 million was missing from a \$100 million education fund. Niger was ranked 138 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Constitutional protections for free expression were respected more in 2006 than in 2005, when journalists were harassed and detained for reporting on public protests and allegations of corruption. However, several publications were suspended during the year, and a number of journalists were arrested on charges of disseminating false information or defaming the government. In most of these cases, journalists were released with suspended sentences, dropped charges, or appeals pending. As a result, however, self-censorship in the media is common. Access to the internet is unhindered, though only a small percentage of the population has the means to use it.

Freedom of religion is respected for the most part, but Muslims are not uni-

formly tolerant of minority religions. Islam is practiced by 80 percent of the population. Academic freedom is guaranteed in principle but not always observed in practice.

Constitutional guarantees of freedom of assembly and association are generally respected, and most nongovernmental organizations operate openly and publish reports that are often critical of the government. Security forces used force to break up several demonstrations during the year, but did not prevent most groups from demonstrating peacefully in 2006, a marginal improvement from 2005. Teachers and students demonstrated peacefully during the year to protest mismanagement and corruption in the educational system, for example.

Workers have the right to form unions and bargain for wages, although more than 95 percent of the workforce is employed in the nonunion subsistence-agricultural and small trading sectors.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and courts have shown some autonomy in practice. Respect for human rights has generally improved under President Tandja's government. However, the judiciary is overburdened and subject to executive interference and other outside influence. Corruption is rife, fueled partly by low salaries and inadequate training. Prolonged pretrial detention is common. Police forces are also underresourced and poorly trained. Prisons are characterized by overcrowding and poor health and sanitary conditions, though humanitarian groups have unrestricted access.

Discrimination against ethnic minorities persists, despite constitutional protections. The Hausa and Djerma ethnic groups dominate government and business, although other major ethnic groups are represented at all levels of government.

The government has supported greater representation in the National Assembly by designating eight seats for special constituencies of ethnic minorities and nomadic populations. Instances of "hate speech" targeted against specific ethnic groups have been investigated and prosecuted by the government.

Nomadic peoples continue to have poor access to government services. Under pressure from human rights groups, the National Assembly in 2003 banned the keeping or trading of slaves, though a system of caste-based servitude is believed to continue. The government has begun to sensitize the population to the trafficking of children and has increased cooperation with its neighbors to limit the practice.

A quota system designed to improve women's access to appointed and elected office has increased their representation at all levels of government. Women continue to suffer extensive societal discrimination, however, especially in rural areas. Family law gives women inferior status in property disputes, inheritance rights, and divorce. In the east, some women among the Hausa and Peul ethnic groups are cloistered and rarely allowed to leave their homes without a male escort. Domestic violence against women is reportedly widespread. Sexual harassment and female genital mutilation are criminal offenses. Abortion is prohibited.

Nigeria

Population: 134,500,000

Capital: Abuja

Political Rights: 4

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,6NF	6,4NF	4,3PF	4,4PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF

Overview: Nigeria in 2006 geared up for general elections scheduled for April 2007. A proposed constitutional amendment that would have allowed President Olusegun Obasanjo to run for a third term in office was defeated in the Nigerian legislature in May. A rancorous public feud between Obasanjo and Vice President Atiku Abubakar, who planned to seek the presidency, led to competing charges of corruption and official misconduct. Separately, the government brought sedition charges against two journalists who had reported on a corruption scandal involving the purchase of a presidential jet.

The military has ruled Nigeria for all but 16 years since independence from Britain in 1960. Generals and their backers argued that they were the only ones who could keep a lid on simmering tensions among the country's 250 ethnic groups, as well as between religious communities; the north is largely Muslim, while the south is mainly Christian.

Nigeria initially appeared to be emerging from several years of military rule under General Ibrahim Babangida in 1993, when a presidential election was held. Moshood Abiola, a Muslim Yoruba from the south, was widely considered the winner, but the military annulled the results. It continued to rule behind a puppet civilian administration until General Sani Abacha, a principal architect of previous coups, took power in November 1993. A predominantly military Provisional Ruling Council (PRC) was appointed, and all democratic structures were dissolved and political parties banned. Abiola was arrested in June 1994 after declaring himself Nigeria's rightful president. He died in detention, after suffering from a lack of proper medical care, just five weeks after Abacha himself died suddenly in June 1998.

The departure of the two most significant figures on Nigeria's political landscape opened possibilities for democratic change. General Abdulsalami Abubakar, the army chief of staff, emerged as the PRC's consensus choice to be the country's next leader, and he promised to oversee a transition to civilian rule in 1999. Olusegun Obasanjo—a former general who had led a military regime from 1976 to 1979 and had spent three years in prison under Abacha—won the presidential poll in February 1999. In legislative elections held that year, Obasanjo's People's Democratic Party (PDP) won the most seats in both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Nigeria made its first peaceful transition from one elected government to another with the April 2003 election, in which Obasanjo won a second term. Electoral unrest, though anticipated, did not materialize, but there was violence leading up to the polls, which were marred by irregularities. While Obasanjo faced 19 opposition candidates, the race ultimately was between the southern, Christian Obasanjo and former general Muhammadu Buhari, a northern Muslim and member of the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP). Obasanjo won with 62 percent of the vote, compared with 32 percent for Buhari, who filed a petition on behalf of some 20 opposition parties to nullify the election results. The Supreme Court in 2005 unanimously rejected the challenge, saying the fraud discovered was not enough to have changed the poll results.

Obasanjo's PDP also dominated the 2003 legislative elections, in which at least 30 parties participated. The PDP won 52 of 109 Senate seats and 170 of 360 House seats. The ANPP captured 25 seats in the Senate and 81 in the House, while the Alliance for Democracy won 5 Senate seats and 30 House seats. Smaller parties secured the remainder.

After initially resisting calls for a national dialogue, Obasanjo opened a national conference in 2005, warning delegates against questioning Nigeria's unity. Although Nigerians had long called for a national conference, the talks drew criticism from Obasanjo's opponents and members of civil society. About 400 delegates met for five months and failed to agree on fundamental issues, such as how to divide the country's oil wealth and how to effectively deal with religious and ethnic tensions. The delegates called for a special commission to devise possible solutions to those problems.

Preparations for presidential, gubernatorial, and legislative elections scheduled for 2007 dominated Nigerian politics in 2006. In May, the legislature defeated a proposed constitutional amendment that would have allowed Obasanjo to run for a third term in office.

Obasanjo's vice president, Atiku Abubakar, who had publicly opposed the amendment, announced his intentions to run for president. However, in September, the PDP attempted to expel Abubakar from the party, and the following month an official report accused him of corruption. He rejected the charges, claiming that the prosecution was politically motivated. The courts ruled in his favor in November, and he was nominated for the presidency in December by the opposition Action Congress (AC) party. Obasanjo's subsequent decision to remove him from his position as vice president due to his joining another party prompted further battles in court.

Two prominent Nigerian politicians were assassinated in 2006, which raised fears of a bloody electoral campaign in 2007. In July, Funsho Williams, a leading Lagos politician and PDP member, was found murdered at his Lagos home. Williams had run twice for governor of Lagos State and had been expected to do so again in 2007. In August, Ayo Daramola, the PDP candidate for governor in southwestern Ekiti State and a former World Bank consultant, was stabbed to death. Rewards were offered for information leading to the murderers, but no one was convicted by year's end.

In June 2006, agents of the State Security Service (SSS) arrested two Lagos-based journalists who had covered allegations that a presidential jet purchased by the government was a five-year-old aircraft from the German carrier Lufthansa and not a new jet bought directly from the manufacturer, Boeing, as the government had claimed. After several days in custody, the journalists were charged with sedition and released on bail. The case received local and international attention, as the jour-

nalists, Mike Gbenga Aruleba of African Independent Television and Rotimi Durojaiye of the *Daily Independent* newspaper, were well known and respected, and there seemed to be no grounds for the sedition charges against them. The head of the Nigerian National Human Rights Commission, Bukhari Bello, was removed from his position days after publicly criticizing the journalists' arrests as an affront to free expression and the rule of law.

In August, Foreign Minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala resigned from the government after being moved from her previous post as finance minister in June and having her position as head of a high-level government economics team stripped away weeks later. Okonjo-Iweala was known internationally for her efforts to combat corruption, and analysts said her resignation harmed Nigeria's credibility on economic reform. She had also been seen as a potential presidential candidate for 2007.

The majority of Nigerians are engaged in small-scale agriculture, and most wealth is controlled by a small elite. The agriculture and manufacturing sectors have deteriorated considerably in the pursuit of oil, which accounts for more than 98 percent of the country's export revenues and almost all foreign investment.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Nigeria is not an electoral democracy. According to the constitution, the president is elected by popular vote for no more than two four-year terms. Members of the bicameral National Assembly are elected for four-year terms to the 109-seat Senate and the 360-seat House of Representatives. Local and international observers noted irregularities during the 2003 presidential and legislative elections, including ballot-box stuffing, multiple voting, alteration of results, and voter intimidation. Observers said fraud and intimidation were particularly prevalent in the southeast and in the Niger Delta.

Major political parties include the ruling PDP, the ANPP, the National Democratic Party, the Alliance for Democracy, and the People's Redemption Party. Political parties represent a wide array of policy positions, and openly engaged in debate and electoral campaigning in 2006. In September 2006, seven opposition parties merged into an umbrella party called the Action Congress (AC), with the goal of wresting power from the PDP in 2007 general elections. Vice President Atiku Abubakar was nominated as the AC's presidential candidate in December 2006.

Corruption remains a serious problem, having bled Nigeria of many billions of dollars in oil revenue. Nigeria was ranked 142 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. The government has taken steps to improve transparency and reduce corruption, including reforming procedures for contract procurements and bidding. In September 2006, a top official announced that authorities had convicted more than 1,000 people of economic crimes and recovered around \$5 billion over the past two years. In December 2005, the governor of Bayelsa State, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, was arrested in London after being impeached by the Bayelsa State Assembly and charged with corruption. Governors benefit from immunity from prosecution while in office, prompting state governments to begin impeachment proceedings against at least four governors on corruption grounds. At least two of those impeached remained underground and had evaded arrest at year's end. In May 2006, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission announced plans to investigate over a dozen more governors for corruption after

the 2007 elections, when many will have had to step down because of term limits. Vice President Abubakar was also charged with corruption-related offenses in 2006, though he was eventually acquitted and claimed the prosecution was politically motivated.

Freedom of speech and expression is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected in practice. More than 200 private radio and television stations broadcast throughout the country, and scores of print publications operate largely unhindered. However, criminal prosecution continues to be used against journalists covering sensitive issues such as official corruption, separatist movements, and communal violence. In addition, Sharia (Islamic law) in 12 northern states imposes severe penalties for alleged press offenses. The government does not impede internet access.

Local authorities regularly target journalists who criticize them. In 2006, two journalists in southeastern Ebonyi State were arrested, charged with sedition over an article criticizing the state governor, and kept in jail for over two months owing to stringent conditions for bail. The journalists, Imo Eze and Oluwole Elenyinmi, respectively director and editor of the local bimonthly *Ebonyi Voice*, were freed following local and international pressure on the governor, but the charges against them remained pending.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists has documented a pattern of media repression by the SSS, an elite corps that answers directly to the president. SSS agents have on occasion arrested journalists, confiscated newspapers, and harassed news vendors. In June 2006, the SSS arrested two journalists who had covered a corruption scandal involving the purchase of a presidential jet. They were charged with sedition and released on bail; the charges against one of the journalists were dropped before the end of the year.

Religious freedom is guaranteed by the constitution, but many Nigerians, including government officials, often discriminate against those of a religion different from their own. Religious violence, often reflecting regional and ethnic differences and accompanying competition for resources, is common. Academic freedom is guaranteed and honored in practice.

Freedoms of assembly and association are generally respected in practice. However, Amnesty International reported in 2005 that brutal repression of protests remained a routine tactic of Nigerian security forces in the oil-rich Niger Delta, and that communities protesting in the region often suffered collective punishment by security forces. In 2006, security forces clashed with demonstrators in southeastern Anambra State who supported the banned separatist Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, known as MASSOB. The organization claims that ethnic Igbos suffer discrimination by the government and seeks a separate Igbo state in the southeast. Human rights groups report that dozens of pro-Biafran activists have been killed in the past seven years and hundreds have been detained. (A civil war in the 1960s, in which Biafra attempted to secede from Nigeria, claimed some one million lives.) MASSOB's leader, Ralph Uwazuruike, was jailed in 2005 on treason charges; he maintains that the movement is nonviolent.

Despite several statutory restrictions on the rights of trade unions, workers—except members of the armed forces and those considered essential employees—may join trade unions, and the right to bargain collectively is guaranteed. About 10 percent of the workforce is unionized. Legislation passed in 2005 prevents umbrella

unions, such as the Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC), from calling strikes; such action is now decided by individual unions. The legislation makes union membership voluntary and gives unions the right to form outside the umbrella group. It also bans strikes in essential services such as health and education. According to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Nigeria has "serious shortcomings" in the application and enforcement of core labor standards.

The judiciary is subject to political influence and is hampered by corruption and inefficiency. Defendants do not always have legal representation and are often ill-informed about procedures and their rights. Lengthy pretrial detention remains a problem. In the 12 northern states where Sharia is in effect, human rights groups say Islamic courts fail to respect due process rights, which leads to harsh and discriminatory sentences. Nigeria's prisons are overcrowded, unhealthy, and life-threatening. In January 2006, the government agreed to speed up the trial of and/or unconditionally release up to 25,000 inmates out of an estimated total prison population of 45,000. Amnesty International reported that the effort was aimed at reducing prison overcrowding and improving access to fair trials.

Nigeria continues to suffer from abuses by security forces and a climate of impunity. In 2005, Human Rights Watch said police still routinely torture detainees. According to the report, rape and mutilation are commonly used to extract confessions, and in various coercion techniques, suspects are suspended from the ceiling by their hands, beaten with metal objects, sprayed in the eyes with tear gas, or shot in the feet; sometimes the injuries result in death. A UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions said in 2005 that Nigerian police use armed robbery as a blanket charge to jail people when they refuse to pay bribes and to justify the unlawful killing of civilians. The local Centre for Law Enforcement Education in Nigeria estimates that police at checkpoints shoot about one in 20 motorists who refuse or fail to pay bribes.

A human rights commission appointed by Obasanjo concluded that three of Nigeria's former military rulers were personally liable for extrajudicial killings perpetrated while they were in power. The commission recommended that all three men—General Babangida, General Buhari, and General Abubakar—be banned from holding high office in the future.

The constitution requires government offices to reflect the country's ethnic diversity. The Hausa-Fulani from northern Nigeria generally dominated the military and the government from independence until Obasanjo was elected in 1999. Obasanjo's government is both ethnically and religiously diverse. Although the constitution prohibits ethnic discrimination, societal discrimination is widely practiced, and clashes frequently erupt among the country's many ethnic groups. A number of armed youth groups have emerged to defend their ethnic and economic interests. A national census was completed in March 2006, for the first time since 1991. The census could determine regional distribution of state revenues. However, in a bid to prevent ethnic unrest, it did not contain questions on religion or tribe.

Ethnic minorities in the Niger Delta feel particularly discriminated against, primarily with regard to distribution of the country's oil wealth. Several militia groups, some based on ethnicity, operate in the Delta region and frequently target oil workers for kidnapping and extortion. Militants loyal to Niger Delta ethnic militia leader Moujahid Dokubo-Asari claim to be fighting for political autonomy and a bigger

slice of oil revenues for the Ijaw ethnic group, the largest in the Delta region. Clashes between the Ijaws and their rivals, the Itsekiris, have claimed hundreds of lives in the Delta. News reports in 2006 cited an increase in violence in the Delta linked to the lead-up to 2007 elections.

Nigerian women face societal discrimination, although educational opportunities have eroded a number of barriers over the years. In some ethnic groups, women are denied equal rights to inherit property, and marital rape is not considered a crime. According to a 1997 World Health Organization study, about 60 percent of Nigerian women are subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM), though the precise incidence is unknown. Although the federal government publicly opposes FGM, it has taken no legal action to ban the practice. Women's rights have suffered serious setbacks in the northern states governed under Sharia. Human trafficking to, from, and within the country for purposes of labor and prostitution is a problem. The government in 2004 outlawed human trafficking and set up an agency to deal with offenders.

North Korea

Population: 23,100,000

Capital: Pyongyang

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview: After the short-lived "Joint Agreement" at the September 2005 session of the Six Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons program, the country withdrew late that year from the Beijing-based talks in order to protest banking sanctions instigated by the U.S. Treasury Department in response to North Korea's currency counterfeiting transgressions. North Korea in 2006 proceeded to test ballistic missiles and a nuclear device, both of which resulted in condemnatory resolutions from the UN Security Council. Also in 2006, the UN General Assembly joined the UN Commission on Human Rights (now the Human Rights Council) in recognizing and condemning North Korea's severe human rights violations. Food shortages within North Korea and the problems faced by North Korean refugees in China continued to fester during the year.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was established in the northern part of the Korea Peninsula in 1948 following three years of post-World War II Soviet occupation. The Soviet Union installed Kim Il-sung, a Korean resis-

tance fighter who had waged guerrilla war against Japan, as the new country's leader. In 1950 North Korea invaded South Korea in an attempt to reunify the peninsula under Communist rule. Drawing in the United States and then China, the ensuing three-year conflict killed at least 2.5 million people and ended with a ceasefire rather than a full peace treaty. Since then, the two Koreas have been on a continuous war footing, and the border remains one of the most heavily militarized places in the world.

Kim Il-sung solidified his control following the Korean War, purging rivals, throwing thousands of political prisoners into labor camps, and fostering an extreme personality cult that promoted him as North Korea's messianic, superhuman "Great Leader." Following the 1953 death of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, "revisionist" Communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe eased some of the worst excesses of Stalinism, but East Asian Communist governments took a different course. Kim Il-sung attempted to "Koreanize" Stalinism by reviving the essentially feudalists social and political institutions of the Choson dynasty, which had ruled Korea for 500 years before the advent of Japanese colonial rule in 1910. These included self-isolation, a hereditary class structure, extensive slave-labor, metaphysical Neo-Confucianism, emperor worship, monolithic ideological orthodoxy, guilt by association, collective punishment for political dissent, and dynastic succession. The DPRK's "Juche ideology" (often literally translated as self-reliance but better understood as "to do for oneself on one's own terms") as elaborated by Kim Il-sung's son, Kim Jong-il, replaced Marxism while seeking to raise collectivism to new levels. Rule passed to "Dear Leader" Kim Jong-il on the death of the "Great Leader" in 1994; Kim Il-sung was proclaimed "Eternal President" even though deceased.

The end of the Cold War and its associated Soviet and Chinese subsidies, however, led to the collapse of North Korea's command economy. While the regime maintained rigid control over all aspects of its citizens' lives, severe economic mismanagement resulted in a famine in the 1990s that killed at least a million people. In addition, as many as 300,000 North Koreans fled to China in search of food or wages to assist their families at home, despite a legal ban on leaving the DPRK. In 1995, North Korea ended its self-imposed isolation and allowed the United Nations and private humanitarian aid organizations from Europe, North America, and South Korea to undertake what was, at that point, one of the world's largest famine relief operations.

During the height of the famine crisis, when the Public Distribution System had collapsed, the DPRK reluctantly permitted food to be sold in public markets, which previously were regarded as illegal. The regime also instituted economic reforms in 2002, which included easing price controls, raising wages, devaluing the currency, and giving factory managers more autonomy. Despite continuing food shortages, the DPRK in 2005 instructed the UN World Food Programme (WFP) to either switch from humanitarian relief to development assistance or leave North Korea. However, the WFP remained in North Korea on a reduced basis. In 2006, the DPRK ordered Europe-based private humanitarian agencies to leave after the European Union sponsored UN resolutions condemning North Korea's human rights violations. Also in 2006, the regime attempted to revive the Public Distribution System and again prohibited grain sales in markets. There is little expectation of additional far-reaching market reforms, as the government seems opposed to any measures that would grant North Koreans greater personal autonomy and potentially undermine the dictatorship's

tight grip on power. Human rights and humanitarian aid organizations warn of ongoing malnutrition and the threat of renewed famine.

Kim Jong-il's regime is kept afloat by Chinese and South Korean aid, as both neighbors fear the possible consequences of state collapse in North Korea, including a humanitarian disaster, massive refugee outflows, the release of more than a million armed men from any military command structure, the emergence of criminal gangs and regional warlords, and a loss of state control over nuclear weapons.

Tensions relating to North Korea's nuclear weapons program have continued to define its foreign relations. Following disputes between the United States and the DPRK over the interpretation of the September 19, 2005 "joint statement," North Korea withdrew from the Beijing-based "Six Party Talks" on the issue in order to protest banking sanctions instigated by the U.S. Treasury Department, which was seeking to thwart North Korean counterfeiting activities. In July 2006 North Korea tested seven multistage ballistic missiles, which led to a unanimous UN Security Council resolution of condemnation. In October, the DPRK tested an atomic device, prompting another Security Council condemnation and an extension of previously imposed arms embargoes. Efforts continued at year's end to persuade North Korea to return to the Six Party Talks.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: North Korea is not an electoral democracy. Every aspect of social, political, and economic life is tightly controlled by the state. The regime denies North Koreans all basic rights and subjects many thousands of political prisoners to brutal conditions. Collective punishment—the imprisonment of an entire family if one member of the family is suspected of dissent—is also a common practice. The government operates a highly developed, semihereditary system of social discrimination. All citizens are classified into 53 subgroups organized under overall security ratings—"core," "wavering," and "hostile"—based on their family's perceived loyalty to the regime. This rating essentially determines every facet of a person's life, including employment and educational opportunities, place of residence, access to medical facilities, and even access to stores.

Kim Jong-il has led North Korea since the 1994 death of his father, founding leader Kim Il-sung. He is formally the general secretary of the Korean Workers' Party, supreme commander of North Korea's military, and chairman of the National Defense Commission. This last post has been the "highest office of state" since the office of president was permanently dedicated to Kim Il-sung in a 1998 constitutional revision.

North Korea's Parliament, the Supreme People's Assembly, is a rubber-stamp institution and meets for only a few days each year. Parliamentary and local assembly elections were held in 1990, 1998, and, most recently, in August 2004. The elections were not free. The government maintains two minority parties for the sake of appearances, but they do not fulfill any real electoral role, and are not known to exist below the "central committee" level.

North Korea was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press, but in practice these rights are nonexistent. All media outlets—print, television, and radio—are ei-

ther run or controlled by the state. Televisions and radios are permanently fixed to state channels, and all publications are subject to strict supervision and censorship. Internet access in North Korea is restricted to a few thousand people who have received state approval; foreign-based websites are blocked by the state.

Although freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution, it does not exist in practice. A report issued in late 2005 by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom details the severe violation of freedoms of thought, conscience, religion, and belief in the DPRK, and the intense political and ideological indoctrination to which North Koreans are subjected under Kimilsungism, a virtual state religion.

There are no known associations or organizations other than those created by the government. Strikes, collective bargaining, and other basic organized-labor activities are illegal.

In 2004 the UN Commission on Human Rights appointed a Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in North Korea to prepare studies for the commission (now the Human Rights Council) and the General Assembly. The DPRK refuses to cooperate with the special rapporteur. Nonetheless, his reports highlight problems in six areas: (1) the right to food and the right to life; (2) the right to the security of the person, humane treatment, nondiscrimination and access to justice; (3) the right to freedom of movement and the protection of persons linked with displacement (primarily in China and upon return to North Korea); (4) the right to the highest attainable standards of health and the right to education; (5) the right to self-determination and political participation, access to information, and freedom of expression, belief, opinion, association, and religion; and (6) the rights of vulnerable groups and persons, particularly women and children.

North Korea does not have an independent judiciary, and "socialist norms of life" and a "collective spirit" are emphasized over individual rights. The UN Commission on Human Rights since 2003 and the General Assembly since 2005 have recognized and condemned, by overwhelming margins, severe violations in North Korea including the use of torture, public executions, extrajudicial and arbitrary detention; the absence of due process and the rule of law; imposition of the death penalty for political offenses; and the large number of prison camps and use of forced labor. The authorities are assisted by a huge network of informers that monitors nearly all correspondence and communication and can subject entire communities to security checks. North Korea has two police forces: one called the People's Safety Agency to address "ordinary crimes," and another political police force called the State Security Agency.

Freedom of movement does not exist. Forced internal resettlement is routine. Access to Pyongyang, where the availability of food, housing, and health care is somewhat better, is tightly restricted. Emigration is illegal, although exit visas are sometimes issued to trusted businesspeople, artists, athletes, scholars, and religious figures. Defection is a capital crime punishable by death. Controversy has developed over the Chinese government's willingness to return defectors to North Korea, where they are subject to torture, harsh imprisonment, or death.

Despite recent market reforms, North Korea's economy remains both centrally planned and grossly mismanaged. The government assigns all jobs, prohibits private property, and spends nearly one-third of its gross domestic product on its military. The economy is also hobbled by a lack of infrastructure, a scarcity of energy

and raw materials, and an inability to borrow on world markets or from multilateral banks because of sanctions, lingering foreign debt, and ideological isolationism.

Little is known about how problems such as domestic violence or workplace discrimination may affect North Korean women. There have been widespread reports of trafficked women and girls among the tens of thousands of North Koreans who have recently crossed into China. The UN Commission on Human Rights and the UN General Assembly have noted the use of forced abortions and infanticide against pregnant women forcibly repatriated from China. During the height of the famine crisis, the regime allowed private markets to arise. The fact that most of the market sellers are women has accounted for a real if unplanned increase in the status and wealth of women in North Korea.

Norway

Population: 4,700,000

Capital: Oslo

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In October 2006, Oslo mediated peace talks between the Sri Lankan government and the rebel Tamil Tigers. Separately, reparations were approved for past human rights violations against the Romany minority. In business developments, the state-controlled oil giant, Statoil, agreed to pay \$21 million in U.S. penalties for bribing an Iranian government official. Also that year, a new law went into effect requiring about 500 large companies traded on Norway's stock exchange to give 40 percent of the seats on their boards to women or risk closure.

Norway's current constitution, the Eivold Convention, was adopted in 1814 during a brief spell of independence after nearly four centuries of Danish rule. Subsequently, Norway became part of a Swedish-headed monarchy. The country gained independence in 1905 and has since functioned as a constitutional monarchy with a multiparty parliamentary structure.

Norwegian citizens narrowly rejected membership in the European Union (EU) in 1972 and 1994, despite government support for joining. In addition to wanting to preserve their sovereignty, Norwegians feared that membership would threaten the country's energy, agriculture, and fishing industries. As part of the European Economic Area, Norway has nearly full access to European markets, and 75 percent of

Norwegian exports go to EU countries. However, while Norway has adopted almost all EU directives, it has little power to influence EU decisions.

During September 2005 legislative elections, the center-left Red-Green coalition—led by the Labor Party and including the Socialist Left Party and the "green" Center Party—won 47.9 percent of the vote and 87 seats. The elections marked the first time that Labor had entered into a coalition since the end of World War II. The previous governing bloc—a three-party center-right coalition consisting of the Conservatives, the Christian People's Party, and the Liberals—captured only 26.8 percent of the vote and 44 seats. The other major winner in the elections was the anti-immigrant Progress Party, which took 22.1 percent of the vote and 38 seats, making it the largest single opposition party in Parliament. The 2005 elections were the first in Norway to be observed by an international monitoring team. The election monitoring was part of a "Network for election observation and exchange" hosted by the Norwegian Helsinki Committee.

In 2006, Norway was ranked first in the UN Human Development Index for the sixth year running. Its high standard of living is due in large part to the exploitation of oil deposits discovered in the 1960s; Norway is currently the world's third-largest oil exporter. The government has put 80 percent of oil revenues into a petroleum fund that is invested overseas, thus helping to ensure that the benefits are enjoyed for many years.

A founding member of NATO, Norway has an active foreign policy. In November, talks began between Norway and Iceland concerning a potential defense agreement following the end of U.S. military defense of Iceland, which does not have its own military. Norway would provide surveillance and military defense of Icelandic air space if an agreement is settled.

In addition, in its role as mediator, in June 2006, Oslo set up a fresh round of talks between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Tamil Tigers) rebel group, but the effort broke down amid renewed violence in Sri Lanka, and the two sides refused to meet. Another attempt at negotiations was postponed in December as violence continued.

Also in 2006, the Norwegian government proposed a 7 million NOK (\$1.1 million) grant to support the preservation of the native Sami culture. Sami land ownership remained a controversial topic. Additionally, the government proposed a 2 million NOK (\$300,000) grant for Romany education.

In October, Norway's state-controlled oil company, Statoil, agreed to a total of \$21 million in U.S. penalties for bribes paid to an Iranian government official in 2002 and 2003. The official was paid to help obtain additional oil projects for the company in Iran.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Norway is an electoral democracy. The national Parliament, called the Storting, currently has 169 members, an increase of four over the number elected in 2001. The lawmakers are directly elected for four-year terms through a system of proportional representation. A quarter of the members are then selected to serve as the upper chamber, or Lagting, while the remaining members make up the lower chamber, or Odelsting. Neither body is subject to dissolution. The leader of the majority party or coalition in the Storting is appointed prime minister by the constitutional monarch, currently King Harald V.

Although officially the head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces, the monarch performs largely ceremonial duties.

The indigenous Sami population, in addition to participating in the national political process, have their own Consultative Constituent Assembly, or Sameting, which has worked to protect the group's language and cultural rights and to influence the national government's decisions about Sami land and its resources. The government helps protect the heritage of the Sami population through Sami-language instruction, broadcast programs, and subsidized newspapers in their regions. A deputy minister in the national government deals specifically with Sami issues. Separately, in 2006, Norway set up a system of reparations for the Romany minority for past human rights violations including forced sterilization and family separation.

Norway remains one of the least corrupt countries in the world. However, isolated incidents of bribery have occurred, and a 2003 Gallup survey found that nearly half of all Norwegians believed that bribery in the business world would be an increasing problem in the coming years. In 2006, Oslo hosted an international conference on fighting corruption in the oil and mining industries. Norway was ranked 8 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

In 2003, a police probe into the Iranian operations of the state-controlled oil company Statoil led to the resignations of the chairman, the chief executive, and the head of the company's international division amid allegations of bribery. In June 2004, Statoil was found guilty of corruption charges. In 2006, it agreed to pay \$10.5 million to the U.S. Justice Department, as well as \$10.5 million to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission in connection with the case. The company is subject to U.S. laws because its stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange.

Freedom of the press is constitutionally guaranteed. The state subsidizes many newspapers, the majority of which are privately owned and openly partisan, in order to promote political pluralism. A government ban on political commercials, designed to ensure equal access to the media for all candidates regardless of varying resources, violates the European Convention on Human Rights, which Norway has signed. In 2006, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) expressed concerns over the acquisition of the Norwegian media company Orkla Media by Metcom, an investment fund. The EFJ warned that journalistic integrity could be compromised by commercial interests. Separately, hackles were raised in July over the publication of a cartoon in *Dadbladet*, an Oslo-based newspaper. The cartoon depicted the Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, as a Nazi camp overseer, but was determined to have been published within the parameters of freedom of expression. Also that year, a Christian newspaper, *Magazinet*, in January published controversial Danish cartoons of the prophet Muhammad, which led to the burning of Norway's embassy in Syria the following month. After receiving numerous death threats, the editor of *Magazinet* apologized for offense caused to the Muslim community.

The monarch is the constitutional head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway, the state church, and half of the cabinet must belong to the church. Other denominations must register with the state to receive support, which is determined by size of membership. A course on religion and ethics focusing on Christianity is mandatory for students. In November 2004, the European Court of Human Rights determined that the course requirement contravened human rights principles. However, after a two-year review, Norwegian officials in 2006 determined that Christian-

ity would remain the primary religion taught in the course and exemptions would not be granted. Meanwhile, in January 2006, the State-Church Commission assessed that most members of the church favored abolishing the current relationship between the Church and the state and establishing separate systems. A final decision about the relationship will be announced in 2008. In March, the U.N. Human Rights Committee announced that the section of Norway's constitution requiring Evangelical Lutherans to raise their children in the faith breaches the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Also in 2006, Oslo sent the Ministry of Knowledge a request to implement a ban on burqas and nikabs—garments worn by some Muslim women that cover the entire body and the face, respectively—in schools. Attacks on Jewish citizens increased during the year, including vandalism of synagogues and grave sites, as well as verbal abuse. A more severe incident occurred in September when a synagogue in Oslo was fired on with an automatic weapon, sparking a nation-wide debate over the rise in anti-Semitism. Four suspects were detained and remained in custody at year's end. Academic freedom is ensured for all.

The constitution guarantees freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Norwegians are very active in different nongovernmental and volunteer organizations. Labor unions play an important role in consulting with the government on social and economic issues, and about 60 percent of the workforce is unionized.

The judiciary is independent, and the court system, headed by the Supreme Court, operates fairly at the local and national levels. The king appoints judges under advisement from the Ministry of Justice. The police are under civilian control, and there were no reports of human rights abuses committed by any domestic law enforcement authorities in 2006. According to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report, prison conditions generally meet international standards.

In December 2003, the government announced that asylum seekers denied residence in Norway would no longer be able to remain at immigration reception centers; an earlier report had found that a record number of asylum seekers had registered at these centers. Polls suggest that discrimination in housing and employment against ethnic minorities is widespread. In 2006, an ombudsman for equality and antidiscrimination was established to counter ethnic and sexual bias; the new post replaced the Center against Ethnic Discrimination, which had previously dealt with these issues. In March, a scandal emerged over 182 Iraqis that were granted temporary residence permits by Utlendingsdirektoratet (UDI), Norway's Directorate of Immigration, during the change of control over immigration issues from former Secretary of State for Local and Regional Affairs, Erna Solberg, and the new minister of labor and social inclusion, Bjarne Hakon Hanssen. An investigation was launched, but no conclusions were drawn by year's end.

The Gender Equality Act provides equal rights for men and women. During the last elections, 37 percent of the seats in the Storting were won by women, a slight increase over the previous elections. A new law went into effect in 2006 requiring at least 40 percent of the boards of directors of about 500 large companies traded on Norway's stock exchange to be women; the figure currently stands at about 16 percent. Domestic violence against women continues to be an area of concern.

Norway is a destination point for the trafficking of women for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The country, however, remains a leader in antitrafficking efforts, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 Trafficking in Persons Report.

Oman

Population: 2,600,000

Capital: Muscat

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview: In January 2006, the United States and Oman signed a bilateral free-trade agreement. To win U.S. congressional approval for this treaty, the Omani government implemented a series of labor reforms including allowing workers to organize and engage in peaceful strikes. The U.S. Congress approved the free-trade agreement in September. Oman was also in the process of preparing for its forthcoming Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council) elections in the fall of 2007.

Except for a brief period of Persian rule, Oman has been an independent state since Sultan bin Seif's expulsion of the Portuguese in 1650. After the expulsion, which ended more than a century of Portuguese involvement in certain regions of Oman, the sultan conquered neighboring territories, building a small empire that included parts of the eastern coast of Africa and the southern Arabian Peninsula.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Oman experienced a period of internal unrest centered mostly in the inland regions of the country. In 1964, a group of separatists supported by Communist governments, including that of the neighboring People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen), started a revolt in Oman's Dhofar province. This insurgency was not completely quelled until the mid-1970s, with Oman's government receiving military assistance from its traditional ally, Britain, as well as from Iran and Jordan.

Sultan Qaboos bin Said al-Said came to power more than 30 years ago, after overthrowing his father, Sultan Said bin Taimur, who had ruled for nearly four decades. The new sultan launched a program to modernize Oman's infrastructure, educational system, government, and economy.

In 1991, Qaboos established the 59-seat (expanded to 83 seats in 1993) Consultative Council, or Majlis al-Shura, an appointed body aimed at providing the sultan with a wider range of opinions on ruling the country. The 1996 basic law, promulgated by royal decree, transformed the Consultative Council into an elected body, but the right to vote in the first elections was not granted to all citizens; only a limited number of citizens selected by tribal leaders were allowed to participate. The basic law granted certain civil liberties; banned discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, ethnicity, and social class; and clarified the process for royal succession.

This limited political reform in the 1990s was overshadowed by a stronger effort, spearheaded by Qaboos in 1995, to reform Oman's oil-dependent economy. Oil generates around 75 percent of state revenues, but the country's relatively small oil fields are aging. The sultan sought to liberalize and diversify the economy, and attract international investments. In preparation for Oman's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2000, the government lifted restrictions on foreign investment and ownership of enterprises in the country. In July 2003, the Ministry of Labor launched a five-year plan aimed at boosting Omani employment in governmental and nongovernmental sectors.

Political reform lags behind economic reform, with Qaboos maintaining a strong grip on the state. In October 2003, Oman held landmark elections for the Consultative Council. Though the powers of the council remain limited, the balloting marked the first time that Oman gave the right to vote to all adult citizens, both men and women.

In January 2006, Oman and the United States signed a bilateral free trade agreement. Trade between the two countries in 2005 amounted to \$1 billion, and the treaty was designed in part to help diversify Oman's economy and reduce its dependence on oil revenues. Addressing objections in the U.S. Congress, Oman had amended its labor laws in 2003 to bring them into accordance with International Labor Organization standards and facilitate approval for the treaty. Further reforms were undertaken in 2006, particularly in the months leading up to Congress's final nod of approval in September. Among other measures, the Omani government enacted legislation that specifically safeguarded workers' rights to bargain collectively and mount strikes, although they were required to give employers a minimum of three weeks' warning before initiating such job actions. The new laws protected union activity on other fronts as well, allowing multiple unions to organize workers within a single company, and barring employers from firing workers for union links. Additional provisions were designed to combat worker exploitation by increasing penalties and enforcement mechanisms pertaining to coerced labor and the employment of children.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Oman is not an electoral democracy. Citizens can express their views only in a very limited way, by electing members to the 83-member Consultative Council, which has no legislative powers and may only recommend changes to new laws.

The Consultative Council is part of a bicameral body known as the Council of Oman. The other part, the 59-member State Council, or *Majlis al-Dawla*, is appointed by the sultan, who has absolute power and issues laws by decree. The sultan serves as the country's prime minister, heads the ministries of Defense, Foreign Affairs, and Finance, and is the governor of Oman's central bank.

Oman's next election cycle commences in the fall of 2007. In the last election, in October 2003, complaints surfaced that the government did not do enough to promote voter participation, as only 30 percent of the qualified population cast ballots. A full year before the 2007 voting, the government and relevant ministries were already trying to promote greater awareness among the electorate.

Article 34 of the basic law, the country's constitution, states that citizens have the right to address public authorities on personal matters or on matters related to public affairs in a manner consistent with Omani law. Mechanisms exist for citizens to petition the government through local government officials, and certain citizens

are afforded limited opportunities to petition the sultan in direct meetings. Political parties are banned, and no meaningful organized political opposition exists.

Corruption was not perceived to be a serious problem in Oman, and few cases of official graft were reported during 2006. However, a number of public officials received prison sentences in 2005 for corruption and bribery offenses, including a member of the State Council. According to the U.S. State Department's 2006 human rights report, such successful prosecutions added to the public perception that corruption was under control in the country. The legal framework does not include specific freedom of information provisions. Oman was ranked 39 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression and democratic debate are limited in Oman, with laws prohibiting criticism of the sultan. Article 61 of the Omani Press Law states that "every person who sends a message via a means of communication that is contrary to the government system and public morals or that is knowingly untrue . . . shall be punished by a prison sentence of not more than one year and a fine of not more than 1,000 riyals," or about \$2,600.

In 2004, Oman promulgated the Private Radio and Television Companies Law, which established regulations for setting up private broadcast media outlets, a first for the country. In October 2005, the authorities announced the licensing of four private television and radio stations. Oman's government permits private print publications, but many of these accept government subsidies and practice self-censorship. Omanis have access to the internet through the national telecommunications company, and the government censors politically sensitive and pornographic content.

Islam is the state religion, according to the basic law. Non-Muslims have the right to worship, although non-Muslim religious organizations must register with the government and non-Muslims are banned from proselytizing. The Ministry of Awqaf (Religious Charitable Bequests) and Religious Affairs distributes standardized texts for mosque sermons and expects imams to stay within the outlines of these texts. The government restricts academic freedom by preventing the publication of material covering politically sensitive topics.

Article 32 of the basic law provides for the right to peaceful assembly within the limits of the law. All public gatherings require official permission, and the government has the authority to prevent organized public meetings without any appeal process.

The basic law allows the formation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but civic and associational life remains quite limited in Oman. The government has not permitted the establishment of independent human rights organizations, and generally uses the registration and licensing process to block the formation of groups that are seen as a threat to stability. Those groups that are approved must operate within circumscribed fields of activity.

Oman's 2003 labor law, enacted during negotiations on the U.S. free-trade agreement, allowed workers to select a representative committee to voice their demands and represent their interests, but prevented them from organizing unions. Included in the decree was the removal of a previous prohibition on strikes. Employers using child labor face increased penalties including prison terms, under the law. Complaints related to labor and working conditions were managed by the Ministry of Social

Affairs and Labor and mediated by the Labor Welfare Board. The 2003 labor law defined employment conditions for some citizens and foreign workers but did not apply to domestic servants, temporary workers, and those whose work contracts were for less than three months. The labor reforms enacted in 2006 included a number of improvements on the 2003 measures, including protections for union activity, collective bargaining, and strikes. However, legal provisions covering migrant workers remain inadequate, and domestic servants are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

Although the basic law states that the judiciary is independent, it remains subordinate to the sultan and the Ministry of Justice. Sharia (Islamic law) is the source of all legislation, and Sharia courts are responsible for family law matters such as divorce and inheritance. In less populated areas, tribal laws and customs are frequently used to adjudicate disputes. Many of the civil liberties guarantees expressed in the basic law have not been implemented.

According to the law, arbitrary arrest and detention are prohibited. In practice, the police are not required to obtain an arrest warrant in advance. Government authorities must obtain court orders to hold suspects in pretrial detention, but the police and security services do not regularly follow these procedures. Prisons are not accessible to independent monitors; former prisoners report overcrowding.

The Omani penal code contains broad and vague provisions for offenses against national security. These charges are prosecuted before the State Security Court, which usually holds proceedings that are closed to the public.

Omani law does not protect noncitizens from discrimination. In addition, some citizens of African origin have reported employment discrimination. The government in November 2006 established rules barring employers from withholding letters that released foreign workers from their contracts. Foreign workers risked deportation if they abandoned their contracts without such documents, meaning employers could effectively keep workers from switching jobs and hold them in a relationship that was open to exploitation.

Although the basic law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, women suffer from legal and social discrimination. Oman's personal status law, based on Sharia, favors the rights of men over those of women in marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. Oman ratified the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, in July 2005. According to official statistics, women constitute only 10 percent of the total labor force in Oman. Only two women won seats on the Consultative Council in the 2003 national elections. However, Qaboos appointed three women as government ministers in 2004. Raweyah el-Bouseidi became the first female minister in the history of Oman when she was appointed minister of higher education. Rajihah bint Abd al-Amir became minister of tourism, and Sharifa bint Khalfan became the minister of social development. In September 2005, Qaboos appointed Hanina bint Sultan bin Ahmad al-Maghiri as the first woman to serve as ambassador to the United States.

Pakistan

Population: 165,800,000

Capital: Islamabad

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4.5PF	4.5PF	7.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF

Overview: Pakistan in 2006 remained firmly under the control of a military government headed by General Pervez Musharraf. Despite facing opposition from both secular and Islamist political parties, pro-Musharraf forces continued to hold sway in national politics, and Musharraf worked to ensure his personal continuation in power through the planned 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections. In the absence of a completely independent legislature and judiciary, the media remained one of the only forums that provided oversight of official actions and policy. However, the government has become less tolerant of such criticism and, on a number of occasions, harassed or intimidated members of the press. A range of other human rights violations, including "enforced disappearances" and torture, as well as widespread legal and societal discrimination against women and religious minorities, continued to be reported. Modest legal reforms that ameliorated some of the worst forms of discrimination against women with regard to rape were enacted during the year. Sectarian and terrorist violence remained a concern, and fighting between government forces and local Taliban in the Pashtun tribal areas as well as separatists in Baluchistan province escalated in 2006, leading to hundreds of deaths and the displacement of thousands of civilians.

Pakistan came into existence as a Muslim homeland with the partition of British India in 1947. Following a nine-month civil war, East Pakistan achieved independence in 1971 as the new state of Bangladesh. The army has directly or indirectly ruled Pakistan for 31 of its 58 years of independence. As part of his efforts to consolidate power, the military dictator General Zia ul-Haq amended the constitution in 1985 to allow the president to dismiss elected governments. After Zia's death in 1988, successive presidents cited corruption and abuse of power in sacking elected governments headed by Benazir Bhutto of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in 1990 and 1996, and Nawaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) in 1993.

After the PML decisively won the 1997 elections, Sharif, as prime minister, largely ignored Pakistan's pressing economic and social problems while attempting to undermine every institution capable of challenging him, including the judiciary and the press. However, when he attempted to reshuffle the army's leadership and fire the

army chief, he was deposed in October 1999 in a bloodless coup. Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf then appointed himself "chief executive," declared a state of emergency, and suspended Parliament, the provincial assemblies, and the constitution. In December 2000, 18 of Pakistan's political parties, including archrivals PML and PPP, joined to form the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD), an umbrella group calling for an end to military rule. However, Musharraf has been able to successfully neutralize Sharif and Bhutto, his primary political opponents, through a combination of court convictions and exile.

Musharraf's primary aim since gaining power has been to ensure a dominant role for the military after Pakistan made the nominal transition back to democratic rule. The controversial 2002 Legal Framework Order (LFO), which was intended as a vehicle for amending the constitution without the participation of Parliament, gave him effective control over Parliament and changed the electoral rules to the detriment of opposition parties. The regime also openly promoted progovernment political parties, such as the newly formed Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-i-Azam (PML-Q). In the 2002 parliamentary elections, no single party won a majority of seats; the PML-Q won 126 seats, while the PPP won 81 and the PML, 19. A coalition of six religious parties, the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), performed unexpectedly well, winning 63 seats in the national Parliament and a majority of seats in two provinces. With support from independents and deserters from the other main parties, the PML-Q was able to form a government; it then consolidated its position by winning a majority of seats in the 2003 Senate elections.

Parliament was deadlocked throughout most of 2003, with the main opposition parties insisting that Musharraf rescind the LFO, introduce legal and constitutional changes through the normal parliamentary process, and relinquish his position as army chief if he wished to continue as president. A deal brokered with the MMA enabled the government to pass a constitutional amendment in January 2004 legitimizing the coup; the government was then able to pass legislation in April 2004 establishing a powerful National Security Council (NSC), headed by the president, which further solidified the military's role in government. In a reversal of his pledge to the MMA that he would step down as army chief by year's end, Musharraf then announced in September 2004 that the need for stability required him to stay on in both roles. This decision was formalized when the Parliament passed the President to Hold Two Offices Act, enabling him to stay on as army chief until 2007. In reaction, the MMA launched nationwide protests and have continued to oppose the government.

In May 2005, Musharraf announced that he might stay on in both roles past 2007, when parliamentary elections were scheduled. Local council elections held in August and September were seen as a test of the government's commitment to allowing freer and fairer elections to take place. The elections were held on a nonparty basis with more than 218,000 candidates participating; in final results, PML-Q-backed candidates performed well in Punjab and Sindh, while nationalist parties scored gains in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan at the expense of MMA-backed candidates. However, opposition parties as well as monitoring groups expressed dissatisfaction with the conduct of the process. In addition to higher-than-usual levels of violence—there were over 60 election-related deaths and some 550 injured countrywide—numerous cases of pre-poll rigging, ballot stuffing, intimidat-

tion, and other forms of coercion and fraud were condemned by the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), the International Crisis Group (ICG), and others. With the moderate opposition parties having been further marginalized and with local government structures more firmly under the grip of his political allies, Musharraf remained well placed to continue in power.

While managing to contain the secular opposition, Musharraf has been less willing to rein in the Islamic fundamentalist groups with whom the military has traditionally had a close relationship. Although several groups have been banned since September 2001, when Musharraf pledged to support the United States in its anti-terrorism efforts, and hundreds of activists have been periodically arrested, more than 40 groups continue to function under new names, and their leaders have generally not been prosecuted. The increased parliamentary presence of religious parties with ties to radical *madrassas* (religious schools) and militant groups suggests that the influence of the Islamists will continue to be strong. However, official tolerance for the activities of these groups declined somewhat following several assassination attempts against Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in late 2003 and 2004. After the July 2005 London terrorist bombings, which involved several British citizens of Pakistani origin who had studied in Pakistan, Musharraf ordered a renewed crackdown on militant groups and madrassas, which further worsened the relationship between the government and the MMA. Nevertheless, many militant groups remain active, and sectarian violence, which kills and injures several hundred people each year, continues to be a concern. Particularly serious attacks in 2006 included a bomb attack in March that killed a U.S. diplomat and four others, and a suicide attack on a Karachi shrine in April that killed more than 50, including several Sunni religious leaders. Musharraf remains at risk for an assassination or coup attempt amid reports of growing disenchantment with his leadership within the military; in October, there was an explosion near his home, and rocket launchers were found nearby.

Fighting and unrest between government forces and tribal groups in Baluchistan, which was triggered by the rape of a female doctor allegedly at the hands of the army, escalated in early 2005, and the situation has steadily deteriorated since then. A separatist group, the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA), has stepped up its attacks on infrastructure (particularly gas pipelines) and development projects and staff, while local tribal leaders continue to demand greater political autonomy and control over the province's considerable natural resources. After a rocket attack targeted Musharraf in December 2005, he refused to engage Baluchi groups politically and initiated counterinsurgency paramilitary operations, which has led to increased human rights violations and a looming humanitarian crisis. The government declared the BLA a terrorist group in April 2006, and the army killed the 79-year-old Baluchi separatist leader Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti and a number of his followers in a counterinsurgency operation in August. Bugti's death led to increased political instability and rioting, with heightened tensions still simmering at year's end.

With both parliamentary and presidential elections planned for 2007, all political factions spent 2006 jockeying for influence and attempting to work the system to their advantage. Musharraf has made clear his interest in remaining president for another term, and in the face of a disunited opposition (which currently consists of the ARD and the MMA), he and his parliamentary allies are expected to win both

sets of elections. The ARD has discussed whether to participate in or boycott the elections, but its unity has been shaken by rumors that PPP leader Benazir Bhutto has been in secret talks with the military government that would enable her to return to Pakistan and contest the elections. While Musharraf's position remained strong, his popularity continued to wane and the PML-Q has a minority in parliament; therefore, in order to ensure his reelection, in June 2006 Musharraf brought forward the date of the presidential vote (the president is chosen by a parliamentary electoral college) so it would be held while the current assemblies were still sitting.

The general has also been forging political deals with one of the main religious parties, the pro-Taliban Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI), in order to split the MMA and bolster his support, particularly in Baluchistan and NWFP, ahead of the key 2007 vote. The JUI was instrumental in helping to negotiate a peace accord reached between the government and a tribal Taliban council in North Waziristan in early September, under which authorities released a number of local fighters in exchange for a cessation of attacks on the army. While Musharraf hailed the deal as a success that would lead to greater stability along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, critics alleged that it would lead to the Taliban gaining effective control on the ground in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and that it would not stop Taliban incursions over the border into Afghanistan. The latter thesis proved correct, with reports of more insurgents crossing the border following the deal. Analysts remained concerned that the influence of the Taliban was continuing to spread in northern Pakistan, particularly in the FATA, NWFP, and Baluchistan.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Pakistan is not an electoral democracy. Despite the election of a civilian National Assembly in October 2002, the Pakistani military, headed by General Pervez Musharraf, continues to wield effective control over the structures of government. The 1973 constitution provides for a lower National Assembly, which currently has 272 directly elected seats and 70 seats reserved for women and non-Muslim minorities, all elected for five-year terms; and a Senate, the majority of whose 100 members are elected by the four provincial assemblies for six-year terms. Shortly after the 1999 coup, Musharraf suspended the provincial and national assemblies, declared himself president, and in 2002 held a referendum that was widely regarded as rigged in order to extend his term as president. In preparation for national elections—after the coup, the Supreme Court mandated that they be held by October 2002—Musharraf further strengthened the powers of the presidency and formalized the military's role in governance. The LFO gave him the right to unilaterally dismiss the national and provincial parliaments, as well as providing for a National Security Council dominated by military figures that would supervise the work of a civilian cabinet. The president is also elected for a five-year term by an electoral college that consists of the Senate, as well as members of the national and provincial assemblies.

The LFO also restricts certain individuals from standing for elected office, as well as restricting political parties in their choice of leadership. Some of these measures were explicitly aimed at preventing former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif from contesting the 2002 elections. Although the government lifted the long-standing ban on political rallies shortly before the elections, significant restrictions remained in place, and the ability of opposition parties to mount effec-

tive campaigns was circumscribed. In its statement on the elections, the HRCP noted that governmental machinery had been used to intimidate opposition candidates. The report of the European Union Election Observation Mission concluded that there had been "serious flaws" in the electoral process.

Since the election, secular opposition parties and their leaders have continued to face intimidation and harassment from intelligence agencies and other government organs. Javed Hashmi, the leader of the ARD alliance, who was sentenced to 23 years on sedition charges in April 2004 after reading an anti-Musharraf letter at a news conference, remained in jail throughout 2006. Prior to and during the 2005 local elections, a number of opposition candidates were abducted or otherwise intimidated, according to the ICG.

On the positive side, women and minorities now have enhanced representation in the Parliament. After repeated complaints by religious minorities, the government abolished the system of separate electorates in January 2002, enabling them to vote alongside Muslims and thus participate more fully in the political system. In addition, 10 seats in the reconstituted National Assembly were reserved for minorities and 60 were reserved for women. However, women continue to have difficulty voting and running for office in some parts of the country due to opposition by social and religious conservatives.

Pakistan's government operates with limited transparency and accountability. Since the 1999 coup, military officers have assumed an increasing role in governance through "army monitoring teams" that oversee the functioning of many civilian administrative departments. The army now has a stake in continuing to influence both commercial and political decision-making processes, as well as maintaining its traditional dominance over foreign policy and security issues. Serving and retired officers receive top public sector jobs in ministries, state-run corporations, and universities, and are given a range of other privileges. The effective functioning of the parliament has been hampered by ongoing opposition boycotts, and many pieces of legislation have been pushed through with limited debate. According to the *Economist*, most important policies are introduced by presidential decree, as ordinances, and are renewed every four months if not formally passed into law by the rubber-stamp parliament.

Corruption is pervasive at almost all levels of politics and government; Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Pakistan 142 out of 163 countries surveyed. Although Musharraf has publicly stated that eliminating official corruption is a priority, the National Anti-Corruption Strategy approved in 2002 focuses on politicians, civil servants, and businesspeople, while virtually ignoring military and security personnel. Corruption charges are frequently used as a tool to punish opposition politicians or to induce them to defect and join the PML-Q.

The constitution and other laws authorize the government to curb freedom of speech on subjects including the constitution, the armed forces, the judiciary, and religion; blasphemy laws have also been used to suppress the media. On numerous occasions, police, security forces, and military intelligence officers have subjected journalists to physical attacks, intimidation, or arbitrary arrest and incommunicado detention. In addition, Islamic fundamentalists and thugs hired by feudal landlords or local politicians continue to harass journalists and attack newspaper offices. Reporters in Sindh province faced threats and attacks from local authorities and

political or tribal figures during the year. In total, more than 100 such instances were reported throughout 2006. Conditions for reporters covering the ongoing unrest in the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan were particularly difficult, with a number of local and foreign correspondents detained, threatened, or otherwise prevented from covering events there, either by the Taliban and local tribal groups or by the army and intelligence services. Reporter Hayatullah Khan, who was abducted in the semi-autonomous North Waziristan tribal region in December 2005, was found dead in June 2006, while unknown assailants seized Dilawar Khan, a reporter for the BBC Urdu service based in South Waziristan, in November 2006. In a chilling trend, the young siblings of both men were also killed, apparently to threaten the journalists and their families.

While a number of journalists practice self-censorship, Pakistan continues to have some of the most outspoken newspapers in South Asia, and the broadcast sector has become considerably more diverse with the opening of a number of new private television stations. However, military authorities are using increasingly aggressive tactics to silence critical voices in the media. A number of journalists have been pressured to resign from prominent publications, charged with sedition, or arrested and intimidated by intelligence officials while in custody; a number of media outlets have also been temporarily banned from publishing or broadcasting. Musharraf himself has also contributed to an atmosphere that is inimical to free speech by making public threats against specific members of the press. Authorities have also used advertising boycotts to put economic pressure on publications that do not heed unofficial directives on coverage. Internews reported that at least 11 newspapers or magazines were denied state-sponsored advertising in 2006 for being critical of government policies. Authorities blocked access to certain websites, particularly those involving Baluchi nationalist issues, with several dozen blocked at various times during the year. In February, the decision of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to block access to the hosting site blogspot.com was met with protests from the expanding community of Pakistani bloggers and from freedom of expression groups.

Pakistan is an Islamic republic, and there are numerous legal restrictions on religious freedom. Blasphemy laws provide for steep sentences, including the death penalty, for defiling Islam, the prophet Muhammad, and the Koran; in addition, injuring the "religious feelings" of individual citizens is prohibited. Instances of low-ranking police officials being bribed to file false blasphemy charges against Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus, and occasionally other Muslims have increased in recent years. Ahmadis consider themselves to be Muslims, but the constitution classifies them as a non-Muslim minority, and the penal code severely restricts Ahmadi religious practice. Authorities occasionally confiscate or close Ahmadi publications and harass journalists or printers involved in their production. To date, appeals courts have overturned all blasphemy convictions, but suspects are generally forced to spend lengthy periods in prison, where they are subject to ill-treatment, and they continue to be targeted by religious extremists after they are released. In an attempt to limit abuse of these laws, an amendment was enacted in 2005 requiring that a senior police officer investigate such charges. This led to a significant reduction in new blasphemy cases registered in 2006, according to the U.S. State Department's 2006 Report on International Religious Freedom.

Religious minorities also face unofficial economic, social, and cultural discrimination, and are occasionally subjected to violence and harassment. Attacks on places of worship and religious gatherings occur frequently, leading to the deaths of dozens of worshippers every year. The government often fails to protect religious minorities from sectarian violence, and discriminatory legislation contributes to a general climate of religious intolerance. In 2005, right-wing religious groups successfully lobbied the government to retain religious designations on Pakistani passports.

The government generally does not restrict academic freedom. However, student groups, some of whom have ties to radical Islamist organizations, violently attack or otherwise intimidate students, teachers, and administrators at some universities. According to the ICG, college students are now also required to sign affidavits declaring that they will not participate in any political activity, and this ban is selectively enforced against supporters of opposition parties. During the year, the government continued to implement reforms of the public education sector designed to minimize the teaching of religious intolerance. It also attempted to impose greater state control over the country's thousands of madrassas, or Islamic religious schools, by requiring registration, the use of a more modernized curriculum, an end to extremist recruitment, and the expulsion of foreign students. Girls' schools, particularly in NWFP, faced threats from religious extremists in 2006, leading some parents to withdraw their children.

The military government banned all public political meetings, strikes, and rallies in March 2000. Authorities regularly disperse protests using force and preemptively arrest political activists to prevent demonstrations from occurring. Some Islamist leaders have been held under house arrest or in preventive detention under the Maintenance of Public Order ordinance, which allows for three months' detention without trial. Laws governing sedition, public order, and terrorism have also been used to raid party offices and detain political activists and leaders in Punjab and Sindh.

Authorities generally tolerate the work of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and allow them to publish critical material. In recent years, Islamic fundamentalists have issued death threats against prominent human rights defenders and female NGO activists who work in rural areas. Parvez Aslam Choudhry, a prominent human rights lawyer who has defended several blasphemy suspects, was attacked and beaten by religious extremists in January 2006. Citing security concerns, during the latter half of the year the government prevented aid groups from operating in strife-torn Baluchistan, leading to a worsened humanitarian situation in the province by year's end.

Trade unions are independent. The law restricts the right to strike, and workers in certain essential industries face restrictions on bargaining collectively and generally cannot hold strikes. Despite legislation outlawing bonded labor and canceling enslaving debts, illegal bonded labor continues to be widespread, particularly in Sindh province. According to news reports, there is a growing trend involving bonded laborers who sell organs, particularly kidneys, in order to escape their servitude. The enforcement of child labor laws remains inadequate; recent surveys have indicated that there are at least eight million child workers in Pakistan, and those found employing children often avoid punishment.

The judiciary consists of civil and criminal courts and a special Sharia (Islamic

law) court for certain offenses. Lower courts remain plagued by endemic corruption; intimidation by local officials, powerful individuals, and Islamic extremists; and heavy backlogs that lead to lengthy pretrial detentions. The military regime undermined the Supreme Court's reputation for independence in January 2000, when it ordered all high-ranking judges to swear to uphold the Provisional Constitutional Order issued by Musharraf. When the chief justice and a number of other judges refused, they were replaced. Since then, the courts have rejected subsequent challenges to the legality of military rule. A November 2004 ICG report drew attention to the fact that the executive has extended its influence over the judiciary by using the appointments system to remove independent judges, fill key positions with political allies, and reward those who issue judgments favorable to the government. However, the Supreme Court in particular does occasionally show sparks of independence.

Other parts of the judicial system, such as the antiterrorism courts, operate with limited due process rights. A 1999 ordinance vested broad powers of arrest, investigation, and prosecution in a National Accountability Bureau and established special courts to try corruption cases. Musharraf has used both selectively to prosecute rival politicians and officials from previous civilian governments. The Sharia court enforces the 1979 Hudood Ordinances, which criminalize nonmarital rape, extramarital sex, and several alcohol, gambling, and property offenses. They also provide for Koranic punishments, including death by stoning for adultery, as well as jail terms and fines. In part because of strict evidentiary standards, authorities have never carried out the Koranic punishments. Pressure to amend or do away with the ordinances, which are highly discriminatory towards women, has grown in recent years, and the Musharraf government has been generally supportive of such proposals. In November 2006, after many delays, limited progress was made to reverse some of the most negative provisions of certain ordinances, although activists complained that the government had caved in to pressure from religious conservatives and that the reforms were not sufficient.

Tensions between national and constitutional laws and the efforts of provincial assemblies to pass restrictive legislation based on Islamic values continues to be an issue. In July 2005, the NWFP assembly, which had previously passed legislation declaring Sharia to be the supreme law of the province, passed the Taliban-style Hisba (accountability) Bill, under which a watchdog agency would monitor and enforce adherence to Islamic values and practices. Musharraf then referred the legislation to the Supreme Court, which in August 2005 declared that large sections of the bill were unconstitutional and prohibited its implementation. However, in November 2006, a modified version of the bill was passed by the provincial assembly; critics expressed concern that the wording of the bill was intentionally vague and open to diverse interpretations. The Supreme Court issued a stay order in December to prevent the NWFP governor from signing the bill into law, and it remained unresolved at year's end.

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are under a separate legal system, the Frontier Crimes Regulation, which authorizes tribal leaders to administer justice according to Sharia and tribal custom. Feudal landlords and tribal elders throughout Pakistan adjudicate some disputes and impose punishments, including the death penalty or the forced exchange of brides between tribes, in unsanctioned parallel courts called *jirgas*. In April 2004, responding to growing concern over the

potential for abuse inherent in this practice, the Sindh High Court issued a ruling that banned all trials conducted under the jirga system in the province. However, such judgments continue to take place.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that police continue to routinely engage in crime, use excessive force in ordinary situations, arbitrarily arrest and detain citizens, extort money from prisoners and their families, accept money to register cases on false charges, rape female detainees and prisoners, commit extrajudicial killings, and torture detainees (often to extract confessions). Political opponents, former government officials, and other critics of the regime are particularly at risk of arbitrary arrest or abduction, torture, "disappearance," and denial of basic due process rights at the hands of military authorities, according to Human Rights Watch and local NGOs. Progress on creating a National Human Rights Commission that is empowered to monitor and investigate cases of abuse and to redress grievances remained slow during the year.

The HRCP has noted a marked increase in the number of people being illegally detained by state agencies, sometimes for extended periods of time, citing reports that more than 600 have disappeared since 2002. Initially most of those detained were suspected of links to radical Islamist groups, but more recently Baluchi and Sindhi nationalists, government critics, and some journalists, researchers, and social workers have also been targeted. Although intelligence services operate largely with impunity and outside the purview of the judicial system, in October 2006, the Supreme Court took up several cases of disappearance and ordered the government to speed up the process of producing the incarcerated men. As a result of the court decision, approximately 20 men were freed by year's end.

Prison conditions continue to be extremely poor, with overcrowding a particular problem, although authorities have taken some steps to ameliorate the situation. A January 2005 Amnesty International report noted that the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance of 2000 remains largely unimplemented and that numerous children continue to be jailed alongside adults, heavily fined, and sometimes sentenced to death.

Press reports indicate that there may be as many as 200,000 armed militants currently active in Pakistan. These extremists carry out terrorist attacks within Pakistan and in neighboring countries, including assassination attempts and suicide bombings directed at foreign, Shia, and Christian targets, which kill at least several hundred civilians each year. Sunni and Shia fundamentalist groups continue to engage in a cycle of retaliatory sectarian violence, mostly bomb attacks against mosques, other places of worship such as shrines, and religious processions or gatherings. The New Delhi-based South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) reported that 201 people were killed and 349 were injured as a result of sectarian violence in 2006, roughly the same number as the previous year. About 50 people were killed, including three prominent religious leaders, and 100 injured when a suicide bomber attacked a Sunni prayer service in Karachi in April.

Operations by the Pakistani army and security forces (with support from the United States) against foreign militants in the tribal areas have been ongoing since 2002, and cases of human rights abuses committed during the course of these operations, including arbitrary arrest and detention, the destruction of property, the death or displacement of civilians, and extrajudicial executions, continue to be reported. The focus during 2006 was on North Waziristan, where the army deployed

additional troops in an effort to root out Islamist militants. Meanwhile, after striking a deal with the army in late 2004, local Taliban militants have strengthened their hold over the South Waziristan agency, imposing strict behavioral codes and killing progovernment political and religious leaders, including 150 tribal elders in the past three years. In late October, air strikes destroyed a madrassa in Bajaur agency, killing around 80 people; angered locals then staged mass demonstrations. Possibly in response, in early November a suicide bomber struck an army training school in NWFP, killing 42 soldiers. Overall, the SATP reported that 1,471 people were killed in terrorist or insurgent-related violence in 2006, including 608 civilians, 325 security force personnel, and 538 militants.

Beginning in early 2005, Baluchistan nationalist groups demanding increased autonomy and control over profits gained from natural resources have increased their attacks on gas pipelines and other infrastructure, and the army has stepped up military reprisals in response, leading to violence, instability, human rights violations, and the displacement of thousands of civilians. The killing of the elderly rebel tribal leader Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti by the army in August 2006 triggered violent riots and strikes, inflaming Baluchi nationalist feelings still further.

In an atmosphere in which the rule of law is weakly enforced and the military has expanded its control over economic resources, land rights are at risk. According to a Human Rights Watch report, tenant farmers in the Okara district of Punjab who have refused to cede their land rights to the army have faced besiegement, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, "forced divorce," dismissal from employment, and, in the most extreme cases, murder. The growing dominance of the military over economic and commercial activity more generally has been cause for concern.

A combination of traditional norms, discriminatory laws, and weak law enforcement continues to contribute to a high incidence of rape, domestic violence, acid attacks, and other forms of abuse against women; according to the HRCP, up to 80 percent of women are victims of such abuse during their lifetimes. Female victims of rape or other sexual crimes are often pressured by police not to press charges, and are sometimes pressured by their families to commit suicide. Gang rapes sanctioned by village councils as a form of punishment for crimes committed by the targeted woman's relatives continue to be reported, despite the fact that harsh sentences have been handed down against the perpetrators in some cases. In 2005, an outcry erupted over Musharraf's comments that for some high-profile victims—Shazia Khalid, a doctor in Baluchistan who was raped in January and subsequently fled the country after being pressured by the government; and Mukhtaran Mai, who was gang-raped on the orders of a village council in 2002 and initially denied an exit visa to travel to the United States in June 2005—rape had become a "money-making concern."

Under the discriminatory Hudood Ordinances, women can be charged with adultery or other sexual misconduct arising from rape cases or alleged extramarital affairs; thousands of women (an estimated 80 percent of the female prison population) have been incarcerated as a result of being wrongfully charged. The threat of being charged with adultery may prevent some women from reporting rape. In an attempt to reduce abuse of the ordinances, the government passed legislation in 2005 requiring a court order before a woman can be detained under such charges, which led to a significant decline in the number of new cases filed in 2006. In July

2006, Musharraf ordered the release on bail of all women held under the ordinances, and according to local NGOs, approximately 1,200 women had been released by the time the measure lapsed in November. More extensive reform of the ordinances has proved considerably harder to implement due to opposition from religious parties, who hold some power in parliament. However, after watering down initial drafts, the government was able to pass the Women's Protection Bill in November, which reformed some of the worst aspects of Hudood. A woman is no longer required to produce four Muslim male witnesses in order to prove rape, and judges can now try rape cases under criminal rather than only under Islamic law. However, extramarital sex is still criminalized, and marital rape is not recognized as a crime.

According to the HRC, at least 565 women were killed by family members in so-called honor killings in 2006, and many more are otherwise humiliated or mutilated. Usually committed by a male relative of the victim, honor killings punish women who supposedly bring dishonor to the family. Government-backed legislation introducing stiffer sentences and the possibility of the death penalty for those convicted of honor killings was signed into law in January 2005. However, given a prevailing environment in which authorities generally do not aggressively prosecute or convict the perpetrators of violence against women, activists questioned the effectiveness of the bill. The tribal practice of *vani*, in which women are offered in marriage to the male relatives of victims killed by their own family members in order to settle a potential feud, continues to take place in certain parts of rural Pakistan, although there is growing opposition to the practice by the women themselves as well as social activists and religious scholars. It was declared illegal by the Supreme Court in 2004, and in a landmark December 2005 judgment the court ordered local police to offer women protection.

Pakistani women face unofficial discrimination in educational and employment opportunities, and the trafficking of women and children remains a serious concern, with females being trafficked or sold for the purposes of forced labor, sexual exploitation, or marriage to significantly older men. Children's access to education and health care continues to be inadequate, with low numbers for both school attendance and literacy, despite the presence of a number of local and international NGOs that work to address such problems.

Palau

Population: 20,000

Capital: Melekeok

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Palau's government in 2006 approved new requirements for annual random drug tests for elected representatives and police officers as well as stringent new measures that will further restrict the hiring of Bangladeshi workers, and stiffened the penalty for rape of a female minor. Also in 2006, the capital was moved from Koror to a new site in Melekeok.

The United States administered Palau, which consists of 8 main islands and more than 250 smaller islands, as a UN Trusteeship Territory from 1947 until 1981, when it became a self-governing territory. Full independence was achieved in 1994 under a Compact of Free Association with the United States. Under the terms of the compact, the United States agreed to grant Palau \$442 million in economic aid between 1994 and 2009 and provide for the country's defense in exchange for U.S. military access to the archipelago until 2044.

Vice President Tommy Esang Remengesau was elected president in a narrow victory over Senator Peter Sugiyama in November 2000. In the November 2004 presidential poll, Remengesau was reelected, winning two-thirds of the ballots.

In a referendum held concurrently with the 2004 general election, voters endorsed the initiation of a constitutional convention in 2005 to consider amendments to the constitution. Matters for consideration included allowing dual citizenship, limiting terms in the Parliament to three, making legislative posts part-time positions, switching from a bicameral to a unicameral legislature, and allowing presidential and vice presidential candidates to run for election as a team. The constitution currently states that only citizens may vote and own land in Palau. A proposed amendment would allow Palauans living in the United States (about 25 percent of all Palauan citizens) and elsewhere to acquire citizenship in their resident countries without losing their right to vote and own land in Palau. Other measures aim to reduce factional disputes and the cost of running a legislature for the country's small population. The review was completed in mid-July 2005 with the approval of 25 proposed amendments. Citizens will put the measures to a vote in the next general election, scheduled for November 2008.

Also in 2005, three state governors were convicted of bribery, theft, misconduct, and other crimes and removed from office. The Speaker of the House of Delegates

was charged with 34 criminal counts involving the use of public funds for personal purposes.

The number of human and drug trafficking, prostitution, and money laundering cases has increased in recent years. The government has said more resources are needed to improve law enforcement and the judiciary and to implement a new border-management system.

Concern about the spread of drug addiction prompted the Senate to unanimously pass a bill in September 2006 that would require all elected and appointed officials and law enforcement officers to accept random drug tests at least twice a year. The Senate passed another bill to stiffen the penalty for rape of a female younger than 18 to a minimum of 15 years and a maximum of 30 years in prison. The bill also permits prosecution of spousal rape. At year's end, both bills were being considered in the House of Delegates.

In December, the government passed a bill preventing the hiring of all Bangladesh workers in Palau and forbidding those in the country from applying for extensions. The number of Bangladeshi workers more than doubled from 163 in 2004 to 425 in 2005, and language barriers and fraud among recruiters have resulted in social tensions and problems for the Palauan government, which does not have formal diplomatic ties with Bangladesh.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Palau is an electoral democracy. The bicameral legislature, the Olbiil Era Kelulau, consists of the nine-member Senate and the 16-member House of Delegates. Legislators are elected to four-year terms by popular vote. The president and vice president are also elected to four-year terms by popular vote. There is no limit on the number of terms, except that the president may serve only two terms consecutively. The country is organized into 16 states, each of which is headed by a governor. President Tommy Esang Remengesau was elected in a narrow victory in November 2000 and secured a second term with a two-thirds majority in November 2004. The capital, previously located in Koror, was moved to a new complex in Melekeok in 2006.

There are no political parties, but there are no laws against their formation. Political alliances, quickly formed and dismantled, dictate politics and in recent years have had a serious destabilizing effect on governance.

Official corruption and abuses are serious problems. Responding to public dissatisfaction, the government has made more deliberate efforts to address the matter in recent years, especially with respect to senior officials. Palau was not rated in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and the press is respected. There are three major print publications: *Tia Belau* and *Palau Horizon* are English-language weeklies and *Roureur Belau* is a Palauan weekly. There are five privately owned radio stations and one privately owned television station. Most households receive cable television, which rebroadcasts U.S. and other satellite television programs. The internet is accessible without government interference and has helped to connect islanders with their fellow citizens living abroad. Diffusion is limited by cost and a lack of access outside the main islands.

Citizens of Palau enjoy freedom of religion. Although the government requires religious organizations to register with the Office of the Attorney General, no application has ever been denied. There have been no reports of restrictions on academic freedom, and the government provides well-funded basic education for all.

Freedom of assembly and association are respected. Many nongovernmental groups focus on youth, health, and women's issues. No laws or policies bar formation of trade unions. The largely subsistence agricultural economy is heavily dependent on aid and rent from the United States under the compact, as well as remittances from citizens working overseas. The government and the tourist industry are the main employers.

The judiciary is independent and trials are generally fair. A 300-member police and first-response force maintains internal order. Palau has no armed forces; the United States provides external defense under the terms of the compact. There have been no reports of prisoner abuse or extreme hardship for prisoners.

Foreign workers account for about a third of the population and 73 percent of the workforce. There have been reports of discrimination against and abuse of foreign workers, and the law bars foreign workers from changing employers inside Palau. In December 2005, the government decided to impose a moratorium on workers from Bangladesh when local employment contracts for several fell through, and the absence of official ties with Bangladesh complicated efforts to repatriate them. Marriages of convenience between islanders and foreigners are also a problem. Foreigners are said to use fake marriages to extend their stay in Palau and to enter the United States, which grants Palauan citizens visa-free entry and residence under the compact. There have been reports of human trafficking from China, the Philippines, and Taiwan into Palau as a conduit to the United States.

There is high regard for women in this matrilineal society, in which land rights and familial descent are traced through women. This has allowed many women to be active in both traditional and modern sectors of the economy, as well as in politics. A small number of domestic abuse cases, many linked to alcohol and drug abuse, have been reported. According to the police, drugs and alcohol are involved in 90 percent of all crimes. Prostitution and sexual harassment are illegal, and the law prohibits rape, including spousal rape.

Panama

Population: 3,300,000

Capital: Panama City

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,3F	2,3F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview:

In 2006, plans to expand the Panama Canal passed in a national referendum. The country also experienced public

protests against the mining industry and reforms to the country's criminal code. Panama continued to confront problems with drug trafficking, violence, and trafficking in persons.

Panama was part of Colombia until 1903, when a U.S.-supported revolt resulted in the proclamation of an independent republic. A period of weak civilian rule ended with a 1968 military coup that brought General Omar Torrijos to power. After the signing of the 1977 canal treaty with the United States, under which the canal was gradually transferred to full Panamanian control by 1999, Torrijos promised democratization; the 1972 constitution was revised to provide for the direct election of the president and National Assembly for five-year terms. However, a real transition to democracy would not come for another dozen years.

After Torrijos's death in 1981, General Manuel Noriega emerged as Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) chief. He rigged the 1984 elections that brought to power the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), which was then the political arm of the PDF. The Democratic Alliance of Civic Opposition (ADOC) won the 1989 elections, but Noriega annulled the vote and declared himself head of state. He was removed during a U.S. military invasion late that year, and ADOC's Guillermo Endara became president.

Both the PRD and the Arnulfista Party (PA)—named after the late Arnulfo Arias, who was president three times between 1940 and 1968—won elections in the 1990s. Presidential and legislative elections in May 2004 returned the PRD to power, with Martin Torrijos, the son of the former strongman, defeating a number of presidential candidates from various parties; former president Endara of the Solidarity Party (PS) was his closest challenger. The PRD also won a majority of 42 seats in the 78-seat National Assembly, followed by the PA with only 17 seats; several other parties captured fewer than 10 seats each.

The fallout from the elections continued to affect Panama's political parties in 2005. Endara broke with the PS to form a new political party, the Moral Vanguard of the Fatherland (MVP). The PS formed a four-party coalition with a variety of minor parties to create the leading legislative opposition to the PRD; the new opposition coalition is known as the Coordinated National Opposition (CNO). The PA forced out its founder, Arias widow and former president Mireya Moscoso, and the party changed its name to the Panamenista Party (PP).

Late in 2006, a majority of voters approved a Torrijos-backed referendum that proposed the expansion of the Panama Canal. Construction work on a third set of locks in the canal, which would double its current size, was due to begin during the first half of 2007. Although the government planned to move ahead with the project, estimated to cost \$5.3 billion, there were concerns about a lack of popular support, reflected in low voter turnout at 42 percent. Critics of the expansion plan maintained that the projected cost may have been underestimated and that the funds should instead be used to reduce poverty and improve education and health care. The Panama Canal Authority, however, asserted that the expansion would boost the gross domestic product by 2 percent annually.

Economic concerns continued in 2006. Although Panama's economy boasted the highest growth rates in Central America, unease over the growing debt, inflation, fiscal reforms, and social security escalated. Increased debt received the most

attention from international financial institutions and economic analysts, as the external debt surpassed \$10 billion and grew by 14 percent compared with the debt incurred by the previous administration. Additionally, the government raised electricity rates by 30 percent at the beginning of 2006, eliciting strong objections from consumers, but electric company financial statements requested by the government subsequently showed that company profits were higher than legally permitted. Confronted with a discontented public, government officials declared that construction of additional hydroelectric plants would be undertaken in the future to increase supply and reduce rates.

The government in 2006 authorized exploration at the Petaquilla gold and copper mine, prompting public protests, particularly from indigenous activists claiming that mining would have adverse effects on their land and the environment. In recent years, the mining industry in Panama had been mostly inactive. However, due to an increase in world mineral prices, the industry has been reenergized, and the National Assembly undertook reforms of the Mineral Code in response to changes in the mining sector. However, the reforms had yet to be passed by Congress at year's end. It was also uncertain whether such legislation would benefit local indigenous groups, which were most likely to experience negative repercussions from the reactivation of the mining sector.

Reforms to Panama's criminal code were submitted for consideration by President Torrijos and the National Assembly in 2006. The proposal envisaged a general increase in penalties for a variety of criminal acts. However, the changes' potential infringement on freedom of speech provoked outcries and protests on behalf of journalists and international media organizations. Critics of the reforms maintained that they were an attack on freedom of expression and a violation of human rights conventions. Additionally, opponents stated concerns that the proposal to lengthen prison sentences would lead to neglect of prisoners' human rights and a more chaotic situation in the already substandard and overcrowded prisons. In response to the strong criticism, a commission composed of members of the original reform board and journalists' organizations was formed and tasked with revising the draft measures.

Drug trafficking and related violence continued to plague Panama in 2006. The government has been stepping up its efforts to curb the illegal trade, and 200 percent more drugs were reportedly seized in 2005 than in the previous year. However, the overall success of the government's campaign has been limited by a lack of resources, weak border enforcement, and government corruption. Additionally, money laundering, the trafficking of persons, and the presence of Colombian guerrilla and paramilitary forces along Panama's southern border remained causes for concern.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Panama is an electoral democracy. The 2004 national elections were considered free and fair by international observers. The president and deputies to the 78-seat unicameral National Assembly are elected by popular vote for five-year terms. The constitution guarantees freedom of political organizations. The PRD gained a legislative majority after winning 42 seats in the National Assembly in the 2004 elections.

In early 1999, Panama's largest political parties agreed to ban anonymous campaign contributions in an effort to stem the infiltration of drug money into the political process. Nevertheless, widespread corruption of the governmental apparatus

indicates the difficulty of enforcing any such bans. The administration of President Torrijos, who took power in 2004, established a special commission to deal with corruption scandals from the previous Moscoso administration and to uncover new abuses. Upon taking office, Torrijos implemented a Transparency Law that had been suspended by Moscoso. However, since that initiative, he has worked to limit the scope of the law, preventing the release of the minutes from cabinet meetings and keeping the disclosure of assets by public officials from public view. Panama was ranked 84 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

All of the country's media outlets are privately owned with the exception of one state-owned television network and a network operated by the Catholic Church. However, there is a considerable concentration of media ownership by relatives and associates of former president Ernesto Perez Balladares of the PRD. There are five national daily newspapers.

Panama is notable for its harsh legal environment for journalists. Although former president Moscoso was unable to repeal restrictive gag rules in Panama's 1972 constitution, she did pardon more than 80 journalists accused of criminal libel. Torrijos was criticized by international journalism groups when he took office without setting any plans to repeal the gag laws or the tough criminal libel statutes. However, in 2005, the gag laws were repealed and the country's censorship board was disbanded. In 2006, the Torrijos administration undertook reforms of the country's criminal code, proposing lengthened sentences for offenses including libel. Panamanian journalists and international organizations called the proposed reforms an attack on freedom of expression and a violation of human rights conventions. Despite restrictive laws, there is free access to the internet.

Freedom of religion is respected, and academic freedom is generally honored.

Freedom of assembly is generally recognized, and nongovernmental organizations are free to operate. Although only about 10 percent of the labor force is organized, the unions are cohesive and powerful, as demonstrated by their ability to block Torrijos's social security reform initiative in 2005. However, there are limitations on unions' ability to strike. In recent years, the government has extended union-organization and collective-bargaining rights to special export-processing zones where they had previously been restricted, but the right to strike remains limited.

The judicial system, headed by the Supreme Court, was revamped in 1990. However, it remains overburdened and its administration is inefficient, politicized, and prone to corruption. An unwieldy criminal code and a surge in cases, many against former soldiers and officials of the military period, complicate the judicial process. The Torrijos administration's 2006 criminal code reform proposal emphasized longer sentences, leading to questions about the potential repercussions for the penal system and human rights. Currently, roughly two-thirds of defendants face delays of nearly 24 months before having their cases heard. The State Department's 2006 human rights report maintains that "pretrial detention in excess of the maximum sentence for the alleged crime was common." The penal system is marked by violent disturbances in decrepit facilities that are severely overcrowded.

The PDF was dismantled after 1989, and the military was formally abolished in 1994. The Panamanian Public Forces that replaced the PDF, while accountable to civilian authorities through a publicly disclosed budget, are poorly disciplined and

corrupt. They consist of four components: the Panamanian National Police, the National Maritime Service, the National Air Service, and the Institutional Protection Service. Criminal investigations are the responsibility of the semiautonomous Judicial Technical Police. Like the country's prison guards, police officers frequently use excessive force, and in 2005, several high-ranking officers were accused of sexually abusing minors.

Discrimination against darker-skinned Panamanians is widespread. The country's Asian, Middle Eastern, and indigenous populations are similarly singled out. The living standards of indigenous people, who often do not speak Spanish, are significantly lower than those of the general population. Some 90 percent of the indigenous population in Panama live in extreme poverty, and along with other minority groups, they face significant discrimination in employment. Since 1993, indigenous groups have protested the encroachment of illegal settlers on Indian lands and delays by the government in formally demarcating the boundaries of those lands. In 2006, proposed legislation showed some promise of recognizing indigenous territorial rights, but there were doubts regarding the implementation of such laws, which have been postponed indefinitely. Indigenous communities do enjoy a degree of autonomy and self-government.

Violence against women and children is widespread and common. Panama is a source, destination, and transit country for human trafficking. The Panamanian government has worked with the International Labor Organization on information campaigns addressing the issue, and it has created a special sex-crimes unit to investigate cases of trafficking for the purpose of prostitution. However, the resources dedicated to this special unit and other efforts to combat trafficking remain insufficient.

Papua New Guinea

Population: 6,000,000
Capital: Port Moresby

Political Rights: 3
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,4PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	3,3F	3,3F	3,3F	3,3F

Overview: In 2006, Prime Minister Michael Somare replaced several cabinet members and gave his son a new portfolio after he had resigned from an earlier cabinet position for alleged financial improprieties. Increasing crime, weak government, widespread abuse and corruption, and tribal feuds continued to hinder efforts to improve law and order and spur economic growth in the country.

Papua New Guinea (PNG), which consists of the eastern part of New Guinea and some 600 smaller islands, gained independence from Australia in 1975. In 1988, miners and landowners on Bougainville Island began guerrilla attacks on the Australian-owned Panguna copper mine, which provided 40 percent of PNG's total export revenues. By 1990, the islanders' demands for compensation and profit-sharing had turned into a low-grade secessionist war. Tensions eased following a 1998 ceasefire brokered by Australia and New Zealand, and a peace treaty was signed between the government and the rebels in August 2001. A decade of violence had claimed more than 10,000 lives, displaced thousands of people, and crippled the country economically.

Both the United Nations and Australia have been deeply involved in the peace process and recovery efforts, sending observers, peacekeepers, police officers and trainers, and material assistance to restore law and order. The Australian police presence has been politically controversial for the government, which is eager to demonstrate independence from its former colonial master but does not appear capable of maintaining order on its own. Australian police are scheduled to return to PNG in early 2007; 150 Australian police withdrew in May 2005 after the PNG Supreme Court ruled their legal immunity invalid under the PNG constitution. They were part of a 210-member Australian force and a \$670 million, five-year package to help restore peace and stability in Bougainville.

The Bougainville peace treaty called for elections for a semiautonomous government on the island and a referendum on independence in 10 to 15 years. The Parliament approved a new constitution for Bougainville in December 2004, and more than 200,000 people voted in elections in May 2005 that were declared free and fair by international observers. John Kabui, an independence advocate, defeated former Bougainville governor John Momis to become the new Bougainville president.

In March 2006, Arthur Somare, son of Prime Minister Michael Somare, resigned as Minister for National Planning and Monitoring over alleged financial improprieties. A cabinet reshuffle in April saw more changes to the cabinet. In July, another cabinet shuffle followed, including the reappointment of Arthur Somare as head of the Ministry for Public Enterprise, Information, and Development. In November 2006, the prime minister declared his intention to run in the next general election in 2007.

The government has tightened immigration controls on illegal migrants from Indonesia's Papua Province, which borders on PNG, to avoid increasingly tense relations with Jakarta. Over the years, many Papuans have come to PNG to seek refuge from the Indonesian military and police or to engage in trade.

Crime, including firearms smuggling, rape, murder, and drug trafficking, is on the rise, and the government has done little to stop it due to a lack of political will and resources. For example, the government has declared a state of emergency in the Southern Highlands Province since August 2006 because of extensive lawlessness and corruption in the region. Weak governance and law enforcement are said to have made PNG a home to many Asian organized crime groups. Tribal feuds are also a major source of violence; 16 people were killed in January 2006 in clashes between rival tribes claiming ownership of a coffee plantation. PNG's economic and social troubles are exacerbated by population growth, which at an annual rate of 2 percent is among the highest in the world. According to the Asian Development Bank, PNG has the lowest economic growth rate in the region, while life expectancy,

income, and other social and economic development indicators have all declined since independence. Rampant official corruption and abuse also hinder development and fuel public discontent.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Papua New Guinea is an electoral democracy, but voting fraud and other electoral irregularities are common. Voters elect a unicameral parliament with 109 members from all 19 provinces and the National Capital District. The lawmakers serve five-year terms. The prime minister is the leader of the majority party or coalition in parliament. PNG is a member of the Commonwealth, and the prime minister is formally appointed by the governor general, who represents Britain's Queen Elizabeth II as head of state. The governor general is chosen by the PNG cabinet; Sir Paulias Matane was sworn in to the post in 2004. A new, limited preferential voting system allows voters to rank three candidates by preference. It replaces the first-past-the-post system that critics claimed was open to bribery. The new system was tested in a by-election in 2004 and will be fully implemented in the 2007 general elections. The last general election in June 2002 produced a coalition government headed by Prime Minister Somare.

The major political parties are Somare's National Alliance, the United Resources Party, the Papua New Guinea Party, and the People's Progressive Party. However, tribal and geographical ties and personalities are more important determinants of political affiliations and alliances than political parties.

Corruption and abuse of office are severe problems. PNG was ranked 130 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. The government has yet to implement real reforms to increase transparency and strengthen the rule of law but pursues a few high-profile cases every year. In 2006, the authorities arrested a former police commissioner for abuse of office and interfering in an investigation and convicted a member of parliament for raping his 17-year-old sister-in-law (he committed the crime after receiving a suspended 12-year prison sentence for assault).

Freedom of speech is generally respected. The media provide independent coverage and report on controversial issues such as alleged abuses by police, official corruption, and the views of the political opposition. Foreign newspapers are available. There are two major daily newspapers and several local weekly and monthly publications. The state operates three radio stations and a television station, and there are several private radio stations and two private television stations. Two new mobile telephone operators entered the market in 2006. However, infrastructure is fragile. The donation of a new 1.5 megawatt generator by the Japanese government has enabled Radio Bougainville to expand its broadcasts to 10 hours daily, and Media Niugini, PNG's only free-to-air commercial television station, reaches only about 45 percent of the population. There are no government controls on access to the internet, but access is limited by cost and a lack of infrastructure.

The government upholds freedom of religion. Academics are free to set their curriculums and engage in research, but the government does not always tolerate strong criticism from scholars. Lack of resources and a shortage of trained teachers are serious problems. A UNESCO 2005 study reported PNG's literacy rate as 57.3 percent, making it the lowest in the Pacific region. In July 2006, 37,000 teachers went on an indefinite strike nationwide to demand back pay and a wage increase.

The constitution provides for freedom of association, and the government generally observes this right in practice. A number of civil society groups provide social services and advocate for women's rights, environmental conservation, and other causes. A small-scale mining association covering the Wau-Bulolo areas was formed in 2006 to protect the interests of the many who pursue alluvial mining in these gold-rich areas. Marches and demonstrations require 14-day advance notice and police approval. The government recognizes workers' rights to strike, organize, and engage in collective bargaining.

The judiciary is independent, and the legal system is based on English common law. The Supreme Court is the final court of appeal and has original jurisdiction on constitutional matters. The National Court hears most cases and appeals from the lower district courts established at the provincial level. There are also village courts, headed by laypeople, to adjudicate minor offenses under both customary and statutory law. A lack of resources severely limits the number and training of judicial branch personnel and results in long detentions and delays in court cases.

Law enforcement officials have been implicated in unlawful killings, extortion, using excessive force in arresting and interrogating suspects, and conducting excessively punitive and violent raids. Police have also been accused of robberies, terrorizing civilians, torching homes, raping women arrested for prostitution, and stealing and selling firearms. In August, the police were accused of maintaining a large number of "ghost workers" on the payroll, and a Human Rights Watch report in 2006 found the police failed to stop torture, rape, and beating of children. Police in Lae province were also alleged to routinely beat and rape young male detainees. PNG is the only South Pacific country cited by human rights groups for serious abuses, most of them related to police violence. The correctional service is short of staff, and prison conditions are poor. Prison breaks are not uncommon; more than 150 inmates escaped from various prisons in 2006.

The country maintains ground, naval, air, and special operations forces. Military control and effectiveness are hampered by a lack of training and equipment, low morale, low pay, corruption, and disciplinary problems. The Australian-led multinational force has reduced the PNG army from 3,300 to 2,000 personnel, and 30 Australian police advisers are working to improve capacity and morale in the PNG police force.

Violence between native tribes is rooted in a cultural tradition of revenge for perceived wrongs. Inadequate law enforcement and the increased availability of guns have exacerbated this problem. Attacks on ethnic Chinese and their businesses have become more frequent and, in some cases, involve the police.

Discrimination and violence against women and children are serious problems. Domestic violence is punishable by law, but prosecutions are rare. Police commonly treat it as a private matter, and family pressure and fear of reprisal discourage victims from pressing charges. Women's rights advocates say the traditional practice of buying brides hinders efforts to raise the status of females. In March 2006, the family of a 14-year-old girl raped by six men accepted \$1,100 as compensation—a customary practice—with the police facilitating the arrangement rather than arresting and charging the perpetrators. The spread of HIV/AIDS is a serious problem. An estimated 100,000 people, or 2 percent of the population, are infected with the virus, and up to 12 percent of all university students are HIV-positive. Experts have warned

that without drastic action, HIV/AIDS will infect one million people in PNG by 2015, yet illiteracy and a lack of government leadership and resources continue to pose major obstacles.

Paraguay

Population: 6,300,000

Capital: Asuncion

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview: In 2006, an antagonistic political opposition undermined the ability of President Nicanor Duarte Frutos to govern effectively as November municipal elections approached. Duarte renewed his push to change the constitution to allow him to seek reelection in April 2008, but his efforts were hampered by the combative political environment. Meanwhile, the country's anticorruption efforts began to make headway, even as press freedom conditions deteriorated amid violence against journalists.

Paraguay, which achieved independence from Spain in 1811, has been racked by a series of crises since authoritarian President Alfredo Stroessner of the right-wing Colorado Party was ousted in 1989 after 35 years in power. The fragility of the country's emerging democratic institutions resulted in nearly 15 years of popular uprisings, military mutinies, antigovernment demonstrations, bitter political rivalries, and unbroken rule by the Colorados.

Senate leader Luis Gonzalez Macchi assumed the presidency in 1999 after the incumbent fled the country amid charges that he had orchestrated the murder of his vice president. In December 2002, Gonzalez Macchi offered to leave office three months early, just a week after lawmakers voted to begin impeachment hearings against him. He was accused of buying an armor-plated BMW that had been stolen from Brazil, mishandling millions of dollars in state revenues, and embezzling \$16 million from two banks in the process of liquidation. He barely survived an impeachment trial in early 2003. Gonzalez Macchi and many in the Colorado Party were also discredited by their failed efforts to reverse the country's downward economic spiral.

Favoring populist, antiglobalization rhetoric during the 2003 presidential campaign, former education minister Nicanor Duarte Frutos, an insurgent Colorado, emerged victorious in national elections held in April. Duarte had promised to purge the public sector and the judiciary of corruption and inefficiency, create jobs, and

return fiscal stability to the country. Upon taking office in August, he quickly began to implement the good-governance agenda that he had promised during the campaign. Skeptics, however, questioned whether the new anticorruption regime would be selectively applied to Duarte's rivals inside and outside the Colorado Party.

Duarte moved to take control of the tax, port, and customs authorities to combat tax evasion and smuggling. Paraguay had a highly dollarized banking system, which facilitated the illegal transfer of funds to offshore accounts. This tax evasion as well as corruption left the state with about one third of its legitimate revenues. In October 2003, Duarte's law enforcement minister, the commandant of the national police, and the head of customs were all forced to resign following revelations about a smuggling and corruption scandal.

Despite the administration's efforts to promote good governance, pay foreign debt arrears, and adopt International Monetary Fund (IMF) reforms, Paraguay was hobbled in 2004 by a decline in public security, a long-running economic recession, endemic public corruption, and a poverty rate of more than 60 percent. Intermittent violent land seizures by groups of homeless people in and around the capital city, Asuncion, contributed to a growing debate about the distribution of wealth in the country.

Beginning in 2006, Duarte pushed for constitutional reform that would allow him to seek reelection, pointing out that the current constitution was approved in an era of "mutual mistrust," just three years after Stroessner's fall. Duarte's influence in Congress increased after a pact in September 2006 with the fractured Authentic Liberal Radical Party (PLRA), the country's strongest opposition party, secured the votes necessary for his supporters to take control of the leadership positions in both chambers. However, opposition parties took an increasingly combative stance against the president in 2006 as the November municipal elections approached.

The resulting congressional deadlock blocked progress on much-needed economic reform. Friction increased after a Duarte ally left the post of Senate president in June 2006 and was replaced by Enrique Gonzalez Quintana, an open critic of Duarte. Also in June 2006, former president Gonzalez Macchi was sentenced to six years in prison for fraud and embezzlement.

Faced with the country's troubled political and economic conditions, a record number of Paraguayans emigrated to Spain in 2006, a phenomenon for which the political opposition blamed the Duarte administration. Duarte's mandate has been weakened by stubborn unemployment levels and low real economic growth, in spite of macroeconomic stability. Duarte's popularity declined through 2006 due to his perceived inability to address rising unemployment and growing crime. However, a June 2006 IMF stand-by agreement worth \$97 million was expected to boost investor confidence in the government.

In November, the ruling Colorado Party captured over 49 percent of the vote in municipal elections, winning in Asuncion and three of the five next-largest towns. The opposition PLRA finished second, with over 34 percent and the other two of those towns.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Paraguay is an electoral democracy. The 2003 national elections were considered to be free and fair. The 1992 constitution provides for a president, a vice president, and a bicameral Con-

gress, consisting of a 45-member Senate and an 80-member Chamber of Deputies, all elected for five-year terms. The president is elected by a simple majority vote, and reelection is prohibited. The constitution bans the active military from engaging in politics.

The Colorado Party has ruled Paraguay for some 50 years; the other major political groupings include the PLRA, the Beloved Fatherland Party, the National Union of Ethical Citizens, and the National Agreement Party.

Corruption cases languish for years in the courts, and most end without resolution. Corruption is most rife in the informal economy, which accounts for an estimated 50 percent of national output. Only 5 percent of imports are declared at customs. Before 2006, Transparency International consistently ranked Paraguay below all other Latin American countries on its annual Corruption Perceptions Index. However, Paraguay's 2006 ranking was 111 of 163 countries surveyed, placing it ahead of countries like Honduras, Ecuador, and Venezuela. The administration of President Nicanor Duarte Frutos has worked to curb corruption by formalizing more economic activity through tax reform in 2006. An income tax has been introduced, and taxes on businesses have been lowered to discourage evasion. While income tax accounts for only 12 percent of government revenue—low by regional standards—tax receipts overall have increased by 80 percent since Duarte took office.

The constitution provides for freedom of expression and the press, and the government generally respects these rights in practice. There are a number of private television and radio stations and independent newspapers, but only one state-owned media outlet, Radio Nacional, which has a limited audience. Journalists investigating corruption or covering strikes and protests are often the victims of intimidation or violent attack by security forces, and even death threats from politicians. In 2005, there were several threats and attacks against journalists that caused the Paraguayan Journalists Union to issue a statement complaining about the climate of insecurity. This atmosphere continued through 2006, as press freedom advocates condemned the violence and intimidation aimed at reporters after a brazen attack on a journalist in southern Paraguay in February 2006. A year following the attack and probable murder (the journalist remains missing), none of the individuals involved in the attack had been arrested or even questioned. Vague, potentially restrictive laws that mandate "responsible" behavior on the part of journalists and media owners also threaten free expression. The government does not restrict use of the internet, nor does it censor internet content.

The government generally respects freedom of religion. All religious groups are required to register with the Ministry of Education and Culture, but no controls are imposed on these groups and many informal churches exist. The government generally does not restrict academic freedom.

Freedoms of association and assembly have been undermined by the Macchi government, which tolerated threats and the use of force, including imprisonment, against the opposition. However, the constitution does indeed guarantee these rights, and their abuses have subsided under the current Duarte administration. There are numerous trade unions and two major union federations, although they are weak and riddled with corruption. The constitution gives public sector workers the right to organize, bargain collectively, and strike, and nearly all of these workers belong to the ruling Colorado Party. A revised labor code, designed to protect workers' rights, was adopted in October 1993.

The judiciary, under the influence of the ruling party and the military, is susceptible to the corruption pervading all public and governmental institutions. The constitution permits detention without trial until the accused completes the minimum sentence for the alleged crime. There have been continuing reports of illegal detention by police and torture during incarceration, including of minors, particularly in rural areas. Reportedly corrupt police officials, who are poorly paid, remain in key posts that could allow them to give protection to, or compromise law enforcement actions against, narcotics traffickers. Overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and mistreatment of inmates are serious problems in the country's prisons; more than 95 percent of those held are awaiting trial, many for months or years after their arrests.

The lack of security in border areas, particularly in the tri-border region adjacent to Brazil and Argentina, has allowed large organized crime groups to engage in money laundering, and the smuggling of weapons, narcotics, and other contraband. In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, attention focused on the serious lack of government control over Paraguay's lengthy and undeveloped land borders, extensive river network, and numerous airstrips (both registered and unregistered). Sympathizers of the Lebanese Islamic extremist organization Hezbollah and other militant groups are active in the tri-border region, also known as the Iguazu triangle.

The constitution provides indigenous people with the right to participate in the economic, social, political, and cultural life of the country. However, in practice, the indigenous population is unassimilated and neglected. Low wages, long working hours, nonpayment of wages, lack of access to social security benefits, and racial discrimination are common. Peasant organizations that illegally occupy land often result in death threats and forced evictions by vigilante groups employed by landowners. Impoverished indigenous groups in the Chaco region are among the most neglected in the hemisphere, with 93 percent of homes lacking proper sanitation or drinking water. In February 2005, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights accused the government of violating six articles of the American Convention on Human Rights by displacing indigenous populations from their ancestral lands and denying them the right to land, education, health, and judicial protection.

Nearly 242,000 children between the ages of 10 and 17 work in Paraguay, and many are used in narcotics and weapons trafficking to and from Brazil by criminal bands. Sexual and domestic abuse of women continues to be a serious problem in Paraguay, with nearly 1 in 15 women reporting having been raped at least once in their lives. Although the government generally prosecutes rape allegations and often obtains convictions, many rapes go unreported because victims fear their attackers or are concerned that the law does not respect their privacy. Employment discrimination is pervasive, and spousal abuse is common. Trafficking in persons to, from, and within the country is proscribed by the constitution and criminalized in the penal code; however, there have been occasional reports of the practice for sexual purposes.

Peru

Population: 28,400,000

Capital: Lima

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5.4PF	5.4PF	5.4PF	3.3PF	1.3F	2.3F	2.3F	2.3F	2.3F	2.3F

Overview: Former president Alan Garcia returned to power in 2006 after narrowly defeating outsider candidate Ollanta Humala in a runoff election. Congressional and local elections were also held, all under generally free and fair circumstances. At year's end, Peru waited to find out whether former president Alberto Fujimori would be extradited from Chile to face trial. In December, President Garcia signed a bill that required the registration of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), raising the ire of domestic and international observers.

Since independence in 1821, Peru has seen alternating periods of civilian and military rule. Elected civilians have held office since a 12-year dictatorship ended in 1980. However, that same year, a Maoist guerrilla group known as the Shining Path launched a vicious two-decade-long insurgency. Alberto Fujimori, a university rector and engineer, defeated the novelist Mario Vargas Llosa in the 1990 presidential election.

In 1992, Fujimori, backed by the military, suspended the constitution and dissolved the Congress. In November, he held elections for an 80-member Constituent Assembly, which his candidates won overwhelmingly after the opposition made a strategic decision to boycott the voting. The assembly created a constitution establishing a unicameral Congress that would be more closely controlled by the president, and the new charter was approved in a state-controlled 1993 referendum following the capture of the Shining Path leader, Abimael Guzman. Congress passed a law in August 1996 allowing Fujimori to run for a third term, despite a constitutional provision limiting the president to two terms.

In the April 2000 presidential election, Fujimori outpolled Alejandro Toledo—a U.S.-educated economist who had been raised in one of Peru's many urban squatter settlements populated by former peasants—49.9 percent to 40.2 percent. Toledo refused to participate in a second-round runoff, saying that he had been cheated by election-day voting irregularities as well as repeatedly smeared, threatened, and assaulted by Fujimori supporters.

In early September 2000, a videotape was released showing Vladimiro Montesinos, the de facto head of the national intelligence service, bribing an opposition con-

gressman. At the same time, the spy chief was also being linked to the illegal shipment of arms to Colombian guerrillas. After other, similar videos (labeled "Vladivideos") were revealed, the scandal raised suspicions that Fujimori had secured a congressional majority by bribing opposition members to change sides. As a result, in late November, Fujimori was driven from office; opposition forces assumed control of Congress; and a respected opposition leader, Valentin Paniagua, was chosen as interim president. At the end of 2000, Fujimori announced that he was availing himself of his dual citizenship to remain in Japan.

In the April 2001 congressional elections, Toledo's Peru Posible party won 25 percent of the votes, compared with 19 percent garnered by its closest competitor, the Peruvian Aprista Party (APRA). Running on the slogan "Toledo Trabajo" (Toledo Means Jobs), Toledo bested former APRA president Alan Garcia (1985-1990) in a runoff presidential election held in June. The 2002 reform of Peru's highly centralized political structure gave new regional governments almost a quarter of the national budget and a range of powers that had long been concentrated in the central government. However, Toledo's standing suffered from a host of personal scandals, and Peru Posible suffered a serious setback in elections for 25 new regional governments.

In August 2003, Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission—which Paniagua had appointed in July 2001—presented its report on the scope and origins of the political violence that had racked the country from 1980 to 2000. While it concluded that the Shining Path was the "principal perpetrator of the human rights violations," the commission also accused the military and security forces of serious and repeated atrocities. The report shocked many observers by more than doubling the number of deaths estimated to have occurred during the protracted insurgency; of the 69,000 dead, nearly three-fourths of the victims of both the guerrillas and the military were residents of Andean highland villages, rural poor who have long suffered from neglect by the central government.

Throughout 2003 and 2004, Toledo's personal popularity plummeted and his Peru Posible party appeared on the verge of disintegration, all despite strong macroeconomic growth. In mid-2004, Peru Posible lost control of Congress after the resignation from the party of two of its founding members. One public opinion survey at the time showed that 70 percent of those polled felt that Toledo—the most unpopular president in Latin America, according to comparative polling data—was himself personally corrupt, and half said they wanted him to leave office early. In June, a special anticorruption court found former intelligence chief Montesinos guilty on charges of corruption, sentencing him to 15 years in prison. Nonetheless, in September, the self-exiled Fujimori, wanted in Peru on charges including murder and kidnapping, declared that he would run for president in 2006—despite being legally banned from holding public office.

In early 2005, the vice president was forced to resign over a tax scandal, his personal lawyer was arrested for attempting to influence the justice system, and two cabinet ministers were forced to resign on corruption charges. Meanwhile, human rights advocates complained of a lack of progress in bringing institutional changes recommended two years earlier by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In May, Congress voted to send the attorney general a report accusing Toledo of directing a fraudulent signature campaign to register his Peru Posible party for the 2000 elec-

tions. Forensic analysis showed that 77 percent of the 1.2 million signatures presented were false.

In November, Fujimori, who had been living in Tokyo, suddenly reappeared in Chile. After again declaring his intention to run for president despite a congressional ban on his holding office until 2011, he was detained by Chilean authorities as Peru requested his extradition to face more than 20 criminal charges. By the end of 2005, opinion polls indicated that the presidential contest was shaping up as a three-way race between frontrunner Lourdes Flores Nano of the right-wing National Unity Party (UN), former president Garcia of the populist APRA party, and Peruvian Nationalist Party (PNP) candidate Ollanta Humala.

Much of the attention during the 2006 presidential campaign focused on the rise of Humala, an outsider candidate whose family was notorious for strongly nationalistic, intolerant views; his brother Antauro had led an abortive uprising at the beginning of 2005, during which several police officers were killed. Humala's platform called for state control of "strategic" sectors such as energy and mining, and advocated the formation of a constituent assembly to write a new constitution. A rich vein of disillusionment with the existing system was certainly available to be tapped: in March the UN Development Program released a survey showing that over 90 percent of Peruvians believed that politicians prevented democracy from working in the country, while over 70 percent favored an authoritarian government.

Largely on the strength of his outsider status and nationalist appeals, Humala was victorious in the first round of the election on April 9, with Garcia narrowly edging out Flores for second place. Humala's PNP, allied with the Union for Peru (UPP) party, captured the most seats in Congress, with 45, while Garcia's APRA followed with 36 and Flores's UN garnered 17. Notably, the pro-Fujimori Alliance for the Future party won 13 seats, giving it influence in a divided Congress.

However, several factors combined to limit Humala's chances in the June 4 runoff election. Fears of possible authoritarianism led most Flores voters to support Garcia. In addition, Garcia adroitly used Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez's endorsement of Humala to frighten centrist voters who were disinclined to import the Venezuelan model of polarized politics and state-centric policies. Finally, charges of human rights violations stemming from Humala's stint in the military fighting Shining Path rebels in the 1980s further discredited him. Garcia triumphed in the end, but by the slim margin of 52.5 percent to 47.5 percent. Furthermore, 15 of Peru's 24 departments (provinces) voted for Humala, and he won by an overwhelming margin in many areas of the highlands, thereby underlining the rift between Lima and the impoverished interior. The nation's political fragmentation was further illustrated in November, when locally based independent candidates were victorious in the vast majority of departments and provinces, with APRA and Humala-linked candidates performing poorly.

Once in office, Garcia quickly moved to increase his appeal through populist measures such as salary cuts for government officials (including himself and members of Congress) and the proposed introduction of the death penalty for child rapists and terrorists. Meanwhile, he attempted to buttress relations with the United States by denouncing Chavez, expressing his concern regarding the "Andean fundamentalism" practiced by Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and Bolivia's Evo Morales, and promising to extradite drug traffickers. However, his top foreign policy priority,

the ratification of the free-trade agreement Toledo had signed with the United States, remained in limbo due to internal U.S. political obstacles. In December Garcia signed a controversial law requiring NGOs to register and detail their funding sources to a government agency or face penalties including fines and even suspension of their registration. Many elements of civil society and the media strongly condemned the new measure, as did international organizations. The measure, initiated by the Fujimorista bloc, passed through Congress with the support of that group as well as the APRA party and Flores's UN. The law's backers claimed the new law was necessary to ensure NGO transparency, while its opponents claimed that the law gave the government a powerful legal tool for harassment and would be wielded arbitrarily. At year's end opponents were preparing to challenge the law's constitutionality in court.

In late December, relations between civil society and the ruling party were inflamed further by a judgment rendered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights calling for reparations to be paid to the families of inmates killed in a prison battle in 1992. Most of the victims were accused members of the Shining Path, and politicians reacted with outrage, with some legislators and party functionaries even calling for Peru to withdraw from the Court's jurisdiction. Most human rights NGOs conversely accepted the judgment and accused the politicians of demagoguery.

Other reminders of the Fujimori era remained abundant in 2006. In September, Montesinos was sentenced to an additional 20 years in prison for selling rifles to Colombian rebels. Meanwhile, Chilean authorities completed their investigation and Peruvians waited anxiously to find out whether Fujimori would return to Peru for trial.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Peru is an electoral democracy. All elections in 2006 were conducted in a generally free and fair atmosphere, according to international observers; complaints focused on poor logistics and information distribution in rural areas, as well as the disenfranchisement of the roughly one million Peruvians lacking official identification papers.

The president and the 120 members of the unicameral Congress are elected by popular vote for five-year terms. Congressional balloting is based on an open-list proportional representation system, with seats allotted to the various departments based on population. Thirty parties participated in the 2006 elections; however, in an effort to combat party fragmentation, an "electoral hurdle" was introduced that prevented any party receiving less than 4 percent of the total vote from holding congressional seats. The two bodies charged with administering the elections disagreed over candidate eligibility, ballot format, and other issues, complicating the electoral process. Additionally, checks on campaign financing were weak, and allegations surfaced that drug money played a role in multiple campaigns, particularly during local elections.

The Peruvian political system is open to the rise and fall of new political parties—too open, according to many political observers. Lack of programmatic coherence and constant party switching by politicians have discredited political parties in the eyes of Peruvians, which further reinforces the trend toward fragmentation.

Indigenous groups, which account for nearly half of the Peruvian population by some measures, have not unified for political purposes nearly as much as in neighbor-

ing Andean countries. Peruvians have generally sought political expression through nationalism more than through ethnic solidarity. However, rural social protests are often carried out by indigenous workers, and several political parties have attempted to capture the support of both jungle- and mountain-dwelling indigenous groups.

Corruption is a severe problem; according to a September 2006 survey, 49 percent of Peruvians deemed it the principal impediment to development. Hundreds of millions of dollars disappeared during the Fujimori era; although a significant amount has been recovered, much more presumably remains untraced. In November 2006, the attorney general's office opened a corruption investigation into government of former president Toledo. Peru was ranked 70 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The press is for the most part privately owned and lively, but journalists face significant limitations. Especially in the provinces, journalists are frequently intimidated and even attacked; 2006 witnessed a notable surge in the number of reported attacks, partly due to tensions caused by the national and local elections. Journalists also face harassment through defamation lawsuits. Some media observers claim that the upswing in public complaints about corruption reflects, at least in part, ethical laxity in the press and a tendency to engage in *denuncialogia*—an obsession with denunciations that trivializes investigative journalism and helps to poison both political debate and public confidence. Broadcasts from both publicly owned and privately owned radio and television stations are available. The government does not limit access to the internet.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects it in practice. However, the Roman Catholic Church receives preferential treatment from the state. Peru's 3,000-member Jewish community strongly opposed Humala's 2006 presidential candidacy due to a history of anti-Semitic remarks by members of his family. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

The constitution provides for the right of peaceful assembly, and the authorities uphold this right for the most part. Freedom of association is also generally respected. The Toledo government permitted the unhindered operation of numerous NGOs dedicated to monitoring and advancing human rights. However, shortly after entering office, President Garcia and other APRA leaders criticized NGOs for hindering economic development and for a perceived lack of transparency. The November 2006 passage of restrictive legislation intensified antagonism between APRA and civil society, with many leading newspapers joining domestic and international NGOs in condemning the new law.

Peruvian law recognizes the right of public and private sector workers to organize and bargain collectively but requires them to exercise their rights in harmony with broader social objectives. Although workers exercise the right to strike, as provided by law, those employed in public services deemed essential by the government are restricted from striking, and strikers are required to notify the Ministry of Labor of their intention to carry out a job action, with the result that nearly all strikes are categorized as illegal. Only about 5 percent of the formal sector workforce is unionized, reflecting a legacy of hostility by the Fujimori regime, cuts to public sector jobs, more flexible labor policies, and other free-market reforms.

The judiciary is the single most distrusted Peruvian institution. During his period in office, Fujimori conducted a purge that removed 70 percent of judges. He

filled the open positions with appointees on a "provisional" basis, meaning they lacked job tenure and were effectively beholden to the government. After Toledo assumed office in July 2001, the Ministry of Justice worked to implement a broad anticorruption effort and lower the number of provisional judges. However, popular perceptions of the justice system—that it is an inefficient, overloaded bureaucracy riddled with political influence and greed—have changed little. In September 2006, a Supreme Court justice was caught taking a \$300 bribe, setting off a new round of recriminations and turf battles, with Garcia and Congress threatening to legislate reform while the judiciary asserted its autonomy. Throughout 2006, more than 100 judges who had previously been suspended due to suspicions of corruption or incompetence were reinstated.

Although crime in Peru is not high by regional standards, it continues to increase in much of the country despite macroeconomic gains. In the wake of attacks by Shining Path between December 2005 and December 2006, which took the lives of more than two dozen police officers, many Peruvians indicated mounting fears of a return of political violence. The National Statistics Institute reports that around half of the population still lives in poverty, which recent economic growth has done little to alleviate. Conditions remain deplorable in prisons for common criminals. An estimated 70 percent of the prison population is in pretrial detention, and many prisons are severely overcrowded. In July 2006, an adversarial justice system was introduced in the district of Huaura with the hope that it will speed up and ensure greater fairness in judicial proceedings. Torture and ill-treatment by the military and security forces remain concerns.

Under Toledo, the government retained firm control over the military but did not embark on a comprehensive reform program to address the serious professional deformations promoted under Fujimori and Montesinos. Peru lacks the codified distinction between national defense and internal security that is characteristic of modern, democratic states; the military shares responsibility for internal security with the Peruvian National Police. Under Garcia's new defense minister, Allan Wagner, the military has expressed its desire to more clearly define its rules of engagement. Recommendations by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, such as an ethics code obliging members of the military to disobey orders that are contrary to human rights standards, have not been put into action. However, in April 2006, the Constitutional Court ruled that active military officers cannot serve as military justices.

Racism against Peru's large indigenous population has been prevalent among the middle and upper classes, although the Fujimori government made some effort to combat it. The election of Toledo, who boasted of his indigenous heritage, was considered a watershed. In 2005, he told reporters that one of his government's most important accomplishments was empowering poor indigenous communities by setting up social investment funds and cultural institutes. However, the government's failure to codify aspects of customary law (*derecho consuetudinario*) into positive law has been accompanied by recent incidents of vigilante violence, including lynchings, in the predominantly indigenous highlands.

In recent years, women primarily from the upper and upper-middle classes have advanced into leadership roles in various companies and government agencies. By law, women must receive equal pay for equal work. Domestic violence is epidemic, with over half of Peruvian women reporting instances of physical or sexual violence.

Forced labor, including child labor, exists in the gold-mining region of the Amazon. Discrimination against homosexuals, including occasional acts of violence, is a problem. In July 2006, Lima police were accused of entering several bars frequented by homosexuals and beating and insulting patrons.

↓ Philippines

Population: 86,300,000

Capital: Manila

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Trend Arrow: The Philippines received a downward trend arrow due to a spate of political killings specifically targeting left-wing political activists.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview: An alleged coup attempt prompted President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to declare a week-long state of emergency in February 2006. Security forces raided antigovernment press offices, arrested opposition officials without warrants, and brutally suppressed public protests. Responding to these actions and a series of Supreme Court rulings against the administration, opposition members of the lower house of Congress launched a second unsuccessful impeachment bid against Macapagal-Arroyo in June. Amnesty International in August released a report documenting a spike in the number of political killings of left-wing activists during the first half of 2006, garnering international attention and prompting Macapagal-Arroyo to establish the Melo Commission to Address Media and Activist Killings the same month. Yet minimal concrete steps to reduce these extrajudicial killings have been taken. Both the police and the military were believed to be involved in the killings, raising doubts as to whether the perpetrators would be held accountable under Macapagal-Arroyo, who remained heavily dependent on military support to stay in power. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court in October ruled against a proposed referendum on constitutional reform that would replace the country's bicameral legislature and presidential executive structure with a unicameral parliament and a prime minister, effectively ending the long-standing debate on the issue.

The Philippines came under U.S. control in 1898, ending centuries of Spanish rule, and won independence in 1946 after emerging from Japanese occupation during World War II. The country held U.S. commonwealth status from 1935 until its

independence. Once one of Southeast Asia's wealthiest nations, the Philippines has been plagued since the 1960s by insurgencies, economic mismanagement, and widespread corruption. The country's economic and political development was set back by President Ferdinand Marcos's 14-year dictatorship. Marcos was finally chased from office in 1986 by a popular movement that replaced him with Corazon Aquino, whom the regime had cheated out of an electoral victory weeks earlier.

Aquino set out to make significant democratic reforms, but her administration ultimately failed to implement more than procedural changes and was unable to improve the socioeconomic situation of the population. Social and economic elites reconsolidated their hold on power under Aquino, and electoral politics continued to reflect their entrenched positions. In the May 1992 presidential poll, Fidel Ramos—a key figure in the demonstrations that forced Marcos into exile—narrowly defeated Agrarian Reform Secretary Miriam Defensor-Santiago. Under Ramos, the country was relatively stable and experienced significant if uneven economic growth.

Joseph Estrada, the vice president under Ramos, won the 1998 presidential election by a wide margin, securing strong support from impoverished Filipinos in a campaign built around promises of concrete socioeconomic reform. Almost from the outset, the Estrada administration was dogged by allegations of corruption, although an impeachment process eventually failed after stalling in a deadlocked Senate. In retrospect, Estrada's administration seems to have been no more graft-prone than either Ramos's or that of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who succeeded him. The campaign against Estrada, however, had political support, and massive street protests removed him from office in 2001. Since that time, the model of demonstration-driven transitions in leadership has provided a more or less constant potential alternative to electoral removal.

Macapagal-Arroyo, who was Estrada's vice president, assumed the presidency, and her political coalition soon won 8 of 13 contested Senate seats and a majority in the House of Representatives in the May 2001 legislative elections. Nevertheless, Macapagal-Arroyo faced questions about the legitimacy of her unelected administration. In the May 2004 presidential election, Macapagal-Arroyo initially seemed to defeat challenger Fernando Poe Jr. with a reported 1.1-million-vote margin of victory. However, charges of massive voter fraud quickly began to circulate (not in itself a rare event in Philippine politics). Poe's supporters staged demonstrations, but these faltered until members of the administration themselves began to verify the charges.

As a postelection fiscal crisis emerged, an audiotape of a conversation between the president and election officials surfaced in June 2005. The conversation, the authenticity of which was confirmed by government officials, seemed to support allegations that the president had used her incumbent powers to rig the elections. Many cabinet officials resigned to join a new opposition movement, while an ultimately unsuccessful bid to impeach the president was launched in Congress. Frequent protests called for the president's resignation. The anti-Macapagal-Arroyo movement included former president Aquino, a broad array of civil society groups, and 11 former members of the administration. Rumors also suggested that factions of the military would join the move to oust the government. The administration undertook several efforts to undercut the opposition movement in 2005, including gag orders, punitive prosecutions, and the announcement of Executive Order 464, which prevented department heads, high-ranking military officers, and potentially a wide range

of other executive-branch officials from testifying before Congress without prior clearance from the president.

In February 2006, Macapagal-Arroyo declared a week-long state of emergency to disrupt an alleged coup attempt by a supposed right-left alliance between members of the military, opposition lawmakers, and the New People's Army (NPA), a Communist rebel group. The crackdown involved security raids on antigovernment press offices, warrantless arrests of opposition officials, and the brutal suppression of public protests. While credible evidence suggested that some within the military were scheming to challenge Macapagal-Arroyo, the president's concerns appeared to stem from the likelihood that elements of the army would join civilian protesters in upcoming opposition rallies marking the anniversary of Marcos's 1986 popular ouster, potentially driving her from power in a similar mass movement. In June, House opposition members launched a second presidential impeachment campaign, repeating the 2005 charges of electoral fraud and corruption and adding the obstruction of the press and freedom of assembly during the state of emergency, the unconstitutionality of Executive Order 464, and persistent human rights abuses. However, pro-administration parties controlled the House, and the impeachment bid failed to garner the one-third vote required to advance it to the Senate, where opposition forces were more powerful.

Philippine politics in 2006 were also dominated by an ongoing debate over constitutional reform. Macapagal-Arroyo strongly supported the "Cha-Cha" (Charter Change) campaign, which aimed to replace the current bicameral legislature and single presidential term with a unicameral parliamentary system, led by a prime minister, by the time the current presidential term ended in 2010. Philippine reformers also supported the plan on the grounds that the Senate has traditionally inhibited effective governance by preventing administrations from pushing through various reform measures. A presidential commission delivered related proposals in December 2005, the most controversial of which involved calling off the 2007 midterm elections. That would have ensured the administration's continued control of the House, safeguarding the president against impeachment, and provided an incentive for senators who would otherwise be forced to step down in 2007 due to term limits. In light of pressure mounting on Macapagal-Arroyo to step down from office at the time of the midterm elections in exchange for striking a deal on constitutional reform, this particular proposal was also seen as a means for the president to retain power through her elected term. The government sought to bring the reform plan to a referendum through a public petition, or "People's Initiative," but the Supreme Court ruled against the mechanism in October 2006. The decision effectively killed hopes for reform by making success contingent upon approval by the Senate, the very body the proposed changes would eliminate. The government then tried to change the laws requiring that both houses of Congress approve constitutional amendments, but was forced to concede in the face of significant resistance from the public and the Catholic Church. At year's end, the midterm elections remained scheduled for June 2007.

The southern Philippines continued to be racked by violence in 2006, with serious outbreaks of fighting between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Abu Sayyaf, an Islamist militant group known for terrorist bombings and kidnappings, in both January and August. The group suffered a significant loss of leadership in

September, however, when Khadaffy Janjalani was killed in a clash with government troops on Jolo Island. Separately, the government in February finally reached consensus on the issue of "ancestral domain" (or homeland) with another rebel group, the Mora Islamic Liberation Front (MELF), and expanded the terms of local autonomy granted in 1996 to allow for a separate constitution, but not the establishment of an Islamic state. Talks with the MILF stalled in the fall, however, and no agreement was finalized by year's end. Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), a regional Southeast Asian terrorist group with ties to al-Qaeda, is also believed to have training grounds on the southern island of Mindanao and, although the MILF continues to renounce violence and deny relations with JI, links between the groups are thought to exist. Meanwhile, the Communist insurgency elsewhere in the country continued at a low level in 2006.

Attacks against journalists and left-wing political activists have dramatically increased since Macapagal-Arroyo entered office, and a persistent culture of impunity allows for continued abuse. In 2006, a wave of assassinations struck left-wing political activists, including some journalists, labor leaders, and senior members of legal left-wing parties. The Philippine human rights group Karapatan has counted more than 800 victims of extrajudicial killings since 2001, while other watchdog groups reported roughly 50 in the first half of 2006 alone, marking a significant spike from the year before. A scathing Amnesty International report on the killings and alleged military involvement, released on August 15, 2006, brought international attention to the issue, prompting Macapagal-Arroyo to announce the establishment of the Commission to Address Media and Activist Killings on August 21. Macapagal-Arroyo pledged to leave "no stone unturned," and mandated the Melo Commission (so-called after the former Supreme Court justice appointed to head it) to conduct a five-month inquiry. Yet the extent of the president's dependence on military support to retain power, combined with witnesses' fear of testifying, threatened to impede the investigation and complicate the credibility of the commission's findings.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The Republic of the Philippines is an electoral democracy, However, the fairness of Philippine elections and the strength of the country's democratic institutions have been called into question by events surrounding the 2004 balloting and persistent concerns about possible coup attempts in late 2005 and 2006. The Philippine National Police reported 192 incidents of electoral violence during the May 2004 presidential polls.

The Philippines has a presidential system of government, with the directly elected president limited to a single six-year term. The current president's constitutionally anomalous position stems from her initial rise to office in an extraconstitutional transition process in 2001, in which military pressure and street protests drove incumbent Joseph Estrada from power. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the vice president at the time, completed Estrada's first term, and then—despite some legal challenges—ran for her own full term in 2004. As protests against her government mounted in 2005, many politicians, including former president Fidel Ramos, suggested that her second term be shortened, so that both together would add up to six years; Macapagal-Arroyo rejected this appeal. Pressure on the president to relinquish her post early mounted again in late 2005 and early 2006 in connection with the campaign for constitutional reform.

The national legislature, the Congress, is bicameral. The 24 members of the Senate are elected on a nationwide ballot and serve six-year terms. The 250 members of the House of Representatives serve three-year terms; 212 of them are elected by district, and the remainder are elected by party list. Legislative coalitions are exceptionally fluid, and members of Congress often change party affiliation. In 2006, the ruling People's Power Coalition was headed by Macapagal-Arroyo's party, the National Union of Christian Democrats (Lakas); the main opposition party is the Struggle for a Democratic Philippines (Laban or LDP). Pro-administration parties currently hold the majority of seats in the House of Representatives, while opposition forces are dominant in the Senate. To prevent potential cooperation among members of the opposition, military dissidents, and civilian protesters, the government imposed a number of unconstitutional restrictions during the week-long state of emergency in February 2006, including the warrantless arrest of a number of opposition party leaders and raids on opposition newspapers.

Corruption, cronyism, and influence peddling are widely believed to be rife in business and government. Despite recent economic reforms, a few dozen powerful families continue to play an overarching role in politics and hold an outsized share of land and corporate wealth. Local "bosses" often control local areas, limiting accountability and encouraging abuses of power. Corruption is especially prevalent in local government; a number of journalists killed in 2005 and 2006 were well known for covering corruption at the local level. The country was ranked 121 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Government accountability and transparency have deteriorated since the 2005 implementation of Executive Order 464, which prohibits government, military, and police officials from attending congressional inquiries without presidential permission. The order essentially limits the investigative authority of the Senate and allows the administration to block probes into government contracts and corruption. The Supreme Court ruled against key provisions of the order in April 2006, but the administration filed an appeal for reconsideration in response. The order will remain in effect until the appeal is resolved, preventing the Senate defense committee from proceeding with its hearings on electoral fraud, which had been launched in November 2005. There were also allegations that the government bought and counterfeited signatures on public petitions in support of constitutional reform prior to the October 2006 court decision outlawing the "People's Initiative."

The constitution provides for freedom of expression and of the press. The Philippine media express a wide range of opinion, but journalists face extreme danger in the course of their work, and there was an overall decline in press freedom in 2006. The private press (most print and electronic media) is vibrant and outspoken, although newspaper reports often consist more of innuendo and sensationalism than substantive investigative reporting, and many newspapers largely declined to cover opposition activities until recently. The country's many state-owned television and radio stations cover controversial topics and are willing to criticize the government, but they too lack strict journalistic ethics. Although the censorship board does have broad powers to edit or ban content, government censorship generally does not pose a serious problem. The internet is widely available and uncensored in the country, which is home to more than 110,000 internet hosts.

The February 2006 state of emergency significantly infringed on press freedom: security forces raided the offices of the *Daily Tribune*, a number of other newspapers were placed under surveillance, critical media figures were charged with incitement to rebellion, and several journalists were arrested. After emergency rule was lifted, the National Telecommunications Commission warned the media not to air materials that "incite treason, rebellion, sedition, or pose a clear and present danger to the state." In May, the Supreme Court ruled that the administration's clampdown on the press during the state of emergency was unjustified.

The Philippines is one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists to work, according to the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines (NUJP) and several foreign press-freedom watchdog groups. The number of murdered journalists has spiked under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration; according to the NUJP, 47 journalists have been killed since 2001, while 12 journalists were killed in 2006 alone. Several cases over the last few years have involved journalists who were well known for exposing corruption scandals or being critical of the government, army, or police. Watchdog groups allege that unknown gunmen are hired by government officials, and a general culture of impunity for violence against journalists prevails. The November 2005 conviction of former police officer Guillermo Wapile for the murder of journalist Edgar Damalerio marked the first conviction since the spike of journalist killings began and, while a few additional murderers were convicted in 2006, there have been no convictions against those ordering the killings. The government established a police task force, Task Force Usig, in May as a first step toward investigating the murders; however, the effort is complicated by the fact that police are believed to be complicit in many of the killings.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed under the constitution and generally respected in practice. While church and state are separate, the country is mainly Christian, with a Roman Catholic majority. The largest minority group is the Muslim population, which is concentrated in the south on the island of Mindanao and, according to the most recent census, represents roughly 5 to 9 percent of the total population. Muslims face some discrimination, although a 2005 Social Weather Station survey suggests that hostility toward Muslims—which reportedly increased in the years after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States—may be on the decline. Muslims claim that the government has made inadequate efforts to promote economic development in predominantly Muslim provinces, which are among the country's most impoverished. Only 12 of 236 members of Congress are Muslim. Muslims' perceptions of relative socioeconomic deprivation and political disenfranchisement, and their resentment toward Christian settlement in traditionally Muslim areas, have long played a central role in the Muslim separatist movement in the south and continue to fuel conflict between Christian and Muslim populations in certain provinces. There are also reports of reverse discrimination (against Christians) in Muslim-majority areas such as Mindanao.

Academic freedom is generally respected in the Philippines, and professors and other teachers can lecture and publish freely.

Citizen activism in the Philippines is robust, and protests, rallies, and other demonstrations have traditionally been permitted without government interference. The law requires that groups request a permit before holding a rally, but this law was often ignored in practice before the government's September 2005 shift from a maxi-

mum-tolerance approach to a strategy of "preemptive calibrated response." This new approach allows police to break up demonstrations and arrest protesters when they lack official permits or stray outside permitted areas. It was implemented in the aftermath of the July 2005 attempt to impeach the president, when 40,000 to 60,000 protesters publicly called for the president to step down. The Supreme Court ruled against the government's preemptive calibrated response policy in late April 2006, and called for the designation of certain areas where protest permits were not required. The police brutally suppressed protests during the state of emergency in February 2006.

The Philippines has many active environmental, human rights, social welfare, and other nongovernmental groups. Trade unions are independent, and they may align themselves with international trade union confederations or trade secretariats. However, only 5 percent of the national labor force is unionized, and 18 percent of government employees are unionized. Collective bargaining is widespread, and strikes may be called, though unions must provide notice and obtain majority approval from their membership before calling a strike. Strikes often provoke violence, however, and labor leaders have been among those targeted in the spate of killings of leftist activists in 2005 and 2006. In July 2006, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) issued a letter to Macapagal-Arroyo with a list of 19 instances in which unionists, labor activists, and workers were killed, abducted, or arrested for their work between September 2005 and July 2006. An ICTFU study found that violence against labor leaders and activists occurred with impunity.

Judicial independence is strong, particularly on the part of the Supreme Court, which issued a series of rulings against the actions and decisions of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration in 2006. However, despite many advances since the dictatorship of President Ferdinand Marcos, the rule of law remains generally weak. The judiciary is hampered by corruption and inefficiency. Low pay for judges and prosecutors is often cited as a major factor in making bribes and payoffs central to the resolution of most court cases. The constitution sets time limits for court cases, but they are not mandatory and are mostly ignored in the face of backlogs. Independent observers have found that the judicial system does not adequately guarantee defendants' constitutional rights to due process and legal representation. In what Amnesty International has called "the largest ever commutation of death sentences in modern times," Macapagal-Arroyo commuted the death sentences of at least 1,230 prisoners to life imprisonment in April 2006; the Philippine Congress abolished the death penalty in June.

Reports of arbitrary and unlawful detention or arrest under harsh prison conditions, disappearances, kidnappings, and abuse of suspects and detainees continued in 2006. International as well as local and regional human rights organizations have condemned the vast number of extrajudicial killings that have occurred over the past few years. The killings increased in 2006, with a spate of political assassinations of leftist activists, including journalists, labor leaders, and senior members of legal left-wing parties. The August 2006 Amnesty International report on the number of extrajudicial killings documented from January to June 2006 raised international pressure on the Macapagal-Arroyo administration to investigate the murders and the role of the AFP, which were believed to have been involved. Meanwhile, members of the poorly disciplined Philippine National Police (PNP)—suspected of

complicity in the recent spike in journalist murders—are regularly described by the official Commission on Human Rights as the country's worst rights abusers. The PNP are under the jurisdiction of the AFP.

The long-running conflict between the government and separatist Muslim rebels has caused severe hardship for many of the 15 million Filipinos on southern Mindanao and nearby islands, and has resulted in more than 120,000 deaths since it first erupted in 1972. Both government and insurgent forces have committed summary killings and other human rights abuses. MILF guerrillas have attacked many Christian villages. Separately, the smaller Abu Sayyaf Group has kidnapped, tortured, and beheaded some civilians. Islamist militants are suspected in a string of bombings on Mindanao in recent years, including one that killed six people in October 2006, as well as bombings in Jolo City in February and March 2006. The Abu Sayyaf was suspected of planning attacks during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit in the town of Cebu in December 2006.

In the countryside, especially central and southern Luzon, the 10,000-strong NPA, the Communist paramilitary group, continues to engage in executions, acts of torture, and kidnappings. Meanwhile, the army and progovernment militias operating in Mindoro Oriental and other provinces are responsible for summary killings, disappearances, torture, and illegal arrests while fighting Communist rebels. The number of internally displaced persons in the Philippines is close to 160,000.

Citizens may travel freely, and there are no restrictions on employment or place of residence. The government generally respects the privacy of its citizens, but the poor security situation inhibits individuals' ability to operate private businesses.

Filipino women have the same legal rights as men, though this is not always borne out in practice. Women have made many social and economic gains in recent years, and more women than men now enter high school and university. Women face some discrimination in the private sector, however, and have a higher unemployment rate than men. The UN Development Program's 2006 Human Development Report ranks the Philippines at 84 out of 177 countries on its Gender Empowerment Index, which measures gender inequality in economic participation and decision making (including over economic resources) and political participation.

Rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment on the job, and trafficking of Filipino women and girls abroad and at home for forced labor and prostitution continue to be major problems despite efforts in government and civil society to protect women from violence and abuse. There are reports of bonded labor, especially of children, in blackmarket trades such as prostitution and drug trafficking. The NPA, MILF, and Abu Sayyaf have been accused of using child soldiers.

Poland

Population: 38,100,000

Capital: Warsaw

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: In 2006, Prime Minister Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz was replaced with Jaroslaw Kaczynski, head of the ruling party and the twin brother of President Lech Kaczynski. Political turmoil followed, as the three-party governing coalition was dissolved in acrimony, only to be reinstated in a weaker political position. Also during the year, Poland's relations with its European Union (EU) partners suffered due to friction over Poland's cooperation in U.S. antiterrorism efforts, relations with Russia, and the cancellation of a summit with France and Germany among other issues.

From the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, Poland and Lithuania maintained a powerful state that Prussia, Austria, and Russia subsequently destroyed in three successive eighteenth-century partitions. Poland enjoyed a window of independence from 1918 to 1939 but was invaded by Germany and the Soviet Union at the opening of World War II and then forced into the Communist sphere at the end of the war. Polish citizens endured decades of Soviet domination until 1989, the year the Solidarity trade union movement, led by Lech Walesa, forced the government to accept democratic reforms.

Fundamental democratic and free market-oriented reforms were introduced during the 1989-1991 period. Later changes were stimulated by a need to adjust the Polish legal system to European Union (EU) requirements as the country sought to join the expanding bloc. Political parties with a background in the Solidarity movement held power from 1989 to 1993 (in several coalitions) and from 1997 to 2001 (as Solidarity Election Action, or AWS). In 1995, former Communist Alexander Kwasniewski replaced Solidarity's Walesa as president and was subsequently reelected by a large margin of votes in 2000.

In September 2001, voters handed the government of Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek a decisive defeat in parliamentary elections. In the Sejm (lower house of Parliament), a coalition of the center-left Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and the Union of Labor (UP) took 216 seats out of 460, falling short of a majority. That led them to form a government with the leftist Polish Peasant Party (PSL), and SLD leader Leszek Miller became the new prime minister. The Solidarity movement, now a looser coalition known as the "Coalition Electoral Action Solidarity of the Right," and the right-leaning Freedom Union (UW) failed to secure a single seat.

On May 1, 2004, Poland joined the EU along with nine other countries, most of them in formerly Communist Central and Eastern Europe. However, Poland has since been a somewhat awkward EU member, fighting aggressively over its share of the EU's budget and its voting privileges. The draft constitution for the EU might have failed a referendum in Poland if it had not first been defeated in France and the Netherlands in May and June 2005.

In March 2004, Miller announced that he would resign as prime minister, effective in May. His SLD-led government's popularity suffered from the effects of a weak economy, high unemployment, and high budget deficits, and was also dogged by allegations of corruption. The final blow was the defection of a group of SLD members of Parliament, who announced their intention to form a new party, the Social Democratic Party of Poland. Miller was replaced by the SLD's Marek Belka, who served as a caretaker prime minister until elections in 2005.

In the September 2005 legislative elections, Law and Justice (PiS), a conservative party with strong anti-Communist roots, won a stunning victory by increasing its Sejm seat total from 44 to 152, while the SLD fell from winning 216 seats in 2001 (along with its UP partner) to just 56 seats (now without the UP). The center-right Civic Platform (PO) party placed second, winning 133 seats. PiS is led by identical twin brothers, Lech and Jaroslaw Kaczynski. Jaroslaw was the party's original choice for prime minister, but when it appeared that Lech might win the presidency—and that Poles might be skeptical of having twin brothers in the country's two most powerful jobs—Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz became prime minister-designate instead. In the October presidential election, Lech Kaczynski won a surprise victory over the PO's Donald Tusk. Shortly afterward, having failed to reach a coalition accord with the PO, PiS formed a minority government that relied on cooperation from some of the smaller right-wing parties in Parliament. Marcinkiewicz later secured a slim majority by forming a coalition with the leftist-populist, agrarian Self-Defense Party (Samoobrona) and the socially conservative, Catholic-oriented League of Polish Families (LPR).

The prime minister won popularity for running a capable, modest government. However, in July 2006 he was replaced by Jaroslaw Kaczynski, ostensibly on the grounds that Kaczynski, as the formal head of PiS, should also be the prime minister.

Government stability declined in the second half of the year. The finance minister was fired in June, under suspicion of ties to Poland's Communist-era intelligence services, only to be reinstated later. Lech Kaczynski canceled a summit planned for July with the leaders of France and Germany over a satirical article in a German newspaper. The government also began a process of reforming the military intelligence service in late summer. The ruling coalition broke apart in September over demands by Samoobrona's leader, Andrzej Lepper, for greater social spending, especially on farms. In October, Jaroslaw Kaczynski reformed the PiS-Samoobrona-LPR coalition, but only after a period of political disorder. Kaczynski at one point threatened to call early elections. However, PiS members were caught on tape offering Samoobrona members high-level jobs for defecting from their party. This hurt PiS's anticorruption image and weakened Kaczynski's election threat, as the opposition PO gained in popularity. When the coalition was re-formed, it was smaller and weaker, with poor prospects for major reforms and the threat of future internal conflicts remaining.

Over the past several years, Poland's foreign and domestic policies have begun

to diverge from those of many other EU members. Polish troops played a prominent role in the stabilization of Iraq following the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, which countries like France and Germany opposed. In November 2005, Poland became the subject of unwelcome attention when it was accused of cooperating with the U.S.'s CIA in running a secret prison for terrorism detainees, charges the Polish government has denied. A preliminary final report by the Parliament of the European Union, released in December 2006, supported the charges against Poland, and the report's author suggested that Poland's votes in the EU's Council of Ministers could even be suspended. Poland protested strongly against both the conclusion of its involvement and the suggestion of punishment; Poland's position was supported by other country members of the center-right bloc in the European Parliament. The final report was scheduled to be released in January 2007.

Poland's relationship with its EU partners deteriorated generally in 2006. The government protested Europe's generally tolerant policy toward Russia, and used its veto to block the beginning of EU-Russian talks. Restrictions on the independence of the central-bank governor also worried EU members, who expect Poland to adopt the euro. Poland's social conservatism—including a failed attempt to reference "God" in the draft EU constitution—further reflected the country's differences with many EU partners.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Poland is an electoral democracy. Voters elect the president for five-year terms and members of the bicameral Parliament for four-year terms. The president's appointment of the prime minister is subject to confirmation by the 460-seat Sejm, the lower house of Parliament. The prime minister is responsible for most government policy, but the president has an important role, especially in foreign policy. The 100-member Senate, the upper house, can delay and amend legislation but has few other powers.

The political party system is fragmented. For years, the largest and most coherent groups were the AWS and SLD; however, the former has disappeared from Parliament, and the latter was reduced to a fraction of its former power in the 2005 elections, which were deemed free and fair. PiS and the PO have become the two most important parties, while others such as Samoobrona and the LPR are small but powerful.

Poland's membership in the EU required it to meet the bloc's "Copenhagen criteria," including "stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities." In its final report on Poland's progress, issued in 2003, the European Commission said, "Poland has reached a high level of alignment with the *acquis* [the body of EU laws] in most policy areas." The report did criticize slow progress on corruption, however. That year, the SLD-led government faced allegations that party figures were linked to organized crime and corruption. A bribery and influence-peddling scandal involving the drafting of a new media-ownership law helped bring down SLD Prime Minister Leszek Miller in 2004. New allegations of corruption surfaced the same year involving an alleged bribe by a Russian oil company to a Polish government minister for the sale of a Polish refinery. The PiS government elected in 2005 made anti-corruption a priority, and the PiS party (including the Kaczynski twins) has generally been seen as cleaner than its predecessors in government. However, that reputation was tainted by accusations that it had offered other parties' members top jobs for defecting to

join PiS. The use of Communist-era intelligence files—including material of dubious veracity—has also been seen by much of the public as potentially corrupt, used by the powerful to discredit enemies. Poland was ranked 61 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The 1997 constitution guarantees freedom of expression and forbids censorship. However, the country's libel law treats slander as a criminal offense, and journalists oppose the growing number of related lawsuits. Infringements on media freedom include gag orders and arbitrary judicial decisions concerning investigations of individuals affiliated with parties in power. The law requires the media to maintain "respect for Christian values," and in 2005, a journalist was convicted of insulting the pope in a newspaper article, fined \$6,500, and given a suspended jail sentence. A recent spate of criminal libel cases, in which enormous damages were sought, is thought to have given rise to self-censorship by journalists.

The state respects freedom of religion and does not require religious groups to register. However, registered religious groups enjoy a reduced tax burden. In 2003, the Roman Catholic Church for the first time met with serious accusations of sexual impropriety by clerics in Poland, an overwhelmingly Catholic country where the Church holds great influence. The Church responded to the charges with investigations and dismissals, including that of a bishop. Academic freedom is generally respected, though one rarely invoked law threatens anyone who "publicly insults or humiliates a constitutional institution" with a fine or up to two years' imprisonment.

Polish citizens can petition the government, assemble legally, organize professional and other associations, and engage in collective bargaining. Public demonstrations require permits from local authorities. In 2004 and 2005, gay-rights groups were denied permits to march in Warsaw, but did so anyway. In 2006, the march was allowed but still suffered minor violence (such as egg throwing) and required heavy security. Civil society in Poland was seen as hastening the downfall of the Communist regime and remains active. Since the 1980s, when shipyard workers in Gdansk launched a national strike and formed the Solidarity labor union, Poland has had a robust labor movement. However, labor leaders have complained of harassment by employers.

Poland has an independent judiciary, but courts are notorious for delays in administering cases. In its 2003 accession report, the last before Poland joined the EU, the European Commission pronounced Poland ready to join the union, but noted that "despite steady progress, efforts are still needed to improve the effectiveness and transparency of the judiciary . . . In general the level of public trust in the efficiency and fairness of the judicial system remains low." State prosecutors have proceeded slowly on investigations into graft and corruption, contributing to concerns that they are subject to considerable political pressure. Prison conditions are fairly poor by European standards, and pretrial detention periods can be lengthy.

Ethnic minorities generally enjoy generous protections and rights provided under Polish law, including funding for bilingual education and publications and privileged representation in Parliament; their political parties are not subject to a minimum vote threshold of 5 percent to achieve representation. Poland's once-vibrant Jewish community was reduced to a tiny minority by the Holocaust during World War II and subsequent emigration. Poland's other minority groups are small, but

some, particularly the country's 30,000 Roma, suffer discrimination in employment and housing, racially motivated insults, and occasional attacks. Poland's homosexual community is active, but faces discrimination as a result of a generally conservative, Catholic culture and occasional restrictive actions, such as frequent clashes over gay-rights marches.

Women have made inroads in the professional sphere and are employed in a wide variety of occupations. A number of women hold high positions in government and the private sector, and Poland's first nominee to the European Commission was a woman, Danuta Huebner. However, domestic violence against women is a problem in Poland. Abortion is illegal unless the health of the mother is at risk, the pregnancy results from rape or incest, or the fetus is irreparably damaged, and the law is strictly enforced. As in several other formerly Communist countries in the region, trafficking in women and girls for the purposes of prostitution remains a problem.

Portugal

Population: 10,600,000

Capital: Lisbon

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Anibal Cavaco Silva, a center-right, independent candidate, won the presidential election in January 2006 with just over 50 percent of the vote. In an April ruling on press freedom, an appeals court rejected an appeal by two journalists who claimed that a court order allowing authorities to examine their computers violated their right to protect sources. In October, the governing Socialists proposed holding a referendum to further legalize abortion; the country has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe. A two-day strike by public sector workers in November crippled the country as schools and hospitals closed.

Portugal was proclaimed a republic in 1910, after King Manuel II abdicated during a bloodless revolution. Antonio de Oliveira Salazar became prime minister in 1932 and ruled the country as a fascist dictatorship until 1968, when his lieutenant, Marcello Caetano, replaced him. During the "Marcello Spring," repression and censorship were relaxed somewhat, and a liberal wing developed inside the one-party National Assembly. In 1974, a bloodless coup by the Armed Forces Movement, which opposed the ongoing colonial wars in Mozambique and Angola, overthrew Caetano.

A transition to democracy began with the election of a Constitutional Assembly that adopted a democratic constitution in 1976. A civilian government was formally established in 1982 after a revision of the constitution brought the military under civilian control, curbed the president's powers, and abolished the unelected Revolutionary Council. Portugal became a member of the European Economic Community (later the European Union [EU]) in 1986, and in early 2002, the euro replaced Portugal's currency, the escudo. In 1999, Portugal handed over its last overseas territory, Macao, to the Chinese, ending a long history of colonial rule.

In February 2005 elections, the Socialists gained 120 of the 230 seats in Parliament, while the governing Social Democrats captured only 72. The Communist Party garnered 14 seats; the Popular Party, 12 seats; and the Left Bloc, 8 seats. The elections, which had been called more than a year early, ushered in Portugal's fourth government in three years. Socialist leader and former environment minister Jose Socrates became prime minister, edging out Pedro Santana Lopes, who was in power for only seven months. Lopes had gained the office after his predecessor, Jose Manuel Barroso, left in July 2004 to head the European Commission.

Anibal Cavaco Silva, a center-right candidate, won the presidential election in January 2006 with just over 50 percent of the vote. The new president, who had been prime minister from 1985 to 1995, would have to "cohabit" with the Socialist prime minister; it was the first time since Portugal became democratic that the president and prime minister hailed from opposite sides of the political spectrum.

In February 2006, a lesbian couple's bid to get a marriage license was rejected by government officials on the grounds that Portuguese law only recognizes marriage between a man and a woman. The law may be challenged by the couple as a violation of the Portuguese constitution, which forbids discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

In an April 2006 press freedom ruling, an appeals court rejected an appeal by two journalists who claimed that a court order allowing authorities to examine their computers violated their right to protect sources. The journalists had been accused of "illegal access to personal data" after they published a claim that Telecom Portugal was in possession of a list of telephone numbers of public officials, including the president's, in connection with the Casa Pia child sex abuse case. The case emerged from a series of allegations in 2003 of child abuse in the long-established, state-run Casa Pia orphanages. Those accused of participating in the sex ring included a television presenter, a former top diplomat, and a former director of the Casa Pia children's home network.

As part of an effort to liberalize the country's laws on social and personal matters, the governing Socialists in October 2006 proposed holding a referendum to remove restrictions on abortion. The existing law, which was interpreted narrowly, allowed a woman to have an abortion only if her life was in danger, or if it was necessary for her mental or physical health, or in cases of rape, incest, or fetal impairment. The proposal was backed by the opposition center-right Social Democrats. The last referendum on the subject, held in 1998, was defeated due to the large numbers of people who boycotted it.

In November 2006, a two-day strike by public sector workers crippled the country, forcing the closure of schools and hospitals. The strike was called in order to protest a budget bill calling for cuts in the public sector workforce. The government

was attempting to reduce the budget deficit from 4.6 percent of gross domestic product in 2006 to 3.7 percent in 2007, in keeping with EU mandates; similar strikes had occurred in 2005.

A Council of Europe report on human rights in June 2006 cited Portugal as a possible "stop-off" point for CIA-led rendition operations in Europe, in which suspected terrorists are flown to third countries for interrogations. There have been numerous allegations that these interrogations have involved torture.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Portugal is an electoral democracy. The 230 members of the unicameral legislature, the Assembly of the Republic, are elected every four years by popular vote, using a system of proportional representation. The president is popularly elected for a five-year term, with the possibility of a second term. The president receives advice from the Council of State, which includes six senior civilian officials, former presidents elected under the 1976 constitution, five members chosen by the Assembly, and five members selected by the president. While the president holds no executive powers, he can delay legislation with a veto and dissolve the Assembly to call early elections. The prime minister is nominated by the Assembly and the choice is confirmed by the president. The constitution was amended in 1997 to allow resident noncitizens to vote in presidential elections. The Portuguese have the right to organize and join political parties and other political groupings of their choice, except for fascist organizations. The autonomous regions of Azores and Madeira—two island groups in the Atlantic—are relatively independent, with their own political and administrative structures, and their own legislative and executive powers.

Portugal was ranked 26 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of the press is guaranteed by the constitution, and laws against insulting the government or the armed forces are rarely enforced. Commercial television has been making gains in recent years, providing serious competition for the inadequately funded public broadcasting channels. A court in April 2006 upheld an order allowing authorities to search the computers of two journalists. The reporters claimed that the search violated their right to protect sources. They had been accused of "illegal access to personal data" after they published a claim that Telecom Portugal was in possession of a list of phone numbers of public officials, including the president's, in connection with the Casa Pia pedophile case. In February 2006, the computers of two journalists for the newspaper *24 Horas* were seized by a criminal investigative court, which argued that the journalists had violated Article 44 of the criminal code for having "illegal access to personal data. Internet access in Portugal is not restricted.

Although the country is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, the constitution guarantees freedom of religion and forbids religious discrimination. The Religious Freedom Act, which was adopted in 2001, provides religions that have been established in the country for at least 30 years (or recognized internationally for at least 60 years) with a number of benefits formerly reserved for the Catholic Church, such as tax exemptions, legal recognition of marriage and other rites, chaplain visits to prisons and hospitals, and respect for traditional holidays. Academic freedom is respected.

There is freedom of assembly and association, and citizens can participate in

demonstrations and open public discussion. National and international nongovernmental organizations, including human rights groups, operate in the country without government interference. Workers have the right to organize, bargain collectively, and strike for any reason, including political ones. Since 2005, public workers have staged large-scale strikes in response to the new government's plans to cut public spending to bring the country's budget deficit back in line with EU rules.

The constitution provides for an independent court system. However, a considerable backlog of pending trials has built up due to general inefficiency and a number of vacancies in the judicial system. Human rights groups have expressed concern about the number of human rights abuses in the country, including unlawful police shootings, deaths in police custody, and poor prison conditions that amount to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. A Justice Ministry report released in 2005 cited a number of problems in the country's prison system, including overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions, and high rates of HIV/AIDS among prisoners. The prison population—as a percentage of the total population—is larger than the EU average.

The constitution guarantees equal treatment under the law and nondiscrimination. The government has taken a number of steps in the past few years to combat racism, including passing antidiscrimination laws and launching initiatives that seek to promote the integration of immigrants and Roma (Gypsies) into Portuguese society. However, there have been few prosecutions in cases involving racial or religious discrimination or the use of excessive force by the police toward immigrants and Roma. The constitution also forbids discrimination based on sexual orientation, but in February 2006, a lesbian couple's bid to get married was rejected by the government on the grounds that Portuguese law only recognizes marriage between a man and a woman.

The country is a destination and transit point for trafficked persons, particularly women from Eastern Europe and former Portuguese colonies in South America and Africa. According to the 2006 U.S. State Department Report on Trafficking in Persons, the Portuguese government does not comply with the minimum standards to eliminate trafficking, putting the country on the report's Tier 2 list. Although the government has made efforts to offer protection, support, and reintegration services to victims of trafficking, it has done little in terms of enforcement and prevention. The Casa Pia pedophilia case has also heightened awareness of child sex trafficking in the country.

Although domestic violence against women remains a problem in Portugal, few cases are brought to trial. In 2005, the government launched a nationwide awareness campaign against domestic violence. Abortion is illegal, except under certain circumstances, such as when the mother's life or health is at risk, or when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest. A referendum to ease those restrictions was proposed in October 2006 by the governing Socialists and supported by the opposition. In parliamentary elections in February 2005, 19.5 percent of the seats were won by women, about the same as in the previous elections in 2002.

Qatar

Population: 800,000

Capital: Doha

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,6NF	7,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview: Qatar made some progress with regard to religious freedom and human rights in 2006. The government in December 2005 formalized an agreement allowing six Christian churches to be built in the country at the Christian community's expense; construction began in April 2006. In March, the state-sponsored National Human Rights Committee issued a critical report calling for revisions to the labor laws, which adversely affect foreign workers. Also that year, women made entrees into the political sphere, taking two appointed positions, at the Ministry of Education and Teaching and the National Human Rights Committee, and one elected position, at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

For the first half of the nineteenth century, the al-Khalifa family of Bahrain dominated the territory now known as Qatar. The Ottoman Empire occupied Qatar from 1872 until World War I, when Britain recognized Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim al-Thani as the ruler of Qatar, and Abdullah signed a series of treaties of friendship and commerce with Britain. After World War II, Qatar rapidly developed its oil industry, and the resulting wealth enabled economic and social progress in the country.

Qatar became formally independent in 1971. Khalifa bin Hamad al-Thani in 1972 deposed his cousin, Emir Ahmad ibn Ali al-Thani, and ruled until 1995 as an absolute monarch, with few government institutions checking his authority. In 1995, the emir was deposed by his son, Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, who began a program of gradual political, social, and economic reforms. Hamad dissolved the Ministry of Information shortly after taking power, an action designed to demonstrate his commitment to expanding press freedom.

In 1996, Hamad permitted the creation of Al-Jazeera, which has become one of the most popular Arabic-language satellite television channels in the Middle East. Al-Jazeera, however, generally does not cover Qatari politics and focuses instead on regional issues such as the situation in Iraq and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Over the next several years, Hamad accelerated a program to build Qatar's educational institutions, inviting foreign universities to establish branches in the country; Cornell University of the United States established a separate campus of the Weill Cornell Medical College in Doha in 2002. In 2003, citizens elected the 29 members of the

Central Municipal Council, a body designed to advise the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture, for four-year terms. When elections were first held for the council in 1999, Qatar had become the first state of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to introduce universal suffrage.

In 2002, a 38-member committee appointed by Hamad presented a draft constitution, which was refined and presented to the public in a referendum in April 2003. The new constitution, which was approved by almost 97 percent of voters, slightly broadened the scope of political participation without eliminating the monopoly on power enjoyed by the al-Thani family. Most rights in the new constitution do not apply to the majority of people living in Qatar—noncitizen residents.

After previous cooperation during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Qatar began allowing the United States to use its Al-Udeid air base in 2001, and the U.S. presence has grown since then. The U.S. military's Central Command, which oversees operations from East Africa to Central Asia, has established a headquarters facility in Qatar, and the country served as a major military hub during and after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003.

In January 2006, Qatar began a two-year term on the 15-member UN Security Council (UNSC). The position has become a central element in the country's long-term strategy to raise its international profile. It has sought to utilize its highly visible role on the UNSC to enhance its image in the Muslim world, dissenting from Security Council votes targeting the governments of countries like Sudan and Iran, and joining the council's efforts to halt fighting between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. Qatar has faced severe criticism among Muslim countries for its close alliance with the United States and its tentative links with Israel.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Qatar is not an electoral democracy. The head of state is the emir, currently Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, and the al-Thani family has a monopoly on political power in Qatar. The emir appoints a prime minister and the cabinet. The constitution states that the emir appoints an heir after consulting with the royal family and other notables. Voters elect local government representatives with limited powers over municipal services; these representatives report to the appointed minister of municipal affairs and agriculture. A constitution, ratified by public referendum in 2003 and promulgated by the emir in 2004, provides for elections to 30 of the 45 seats in a new Consultative Council. The emir has the power to appoint the other 15 members. In early 2007, Qatar is scheduled to hold elections for the council. These elections have been delayed twice since 2004.

In the most recent elections in the country, citizens in April 2003 voted for a 29-member Central Municipal Council, which will serve a four-year term. Sheikha Yousef Hassan al-Jufairi won a seat on the council, becoming the first woman elected to public office. The body advises the government on local infrastructure issues, including street repair and trash collection. The 2003 voting was considered free and fair, but was marred by a turnout of just 30 percent of eligible voters. Only a small percentage of the country's population—about 50,000 people out of 800,000 residents—is permitted to vote or hold office. The group is largely limited to those born to families present in Qatar before 1930, although some Qataris have had their citi-

zenship revoked or restored for various reasons. The government does not permit the existence of political parties.

Critics allege a lack of transparency in government procurement, with few procedures in place to ensure fair competition for government contracts. Qatar was ranked 32 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and the state has generally refrained from direct censorship. However, content in the print and broadcast media is influenced by leading families, and journalists practice a high degree of self-censorship. Reporters face possible jail sentences for slander, and such laws are applied more stringently to non-Qatari journalists, who make up a majority of journalists in the country. The five leading daily newspapers are privately owned, but their owners and boards include members of the royal family and other notables. Although the satellite television channel Al-Jazeera is privately owned, the Qatari government has reportedly paid operating costs for the channel since its inception. As a result, Al-Jazeera rarely criticizes the al-Thani family. Qataris have access to the internet through a telecommunications monopoly that has recently been privatized, but the government censors content and blocks access to certain sites deemed pornographic or politically sensitive.

Islam is Qatar's official religion. However, the new constitution explicitly provides for freedom of worship. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs regulates clerical matters and the construction of mosques. Converting to another religion from Islam is considered apostasy, a capital offense, but there have been no reports of executions for apostasy in recent years. The government regulates the publication of religious books and materials but has not prevented the importation of holy books for personal and congregational use. In April 2006, Qatar hosted the Fourth Conference for Interfaith Dialogue, the second time the country has hosted a conference with representatives from Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. In December 2005, the government signed an agreement with the Christian community of Qatar to proceed with the construction of six Christian churches, the first new churches since the coming of Islam. Construction on the first began in April 2006. The new constitution provides for freedom of opinion and research, but scholars often practice self-censorship on politically sensitive topics.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and the right to form organizations, but these rights are limited in practice. Public protests are rare, with the government placing strict limits on the public's ability to organize demonstrations. All nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) need state permission to operate, and the government closely monitors the activities of these groups. In April 2005, the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs and Housing promulgated new regulations for NGOs and professional associations. The regulations streamline operating requirements for associations and set restrictions on membership and activities.

There are no independent human rights organizations, but a National Human Rights Committee (NHRC), consisting of members of civil society and government ministries, has done some work on investigating allegations of abuses. The NHRC has a human rights telephone hotline and presents regular reports to the cabinet on Qatar's human rights situation. In March 2006, the government hosted a human rights conference in collaboration with the UN High Commission for Human Rights. The

NHRC that month published a first-of-its-kind human rights report calling on the government to change its policies toward foreign workers, particularly those which encourage prostitution. Doha in 2008 will become home to the UN Human Rights Center for Southwest Asia and the Arab Region. The goal of the center will be to provide training, documentation, collaboration, and empowerment to organizations and national institutions.

A new labor law came into effect in 2005, expanding some protections for citizens. However, the law prohibits noncitizen workers from forming labor unions. Foreign nationals, who make up most of the workforce in Qatar, face severe disadvantages in labor contract cases. Although foreign laborers have limited legal rights and can appear before the same courts as Qatari citizens, fear of job loss and deportation prevents many workers from exercising even these rights.

Foreign workers grapple with a host of different problems. Some complain of economic abuses like the withholding of salaries or contract manipulation, while others cite poor living conditions and excessive work hours. Worker complaints have included charges as serious as torture, imprisonment, and forced labor. The NHRC's March 2006 report focused in part on the plights of foreign housemaids and construction workers. Foreign construction workers have repeatedly demonstrated against poor living and working conditions, and hundreds mounted protests in April after at least two workers died, reportedly from exposure to toxic gas. The authorities arrested and deported the leaders of the protest. Female domestic servants are particularly vulnerable to abuse, and are often lured or forced into prostitution, according to the March report.

Despite constitutional guarantees, the judiciary is not independent in practice. The majority of Qatar's judges are foreign nationals who are appointed and removed by the emir. The judicial system consists of two sets of courts: Sharia (Islamic law) courts, which have jurisdiction over a narrow range of issues, such as family law; and civil law courts, which have jurisdiction over commercial and civil suits. These two divisions are united under the Supreme Judiciary Council, which regulates the judiciary. Qatar has a three-tiered system of courts—the Courts of First Instance, Appeal, and Cassation—which applies for both Sharia and civil courts.

The constitution protects individuals from arbitrary arrest and detention and bans torture. However, Law 17, issued in 2002, allows the suspension of these guarantees for the "protection of society." The law empowers the minister of the interior to detain a defendant for crimes related to national security on the recommendation of the director-general of public security.

The government discriminates against noncitizens in education, housing, health care, and other services offered free of charge to citizens. In February 2006, government officials restored the Qatari nationality of 6,000 people, most of them dual citizens in Saudi Arabia, whose Qatari citizenship had been stripped in 2005. The government in 2005 began addressing problems related to trafficking in persons by legislating a ban on underage camel jockeys. In July 2005, the Ministry of the Interior established a human rights department to handle cases of human rights abuses and trafficking in persons. Qatar remains on the Tier 2 Watch List of the U.S. State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons Report for its failure to meet basic standards in combating the practice.

The constitution treats women as full and equal persons. Article 35 of the con-

stitution bans discrimination based on sex, country of origin, language, or religion. Nevertheless, women continue to face societal gender discrimination, and few legal mechanisms are available for them to contest instances of discrimination. Despite a constitutional ban that prevents women from acceding to the throne itself, women have recently made political gains. Two women were appointed to public office in May 2006: Sheikha bint Ahmad al-Mahmud became minister for education and teaching and Sheikha Ghaila bint Mohammad bin Hamad al-Thani became deputy chairperson of the National Human Rights Committee. Also in 2006, a woman was elected to Qatar's 17-member Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

📍 Romania

Population: 21,600,000

Capital: Bucharest

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Trend Arrow: Romania received an upward trend arrow due to the implementation of judiciary reform measures designed to meet the requirements for the country's entry into the European Union.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	3,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview: In an effort to meet the requirements for membership in the European Union, Romania in 2006 implemented several important measures to combat corruption and reform the judiciary. As a result, in September 2006, the European Commission concluded that Romania had met all the membership requirements and set the accession date for January 2007.

Throughout the latter half of the Cold War, Romania was ruled by Nicolae Ceaucescu, one of Eastern Europe's most repressive dictators. In late 1989, popular dissatisfaction with Ceaucescu's regime led to his overthrow and execution by disgruntled Communists. A provisional government was formed under Ion Iliescu, a high-ranking Communist and the leader of the National Salvation Front (NSF). The 1992 parliamentary elections saw the NSF split into neo-Communist and reformist factions. In November 1996, Emil Constantinescu of the Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR) defeated Iliescu in a presidential election. However, Iliescu won the post in 2000, and the former Communist Party, renamed the Party of Social Democracy (PSD), took power in that year's parliamentary elections, with Adrian Nastase as prime minister.

The most recent elections for both president and Parliament took place in November 2004. Traian Basescu of the Alliance for Truth and Justice (comprising the National Liberal Party and the Democratic Party), Nastase, and 10 other candidates from smaller parties competed for the post of president in the first round of voting. Nastase, who won 41 percent of the vote, advanced to a runoff against Basescu, who captured 34 percent of the vote. Basescu won the December runoff With 51 percent of the vote, to Nastase's 49 percent.

Although the PSD secured the most seats in the parliamentary elections, no party captured a majority. The PSD initially formed a coalition with the Humanist Party (PUR), its traditional ally, and the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR). However, Basescu's surprising December presidential victory resulted in the PUR—which subsequently changed its name to the Conservative Party (CP)—and UDMR abandoning the PSD to join the Alliance for Truth and Justice in a ruling coalition. Meanwhile, the nationalist Greater Romania Party (PRM), which did unusually well in the 2000 elections, lost support in the 2004 balloting. Calin Popescu Tariceanu of the National Liberal Party (PNL) became prime minister.

Throughout 2005 and 2006, the ruling coalition was rather unstable. The divisions between the PNL and the Democratic Party (PD) hit a new low in June 2006, after Tariceanu proposed the withdrawal of Romanian troops from Iraq, a measure opposed by President Basescu, formerly of the PD. The two parties were further divided over constitutional reform, control of the security forces, and the holding of early elections. The two junior partners of the ruling coalition, the UDMR and the CP, have also appeared disgruntled and were considering aligning with other parties in 2007. In December 2006, the CP formally withdrew from the ruling coalition denying the remaining three parties a parliamentary majority. Later in December, the NLP split and a new Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), led by Theodor Stolojan, was created. At year's end, the LDP was still waiting for legal registration, which is expected to be completed in early 2007.

Romania applied to join the European Union (EU) in 1995. Negotiations, which began in 2000, were completed at the end of 2004. In September 2006, the EU approved Romania's entry and scheduled the accession for January 1, 2007. In order to fulfill the accession requirements, Romania's government made a notable effort to speed up the reform of the judiciary and eradicate corruption. A European Commission report on the drive, published in May 2006, praised Romania's progress. Among the improvements were the ongoing review of the Civil and Criminal Codes; a decrease in pending cases before the civil section of the High Court; improvements in recruitment, promotion, and disciplinary procedures for judges; and an increase in the operational budget for the courts. Moreover, new laws were put in place in December 2005 to assist low-income citizens in enforcing court judgments.

Romania's anticorruption efforts in 2006 were equally substantial. In March, the National Anticorruption Prosecutor's Office was transformed into the National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA) and given the authority to investigate corruption at the highest levels of government, including the Parliament. An anticorruption agency within the Ministry of Administration and Interior, the General Directorate for Anticorruption, also increased its staff and stepped up its investigative efforts. As a consequence, the number and the quality of investigations into high-level corruption allegations increased significantly in 2006.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Romania is an electoral democracy. Elections since 1991 have been considered generally free and fair by international observers. The president, who is directly elected, does not have substantial powers beyond foreign policy. He appoints the prime minister, who remains the most powerful politician, with the approval of Parliament. The members of the bicameral Parliament, consisting of the 137-seat Senate and 332-seat Chamber of Deputies, are elected for four-year terms, and a 2004 constitutional amendment stipulates that the president is now elected for a five-year term. A 5 percent electoral threshold for representation in Parliament favors large parties; six parties are currently represented. The president is not permitted to be a member of a political party.

The 1991 constitution provides for a seat to be allotted to each national minority that passes a special threshold lower than the 5 percent otherwise needed to enter Parliament. The number of these seats varies according to the number of eligible minorities, thus changing the total number of seats in the Chamber of Deputies. In the 2004 elections, 18 such seats were allotted. While the Hungarian minority is represented in the ruling coalition, political participation and representation of Roma are very weak.

Romania has significantly stepped up its anticorruption efforts in anticipation of its accession to the EU. The new anticorruption body, the DNA, has received sufficient funds and staff, enabling it to operate effectively. As a result, the number of successful investigations has increased, leading to arrests and convictions of several government officials, judges, and police officers. In July 2006, the government approved legislation to establish the National Agency for Integrity, commissioned to check the assets of public officials for any conflict of interest. In September 2006, 13 customs officials were detained and later prosecuted on charges bribery and extortion. Romania ranked 84 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The 1991 constitution enshrines freedom of expression and the press, and the media are characterized by considerable pluralism. The government increasingly respects media freedoms. A new criminal code—adopted in June 2005—stipulates that libel is no longer a felony and that slander, although a criminal offense, would not be punishable by imprisonment. The government does not restrict access to the internet.

Religious freedom is generally respected, although "nontraditional" religious organizations encounter difficulties in registering with the state secretary of religions. Lack of registration denies adherents the right to freely exercise their religious beliefs and prevents them from building places of worship and cemeteries. The government formally recognizes 18 religious groups in the country, each of which is eligible for some level of state support for clerical salaries and activities, including the building of houses of worship. The Romanian Orthodox Church remains dominant. In December 2006, Parliament passed a new law requiring all religions to have a membership equal to at least 0.1 percent of the population in order to be officially acknowledged. Moreover, nontraditional religions must now undergo a 12-year "waiting period" before they can be officially recognized. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the government respects these rights in practice. In general, the government does not place restrictions on the work of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Romanian civil society sector is vibrant and able to influence public policy. NGOs are free from onerous requirements for registration, and several new groups became particu-

larly visible in 2006. Ad-Astra, a network of academics at Romanian universities, is now often consulted by the media on educational matters and is actively involved in efforts to make the salaries of all university employees public. Workers have the right to form unions and to strike, but in practice many employers work against unions and illegal antiunion activity is rarely punished.

The judiciary is one of the most problematic institutions in Romania. However, a number of important and encouraging reforms were passed in 2006. The justice budget has increased, and the training for judges and clerks has improved. The court infrastructure underwent a process of renovation in 2006, and some 15,000 internet-enabled computers were installed in various court buildings.

Romania has 18 recognized ethnic minorities, the largest of which are the Hungarians. Minorities have the right to use their native tongue in communicating with authorities in areas where they represent at least 20 percent of the population. However, in about 13 percent of the country's localities, the law is not enforced and minorities do not have any rights regarding the use of their language. Although the treatment of the Hungarian minority has improved in recent years, discrimination against Roma continues, especially in housing, access to social services, and employment. A National Agency for Roma created in 2001 has taken some steps, but change has not been significant. In a nationwide government survey, released in November 2006, over 60 percent of respondents said they would not hire Roma because "most of them are lazy and steal."

People with disabilities in Romania face discrimination in various facets of life, including employment. Many government buildings are not equipped to provide access for the disabled. In August 2006, Human Rights Watch reported that thousands of HIV-positive Romanian children face widespread discrimination that prevents them from attending school and seeking medical care. The majority of these children—who were reportedly infected with the virus as a result of negligent government policies that exposed them to contaminated needles and blood between 1986 and 1991—rarely receive assistance when they report instances of serious abuse.

Romania's unemployment rate has gradually decreased in recent years and registered at 5 percent in September 2006, a lower rate than for most other European countries. Moreover, the country has experienced notable economic growth while maintaining low inflation and increasing the standard of living for the population.

The constitution guarantees women equal rights, but gender discrimination is a problem. Only about 10 percent of the seats in parliament are held by women. Trafficking of women and girls for the purpose of forced prostitution has become a major problem. However, some progress has become evident. In January 2006, the government created the National Agency for Preventing Human Trafficking and Monitoring the Assistance Offered to its Victims, with the goal of evaluating antitrafficking efforts and providing help to victims. Moreover, between October 2005 and May 2006, the government broke up 10 trafficking networks and made dozens of arrests.

↓ Russia

Population: 142,300,000

Capital: Moscow

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Trend Arrow: Russia received a downward trend arrow for the government's intensified crackdown on NGOs, particularly those receiving foreign funding.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,4PF	4,4PF	4,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview: In 2006, the Kremlin continued to infringe on the rights and liberties of Russian society. New legislation on terrorism and extremism contained formulations so vague that critics fear it could be used against the Kremlin's political opponents as well as its ostensible targets. The assassination of investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya silenced the most tenacious critic of the government's Chechnya policy, while the murder of Russia's top bank regulator highlighted the dangers of efforts to clean up corruption in this crucial sector of the economy. The authorities' continuing campaign against nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), particularly those with foreign funding, curtailed the activities of human rights groups, and fine-tuning of the electoral laws made life more difficult for opposition parties. Russia's official crackdown on Georgians living in the country led to accusations of selective application of the law against specific ethnic groups.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the Russian Federation emerged as an independent state under the leadership of President Boris Yeltsin. In 1993, Yeltsin used tanks to thwart an attempted coup by hard-liners in Parliament, after which voters approved a new constitution codifying a powerful presidency and a bicameral national legislature, the Federal Assembly. The December 1995 parliamentary elections, in which 43 parties competed, saw strong support for Communists and ultranationalist forces. Nevertheless, in the 1996 presidential poll, Yeltsin easily defeated Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov with the support of powerful economic oligarchs. The August 1998 collapse of the ruble and Russia's financial markets provided a useful corrective to the Russian economy, ushering in years of rapid growth. In 1999, Yeltsin appointed Vladimir Putin, then the head of the Federal Security Service (FSB), as prime minister.

Conflict with the separatist region of Chechnya, which had included a brutal two-year war from 1994 to 1996, resumed in 1999. After a Chechen rebel attack on the neighboring Russian republic of Dagestan in August 1999 and a series of deadly

apartment bombings in Russian cities that were blamed by the Kremlin on Chechen militants the same year, the central government responded with an attack on the breakaway region. The second Chechen war dramatically increased Putin's popularity, and after the December 1999 elections to the State Duma, the lower house of the Federal Assembly, progovernment forces were able to shape a majority coalition.

An ailing Yeltsin—who was constitutionally barred from a third presidential term—resigned on December 31, 1999, transferring power to his hand-picked successor, Putin. The new acting president subsequently secured a 53 percent-29 percent first-round victory over Zyuganov in the March 2000 presidential election. After taking office, Putin moved to consolidate his power, reducing the influence of the legislature, regional leaders, the business community, and the news media, while strengthening the FSB. He considerably altered the composition of the ruling elite through an influx of personnel from the security and military services; they now represent approximately 25 percent of the country's ministers, deputy ministers, legislators, regional governors, and heads of multiregional federal districts. Overall, Putin garnered enormous personal popularity by stabilizing the Russian political system after years of chaos under Yeltsin and overseeing a gradual increase in the standard of living for most of the population.

Nevertheless, the December 2003 Duma elections were marred by extensive bias in media coverage. The Kremlin-controlled United Russia political party captured 306 of the Duma's 450 seats. With the national broadcast media and most print media uniformly favorable to the incumbent, no opponent was able to mount a respectable challenge in the March 2004 presidential election. Putin, who refused to debate the other candidates, received 71.4 percent of the vote, compared with 13.7 for his closest rival, Communist Nikolai Kharitonov, in a first-round victory. Voter turnout was 64.3 percent.

Putin's second term has seen an increase in state power over civil society with little progress on overall administrative and military reform. In September 2004, Putin introduced legislative changes that eliminated direct gubernatorial elections in favor of presidential appointments. Acting in the wake of a deadly hostage-taking raid by Chechen rebels in Beslan, in the Caucasus republic of North Ossetia, he argued that the tighter centralized control was necessary to help prevent Russia's dissolution at the hands of ethnic separatists. Later the same year, a popular protest movement overturned fraudulent election results in Ukraine, leading to the defeat of the Russian-backed presidential candidate. Russia itself faced mass protests in early 2005, after the government attempted to replace long-standing in-kind social benefits for certain vulnerable groups with inadequate cash payments. The events sparked concerns in the Kremlin that a future protest movement could topple the current leadership. To prevent such an outcome, Russian officials and state-controlled media promoted loyalist groups, such as Nashi, to counter potential opposition protesters. The government also began a crackdown on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) inside Russia, especially those receiving foreign funding.

The authorities removed another possible threat in 2005, when a court sentenced billionaire energy magnate Mikhail Khodorkovsky, founder of the oil firm OAO Yukos, to eight years in prison for fraud and tax evasion. A parallel tax case against Yukos itself led to the transfer of many of its assets to the state-owned OAO Rosneft. Although an oligarch with a checkered past, Khodorkovsky had transformed his

company into one of the most transparent in Russia, and was using his wealth to bankroll opposition political activities.

Putin in early 2006 signed a new law that handed bureaucrats wide discretion in registering NGOs and placed extensive reporting requirements on the groups. Critics feared that the legislation would make it easier for the authorities to shut down NGOs critical of official policy. In October, a Nizhny Novgorod court ordered the closure of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society, which monitored human rights in Chechnya, on the grounds that an NGO cannot be headed by a person convicted of extremist activities. In February, the organization's leader, Stanislav Dmitrievsky, had been found guilty of publishing articles by Chechen separatist leaders, an offense labeled an act of "extremism."

The Kremlin that year also continued efforts to fine-tune Russia's electoral legislation in advance of the 2007 parliamentary and 2008 presidential elections to ensure a favorable outcome. One new law stripped legislators of their seats if they changed parties and prohibited parties from supporting other parties during elections. Those provisions weakened opposition parties by preventing them from setting up informal coalitions; previous changes had banned formal electoral blocs. In addition, the authorities removed the option of voting "against all" from the ballot. While this option is not usually available in democratic systems, voters used it to express frustration with elections that provide no real choices, particularly when there has been extensive official interference. An election was declared invalid if "against all" won the most votes. Officials removed minimum turnout requirements from the ballot, a practice also not widely used elsewhere, but seen by the opposition as a way of preventing the election of unpopular candidates through a boycott. Other legislation banned critical comments in television ads, a move to spare incumbents from the barbs of their opponents.

In another sign that safe avenues for dissent were disappearing, an unidentified assassin murdered investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya on October 7. She had frequently criticized the Kremlin's brutal crackdown in Chechnya and the excesses of Russian troops in the region. Thirteen journalists have been killed since Putin came to power, and there have been no convictions in any of the cases.

Russia's already poor relations with Georgia broke down further that fall, when Georgian authorities temporarily detained a group of Russian service personnel as spies. Russia responded in part by harassing ethnic Georgians, many of them citizens of the Russian Federation. It deported more than 1,000 Georgian migrants, ordered tax checks on prominent Georgians, and closed many Georgian-owned businesses. Some Russian and Western observers denounced these policies aimed against a specific ethnic group as shameful.

New laws on combatting terrorism and extremism further opened the door for abuses of civil liberties. A new counterterrorism law includes vague formulations that allow for the banning of any organization that justifies or supports terrorism. Amendments to the law on extremism expand the definition of extremist activities to include slandering a government official in the performance of his duties. Likewise, a new law bars parties from contesting elections if one member is convicted of extremism. Critics of these measures argue that existing laws are already strong enough to address these problems, while the new laws are so vaguely worded that they can be used to silence opposition politicians and the press. Against this background,

foreign media reported a number of cases in which opposition-minded activists who crossed the authorities were taken to insane asylums, a common practice during the Soviet era.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Russia is not an electoral democracy. In the State Duma elections of December 2003, the Kremlin's United Russia political party won more than two-thirds of the seats, while many of the remaining seats were captured by parties friendly to the Kremlin. The parliament now serves as a rubber stamp for Kremlin decisions. The Communists represent the sole party in the legislature that remains relatively free of Kremlin influence. In the presidential election of March 2004, state dominance of the media was in full display, debate was absent, and incumbent Vladimir Putin won a first-round victory with 71.4 percent of the vote, more than five times that of his closest rival.

The 1993 constitution established a strong presidency with the power to appoint, pending parliamentary confirmation, and dismiss the prime minister. The bicameral legislature consists of a lower chamber (the 450-seat State Duma) and an upper chamber (the 172-seat Federation Council). Amendments to the electoral law introduced in 2005 mean that, starting with the December 2007 elections, all seats, rather than just half, will be elected on the basis of party-list proportional representation; parties must gain at least 7 percent of the vote, rather than the previous 5 percent, to enter the Duma. Parties cannot form electoral coalitions, and would-be parties must have at least 50,000 members and organizations in half of the federation's 86 administrative units in order to register. In practice, these changes will make it extremely difficult for opposition parties to win representation in the State Duma. The upper chamber is made up of members appointed by governors and regional legislatures. Although the governors were previously elected, a 2004 reform gave the president the power to appoint them, meaning he heavily influences the appointment of half of the members of the upper house. The president and members of Parliament serve four-year terms, and the president is limited to two terms.

Corruption throughout the government and business world is pervasive, and Putin has identified his lack of progress on this issue as one of his greatest failures. In fact, Putin's anticorruption efforts are selectively applied and have often targeted critics and potential political adversaries. The size of the bureaucracy has grown rapidly during the last few years, adding to the complexity of doing business and creating opportunities for graft and bribery. The central bank has made efforts to crack down on the endemic money laundering in the Russian banking system, but the September 2006 assassination of Andrei Kozlov, the senior bank official behind the anticorruption drive, showed that the problem remains acute. Recent reports by the World Bank suggest that the amount of bribes paid in Russia is rising. Russia was ranked 121 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech, the government continues to put pressure on the dwindling number of media outlets that are still critical of the Kremlin. Since 2003, the government has controlled directly, or through state-owned companies, all of the national television networks. While the independent Ekho Moskvyy radio station airs a wide range of viewpoints, it is vulnerable because it is owned by the state-controlled OAO Gazprom natural gas conglomerate.

ate. The gas monopoly expanded its media empire in September 2006, when a subsidiary added the newspaper *Kommersant* to its 2005 purchase of another major paper, *Izvestiya*. Some independent outlets remain in the regional media and on the internet, but even these areas are under threat as the Kremlin extends further control. The military continues to impose severe restrictions on Russian and foreign journalists' access to the restive republic of Chechnya, issuing accreditation primarily to those of proven loyalty to the government. The October 2006 murder of well-known investigative reporter Anna Politkovskaya, who had covered Chechnya extensively, highlighted the intimidation faced by many Russian journalists, in addition to threats of libel suits and other pressures.

Freedom of religion is respected unevenly. A 1997 law on religion requires churches to prove that they have existed for at least 15 years before being permitted to register. As registration is necessary for a religious group to conduct many of its activities, new, independent congregations are consequently restricted in their functions. Orthodox Christianity increased its privileged status as public schools in four regions introduced courses on it into their curriculums in fall 2006, bringing the total number to 19 of the federation's 86 regions. Regional authorities continue to harass nontraditional groups, with the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons among the frequent targets. In a positive development, the recently appointed president of Kabardino-Balkaria, Arsen Kanokov, agreed to reopen mosques that had been closed by his predecessor. The earlier repression provided a backdrop of official religious intolerance to an October 2005 insurgent attack on official institutions in that republic. However, religious organizations fear that the new law on NGOs will be used against them.

Academic freedom is generally respected, although the academic system is marred by corruption at the higher levels and by very low salaries for educators. The arrest and prosecution of scientists and researchers on charges of treason, usually for discussing sensitive technology with foreigners, has engendered a climate in some research institutes that is restrictive of international contacts. In December 2006, a new law required that the Russian president appoint the president of the Russian Academy of Sciences after he has been elected by the academy's general assembly. Critics claim that the new requirement of the presidential appointment means that the academy has lost its independence. Although it was dependent on the federal budget, the academy has so far retained autonomy over management and spending. It remains unclear how the change will affect the academy's funding priorities.

The government provides some space for freedom of assembly and association. However, at the beginning of 2006, Putin signed a new law on NGOs that gave government bureaucrats extensive discretion in deciding which organizations could register. The law imposes onerous reporting requirements on the organizations that will hamper their ability to operate effectively. Putin said that a key purpose of the law was to block foreign funding of political activities, but the law does not define what these activities are. The new law could also create extensive new opportunities for corruption, as bureaucrats seek bribes in exchange for not harassing some organizations.

The NGO sector is composed of thousands of diverse groups, with many of them dependent on funding from foreign sources. The new law places extensive controls on the use of these foreign funds. The April 2006 closure of imprisoned oil magnate Mikhail Khodorkovsky's Open Russia charitable foundation, which had

supported NGOs focused on democratic reform, has had a chilling effect on Russian funding for such groups. To fill the vacuum, Putin established a Public Chamber whose task is to coordinate NGO activities and channel funding to state-approved organizations. At the end of the year, the chamber handed out nearly 473 million rubles to 1,054 organizations, but there were no well-known human rights groups among the recipients. Most did not bother to apply, fearing they had no chance of winning.

While trade union rights are legally protected, they are limited in practice. Strikes and worker protests occur, but antiunion discrimination and reprisals for strikes are not uncommon, and employers often ignore collective bargaining rights. In a rapidly changing economy in transition from the former system of total state domination, unions have been unable to establish a significant presence in much of the private sector. The largest labor federation works in close cooperation with the Kremlin.

The judiciary suffers from corruption, inadequate funding, and a lack of qualified personnel. After judicial reforms in 2002, the government has made progress in implementing due process and holding timely trials. The new code also gives the right to issue arrest and search warrants to the courts instead of prosecutors. Although the 2002 law abolished trials in absentia, this provision was revived in 2006 for suspected terrorists. Since January 2003, Russia's reformed criminal procedure code has provided for jury trials throughout the country, a plan set to be fully implemented by the beginning of 2007. While juries are more likely than judges to find defendants not guilty, these decisions are frequently overturned by a higher court, which can then send the case back for retrial as many times as is necessary to achieve the desired outcome. In 2006, Russia announced plans to move the Constitutional Court from Moscow to St. Petersburg, reducing its overall status.

Critics charge that Russia has failed to address ongoing criminal justice problems, such as poor prison conditions and the widespread use of torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement officials to extract confessions. New prison rules adopted in 2005 mean that prisoners are treated more harshly than they had been in the past, according to human rights activists. On the positive side, in April 2006, Putin signed a law transferring FSB pretrial detention centers to the Justice Ministry, meeting one of the commitments Russia made when it joined the Council of Europe in 1996.

Long before the 2006 government crackdown on Georgians, ethnic minorities, particularly those who appear to be from the Caucasus or Central Asia, were subject to governmental and societal discrimination and harassment. Local observers fear that racially motivated attacks by skinheads and other extremist groups are increasing. During the year there were 520 racist attacks in Russia, including 54 murders, according to Sova, a group that tracks ultra-nationalist activity in the country. An August 2006 bomb blast killed 10 people at a market frequented by migrants from the Caucasus and Central Asia, and was seen as an escalation in the sophistication and preparation of attacks against immigrants. In September, after men from Azerbaijan and Chechnya killed two ethnic Russians in a bar fight in the northern town of Kondopoga, a mob of 2,000, mostly young men, burned the bar and attacked homes and businesses owned by Caucasus migrants. Many ethnic minorities fled the city that night.

The government places some restrictions on freedom of movement and residence. All adults are legally required to carry internal passports while traveling,

documents that they also need in order to obtain many government services. Some regional authorities impose residential registration rules that limit the right of citizens to choose their place of residence freely.

Property rights remain shaky. Prosecutions of wealthy businessmen critical of the Kremlin, coupled with large tax liens on select companies, have reinforced perceptions that property rights are being eroded and that the rule of law is subordinated to political considerations.

Domestic violence continues to be a serious problem, and police are often reluctant to intervene in what they regard as internal family matters. Economic hardships contribute to widespread trafficking of women abroad for prostitution. Forced labor among male migrant workers is also a problem. There is credible evidence that women face considerable discrimination in the workplace, including lower pay than their male counterparts for performing similar work.

Rwanda

Population: 9,100,000

Capital: Kigali

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

In 2006, Rwanda's postgenocide reconciliation effort continued, with increased adjudication of cases through traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms. Meanwhile, the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda moved toward concluding its prosecution of crimes against humanity. Tensions with neighboring countries Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) continued during the year. The Supreme Court upheld the conviction and 15-year prison sentence of former president Pasteur Bizimungu, who was widely considered to be a political prisoner, but overturned the convictions of several of his co-defendants.

Rwanda's minority Tutsi ethnic group traditionally ruled over the majority Hutus, and loose colonial oversight—by Germany beginning in the late nineteenth century and Belgium after World War I—largely left that arrangement in place. A Hutu rebellion in 1959 overthrew the Tutsi monarchy, and independence from Belgium followed in 1962. Hundreds of thousands of Tutsis were killed or fled the country in recurring violence over the subsequent decades. In 1990, the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) launched a guerrilla war to force the Hutu regime, led

by President Juvenal Habyarimana, to accept power sharing and the return of Tutsi refugees.

Habyarimana and Burundian president Cyprien Ntaryamira were killed when their plane was shot down near Kigali in April 1994. While the perpetrators have never been identified, many observers believed that Hutu extremists, angered by Habyarimana's negotiation with the RPF, carried out the attack. Responding to claims for land and power by Rwanda's Tutsi minority, which constituted about 15 percent of the population, the Hutu extremists pursued the complete elimination of the Tutsi people. The ensuing genocide was well planned, with organized distributions of imported machetes and lists of targeted victims broadcast by radio, but the RPF nevertheless succeeded in overrunning the country.

The Hutu-dominated army and militia, along with as many as two million Hutu refugees, then fled into neighboring countries, especially the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), then known as Zaire. International relief efforts that eased the suffering of these refugees also had the effect of allowing the retraining and rearming of the former army and militia forces. The United Nations, which had ignored specific warnings of an impending genocide in 1994, failed to prevent the new activity, and the RPF took direct action, attacking the refugee camps in the DRC.

Nearly three million refugees returned to Rwanda between 1996 and 1998 and were peacefully reintegrated into society. Security improved considerably after 1997, although isolated killings and "disappearances" continued. The government, led by the RPF, closely directed the country's political life. In 2000, President Pasteur Bizimungu, a moderate Hutu installed by the RPF, resigned and was replaced by Vice President Paul Kagame, who had already been the *de facto* leader of the country. A new prime minister, Bernard Makuza, was appointed.

Rwanda's extended postgenocide political transition period officially ended in 2003 with national elections. The RPF's preeminent position in Rwandan political life—combined with a short campaign period, the advantages of incumbency, and continuing effects of the genocide that inhibited free expression of political will—ensured victory for Kagame in the August presidential vote and for the RPF and its allies in the September parliamentary elections. The largest opposition party, the Hutu-based Democratic Republican Movement (MDR), was declared illegal by the authorities before the elections for allegedly sowing "divisionism," meaning the fanning of ethnic hatred. In a sign of the extent of the RPF's influence, even the MDR parliamentary delegation voted to ban the party. A new constitution that officially permits political parties to exist under certain conditions was unveiled in 2003.

A parliamentary commission issued a report in early 2004 criticizing a number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for propagating "genocide ideology." Subsequently, under the threat of a legal ban, the organizations significantly limited activities that involved criticism of the government and its policies.

In June 2004, Bizimungu was sentenced to 15 years in prison after being convicted of inciting civil disobedience, creating a criminal gang, and embezzling state funds, although Amnesty International and other independent observers questioned the fairness of the trial. The Supreme Court in February 2006 upheld Bizimungu's prison sentence, but overturned the convictions of six of his co-defendants.

Rwanda's slow postgenocide reconciliation process continued in 2006, with increased adjudication of cases through traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms.

The UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) also moved to complete its prosecution of crimes against humanity as the May 2007 end of its extended mandate approached.

Rwanda's relations with the DRC and Uganda remained tense during the year, due to continued political instability and violence in eastern Congo and allegations that Rwandan rebels were using Uganda as a base.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Rwanda is not an electoral democracy. The 2003 presidential and parliamentary elections presented Rwandans with only a limited degree of political choice. The 2003 constitution grants broad powers to the president, who serves seven-year terms and has the authority to appoint the prime minister and dissolve the bicameral Parliament. The 26-seat upper house, the Senate, consists of 12 members elected by local councils, 8 appointed by the president, 4 chosen by a forum of political parties, and 2 representatives of universities, all serving eight-year terms. The 80-seat Chamber of Deputies, or lower house, consists of 53 directly elected members, 24 women chosen by local councils, two deputies named by a youth council, and one representative of a federation for the disabled. All serve five-year terms.

The constitution officially permits political parties to exist but only under certain conditions. Political parties closely identified with the 1994 massacres are banned, as are parties based on ethnicity or religion. The cabinet must consist of representatives from several different parties, and the largest party is not allowed to occupy more than half of the cabinet seats. The constitution also provides that the president, prime minister, and president of the lower house cannot all belong to the same party. Hutus have some representation in the government, including Prime Minister Makuza, who belonged to the MDR before it was banned in 2003.

The constitution restricts political campaigning at the grassroots level. Its emphasis on "national unity" as a priority and its prohibition of the incitement of ethnic hatred have the effect of limiting political pluralism. The RPF dominates the political arena. Eight other political parties associate themselves with the government rather than adopting independent positions on issues. The constitutionally mandated Political Party Forum, to which all parties must belong, operates on the principle of consensus, and in practice the RPF guides its deliberations. However, parliamentary committees have begun to question ministers and other executive branch officers more energetically, and some of these deliberations are reported in the local press.

While graft remains a significant problem, the government has undertaken a number of anticorruption measures. In 2005, President Kagame fired several top leaders for alleged corruption and embezzlement, including the minister of agriculture and the ambassadors to France, Ethiopia, and the African Union. Government institutions focused on the corruption issue include the Office of the Ombudsman, the auditor general, and the National Tender Board. Rwanda was ranked 121 out of 163 countries in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The RPF has imposed a number of legal restrictions and informal controls on the media, and press freedom groups have accused the government of intimidating independent journalists. Publications such as the independent national weekly *Umuseso* have been closely watched, harassed, and repeatedly prosecuted. In 2006,

the Rwandan high court sentenced *Umuseso* editor Charles Kabonero to a suspended one-year prison term and a fine of about \$2,000 for a 2004 article critical of a senior parliamentary official. Journalists censor their own writing and say that the authorities have made it clear that certain topics cannot be discussed.

The broadcast media are government controlled, although private radio and television stations can be licensed. There are a growing number of newspapers in the country and limited but increasing internet access. The government has recently shown greater willingness to engage with independent media in organized events like presidential press conferences, where critical questions are freely entertained, and radio call-in shows, where the president and his ministers respond to critical comments and questions from average citizens.

Religious freedom is generally respected. Clerics were among both the victims and the perpetrators of the 1994 genocide. The implication of several Catholic clergymen in the genocide has complicated relations between the government and the Roman Catholic Church. Academic freedom is generally respected.

Although the constitution codifies freedom of association and assembly, in reality these rights are limited. NGOs have complained that registration and reporting procedures are excessively time-consuming and onerous, and activities that the government defines as "divisive" are prohibited. In 2004, the Parliament accepted the recommendations of a parliamentary commission created to investigate the existence and spread of a "genocide ideology" in Rwanda. As a result, the Parliament advised the government to ban five NGOs and several religious groups and also called for action against several international NGOs operating in the country. International human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, expressed serious concern that these decisions were based on overly broad interpretations of the law, vague allegations, and insubstantial research. The executive branch decided to refer cases to the court system for prosecution rather than ban the implicated organizations outright. Responding to the ban threat, several targeted organizations significantly muted their independent and sometimes critical attitudes toward the RPF. Nevertheless, most civil society organizations function without direct government interference, and a wide range of organizations focus on women's and children's rights, HIV/AIDS assistance, workers' rights, human rights, professional interests, and economic development.

The constitution provides for the rights to form trade unions, engage in collective bargaining, and strike. According to the 2006 Annual Report of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, while the government appears to be trying to improve relations with trade unions, union activities cannot be carried out freely given legislative restrictions. For example, the list of "essential services," in which strikes are not allowed, is excessively long. The largest union umbrella group, the Central Union of Rwandan Workers, was closely controlled by the previous regime but now has greater independence.

The judiciary has yet to secure its independence from the executive. However, new courts staffed with trained officials have been established, and much of the old legal code has been updated and revised to better respect human rights. Planned reforms aim to streamline the judicial process, train a competent corps of judges, and assert enhanced oversight over the prosecutorial function. While their behavior does not appear to reflect official policy, individual police officers sometimes use exces-

sive force, and local officials periodically ignore due process protections. In late 2006, the Rwandan government reportedly fired more than 70 senior police officers for lack of discipline.

While those bearing the greatest responsibility for the genocide face trial in the regular courts, those facing lesser charges are being tried by *gacaca* courts, which are just beginning to adjudicate up to 700,000 cases after a nationwide "information-gathering" phase. Use of this traditional dispute-resolution mechanism for criminal cases has required massive training of *gacaca* officials. The *gacaca* process has raised some concerns about due process and the protection of the rights of the accused, and the start of these trials has raised anxiety levels among both suspects (who potentially face years in prison for genocide-related offenses) and victims (who may face threats from those in the community who seek to avoid punishment for themselves or friends and family).

The ICTR in Arusha, Tanzania, has moved ahead with its work in a deliberate fashion. The tribunal, established in 1997 and due to close in 2007, is composed of international jurists and is similar to that established in The Hague to deal with genocide and crimes against humanity in the former Yugoslavia. In 2005, several major trials involving former senior government officials proceeded. Relations between Rwanda and the court in Arusha have been volatile in recent years, with Rwanda accusing the ICTR of incompetence and the court accusing Rwanda of refusing to cooperate in war crimes investigations involving its army. By late 2006, the ICTR had convicted 26 people and acquitted 5.

Equal treatment under the law is guaranteed, and legal protections against discrimination have increased in recent years. A national identity card is required when Rwandans wish to move within the country, but these are issued regularly. In previous years, there were cases of government officials forcing citizens to return to the districts listed on their identity cards, although this did not appear to be a problem in 2006.

Rwanda's new constitution, adopted in May 2003, requires women to occupy at least 30 percent of the seats in each chamber of Parliament. Rwanda has the highest percentage of women in national parliaments in the world, with 48.8 percent representation in the lower house. In December 2003, the Senate elected Aloysia Cyanzaire as the first female chief justice of the Supreme Court. Women's rights to inherit land have been strengthened through legislation. In 2006 an international report found that Rwanda had made significant strides toward achieving an equal balance of girls and boys in primary school education and that special incentives exist to promote the advancement of girls in science-related study topics. Despite these improvements, ongoing de facto discrimination against women continues. Economic and social dislocation has forced women to take on many new roles, especially in the countryside.

Saint Kitts and Nevis

Population: 50,000
Capital: Basseterre

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In July 2006, control of the Nevis Island Administration was transferred from the Concerned Citizens Movement (CCM) to the opposition Nevis Reform Party (NRP), and the NRP's Joseph Perry was subsequently named the island's third premier, ending 15 years of governance by the CCM. Despite fears that the 2005 downsizing of the sugar industry would hamper economic growth and development, 2006 saw an increase in growth due to an expanding tourism sector. During the year, Saint Kitts and Nevis sought international support to help stem the flow of illegal arms through the country.

European colonization of Saint Kitts and Nevis began in the seventeenth century with the arrival of English and French colonists. The English settled mostly on Nevis, while the French chose Saint Kitts. Intermittent warfare led to changes in sovereignty, but the Treaty of Paris in 1783 awarded both islands to Britain. In 1967, together with Anguilla, they became a self-governing state in association with Great Britain; Anguilla seceded late that year and remains a British dependency. The Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis attained full independence on September 19, 1983, but is a member of the Commonwealth.

In the run-up to the March 6, 2000, elections, incumbent Prime Minister Denzil Douglas was able to tout his government's efforts at promoting tourist-resort construction, combating crime, and raising public employees' salaries. Critics of the ruling Saint Kitts and Nevis Labour Party (SKNLP) claimed that the country had accumulated \$192 million in debt and that the government had failed to reinvigorate the islands' sugar industry. The SKNLP won a stronger parliamentary majority in the elections, taking all eight Saint Kitts seats in the 11-member National Assembly. Opposition leader Kennedy Simmonds's People's Action Movement (PAM), which had hoped to oust the SKNLP by winning three seats on Saint Kitts and forming a coalition with the parties that held the three Nevis seats, instead lost its only Saint Kitts seat to the SKNLP, which had previously held seven.

In 2002, the Financial Action Task Force removed the federation from its list of jurisdictions that were "noncooperative" in the fight against money laundering and other financial crimes.

Momentum began to gather in mid-2003 for Nevis to secede from Saint Kitts, a process that cast a shadow over the twentieth anniversary of independence from Britain. Nevis held the constitutional right to secede if two-thirds of the elected legislators in its local assembly approved and two-thirds of Nevisian voters endorsed secession in a referendum. Though a 1998 referendum on independence had failed to reach the required two-thirds majority, Nevisians continued to feel neglected by the central government. The cabinet has no Nevisian members, and the island is entitled to only 3 of the 11 seats in the national legislature. There is little support for independence from neighboring states or farther afield.

Douglas called early elections for October 25, 2004, and his SKNLP won seven Saint Kitts seats, while the opposition PAM took the remaining seat on the island. Douglas's call for early elections was seen as a successful effort to ensure that he and the SKNLP would serve a third consecutive term in office. On Nevis, the Concerned Citizens Movement (CCM), a pro-independence party led by the premier of the island's local assembly, Vance Amory, kept two seats, while the Nevis Reformation Party (NRP) held on to one. The NRP has historically favored succession from Saint Kitts.

In March 2005, Douglas announced that Saint Kitts and Nevis would cease to produce sugar for export. The islands' 300-year-old sugar industry had been unprofitable for a number of years and faced even steeper losses due to pending changes to Europe's sugar-import regime. Some in the opposition PAM called on workers to take up machetes and march against the export shutdown, but sizable severance payments to former sugar laborers succeeded in mollifying many reform opponents. However, layoffs in the industry increased pressure on the government to seek alternative means for economic development.

In June 2006, the National Assembly approved a roadmap for electoral reform and established a new committee to solicit suggestions and make recommendations for changing the electoral system and voters' lists. The government in January 2005 had accepted an offer from the London-based Commonwealth Secretariat to help reform the system.

In July 2006, the NRP won three of the five seats in the Nevis Island Assembly after 15 years in the opposition, thereby undoing the 4-1 majority that had been held by the CCM.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Saint Kitts and Nevis is an electoral democracy. The 2004 elections were generally deemed free and fair. The federal government consists of the prime minister, the cabinet, and the unicameral National Assembly. Elected Assembly members—eight from Saint Kitts and three from Nevis—serve five-year terms. Senators are appointed to the body, and their number may not exceed two-thirds of the elected members, with one chosen by the leader of the parliamentary opposition for every two chosen by the prime minister. Saint Kitts's main political parties are the SKNLP and the PAM. On Nevis, the two main parties are the CCM, which had long been the majority party there, and the NRP, which won a majority of seats in the Nevis Island Assembly in June 2006. Nevis's assembly is composed of five elected and three appointed members, and the local government pays for all of its own services except for those involving police and foreign relations. Saint Kitts has no similar body. The country is

a member of the Commonwealth, and its head of state is Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, represented by a governor-general. In June 2006, Prime Minister Denzil Douglas's government outlined a roadmap for constitutional reform to ensure greater equity in representation, revise electoral boundaries, and improve voter registration procedures.

In an effort to create greater transparency in political party financing, a constitutional amendment was approved in 2005 requiring the disclosure of all campaign donors whose gifts exceeded a certain threshold. However, drug trafficking and money laundering have had a corrupting influence on the political system by undermining the effectiveness of the police force and tainting the judicial process. Saint Kitts and Nevis was not surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Constitutional guarantees of free expression are generally respected. Television is government-owned, although it is managed by a Trinidadian company, and there are some government restrictions on opposition access to the medium. Douglas has kept pledges to privatize radio, selling off the government radio station in 1997. There are eight radio stations and two daily newspapers on the islands. In addition, each major political party publishes a weekly or fortnightly newspaper. Opposition publications freely criticize the government, and international media are available. Internet access is not restricted.

The free exercise of religion is constitutionally protected, and academic freedom is generally honored.

The right to organize civic organizations and labor unions is generally respected, as is freedom of assembly. The main labor union, the Saint Kitts Trades and Labour Union, is associated with the ruling SKNLP. The right to strike, while not specified by law, is recognized and generally respected in practice.

The judiciary is for the most part independent, and legal provisions for a fair and speedy trial are generally observed. The highest court is the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court on Saint Lucia, which includes a court of appeals and a high court. Under certain circumstances, there is a right of appeal to the Caribbean Court of Justice in Trinidad. However, the islands' traditionally strong rule of law has been tested by an increase in drug-related crime and corruption, and the intimidation of witnesses and jurors is a problem. The national prison is overcrowded, and conditions are abysmal. The deportation of a number of felons from the United States under the U.S. Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 has contributed to law enforcement agencies' sense that they are being overwhelmed. In March 2006, the government asked the UN Security Council for its support in combating illegal arms trafficking that had negatively affected crime rates on the islands.

Reports suggest that the country's economic citizenship program, which allows for the purchase of passports through real estate investments worth a minimum of \$250,000 and a registration fee of \$35,000, has facilitated the illegal immigration of people from China and other countries into the United States and Canada. In January 2005, the government enacted new work-permit rules for foreign nationals, requiring that the jobs in question be advertised to current citizens. The move was seen as an effort to curb the influx of workers from Guyana.

Violence against women is a problem on the islands. The Domestic Violence Act of 2000 criminalizes domestic violence and provides penalties for abusers. The

Department of Gender Affairs, part of the Ministry for Social Development, Community, and Gender Affairs, has offered counseling for victims of abuse and conducted training on domestic and gender-based violence. There are no laws against sexual harassment. More girls than boys are enrolled in primary and secondary education. Only one of 14 parliamentary seats is occupied by a woman; however, she is the speaker.

Saint Lucia

Population: 200,000

Capital: Castries

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In 2006, Saint Lucia prime minister Kenny Anthony vowed to reverse rising crime rates that threatened to undermine the tourist industry. Prison overcrowding and abuses by the police force were also highlighted as major concerns. In December, Sir John Compton, one of Saint Lucia's "founding fathers" and prime minister on two previous occasions, was again elected to that post in a surprise victory for his United Workers Party.

Saint Lucia, a member of the Commonwealth, achieved independence from Britain in 1979. In May 1997, Kenny Anthony led the Saint Lucia Labour Party (SLP) to victory in legislative elections. Upon taking office as prime minister, he began to address the concerns of an electorate that was weary of economic distress and reports of official corruption. In 2000, Anthony and the SLP gave their approval for regulated casino gambling in an apparent effort to revitalize the country's tourism trade, brushing aside objections from religious groups and the United Workers Party (UWP).

In June 2001, Anthony announced a two-month crackdown on crime, including increased police patrols and heavy penalties for firearms offenses. He maintained that the measures were necessary to combat a wave of murders and armed robberies that he blamed in part on a U.S. policy of deporting hardened criminals born on Saint Lucia back to the island.

The SLP swept to victory in the December 2001 general elections, winning 14 of 17 seats in Parliament, just short of the 16-1 majority it had achieved in 1997. However, constituencies dominated by banana farmers registered their discontent with Anthony's party, reflecting popular dissatisfaction with his efforts to keep the

island's ailing banana industry afloat. The farmers were unhappy that the Anthony administration had not helped to reduce the high production costs that made Saint Lucian exports uncompetitive. Nevertheless, Anthony was the only party leader to survive the elections, which were called six months ahead of schedule. Although her UWP won the other three seats in Parliament, Morella Joseph—the first woman to lead a party into a general election—lost her seat. National Alliance leader George Odium and former UWP prime minister Vaughan Lewis also failed in their efforts to be elected.

In November 2003, the government and opposition announced the establishment of a Constitution Review Commission to examine Saint Lucia's constitution as it related to issues of law and order. The level of criminal violence had increased noticeably, with police blaming much of the problem on drug-related gangs. The United States that year named Saint Lucia as a principal transit point in the eastern Caribbean for South American cocaine. Local authorities have also expressed concern at the increasing number of travelers coming through the island with fraudulent passports.

In March 2006, the SLP suffered its first election loss in nearly a decade in a by-election held in the Central Castries district, following persistent allegations of corruption in the National Conservation Authority. In June, the attorney general accused political parties of padding voter lists in certain districts with names of people who were not properly registered.

In the fall of 2005 and early 2006, Saint Lucia's police and judicial system came under scrutiny following a series of high-profile incidents, including the severe beating of inmate Wilson Exhale at the Bordelais detention facility, the beating of Mathurine Williams by a police corporal in the village of Dennery, and the assault of a teenage girl by her police-officer father. In September 2006, the murder of a female British tourist resulted in the designation of a new police unit to protect tourists on the island.

Sir John Compton came out of retirement to lead the UWP to an unexpected victory in the December 2006 elections. Compton, who played a major role in securing Saint Lucia's independence and served as its first prime minister, was sworn in at the age of 81. Though his party won a majority of the seats in the House of Assembly, he pledged "to govern in a spirit of cooperation" with the SLP.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Saint Lucia is an electoral democracy. The 2006 legislative elections were considered free and fair, and an estimated 60 percent of eligible voters turned out, up from 50 percent in 2001. A governor-general represents the British monarch as head of state. Under the 1979 constitution, the bicameral Parliament consists of the 17-member House of Assembly, elected for five years, and an 11-member Senate. The prime minister is chosen by the majority party in the House of Assembly. Six members of the Senate are appointed by the prime minister, three by the leader of the parliamentary opposition, and two in consultation with civic and religious organizations. The island is divided into 11 regions, each with its own elected council and administrative services. Two parties—the UWP, in power since 2006, and the SLP, the official opposition—dominate politics. Parties are free to organize.

Government officials have been accused of corrupt activities. In November 2005,

Saint Lucia's Constitutional Reform Commission was launched to review steps toward electoral reform, with an emphasis on increasing the transparency and credibility of election supervision mechanisms. For the first time, observers from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organization of American States (OAS) were invited to observe the December 2006 elections. The observers recommended campaign finance reform as spending by both parties greatly exceeded previous election expenditures. Saint Lucia was not surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees freedom of speech, which is respected in practice. The media carry a wide spectrum of views and are largely independent of the government. There are five privately owned newspapers, two privately held radio stations, one partially government-funded radio station, and two privately owned television stations. There is unrestricted access to the internet. In August 2006, Prime Minister Anthony filed a libel suit against opponents who had accused him of dealing in the illegal drug trade. The press subsequently accused the government of attempting to muzzle opposition voices during the period leading up to the December elections. In November 2006, Saint Lucia's Parliament repealed the libel section of the criminal code, marking a departure from Anthony's increasingly stringent policy on press freedom.

The constitution guarantees free exercise of religion, and that right is respected. Academic freedom is generally honored.

Constitutional guarantees regarding the right to organize civic groups and labor unions and to assemble freely are generally respected. Civic groups are well organized and politically active, as are labor unions, which represent the majority of wage earners.

The judicial system is independent and includes a high court under the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (based in Saint Lucia). In July 2003, a treaty replacing the previous right of final appeal to the Privy Council in London with a new Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) based in Trinidad and Tobago was approved by Saint Lucia. In November of that year, the Parliament passed the Caribbean Court of Justice 2003 agreement, with Saint Lucia pledging to contribute \$2.5 million toward the establishment of the regional court. The CCJ has an appellate function and also interprets the Caribbean Community (Caricom) Treaty.

Traditionally, citizens have enjoyed a high degree of personal security, although there are episodic reports of police misuse of force. In recent years, a rise in crime—including drug-related offenses, violent clashes during banana farmers' strikes, and increased violence in schools—has created concern among citizens and prompted Anthony to step up enforcement of capital punishment sentences for violent offenders in 2006. In late 2002, the government finished construction of a new, \$17 million prison facility on the eastern part of the island designed to hold 500 inmates. While it currently holds just under maximum capacity, prison authorities expressed concerns about overcrowding in August 2006, due in part to a major backlog in the judicial system that forced detainees to wait for up to six months before being processed for even minor offenses.

Though there are no official barriers to their participation, women are underrepresented in politics and other professions. Female enrollment in primary and secondary education is slightly higher than male enrollment. A growing aware-

ness of the seriousness of violence against women has led the government and advocacy groups to take steps to offer better protection for victims of domestic violence. In November 2004, the Ministry of Health noted that 67 percent of women seeking treatment for HIV/AIDS at clinics reported physical and sexual abuse. In July 2006, activists described the island's domestic violence situation as scandalous following the stabbing death of a 23-year-old woman by her male companion. In addition, homosexuals were occasionally targeted for hate crimes, such as murder of Jermaine Nestor, whose body was found bound and gagged at the bottom of a cliff in March.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Population: 100,000

Capital: Kingstown

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2.1F	2.1F	2.1F	2.1F	2.1F	2.1F	2.1F	2.1F	2.1F	2.1F

Overview:

In December 2005, Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves led his Unity Labour Party (ULP) to electoral victory, taking 12 of the 15 contested parliamentary seats. The opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) vowed to contest the results, but their efforts stalled once the elections were pronounced free and fair by the Organization of American States.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines achieved independence from Britain in 1979, with jurisdiction over the northern Grenadine islets of Bequia, Canouan, Mayreau, Mustique, Prune Island, Petit Saint Vincent, and Union Island. The country is a member of the Commonwealth, with the British monarch represented by a governor-general as head of state.

In the March 2001 elections, the social-democratic Unity Labour Party (ULP) captured 12 of the 15 contested parliamentary seats, and Ralph Gonsalves became prime minister. The incumbent, conservative New Democratic Party (NDP) won the other 3 seats. International observers monitored the elections, which had been preceded by large antigovernment protests and the first serious political unrest in the country's history.

In 2001, Gonsalves, a one-time radical opposition figure, led a successful initiative to save the financially ailing Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) by relieving it of some administrative requirements now carried out by its individual members. After a controversial trip to Libya, also in 2001, Gonsalves was criticized

for not revealing publicly that the Arab nation had promised to buy all the bananas that the Caribbean could produce.

In June 2003, the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force removed Saint Vincent and the Grenadines from its list of jurisdictions deemed "noncooperative" in the fight against money laundering. The move was regarded as a major victory for Gonsalves's government. In the same month, the U.S. Coast Guard detained eight ships when it discovered that several officers had licenses that were improperly issued by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. In June 2005, Barbados prime minister Owen Arthur charged that authorities in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were not doing enough to stop the flow of illegal drugs or stifle international criminal networks operating out of Saint Vincent.

In December 2005, Gonsalves led the ULP to reelection, again taking 12 of the 15 contested seats, while the opposition NDP won the remaining 3. The NDP later vowed to take legal action over alleged irregularities that occurred during the elections, but the party's effort stalled after the Organization of American States gave the elections its stamp of approval.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is an electoral democracy. The constitution provides for the election of 15 representatives to the unicameral House of Assembly to serve five-year terms. The prime minister is the leader of the majority party in the House. In addition, six senators are appointed to the body—four by the government and two by the opposition. A governor-general represents the British monarch as head of state. The December 2005 elections were considered free and fair by international observers. The two main political parties are the ruling, left-leaning ULP and the conservative NDP.

There have been allegations of drug-related corruption within the government and the police force and of money laundering through Saint Vincent banks. In 1995, the U.S. government alleged that Saint Vincent was becoming a drug-trafficking center and that high-level government officials were involved in narcotics-related corruption. Since then, the country has taken steps to cooperate with U.S. antinarcotics efforts and signed an extradition treaty with the United States in 1996. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was not surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The press is independent, with two privately owned, independent weeklies and several smaller, partisan papers. Some journalists allege that government advertising is used as a political tool. The only television station is privately owned and free from government interference. Satellite dishes and cable television are available to those who can afford them. The radio station is government owned, and call-in programs are prohibited. Equal access to radio is mandated during electoral campaigns, but the ruling party takes advantage of state control over programming. There is unrestricted access to the internet.

Freedom of religion is constitutionally protected and reflected in practice, and academic freedom is generally honored. In September 2005, universal secondary education was introduced. Access to higher education is limited but improving as the University of the West Indies initiated degree programs with community colleges in Saint Vincent and other OECS members.

There is constitutional protection for freedom of assembly and association. Civic groups and nongovernmental organizations are free from government interference. Labor unions are active and permitted to strike.

The judicial system is independent. The highest court is the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (based in St. Lucia), which includes a court of appeals and a high court. Litigants have a right of ultimate appeal, under certain circumstances, to the Caribbean Court of Justice. The independent Saint Vincent Human Rights Association has criticized long judicial delays and a large backlog of cases caused by personnel shortages in the local judiciary. It has also charged that the executive branch of government at times exerts inordinate influence over the courts. In May 2006, the ruling ULP sought to make it more difficult for foreigners to achieve citizenship, citing crime concerns.

Murder convictions carry a mandatory death sentence. In November 2004, Prime Minister Gonsalves publicly endorsed the death penalty as a response to the rise in violent crime on the islands, urging judges not to be swayed by a 1993 Privy Council ruling that mandatory death sentences are unconstitutional. In 2006, rising crime and violence remained an important public concern following several high-profile murders, including the killing in early March of the prime minister's press secretary, Glen Jackson, who was shot to death in his car near his East Kingstown home. Prison conditions have improved but remain poor—Her Majesty's Prison in Kingstown was renovated to accommodate 150 inmates, but holds over 350—and inmates have alleged mistreatment.

Violence against women, particularly domestic violence, is a major problem. The Domestic Violence Summary Proceedings Act, which provides for protective orders, offers some tools that benefit victims. The punishment for rape is generally 10 years in prison, while those convicted of sexual assaults against minors receive 20 years. In June 2006, four men were accused of raping two teenagers from Florida and beating their mother, sparking public outrage against the perpetrators.

Samoa

Population: 200,000

Capital: Apia

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,2F	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview:

Prime Minister Tuila'epa Aiono Sailele Malielegaoi and his Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) won a majority in the April 2006 general elections. In May, the gov-

eminent banned the commercial screening and rental of the movie *The Da Vinci Code* after religious leaders voiced objections to it Separately, the attorney general resigned in August, reportedly under government pressure stemming from an election fraud case.

Germany controlled this group of Pacific islands between 1899 and World War I. New Zealand then administered the islands under a League of Nations mandate and, after World War II, a United Nations mandate. The country became independent in 1962 and changed its name from Western Samoa to Samoa in 1988. Samoa depends heavily on remittances from more than 100,000 Samoans working overseas.

The centrist Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) has dominated politics since independence. Tofilau Eti Alesana, who became prime minister in 1982, resigned in 1998 for health reasons. He was replaced by Deputy Prime Minister Tuila'epa Aiono Sailele Malielegaoi, who led the HRPP to another victory in March 2001 by winning 30 of the 49 parliamentary seats. The main opposition party, the Samoa Democratic United Party (SDUP), chose Valasi Tafito as its new leader after its former secretary, Tofa S'a Antonio Lemi, was killed by an assailant in Auckland, New Zealand, in October 2005.

In the April 2006 general elections, the HRPP won 35 of the 49 seats and secured a second full term for Tuila'epa. The opposition SDUP took 10 seats and independents took 4 seats. Violence occurred in some parts of Samoa where local populations were unhappy with the results, but disturbances were generally minor, and the elections were considered open and fair.

Political and public debates continued during the year over the role and powers of village chiefs in Samoa. *Matai*, or chiefs of extended families, control local government and churches through the village *fono*, or legislature, which is open only to them. While many serve their communities well in solving conflicts and providing leadership, there have been cases of abuse of power in recent years. For example, families have been banished from villages and their homes burned down because they belonged to churches other than those recognized by the government.

In May 2006, the government banned the commercial screening and rental of the film *The Da Vinci Code*. Church and traditional leaders—both highly influential—opposed the showing of the movie on the grounds that it went against Christian teachings.

The attorney general resigned in August, reportedly under intense pressure from the government over her handling of a case involving an election fraud charge against a former government minister. The reason behind the attorney general's resignation was not made public, and the government asked her to stay until her replacement was found. In November, the government selected her replacement from a field of 10 applicants.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Samoa is an electoral democracy. The 2006 legislative elections were deemed free and fair. Universal suffrage was implemented in 1990, before which only the matai could vote. Executive authority is vested in the chief of state. The 93-year-old Chief Susuga Malietoa Tanumafili II holds this title for life, but the Legislative Assembly will elect his successor for five-year terms. The chief of state appoints the prime minister, who heads the government and names his own cabinet. In 2003, the number of ministries

was reduced from 27 to 14 through mergers designed to streamline the government. All laws passed by the 49-member unicameral legislature must receive approval from the chief of state to take effect. Although candidates are free to propose themselves for electoral office, approval of the matai is essential. Two Parliament seats are reserved for "at large" voters, mostly citizens of mixed or non-Samoan heritage who have no village ties. All of the lawmakers serve five-year terms. The main political parties are the long-ruling HRPP and the opposition SDUP.

Official corruption and abuses do not appear as widespread or serious as in some other states in the region. Nevertheless, there have been allegations of corruption over the years. Samoa was not ranked in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and the press is generally respected. The government operates one of the country's three television stations. The other two were both launched in 2006. There are three English-language and several Samoan newspapers. Journalists are legally required to reveal their sources in defamation suits against them, but this law has not been tested in court. In 2004, publishers, journalists, and civil society groups called on the government to abolish the Printers and Publishers Act of 1982 and the Law of Criminal Libel. Opponents claim the statutes make it easier for government officials to sue them. There are several internet service providers, and internet use is growing rapidly. The government plans to issue a second telecommunications license to increase competition and improve service.

The government respects freedom of religion in practice, and relations among religious groups are generally amicable. In 2000, the Supreme Court ruled that the 1990 Village Fono (Council of Chiefs) Act, which gives legal recognition to fono decisions, could not be used to infringe on villagers' freedom of religion, speech, assembly, and association. This ruling followed a fono decision in the village of Saluilua to banish members of a Bible study group that the fono regarded as illegal. Similar rulings by the Supreme Court followed in 2003 and 2004. The government appointed the Law Reform Commission in 2003 to address conflicts between traditional customs and Christianity. There have been no recent reports of restrictions on academic freedom.

Freedom of assembly and association are respected in practice, and human rights groups operate freely. More than 60 percent of adults work in subsistence agriculture, and about 20 percent of wage earners belong to trade unions. Workers have the legal right to bargain collectively, and government workers can strike. Samoa joined the International Labor Organization in 2005. Publicly employed doctors went on strike in September 2005 for better working conditions and higher pay. The government ordered the striking doctors to return to work, and those who had received government scholarships were threatened with legal action and barred from leaving Samoa. In the end, the government accepted most of the strikers' demands, except an increase in pay for new doctors. The strike, which lasted several months, severely hampered the delivery of health services.

The judiciary is independent and upholds the right to a fair trial. The Supreme Court is the highest court, with full jurisdiction over civil, criminal, and constitutional matters. The chief of state, on the recommendation of the prime minister, appoints the chief justice. Prisons meet basic international standards, and there have been no recent reports of prisoner abuse or corruption in adjudication.

Samoa has no armed forces; the small police force is under civilian control. The police have little impact in the villages, where most disputes are settled by the fono, and punishments usually involve fines in cash or kind. Banishment from the village is reserved for serious offenses. Fono vary considerably in their decision-making styles and in the number of matai involved, and abuses by some fono officials have caused the public to question the legitimacy of their actions.

Freedom of movement is generally respected. A new permanent resident permit was introduced in 2004 as part of the Immigration Act of that year. The cabinet is required to determine annually the eligibility and residency requirements for permanent resident permits.

Domestic violence against women and children is common and reported to be increasing. Spousal rape is not illegal. Domestic abuse typically goes unreported because of social pressure and fear of reprisal. Sexual abuse of young girls and illegal drug use are both increasing. In November, the prime minister accepted an invitation to serve as patron of the first citizen group to support *fa'afafine*, males who take on female roles in society.

San Marino

Population: 30,000
Capital: San Marino

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: Following June 2006 elections, the Party of Socialists and Democrats (PSD) formed a center-left coalition government with the Popular Alliance of Democrats (AP) and the United Left (SU). It replaced a coalition led by the San Marino Christian Democratic Party (PDCS).

Founded in the year 301, according to tradition, San Marino is considered the world's oldest existing republic and is one of the world's smallest states. Although the Sammarinesi are ethnically and culturally Italian, they have succeeded in maintaining their independence against great odds since the fourth century. The papacy recognized San Marino's independence in 1631, as did the Congress of Vienna after the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. In 1862, Italy and San Marino signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation that began a long period of closeness between the two countries. Despite its dependence on Italy, from which it currently receives budget sub-

sidies, San Marino maintains its own political institutions. It became a member of the Council of Europe in 1988 and a member of the United Nations in 1992. Tourism and banking dominate the country's economy.

In February 2005, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture carried out its third visit to the country. The delegation followed up concerns that were raised in previous visits about detentions at San Marino's prison and safeguards offered to people detained by law enforcement agencies.

The European Union (EU) Savings Taxation Directive, which provided a way to tax revenue from savings accounts held by EU citizens in a member state other than their own country of residence or in certain non-EU countries, came into effect on July 1, 2005. San Marino, which was not an EU member, had agreed to participate in the directive, which was intended to prevent harmful tax practices.

Elections for the Grand and General Council were held in June 2006. The San Marino Christian Democratic Party (PDCS) won 32.9 percent, the Party of Socialists and Democrats (PSD) took 31.9 percent, the Popular Alliance of Democrats (AP) won 11.9 percent, the United Left (SU) received 8.7 percent, and the New Socialist Party (NPS) took 5.4 percent. In terms of seats, the PDCS won 21, the PSD 20, the AP 7, the SU 5, the NPS 3, and other parties 4. The PSD formed a coalition government with the AP and SU, replacing a government led by the PDCS.

Antonio Carattoni and Roberto Giorgetti were elected as captains-regent, the joint heads of state, for the six-month term from October 2006 to March 2007.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: San Marino is an electoral democracy. The 60 members of the Great and General Council, the unicameral legislature, are elected every five years by proportional representation. The executive power of the country rests with the 10-member Congress of State (cabinet), which is headed by two captains-regent selected every spring and fall by the Great and General Council from among its own members to serve as joint heads of state for a six-month period. Although there is no official prime minister, the secretary of state for foreign and political affairs is regarded as the head of government. Fiorenzo Stolfi was elected to the post in July 2006.

The PDCS, PSD, and the AP are the three dominant political groups in the country. There are several smaller groups, however, and majority governments are usually formed by a coalition of parties.

There are few problems with corruption in the country. San Marino was not ranked in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and the press are guaranteed in San Marino. There are daily newspapers, a state-run broadcast system for radio and television called RTV, and a private FM station, Radio Titiano. The Sammarinesi have access to all Italian print media and certain Italian broadcast stations. Access to the internet is unrestricted.

The country prohibits religious discrimination by law. Roman Catholicism is the dominant, but not the state, religion. Taxpayers can request to donate 0.3 percent of their income through their taxes to the Catholic Church or other groups such as the Waldesian Church or the Jehovah's Witnesses. Academic freedom is respected in the country.

Residents are free to assemble, demonstrate, and conduct open public discus-

sions. Civic organizations are active. Workers are free to organize into trade unions and bargain collectively with employers. They are also free to strike, if they do not work in military occupations. Approximately half of the country's workforce is unionized.

The judiciary is independent. Lower court judges are required to be noncitizens—generally Italians—to assure impartiality. The final court of review is San Marino's Council of Twelve, a group of judges chosen for six-year terms from among the members of the Grand and General Council. The country's prison system generally meets international standards, and civilian authorities maintain effective control over the police and security forces.

The population is generally treated equally under the law, although the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has raised some concerns in the past about the status of foreigners in the country. Most of the foreign-born residents are Italians; only about 2 percent—mostly women from Central and Eastern Europe who work as private nurses for the elderly and ill—come from outside the EU. San Marino has no formal asylum policy, and a foreigner must live in the country for 30 years to be eligible for citizenship. The European Convention on Nationality recommends that the period of residence before a foreigner can apply for citizenship should not exceed 10 years. In 2001, San Marino ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Women are given legal protections from violence and spousal abuse, and gender equality exists in the workplace and elsewhere. There are, however, slight differences in the way men and women can transmit citizenship to their children. The country has restrictive laws regarding abortion, which is permitted only to save the life of the mother.

Sao Tome and Principe

Population: 200,000

Capital: Sao Tome

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview: President Fradique de Menezes won a second and final term in July 2006, after his party's coalition won parliamentary elections in March. Corruption in the increasingly important oil sector remained a major concern, though the government has put in place mechanisms to ensure transparency and sound management once pro-

duction begins. In December 2005, Attorney General Adelino Pereira noted serious irregularities after conducting an investigation of the awarding of oil exploration licenses.

The small Gulf of Guinea islands of Sao Tome and Principe gained independence from Portugal in 1975. President Manuel Pinto da Costa's Movement for the Liberation of Sao Tome and Principe (MLSTP) was the country's only legal party until a 1990 referendum established multiparty democracy. Miguel dos Anjos Trovoada, a former prime minister, returned from exile and ran as an independent candidate to become the first democratically elected president in 1991. He was reelected to a second and final term in 1996.

Fradique de Menezes, backed by Trovoada's Independent Democratic Action party (ADI), gained 56 percent of the vote in the 2001 president election, compared with 38 percent for Pinto da Costa. A coalition government was created after no party gained a majority in the March 2002 parliamentary elections. International observers declared both polls free and fair.

In July 2003, a group of disgruntled military officers briefly ousted Menezes. He was returned to power one week later with broad regional and international support. Controversial foreign investment deals in 2004 led to a cabinet shuffle that left the president's party, the Force for Change Democratic Movement (MDFM), in the opposition. Menezes later replaced the prime minister with Damiao Vaz de Almeida of the MLSTP-Social Democratic Party (PSD). Vaz de Almeida resigned in June 2005, following public discontent and allegations of corruption in the award of oil exploration licenses in the Joint Development Zone (JDZ) with Nigeria. The MLSTP-PSD and its coalition partners, which held the largest block of seats in Parliament, threatened to resign from government and force early parliamentary elections. To avoid that outcome, Menezes reached agreement with the MLSTP-PSD on the formation of a new government that included Maria Silveira, the well-respected head of the Central Bank, to serve concurrently as prime minister and finance minister.

The MDFM, in coalition with the Democratic Convergence Party (PCD), took 23 of 55 seats in the March 2006 legislative elections. The MLSTP-PSD won 19 seats, while ADI came in third with 12 seats. The newly formed New Way Movement (NR) won 1 seat. Six other parties competed, but failed to win any seats. Though peaceful, protesters in several parts of the country prevented approximately 9,600 people from voting in 18 electoral districts, but a rerun was held in April without incident. Negotiations on the formation of a new coalition government led to the appointment of a new prime minister, MDFM leader Tome Soares da Vera Cruz, in April.

Menezes won a second term in office in the July presidential election with 60 percent of the vote, eliminating the need for a runoff with his main challenger, Patrice Trovoada, son of former president Miguel Trovoada.

Large oil and natural gas deposits were discovered off the country's coast in the 1990s, though production is not expected to begin before 2010. A 2001 territorial agreement with Nigeria resulted in the creation of the JDZ, headquartered in the Nigerian capital of Abuja. Under its terms, Sao Tome and Principe will receive 40 percent of all JDZ oil and gas revenue. The awarding of exploration blocks in the JDZ has been controversial and in some cases disadvantageous to the Sao Tome and Principe government. Following public criticism that many of the Nigerian-con-

trolled companies which won exploration rights had little experience in the oil sector, Sao Tome and Principe Attorney General Adelino Pereira launched a probe into alleged corruption in 2005. In December of that year, he announced that serious irregularities in the award process had been identified. His report was submitted to the National Assembly for debate, and to the government, but no action had been taken by the end of 2006.

The oil fields are likely to be a continuing source of political conflict, though Sao Tome and Principe has committed itself to transparency in the oil sector. The development of a revenue management law and broad public consultations to determine national development priorities are seen as important steps toward that goal. Sao Tome and Principe has strengthened its relationship with the United States, which has a growing stake in the country's potential oil wealth. Nigeria wields increasing influence over the political class.

The country's poor island economy has been largely dependent on cocoa since independence in 1975, and the majority of the population is engaged in subsistence agriculture and fishing. The country benefited from \$200 million in debt relief in December 2000 under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) program and received additional relief in 2006. In August 2005, the International Monetary Fund approved a three-year, \$4.3 million Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility arrangement.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Sao Tome and Principe is an electoral democracy. Presidential and legislative elections in 1991 gave citizens their first chance to elect their leaders in a free and transparent contest. Presidential and legislative elections held in 2006 were deemed credible, though the legislative polls were disrupted by protesters in a number of districts and had to be rerun. The president is elected for a five-year term and can serve up to two consecutive terms. Members of the unicameral, 55-seat National Assembly are elected by popular vote to four-year terms. The prime minister is chosen by the National Assembly and approved by the president.

Four party blocks currently hold seats in the legislature, and a number of other parties exist and compete for elected office. Smaller parties often join forces with larger parties to form coalitions. All parties operate freely.

The country's potential oil wealth has fueled growing corruption among members of the ruling elite. In 2005, the legislatures of Nigeria and Sao Tome and Principe agreed to form a joint parliamentary oversight committee to monitor the JDZ, and Sao Tome and Principe's attorney general requested cooperation from Nigeria in his investigation of oil exploration licenses that year. Sao Tome and Principe's foreign minister was forced to resign in January 2006 following allegations that he had misappropriated approximately \$500,000 in aid from Morocco. The country was not ranked in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is protected by the constitution and respected in practice. While the state controls a local press agency and the only radio and television stations, no law forbids independent broadcasting. Opposition parties receive free airtime, and newsletters and pamphlets criticizing the government circulate freely.

Freedom of religion is respected within this predominantly Roman Catholic coun-

try. The government does not restrict academic freedom. Education is compulsory through the sixth grade and tuition free to the age of 15 or sixth grade, though rural students often stop attending school after fourth grade. Primary school enrollment stands at approximately 74 percent.

Freedom of assembly and association are respected. Citizens have the constitutional right to gather and demonstrate with an advance notice of two days to the government. Workers' rights to organize, strike, and bargain collectively are guaranteed and respected.

The judiciary is independent, though occasionally subject to manipulation. The Supreme Court has ruled in the past against both the government and the president. The court system is understaffed, inadequately funded, and plagued by long delays. Prison conditions are harsh.

There is societal discrimination against homosexuals. Persons with HIV/AIDS have been rejected by the communities in which they lived and shunned by their families, though testing is free and antiretroviral drugs are available.

The constitution provides for equal rights for men and women, but women encounter significant discrimination in all sectors, including education and employment. Several women have been appointed to cabinet positions, including that of prime minister. Domestic violence against women is reportedly common and rarely prosecuted. Women are often disadvantaged because of their reluctance to take disputes outside their families or a lack of knowledge about their rights. Abortion is prohibited.

Saudi Arabia

Population: 24,100,000

Capital: Riyadh

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview: Saudi Arabia continued incremental reforms in 2006. King Abdullah resolved succession questions by establishing a committee known as the Allegiance Institution, composed of the male descendants of King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, to elect future kings through majority vote. Following the previous year's judicial reform, the government created security, family, traffic, and commercial courts. It also established a supreme court in Riyadh and an appeals court in each of the 13 provinces. Faced with increased international pressure over its educational system, the kingdom also

worked to revise school curriculums. Separately, the composition of the country's partially elected municipal councils was finalized in December 2005, after eight months of delays.

Since its unification in 1932 by King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, Saudi Arabia has been controlled by the al-Saud family, and the current king, Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud, is the sixth in the ruling dynasty. The Saudi monarchy rules in accordance with a conservative school of Sunni Islam. In the early 1990s, Saudi Arabia embarked on a limited program of political reform, introducing an appointed Consultative Council, or Majlis al-Shura. However, this step did not lead to any substantial shift in political power. In 1995, King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud suffered a stroke, and in 1997, Abdullah, then crown prince, took control of most decision making.

Saudi Arabia has been under intense scrutiny from the international community since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the United States—15 of the 19 airline hijackers in the attacks were Saudi citizens, and Osama bin Laden, leader of the terrorist group al-Qaeda, is from a wealthy Saudi family of Yemeni descent. The Saudi government has taken steps to stem the flow of financial support to terrorist groups, implementing new rules against money laundering and more closely monitoring charitable contributions and organizations suspected of financing terrorist operations in Saudi Arabia and abroad.

Terrorist groups that had posed a threat to Saudi Arabia for a decade escalated their attacks in 2003 in an effort to destabilize the autocratic monarchy. These assaults continued through 2004, culminating in an attack, on residential compounds in Khobar, where mostly foreign oil workers lived, that killed 22 people. The government subsequently increased its counterterrorism efforts, killing dozens of suspects, detaining hundreds of others, and claiming to have destroyed five of six major terrorist networks operating in the kingdom. Though peaceful compared with 2003 and 2004, Saudi Arabia experienced some unrest in 2005, with clashes between security forces and terrorist suspects breaking out in the spring.

The formal transition of power from King Fahd, who died in August 2005, to King Abdullah led to increased discussions of political reform. Prince Talal bin Abdul Aziz, a former finance minister and a half-brother of Abdullah's, called for political reform and a constitution in Saudi Arabia. Talal also said that the current Majlis al-Shura should be given additional powers and be turned into a "quasi-legislative" council. These comments reflected growing support for similar proposals within the royal family and more broadly in Saudi society.

Saudi Arabia organized elections for municipal councils in the first half of 2005, giving Saudi men a limited opportunity to select some of their leaders at the local level. Women were completely excluded from the political process. The eligible electorate consisted of less than 20 percent of the population: male citizens who were at least 21 years old, not serving in the military, and resident in their electoral district for at least 12 months. Half of the council seats were open for election, and the other half were appointed by the monarchy. Officials in the Municipal and Rural Affairs Ministry and the Interior Ministry screened candidates, and all results were subject to final approval by the government. Candidates supported by conservative Muslim scholars triumphed in the large cities of Riyadh and Jeddah, and minority Shiite Muslim voters participated in large numbers, seizing the opportunity to

voice their opinion. In December 2005, the final composition of the 178 municipal councils was announced.

In a major step forward for the kingdom, King Abdullah in October 2006 announced a formal protocol to be used for determining future succession. Under the plan, a committee known as the Allegiance Institution, composed of the sons (or grandsons in the event of their deaths) of the founding King Abdul Aziz, would be established. It would be chaired by the eldest member. The committee would make decisions on the succession by a majority vote using secret ballots and would require a quorum of two-thirds of the members. The arrangement would be added to the Basic Law but would not apply until after the current crown prince, Sultan bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud, became king. The new committee would also have the authority to deem a king or crown prince medically unfit to rule, based on the advice of an experts' panel.

Saudi Arabia has the largest proven oil reserves in the world. The country's oil resources and importance to the global economy are key factors affecting its external relations, and the al-Saud dynasty uses its unmatched wealth to shape and control internal politics. However, the government's dominance of the economy, endemic corruption, and financial mismanagement have led to mounting economic problems, including a decline in real gross domestic product (GDP) per person over the last decade. Unemployment is estimated at about 25 percent, and a growing youth population is making economic conditions even more difficult by adding to pressure on the Saudi government to create new jobs. The most recent census found that 59.4 percent of the Saudi population is between the ages of 15 and 64, and 38.2 percent is under the age of 15. The Saudi economy, buoyed by high oil prices, is expected to maintain 5.4 percent growth for 2006. Saudi Arabia joined the World Trade Organization in December 2005.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Saudi Arabia is not an electoral democracy. The country's 1992 basic law declares that the Koran and the Sunna (the guidance set by the deeds and sayings of the prophet Muhammad) are the country's constitution. A 120-member Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council) is appointed by the monarch for four-year terms. This council has limited powers and does not affect decision making or power structures in a meaningful way. The Council of Ministers, an executive body appointed by the king, passes legislation that becomes law once ratified by royal decree. The monarchy has a tradition of consulting with select members of Saudi society, but this process is not equally open to all citizens.

Saudi Arabia does not have political parties, and the only semblance of organized political opposition exists outside of the country, with many Saudi opposition activists based in London. The al-Saud dynasty dominates and controls political life in the kingdom.

Corruption is a significant problem, with foreign companies reporting that they often pay bribes to middlemen and government officials to secure business deals. Saudi Arabia was ranked 70 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government tightly controls content in domestic media outlets but is unable to do much about satellite television coverage, with Arab regional satellite chan-

nels growing in popularity. Government authorities have banned journalists and editors who publish articles deemed offensive to the country's powerful religious establishment or the ruling authorities. The regime has taken steps to limit the impact of new media. The government has blocked access to some internet websites deemed too offensive or sensitive.

Religious freedom does not exist in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam and home to the faith's two holiest cities—Mecca and Medina. Islam is Saudi Arabia's official religion, and all Saudis are required by law to be Muslims. The government prohibits the public practice of any religions other than Islam and restricts the religious practices of both the Shiite and Sufi Muslim minority sects. Although the government recognizes the right of non-Muslims to worship in private, it does not always respect this right in practice.

Academic freedom is restricted in Saudi Arabia, and informers monitor classrooms for compliance with limits on curriculums, such as a ban on teaching Western philosophy and religions other than Islam. In 2004, the government began efforts to reform school curriculums by deleting disparaging references to non-Muslims in textbooks. However, in February 2005, Abdullah bin Saleh al-Obaid, a religious conservative, was appointed to the prestigious post of education minister, replacing a reformer who had been accused of secularism. In January 2006, al-Obaid announced the formation of a committee of experts to make fresh curriculum revisions, including syllabus reform and changes to rote learning. A Saudi foundation proceeded with plans to launch King Faisal University in 2007, to help reform the kingdom's much-criticized higher education system. In March 2006, the Riyadh International Book Fair included a Bible for the first time.

Saudis do not enjoy freedoms of association and assembly. The government frequently arrests and detains political activists who stage demonstrations or engage in other civic advocacy. In 2003, the government approved the establishment of the National Human Rights Association (NHRA), a semiofficial organization charged with reviewing allegations of human rights violations and monitoring the country's compliance with international human rights agreements. Although the NHRA reported in June 2005 that it had received about 2,000 human rights complaints, it has reportedly taken little action.

In 2005, the government approved a new labor law aimed at bringing Saudi law into line with international standards as the country prepared to join the World Trade Organization. The law extended protections to previously unregulated categories of workers, set end-of-service benefits, established clear terms for terminating employment, and required large companies to provide nurseries to help working mothers. It also banned child labor and set provisions aimed at resolving labor disputes. In addition, the new law sought to advance the goal of the "Saudization" of the country's workforce by stipulating that Saudis must make up at least 75 percent of a company's employees. Finally, the law stated that women are permitted to work in "all sectors compatible with their nature."

The judiciary lacks independence from the monarchy. In May 2006, the Justice Ministry announced the establishment of specialized courts. State security courts, as well as family, traffic, and commercial courts are to be set up in Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam. These new courts stem from judicial reforms implemented in 2005. As part of the plan, a supreme court will be created in Riyadh, with appeals courts in

each of the kingdom's 13 regions. In 2001, the Council of Ministers approved a 225-article penal code that bans torture. However, allegations of torture by police and prison officials are frequent, and access to prisoners by independent human rights and legal organizations is strictly limited. In July 2006, King Abdullah declared amnesty for any militants who surrendered to security forces after participating in radical groups.

Although racial discrimination is illegal, substantial prejudice against ethnic, religious, and national minorities prevails. Roughly two million Shiites live in Saudi Arabia, representing 10 to 15 percent of the population. Shiites are underrepresented in major government positions—no Shiite has served as a minister or member of the royal cabinet. The country's estimated six million foreign workers from Asia and Africa are subject to formal and informal discrimination and have difficulty using the justice system.

Saudis have the right to own property and establish private businesses, but much private-enterprise activity is connected with members of the ruling family, the government, or other elite families. Although Saudi Arabia first joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1993, its slow process of privatization and economic reform prevented it from becoming a member of the subsequent World Trade Organization (WTO) for several years. However, at the end of 2005, Saudi Arabia was admitted to the WTO.

Women are not treated as equal members of society, and many laws discriminate against them. They may not legally drive cars and their use of public facilities is restricted when men are present. By law and custom, women cannot travel within or outside of the country without a male relative. According to interpretations of law in Saudi Arabia, daughters receive half the inheritance awarded to their brothers. The testimony of one man is equal to that of two women in Islamic law courts. Unlike Saudi men, Saudi women who marry non-Saudis are not permitted to pass their nationality on to their children, and their spouses cannot receive Saudi nationality. Saudi women are not permitted to serve as lawyers, and women seeking access to the courts must work with a male. The Committee to Prevent Vice and Promote Virtue, a semiautonomous religious police force commonly known as the *mutawa'een*, enforces a strict policy of segregation between men and women and often uses physical punishment to ensure that women meet conservative standards of dress in public.

The government did not allow women to participate in the municipal elections that took place in early 2005. Prince Mansour bin Miteb bin Abdul Aziz, head of the elections committee, announced in advance of the elections that the country did not have sufficient time to prepare for both women and men to vote, indicating that Saudi Arabia would require separate polling stations run by female election judges before it allowed women to participate politically.

Education and economic rights for Saudi women have improved. Girls were not permitted to attend school until 1964, but now more than half of the country's university students are female. In May 2004, women won the right to hold commercial licenses, which opened the door for greater economic participation. In addition, women have generally become more visible in society. In 2005, Saudi state television began using women as newscasters, and two women became the first females elected to Jeddah's chamber of commerce, a small step forward for women's leadership in business.

Senegal

Population: 11,900,000

Capital: Dakar

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F

Overview: President Adoulaye Wade in early 2006 succeeded in postponing that year's legislative elections to coincide with the 2007 presidential election. The move was seen as a bid to increase his chances of retaining power in the face of a growing challenge from former prime minister Idrissa Seek and a new coalition of opposition parties. In August, fighting erupted between separatist groups and government forces in the southern Casamance region, reversing progress achieved after a 2004 peace treaty. Meanwhile, the Senegalese high court finally agreed to try former Chadian president Hissene Habre for alleged crimes against humanity after the African Union decided that he could not be tried anywhere else.

Since independence from France in 1960, Senegal has avoided military or harsh authoritarian rule and has never suffered a successful coup d'etat. President Leopold Senghor, an acclaimed poet and noted academic in France, exercised de facto one-party rule through the Socialist Party (PS) for nearly two decades after independence. Most political restrictions were lifted after 1981. Abdou Diouf of the PS succeeded Senghor that year and won large victories in unfair elections in 1988 and 1993.

Abdoulaye Wade's victory in the 2000 presidential poll—his fifth attempt to win the presidency—ended four decades of rule by the PS. Wade, of the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS), captured 59.5 percent of the runoff vote, against 41.5 percent for Diouf. The election was judged free and fair by international observers.

The people of Senegal adopted a new constitution by an overwhelming majority in January 2001, reducing presidential terms from seven to five years, setting the maximum number of terms at two, and giving women the right to own land for the first time. Wade dissolved the National Assembly, which had been dominated by the PS, and elections were held in April. A coalition led by Wade won 89 of the 120 seats, followed by the PS with 10; smaller parties captured the remainder of the seats.

In 2004, Wade dismissed Idrissa Seek as prime minister on suspicion that he was trying to challenge the president's leadership of the PDS. The National Assembly voted in August 2005 to force Seek to face embezzlement charges before the

High Court of Justice, reserved for criminal allegations against government officials; it would be the first time in more than four decades that a case was filed in the court. Opposition leaders criticized the National Assembly's ruling and tried—unsuccessfully—to have the vote rescinded. The government charged that Seek misappropriated funds designated for public works projects and threatened national security; he was sent to prison to await trial. However, in January 2006 an investigative panel for the High Court ordered Seek to be released from prison after the charges of threatening national security were dropped. He still faced charges of embezzlement and misuse of government funds.

The prosecution of Seek was widely considered to be politically motivated, since many viewed him as Wade's most formidable rival. In April 2006, Seek formally announced his candidacy for the presidency in the 2007 election. Later that month, he orchestrated the formation of a new opposition coalition, the Coalition for Popular Change (CPA), which included the PS as well as the Alliance of Forces for Progress (AFP). Wade claimed that Seek's pending embezzlement charges made him ineligible to run for president.

Wade has recently been criticized for an overbearing leadership style, a penchant for making ad hoc decisions, and for pushing controversial—and sometimes unpopular—policies through the National Assembly to solidify his rule. These practices intensified in 2006 as opposition grew and his chances in the 2007 election seemed to dwindle. Early in the year, the National Assembly approved Wade's proposal to postpone legislative elections from April 2006 to 2007, ostensibly to cut costs by holding the presidential and legislative polls at the same time. The opposition claimed that the delay was unconstitutional and served only to give the ruling PDS more time to rectify disagreements within its ranks. The Constitutional Court, however, sided with the government and allowed the postponement. In March, the government also adopted a bill proposed by Wade to amend the constitution and add an upper house to the unicameral legislature. The measure appeared likely to pass with the support of Wade's party. Finally, soon after the decision came to postpone the legislative elections, PDS officials offered a draft law to eliminate the second round of the presidential election, supposedly to reduce costs and curb a prolonged election process. This had yet to be addressed in the National Assembly at year's end.

Preliminary peace accords between the government and the separatist Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) were signed in 2001. The geographic isolation of Casamance, which is largely separated from the rest of Senegal by The Gambia, had contributed to a feeling of marginalization that sparked the conflict in 1982. Ethnically, the people of Casamance identify more with their southern neighbors in Guinea-Bissau than with the northern Senegalese. A subsequent peace accord was signed in December 2004. A breakaway faction of the MFDC, led by Salif Sadio, rejected the peace agreement, and fighting erupted again in March 2006. The violence initially took the form of clashes between the splinter faction and the military of Guinea-Bissau in the extreme south of the Casamance region. In August, conflict between the two rebel factions gave way to hostilities between Sadio's fighters and the Senegalese military. However, civilians were not targeted during the fighting, which mainly consisted of attacks on military bases. The violence nevertheless displaced thousands of people, some of whom fled to The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau.

Senegal's economy has enjoyed modest growth since the mid-1990s. In June 2005, the Group of 8 (G8) annulled Senegal's external debt. Senegal became a member of a contact group between African countries and members of the G8, partly to help increase African domestic and foreign trade. However, Senegal continues to suffer from uneven and problematic infrastructure systems. In 2006, residents experienced frequent blackouts due to inefficiencies at the state-owned electricity utility Senelec, and city dwellers faced a number of breakdowns in garbage collection due to a lack of resources. Separately, Senegal has become a major port for illegal migration to Europe, with small boats setting off for Spain's Canary Islands. Between January and August 2006, more than 20,000 people arrived in the Canaries on these boats. The journey is not an easy one, and the Spanish Red Cross estimated that for the 20,000 who arrived safely, more than 1,000 drowned at sea. By the end of the year, Senegal had signed an agreement with Spain allowing both countries to patrol the coast of Senegal to curb illegal migration.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Senegal is an electoral democracy. Changes to the 1992 Electoral Code lowered the voting age to 18, introduced secret ballots, and created a nominally fairer electoral framework. The National Observatory of Elections, which was created in 1997, performed credibly in overseeing all subsequent legislative and presidential polls. The president is elected by popular vote every five years, and incumbent Wade is up for reelection in 2007. The president appoints the prime minister. Elections for the 120-seat, unicameral National Assembly are held every five years; originally scheduled for April 2006, they have been postponed to coincide with the presidential election in 2007.

There are more than 75 legally registered political parties in Senegal. Major parties include the ruling PDS, the PS, the AFP, the Union for Democratic Renewal (URD), and the National Democratic Rally (RND). In 2006, the PS and the AFP, in cooperation with former prime minister Seek and a few other parties, formed the Coalition for Popular Change (CPA) to present a united front in the upcoming 2007 presidential and legislative elections.

Although the government has initiated reforms to strengthen the rule of law and improve transparency, corruption remains a problem. Wade orchestrated two separate cabinet reshuffles in February and March 2006, the latest in a number of such changes during his presidency. Frequent cabinet changes could lead to inefficiency in governance and have caused concern that officials may not be held accountable for their decisions. Nevertheless, Senegal has a reputation for a transparent government and limited economic corruption when compared to other countries in the region. It was ranked 70 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is generally respected, and members of the independent media are often highly critical of the government and political parties. There are about 20 independent radio stations, some of which broadcast in rural areas. More than a dozen independent newspapers and three government-affiliated newspapers are available. The state owns the only national television station. Access to the internet is not restricted.

The government does not carry out formal censorship, but journalists practice

some self-censorship because of criminal laws against "discrediting the state" and disseminating "false news," which Wade has promised to repeal. A national security provision, Article 80, criminalizes any "maneuver or act that might compromise public security or cause serious political disturbance." Anyone charged under the law faces mandatory detention. In February 2006, the publication director of the Dakar-based private newspaper *L'Office* was convicted of defaming a local businessman. Since defamation continues to be a criminal offense, the journalist is currently serving a six-month prison sentence.

Religious freedom in Senegal is respected, and the government has even provided hundreds of free plane tickets to Senegalese Muslims and Christians undertaking pilgrimages to holy sites overseas. Rivalries between the country's Sufi Muslim brotherhoods have been known to erupt into violence, though this has happened infrequently in recent years. Many of the Sufi leaders hold great sway over the 90 percent Muslim population, and close association with them can significantly increase a political candidate's chances of victory.

Academic freedom is guaranteed and respected. Surprisingly, the Casamance region, known for its separatist violence, has the highest proportion of children in school in the country. A 2002 law permits two hours of religious education—both Islamic and Christian—per week in public schools, though students are not required to participate. The law was intended to attract students to public rather than private, Koranic schools that do not offer alternative nonreligious teachings.

Freedom of association and assembly are guaranteed, but authorities have sometimes limited these rights in practice. In late December 2005, a student protest in Dakar criticizing police violence against high school students in the Casamance region turned violent when demonstrators clashed with security personnel. Similar student-led protests took place throughout the country, though no others resulted in violence. In 2005, the leader of a minor opposition party was arrested and charged with threatening the state after he encouraged people to lead street demonstrations criticizing Wade and calling for his resignation.

Human rights groups and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely in Senegal. Although workers' rights to organize, bargain collectively, and strike are legally protected for all except security employees, the Labor Code requires the president's approval for the initial formation of a trade union. Civil-service employees intending to strike are required to notify the government at least a month in advance, and private sector strikes require at least three days' notice. However, throughout 2006, union representatives in a number of different industries were able to bargain and strike with little to no obstruction from the authorities. Most workers are employed in the informal business and agricultural sectors. Nearly all of the country's small industrial workforce is unionized, and workers are a potent political force.

Poor pay and lack of tenure protections create conditions for external influence on a judiciary that is, by statute, independent. High-profile cases often attract considerable interference from political and economic elites, as appeared to be the situation in the case against former prime minister Seek. Uncharged detainees are incarcerated without legal counsel far beyond the lengthy periods already permitted by law. Prison conditions are poor. In December 2004, the National Assembly

voted to abolish the death penalty; Senegal had not carried out any executions for four decades.

In 2000, a Senegalese court charged former Chadian president Hissene Habre, who has been living in exile in Senegal since 1990, with torture and crimes against humanity. However, the country's highest court ruled that he could not stand trial for crimes committed outside of Senegal. A number of Habre's alleged victims, some of whom were living in Belgium at the time, indicted him in courts in Belgium. In September 2005, a Belgian judge issued an international arrest warrant for Habre for crimes against humanity and torture. In early 2006, a Senegalese court ruled again that it was incapable of trying the case and turned it over to the African Union (AU), but the AU mandated that the prosecution take place in Senegal. In November 2006, the high court of Senegal acquiesced, noting that the laws would be revised to allow the trial. The court also established a commission to prepare for the proceedings and appealed to the international community for financial support.

In a bid to combat discrimination against individuals with disabilities, Wade in 2005 issued a decree requiring that 15 percent of new civil-service positions be reserved for disabled workers. Blatant discrimination against those with HIV/AIDS is no longer widespread thanks to disease-awareness campaigns, and the government now provides free antiretroviral drugs to patients. Nonetheless, HIV-positive people still face a lingering social stigma. Homosexuals face widespread discrimination but are generally not the targets of violence.

Women's constitutional rights are often not honored, especially in rural areas, and women enjoy fewer opportunities than men for education and formal employment. Despite governmental campaigns, domestic violence against women is reportedly common, and although the law prohibits rape, it does not include spousal rape. Only two sexual harassment cases have been brought in the courts since 1995, and men remain the legal heads of households. Many elements of Sharia (Islamic law) and local customary law, particularly those regarding inheritance and marital relations, discriminate against women. Although Senegal banned female genital mutilation in 1999, it is still practiced among some ethnic groups. The government and NGOs have been working to educate the population about the health risks of the practice. In 2005, Senegal adopted a law on human trafficking that provides penalties of up to 30 years in prison.

Serbia

Population: 9,400,000

Capital: Belgrade

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Note: The ratings through 2002 are for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, of which Serbia was a part, and those from 2003 through 2005 are for the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,6NF	6,6NF	5,5PF	4,4PF	3,3PF	3,2F	3,2F	3,2F	3,2F	3,2F

Overview: The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro dissolved when Montenegro withdrew in June 2006, making Serbia an independent state. During the year, the European Union and the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) continued to call on Serbia to arrest former Bosnian Serb general Ratko Mladic, who was wanted on war crimes charges. The EU broke off Stabilization and Association Agreement talks with Serbia in May due to the country's failure to apprehend the fugitive. Serbia also faced ongoing negotiations over the future status of Kosovo, and voters in October approved a new constitution that reasserted the country's claim to the province.

After centuries of Ottoman rule, Serbia was recognized as an independent state by the Congress of Berlin in 1878. It formed the core of the newly proclaimed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (renamed Yugoslavia in 1929) after World War I, and in 1945, Serbia became a republic in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia under the Communist rule of Josip Broz Tito. Within the boundaries of the Serbian republic as drawn at that time were two autonomous provinces: the largely Albanian-populated Kosovo province in the south, and Vojvodina, with a significant Hungarian minority, in the north.

In the years after Tito's death in 1980, as Yugoslavia began experiencing internal strains, Slobodan Milosevic rose to power in the League of Communists of Serbia (renamed the Socialist Party of Serbia, or SPS, in 1990). Following the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991, the former Yugoslav republics of Serbia and Montenegro in April 1992 jointly proclaimed the formation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). During the 1991-1995 wars that accompanied the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbia under Milosevic was extensively involved in the fighting, both in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Croatia. Milosevic and the SPS succeeded in ruling Serbia

throughout the 1990s by controlling the country's security forces, financial and monetary institutions, and state-owned media.

In 1998-1999, an ethnic Albanian insurgency in Serbia's Kosovo province provoked increasingly violent reprisals by FRY forces against the guerrillas and the Albanian civilian population. In March 1999, NATO launched a 78-day bombing campaign against the FRY to force the withdrawal of Yugoslav and Serbian military and paramilitary forces from the province. Since June 1999, a NATO-led force has occupied Kosovo, and the United Nations has overseen the province's government.

The end for Milosevic's regime came on October 5, 2000, when his attempt to steal the September Yugoslav presidential election from opposition candidate Vojislav Kostunica drew hundreds of thousands of people to Belgrade in protest. The Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS), a coalition of 18 political parties and an independent trade union, took power following Serbian parliamentary elections in December 2000. Zoran Djindjic of the Democratic Party (DS), part of the DOS, became Serbia's prime minister. Among other reformist policies, he worked to cooperate with the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in its effort to prosecute war crimes from the 1991-1995 and 1998-1999 conflicts. However, on March 12, 2003, he was assassinated by a group of organized crime figures associated with Milosevic-era security structures. Meanwhile, the federation of the two republics of Serbia and Montenegro in the FRY proved largely dysfunctional, and a looser state union was formed in 2003, with each state guaranteed the option of an independence vote after three years.

The latest elections to the Serbian Parliament, in December 2003, stabilized the Serbian political situation somewhat by eliminating a number of small, relatively weak parties from the ruling coalition. While the nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) won the most seats, the parties considered to be reformist and democratic were able to form a coalition government to keep the Radicals from coming to power. The new Serbian government, formed in March 2004 after two months of wrangling, made Kostunica Serbia's new prime minister. The minority coalition was composed of his Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS); the liberal, reformist G-17 Plus party, led by the economists Miroljub Labus and Mladjan Dinkic; and the center-right Serbian Renewal Movement-New Serbia. The coalition had tacit support from Milosevic's former party, the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), but excluded the DS, with which the moderate nationalist Kostunica had clashed.

Following three unsuccessful attempts to hold presidential elections in 2002-2003, Serbia finally managed to elect a president in June 2004. Djindjic's successor as head of the DS, Boris Tadic, defeated Tomislav Nikolic of the SRS. In September 2004, municipal elections throughout Serbia confirmed the DS and the SRS as the republic's leading parties, although turnout was a meager 23 percent.

Serbia remains precariously divided between the 50-55 percent majority of the electorate that supports parties that overthrew Milosevic in 2000 and the 35-45 percent segment that supports either the SRS or the SPS. Despite its broader overall support, the anti-Milosevic bloc has been vulnerable due to internal divisions. In September 2005, Tadic's DS began a boycott of Parliament, removing itself from the scene just as issues that could be politically damaging, such as the future of Kosovo, cooperation with the ICTY, and the future of the state union with Montenegro were being addressed.

In May 2006, a majority of Montenegrin citizens voted in favor of independence, breaking its ties with the much larger Serbian republic. As a consequence, Montenegro and Serbia each became independent states.

Serbia continues to have considerable difficulties in its relations with the ICTY. In 2005, the Kostunica government's policy of facilitating "voluntary transfers" of indicted individuals to the ICTY was generally seen as successful in both satisfying the tribunal and preventing outbreaks of discontent among the country's nationalists. Six indictees are believed to remain at large in Serbia, including one of the most wanted individuals from the Bosnian conflict, former Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladic. The June 2005 Serbian television broadcast of a videotape showing a Serb paramilitary unit executing six bound Muslim prisoners during the Bosnian war shocked many Serbs, and public attitudes toward the ICTY improved somewhat. However, Milosevic's death on March 11, 2006, while on trial in The Hague, again raised questions among Serbian citizens as to the ICTY's ultimate impartiality. The failure to apprehend and extradite Mladic remains the major stumbling block in Serbia's quest for better relations with the European Union (EU) and the United States.

In November 2005, the EU approved the beginning of negotiations for a Stabilization and Association Agreement with Serbia and Montenegro, but in May 2006, the negotiations were broken off due to Belgrade's failure to apprehend and extradite Mladic. As a result of this setback, Labus, a deputy prime minister from the G-17 Plus party and one of the leading economic reformers in the Serbian government, submitted his resignation. Other cabinet members from G-17 Plus subsequently resigned in October, leaving Kostunica's coalition government in a precarious position.

In February 2006, UN-led negotiations aimed at determining Kosovo's future status began in Vienna. Throughout the year, it was widely expected that the talks would result in some form of independence for Kosovo, despite Serbian opposition. International officials agreed to postpone any announcement on the issue until after Serbian parliamentary elections scheduled for January 2007, primarily to avoid a nationalist backlash.

In October, Serbia's leading political parties agreed on the draft of a new constitution, which included a provision that reasserted Serbia's claim to Kosovo. The political forces that drove Milosevic from power had promised a new constitution for several years but had finally been forced to draft one after the disintegration of the union with Montenegro. The draft was endorsed by the main politicians representing the Hungarian and Muslim (Bosniak) ethnic minorities, as well as by representatives of the Serbian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish religious communities. Voting in a two-day referendum on October 28-29, Serbian citizens barely endorsed the new constitution, with just over 50 percent of the electorate turning out. Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority did not participate. Although critics found several flaws in the new charter, most observers believed that it was an improvement over the Milosevic-era constitution and the only document that was possible in Serbia's polarized political environment.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Serbia is an electoral democracy. The president of the republic, elected to a five-year term, plays a largely ceremonial role. The latest national parliamentary elections, held

in December 2003, were conducted freely and fairly, but independent watchdog groups have harshly criticized the organization and conduct of the October 2006 referendum on the new Serbian constitution. The Serbian National Assembly is a unicameral, 250-seat legislature, with deputies elected to four-year terms of office. The prime minister is elected by the assembly.

Numerous political parties exist and compete for power in elections. The main parties are Prime Minister Kostunica's DSS; the SRS, officially headed by Hague indictee Vojislav Seselj, but on a day-to-day basis led by Nikolic; President Tadic's DS; the G-17 Plus; and the SPS, the party of late Yugoslav president Milosevic. There is also a host of smaller parties, usually based on the charisma of a particular leader rather than any distinct ideological or philosophical orientation.

Corruption has decreased overall from the excesses of the Milosevic era, although the popular perception, probably the result of greater media openness toward the problem, is that corruption remains at very high levels. In April 2006, several government officials and businesspeople were arrested when investigators cracked down on the sale of public companies at below-market prices to private investors, allegedly masterminded by a so-called bankruptcy mafia. One of those arrested, the president of Serbia's commercial court, was the brother of the presiding judge in the trial of those accused of the assassination of former prime minister Djindjic; the judge in the Djindjic trial subsequently resigned. Serbia was ranked 90 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of the press has improved significantly since the Milosevic period, when the regime controlled state-owned media and some prominent members of the independent media were assassinated. In August 2005, the Serbian Parliament amended the broadcast law in a way that critics claimed increased the potential for government control over the media. The amendments postponed privatization of local broadcast media until 2008. At the same time, the changes allowed government-appointed members of the Broadcast Council to have six-year terms, while members appointed by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and journalists' professional organizations had only four-year terms. A major controversy regarding broadcasting licenses erupted in April 2006, when several media outlets that were considered favorites to win countrywide broadcasting licenses had their applications denied. While the extent to which political favoritism played a role in the allocation of permits remained unclear, journalists' organizations criticized the lack of transparency in the process.

Libel remains a criminal offense in Serbia, although it can be punished only by fines, not by prison sentences. Media advocacy groups continue to call for libel to be decriminalized. In 2004, the Serbian National Assembly passed the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance, although the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has stated that improvements still need to be made to the law as it is now written. There were no reports of the government restricting access to the internet, although in the past there have been allegations that the government was selectively monitoring e-mail correspondence.

According to the constitution, all citizens are guaranteed freedom of religious belief. However, with ethnic and religious identities closely intertwined in the region, increases in interethnic tension often take the form of religious intolerance.

The Serbian Parliament adopted a new Law on Churches and Religious Communities in April 2006. Although the law was intended to improve the independence and legal standing of religious communities in the aftermath of Communist rule, some critics have claimed that the legislation privileges the Serbian Orthodox Church. In May, the Serbian Parliament approved legislation on returning property that had been confiscated from religious communities without compensation during the Communist period. Properties belonging to seven traditionally recognized religious communities in Serbia are tax-exempt, but the dozens of other religious groups operating in Serbia are required to pay taxes on their properties. There were no reports that the government attempted to restrict academic freedom during the year.

Citizens enjoy freedom of association and assembly. Foreign and domestic NGOs have the freedom to pursue their activities. Serbia's current laws and constitution allow workers to form or join unions, engage in collective bargaining, and guarantees workers the right to strike for better working conditions. There were no reports that the government failed to respect these rights during the current reporting period.

Legal and judicial reform is under way, although progress has been slow because of the complicated political situation in the country. In May 2006, the Serbian parliament overwhelmingly approved a new "National Strategy for Reform of the Judiciary," which was intended to rationalize the court system and improve the training of judges and prosecutors. Corruption in the courts is perceived to be widespread. The judicial system is still plagued by a large backlog of cases, underpaid judges and state prosecutors, and an excess of judges left over from the Milosevic era. There are long delays in filing formal charges against suspects. Moreover, the authority and independence of the judicial system continue to suffer as a result of the failure of legislative institutions to heed judicial rulings. A new criminal code was adopted by the Parliament in May. An important provision of the new code shifts responsibility for carrying out criminal investigations from investigative judges to public prosecutors. While prison conditions are generally considered to meet international standards, there were riots and protests in various prisons in 2006, with inmates demanding better conditions.

Reform of the military and security services remains necessary given the close ties between Milosevic-era security officials, networks supporting fugitive war crimes suspects, extreme nationalist forces, and some organized crime groups. One of Serbia's official foreign policy goals is to join NATO's Partnership for Peace program, and ultimately NATO itself.

Cultural and ethnic minorities have their own political parties, access to media in their mother tongues, and other types of associations. Nevertheless, the numbers of ethnic minorities participating in government do not represent their percentages in the population. There are frequent complaints of unfair treatment and police harassment of the Romany (Gypsy) community, and during 2006, expressions of racism were on display at various soccer matches. During March 2004 attacks against Serbs in Kosovo, retaliating mobs attacked mosques in Belgrade and Nis; however, senior government and political leaders quickly condemned the violence. In September 2005, the Kostunica government formed a National Minorities Council tasked with protecting religious, linguistic, and other features of ethnic minorities living in Serbia.

Although women are legally entitled to equal pay for equal work, traditional attitudes prevalent throughout the Balkans often limit women's roles in the economy. In 2004, for instance, 55 percent of men were employed, but only 37 percent of working-age women were, and women in general are underrepresented in higher levels of government. Although the law states that at least 30 percent of an electoral list has to be made up of women, there are currently only 27 women in the 250-seat Serbian Parliament. In October 2005, the Serbian government set up a Council for Gender Equality to work on issues of importance to women. Domestic violence remains a serious problem. In 2005, the Serbian Parliament passed a Law on the Family, which criminalizes "behavior by one of the family members that endangers the bodily integrity, mental health or peace of another family member," although the law's implementation remains difficult. Some towns in southern Serbia have become an important part of the network trafficking women from the former Soviet Union to Western Europe for the purpose of forced prostitution.

↓ Seychelles

Population: 100,000

Capital: Victoria

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Trend Arrow: Seychelles received a downward trend arrow because of a crackdown on the opposition, including the adoption of a bill widely perceived as an effort to forestall an opposition party's plans to establish its own radio station.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview: In July 2006 elections, President James Michel of the ruling Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF) party defeated Wavel Ramkalawan, leader of the opposition Seychelles National Party (SNP) party. Two months later, protesters and security forces clashed after passage of a bill restricting private radio-station ownership. The bill was widely perceived as an effort to forestall SNP plans to establish its own radio station.

The Seychelles, an archipelago of some 115 islands in the western Indian Ocean, was colonized by the French but fell under British control in 1814. The country gained independence as a member of the Commonwealth in 1976. Seychelles functioned as a multiparty democracy until 1977, when then-prime minister France-

Albert Rene seized power and ousted President James Mancham. Mancham and other opposition leaders operated parties and human rights groups in exile after Rene made his Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF) the sole legal party. Rene and his party exerted control over government jobs, contracts, and resources, and won one-party "show" elections in 1979, 1984, and 1989. By 1992, however, the SPPF had passed a constitutional amendment to legalize opposition parties, and many exiled leaders returned to participate in a constitutional commission and multiparty elections.

Rene won a legitimate electoral mandate in the country's first multiparty elections in 1993. The 1998 polls were accepted as generally legitimate by opposition parties, which had waged a vigorous campaign. The Seychelles National Party (SNP), led by Wavel Ramkalawan, an Anglican priest, emerged as the strongest opposition group by espousing economic liberalization, which Rene had resisted.

The political dominance of Rene and the SPPF was further shaken in the August 2001 presidential election, when Rene won a narrow victory that engendered widespread complaints of fraud from the opposition. An official observer delegation from the Commonwealth concluded that the election was peaceful but not entirely free and fair. In October 2002, Rene dissolved the Parliament and called for early legislative elections. The SPPF won the balloting, but the SNP made significant gains, taking 43 percent of the vote.

Given his age and the length of time he had served as president, Rene's resignation in 2004 was not unexpected. The SPPF remained the dominant political party. Rene was replaced as president by Vice President James Michel, who had served in various senior-level government positions prior to his appointment as vice president in 1996.

The country was badly affected by the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which damaged public infrastructure and facilities. The Seychelles government assessed damage from the tsunami at about \$30 million. Tourism and fisheries, both vital to the economy, also suffered. Tourism produced 70 percent of the country's hard currency and employed approximately 30 percent of the labor force. Seychelles continued to grapple with the effects of the disaster in 2005.

Michel defeated Ramkalawan in the July 2006 presidential election, 54 percent to 46 percent. In early October, protesters and security forces clashed outside the Seychelles Parliament after lawmakers passed a bill that restricted private radio-station ownership, effectively ending the opposition's hopes of establishing its own radio station. Ramkalawan was among several people who were injured during the protests. The SNP's secretary general was also beaten and arrested.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Seychelles is an electoral democracy. The July 2006 presidential election was generally viewed as having met basic international norms of legitimacy. However, the ruling SPPF party's control over state resources and most media gives its candidates significant advantages in the polls.

The current constitution was drafted in 1993 by an elected constitutional commission. The president and the National Assembly are elected by universal adult suffrage for five-year terms. The head of government is the president, who appoints the Council of Ministers. As amended in 1996, the constitution provides for a 34-

member, unicameral National Assembly, with 25 members elected directly and 9 allocated on a proportional basis to parties gaining at least 10 percent of the vote. Other amendments strengthened presidential powers. The opposition SNP claims that its sympathizers are harassed by police and victimized by job-related security investigations in the public sector. The probes are generally carried out by SPPF agents at the district level.

Seychelles became a one-party state following then-prime minister Rene's 1977 coup, but opposition parties were legalized in 1992. Rene remains chairman of the SPPF. The SNP and the Democratic Party have traditionally been two of the most important opposition parties.

Concerns about the extent of government corruption have focused on the lack of transparency in privatization and the allocation of government-owned land. Credible allegations have been made that government officials have sold passports illegally. Seychelles was ranked 63 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech has improved since one-party rule was abolished. Independent and pro-opposition publications have spoken out despite tough libel laws, although some self-censorship persists. There is one daily government newspaper, the *Nation*, and at least two other newspapers support or are published by the SPPF. The opposition weekly *Regar* has been sued repeatedly for libel under broad constitutional restrictions on free expression. In December 2004, the newspaper was heavily fined for ignoring a Supreme Court order barring it from publishing a letter by three judges. *Regar's* editor, who is also the secretary general of the SNP, was briefly detained following the October 2006 protest against Parliament's decision not to permit the establishment of an opposition radio station.

There is a lack of balanced presentation in the state media of national events and deliberations at the National Assembly. The board of directors of the officially multipartisan Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation includes only one opposition representative, although it does have several non-SPPF members. In January 2006, a leading journalist with known opposition sympathies was fired from the state-owned television station. High licensing fees have discouraged the development of privately owned broadcast media. There are no restrictions on internet usage.

The right of religious freedom is mandated in the constitution and exists in practice. Churches in this predominantly Roman Catholic nation have been strong voices for human rights and democratization, and they generally function without government interference.

The constitution explicitly endorses freedom of assembly and association. Private human rights-related organizations operate in the country along with other nongovernmental organizations. Public demonstrations are generally tolerated, although on occasion the government has impeded opposition party gatherings. The right to strike is formally protected by the 1993 Industrial Relations Act but is limited by several regulations. The SPPF-associated National Workers' Union no longer monopolizes union activity; two independent unions are now active.

The judiciary includes the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, a court of appeals, an industrial court, and magistrates' courts. Judges generally decide cases fairly but still face interference in cases involving major economic or political interests. There are no Seychellois judges, and the impartiality of the non-Seychellois

magistrates can be compromised by the fact that they are subject to contract renewal. Security forces have been accused of using excessive force, including torture and arbitrary detention, especially in attempting to curb crime.

Islanders of Creole extraction face de facto discrimination. Nearly all of the country's political and economic life is dominated by people of European and South Asian origin. Discrimination against foreign workers has been reported. The government does not restrict domestic travel but may deny passports for reasons of "national interest."

Women constitute 29.4 percent of the Parliament, one of the highest percentages in Africa, despite the lack of a quota system. In general, however, women are less likely than men to be literate, and they have fewer educational opportunities. While almost all adult females are classified as "economically active," most are engaged in subsistence agriculture. Domestic violence against women is reportedly widespread but is rarely prosecuted and only lightly punished. Inheritance laws do not discriminate against women.

Sierra Leone

Population: 5,700,000

Capital: Freetown

Political Rights: 4

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,6NF	3,5PF	3,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,4PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF

Overview: The ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) appeared likely to win the next presidential election in 2007, but a new party created by a former SLPP member, Charles Margai, worked in 2006 to threaten the certainty of that victory. At the end of 2005, the majority of the UN peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone was removed, leaving only a few contingents to protect continuing UN programs. With the UN forces all but gone, doubts prevailed about the ability of Sierra Leone's own security forces to maintain peace. In March 2006, former Liberian president Charles Taylor was extradited from Nigeria to the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone. He was set to be tried in The Hague due to security concerns raised by his presence in West Africa.

Founded by Britain in 1787 as a haven for liberated slaves, Sierra Leone became independent in 1961. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) launched a guerrilla campaign from neighboring Liberia in 1991 to end 23 years of increasingly corrupt

one-party rule by President Joseph Momoh. Power fell to Captain Valentine Strasser in 1992, when he and other junior officers attempted to confront Momoh about poor pay and working conditions at the front; Momoh fled the country. The Strasser regime hired South African soldiers from the security company Executive Outcomes to help win back key diamond-rich areas. In January 1996, Brigadier Julius Maada-Bio quietly deposed Strasser. Elections proceeded despite military and rebel intimidation, and voters elected Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, a former UN diplomat, as president.

In 1997, Major Johnny Paul Koroma toppled the Kabbah government, established the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), and invited the RUF to join the junta. Nigerian-led West African troops, backed by logistical and intelligence support from the British company Sandline, restored Kabbah to power in February 1998, but the country continued to be racked by war. A peace agreement in July 1999 led to the beginning of disarmament, but the process stopped in May 2000 with a return to hostilities and the taking of about 500 peacekeepers as hostages. British troops flew in to help, and disarmament resumed in May 2001.

In the May 2002 presidential poll, in which eight candidates competed, Kabbah was reelected with 70 percent of the vote, compared with 22 percent for Ernest Koroma of the All People's Congress (APC). The RUF candidate, Alimamy Pallo Bangura, lagged with barely 2 percent of the vote. Kabbah's Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) dominated parliamentary elections the same month, winning 83 of 112 available seats; only two other parties won seats.

In November 2000, the Parliament of Sierra Leone passed a law creating the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, intended to enable the country to move forward from years of war. To achieve this objective, in October 2004, the Commission presented its final report to President Kabbah in which it recommended, among other things, that the government reform the judicial system, intensify efforts to eradicate corruption, and prioritize the rights of Sierra Leone's women. Years after the end of the war, many Sierra Leoneans remained discouraged, complaining of corruption, poor infrastructure, and a lack of jobs. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said in 2005 that the critical issues of marginalization and exclusion that were the underlying causes of the civil war had not been addressed. The existing political parties had delivered little in the way of poverty reduction, primary infrastructure, and employment, leading many voters to welcome the January 2006 formation of a new party, the People's Movement for Democratic Change, by Charles Margai, a former SLPP member.

The UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone in 2004 had begun holding trials for those deemed primarily responsible for war crimes and human rights abuses committed during the civil war. As of April 2006, 13 people had been indicted, including 5 members of the RUF, 4 members of the AFRC, 3 members of the CDF, and Charles Taylor. Although 2 of the indicted RUF members have since died, the trials for the other 11 accused are currently being heard in the courts and rulings are expected in mid-2007. International observers have hailed the court's efforts to promote fair trials, protect witnesses, and make justice accessible to Sierra Leoneans. However, the exile of former Liberian president Charles Taylor in Nigeria and his absence from the court had—until 2006—undercut the court's ability to fulfill its mandate. Taylor was accused of 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his role in arm-

ing the RUF in exchange for diamonds. In March 2006, after a brief escape attempt, Nigeria finally turned Taylor over to the court upon the request of the newly elected Liberian president. Due to concerns that his presence in the region might spark further fighting, Taylor was transferred in June to The Hague, where he was set to be tried. He would serve the entirety of his prison sentence in Britain if convicted. Taylor was only the second head of state—after former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic—to face trial in an international court for crimes committed during his presidency.

Although Liberia and Sierra Leone were at peace in 2006, their fragile democracies were threatened by insecurity in neighboring Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. By December 31, 2005, the last troops of the 17,300-strong UN Mission in Sierra Leone, the world's largest peacekeeping mission, had been withdrawn. Only a small contingent of troops remained to guard the special court and a UN Integrated Office for Sierra Leone, set up to address issues of long-term stability. Many Sierra Leoneans expressed concern that with the UN mission all but gone, the government would be unable to maintain security. In late January 2006, the former spokesman for the RUF and two former RUF combatants were put on trial for allegedly plotting a coup. The Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG) had warned in 2004 that Sierra Leone risked sliding back into conflict if the international community did not stay committed—for 15 to 25 years—to restoring security and civil liberties.

Sierra Leone has vast diamond resources, but smuggling and war have turned it into one of the world's poorest countries, with only Niger ranking below it on the 2006 UN Human Development Index. A ban on rough-diamond imports from Sierra Leone does not include diamonds that carry certificates of origin from the government, which depends on the diamond trade as a main source of income. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2005 announced that Sierra Leone had shown significant economic recovery since the end of the civil war, especially in agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and services. However, Sierra Leone's economy continues to struggle with more than 70 percent unemployment. Jobless youths—particularly former combatants—make up a significant proportion of the total. They have received little aid from the government, and their future employment possibilities are slim. Sierra Leone is also highly dependent on foreign financial and technical support, with 60 percent of the annual budget coming from external donors.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Sierra Leone is an electoral democracy. Despite some logistical problems, the May 2002 presidential and parliamentary elections were considered the country's fairest since independence. However, President Kabbah and his SLPP enjoyed the advantage of incumbency and monopolized state resources for both elections. Sierra Leone has a 124-seat unicameral Parliament, with 112 seats chosen by popular vote and 12 filled by paramount chiefs chosen in separate elections. Parliamentary elections are held every five years. The president is elected by popular vote every five years and serves as both chief of state and head of government.

Dozens of political parties have been formed, but many revolve around a specific personality and have little popular following. The major political parties include the SLPP and the APC, although the APC in 2006 did not appear to have the support

necessary to seriously challenge the SLPP's hold on power in the next elections. Vice President Solomon Berewa has been groomed to succeed Kabbah as the head of the SLPP and potentially as president. However, relations between the two men have become tense, and Kabbah has even mentioned the possibility of seeking another term in office.

Former SLPP member Margai formed the People's Movement for Democratic Change in January 2006, offering the opposition a new vehicle for gathering public support. Although the SLPP still has a large following, particularly in the south and east of the country, many of the problems that kindled the civil war, like political marginalization, entrenched poverty, and a deficient or absent education system, have not been confronted. Margai has capitalized on the growing disappointment in the performance of the current government and endeavored to appeal to as wide a demographic as possible. These tactics, and in particular his influence among young Sierra Leoneans—an important voting block after the ravages of civil war—have served to steadily increase his chances in the 2007 elections.

Corruption is a major problem. The Parliament in 2000 established an anticorruption commission to address some of the underlying causes and prosecute the worst offenders; several cases have been brought before the courts. However, most of these cases have avoided top politicians, and the commission is generally beleaguered by political interference. The commission was also intended to assist many of the ministries in conducting internal audits and graft inspections, but the government did not allocate any funding for this function in the 2005-2006 budget. According to the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "endemic corruption" and "bad governance" were prime causes of the persistent civil war; there is little evidence that the pervasive fraud, graft, and clientelism of the conflict period has diminished. Sierra Leone was ranked 142 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and of the press is guaranteed, but the government at times restricts these rights. The environment for the press has improved significantly since the end of the war, and is possibly freer than it has ever been. Nonetheless, criminal libel laws are still used occasionally to jail journalists. Paul Kamara, the well-known editor and publisher of the independent newspaper *For Di People*, was sentenced in 2004 to two years in prison because of articles that linked the president to fraudulent activities in 1967. A judicial inquest in 2005 found that an attack in May of that year on editor Harry Yansaneh, who took over for Kamara at *For Di People*, contributed to his death from kidney failure two months later. After a magistrate ordered the arrest of a member of Parliament and her three children, who were allegedly responsible for the attack, the children were found to have fled to Britain to escape prosecution. The director of public prosecution in Sierra Leone ordered their extradition only in August 2006.

There are several government and private radio and television stations, and newspapers openly criticize the government and armed factions, focusing primarily on investigative stories of corruption. Dozens of newspapers are printed in Freetown, but most are of poor quality and often carry sensational or undocumented stories. In addition, all newspapers are published in English, while only 30 percent of the population is fluent in the language and close to 70 percent is illiterate. Internet access is not impeded.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed and respected in practice. Academic freedom is guaranteed.

The rights of freedom of assembly and association are guaranteed and generally respected in practice. However, early in 2006, Margai was arrested and accused of holding an illegal rally, since his political party had yet to be registered. He was released shortly thereafter and was not prosecuted. Several national and international nongovernmental organizations and civic groups, including human rights groups, operate openly and freely. Workers have the right to join independent trade unions of their choice. There is a legal framework for collective bargaining, and workers have the right to strike. Serious violations of core labor standards occur regularly in Sierra Leone. The minimum working age of 18 is rarely respected, particularly in the illegal markets of prostitution and domestic servitude. Children are also often found working in hazardous conditions in diamond mines.

The judiciary has demonstrated independence, and a number of trials have been free and fair. However, corruption and a lack of resources are impediments to the effectiveness of the judiciary. Arbitrary arrest without charge is common, and there are often lengthy pretrial detentions under harsh and sometimes life-threatening conditions.

Eight international judges sit on the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone. The body made history as the first international war crimes tribunal to seat UN-appointed judges alongside local judges in the country where the atrocities in question took place. Its goal was to deliver less expensive and more timely justice than earlier tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. Funding difficulties have been a key source of frustration and a potential impediment to the completion of the court's work. After former Liberian president Taylor, the highest-profile defendant before the court is the former leader of the progovernment Civil Defense Force (CDF), Sam Hinga Norman. The most senior members of the AFRC and RUF have escaped prosecution; the leader of the AFRC is in hiding, and Foday Sankoh and Sam Bockarie, the two principal leaders of the RUF, are now deceased.

Ethnic loyalty is an important factor in the government, armed forces, and business. Complaints of ethnic discrimination are common.

Sierra Leone once featured some of Africa's worst human rights conditions. Abduction, maiming, rape, forced conscription, and extrajudicial killing were commonplace. Although security has improved considerably, lack of equipment for security forces and poor infrastructure could hinder longer-term efforts to prevent unrest in the country, especially if demobilized combatants lack opportunities for employment.

Despite constitutionally guaranteed equal rights, women face extensive legal and de facto discrimination, as well as limited access to education and formal employment. Under customary law, Sierra Leonean women have legal status equal to that of a minor. Married women have fewer property rights than men, especially in rural areas, where customary law prevails. Abuse of women, including rape, sexual assault, and sexual slavery, were rampant during the war, and protection against these kinds of abuses is currently inadequate. Parliament passed legislation in 2004 providing penalties for human trafficking.

Singapore

Population: 4,500,000

Capital: Singapore

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF

Overview: The long rule of the People's Action Party (PAP) was perpetuated by the results of general elections held in early May 2006. The party retained the same number of seats in Parliament, although the opposition made a stronger showing than in past elections. While peaceful, the balloting reflected the extent to which opposition candidates remain disadvantaged. Freedom of the press and freedom of association were further compromised by the extension of regulations on foreign media in August and the government's heavy-handed approach to civil society activism surrounding World Bank and International Monetary Fund meetings in September.

Singapore, located along major shipping routes in Southeast Asia, was established as a British trading center in 1819 and eventually became a separate British colony. Occupied by the Japanese during World War II, the city-state became self-governing in 1959, entered the Malaysian Federation in 1963, and gained full independence in 1965. Under Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) transformed the port city into a regional financial center and an exporter of high-technology goods. At the same time, Lee restricted individual freedoms and stunted political development.

In 1990, Lee handed power over to Goh Chok Tong, who largely continued his conservative policies and kept the PAP dominant in Parliament. In the 10 general elections that have been held since independence, the PAP has never won less than 95 percent of the parliamentary seats, and in recent years a large number of PAP candidates have run unopposed.

In the November 2001 elections, the PAP received 75 percent of the vote and captured 82 of Parliament's 84 seats. Opposition parties contested only 29 seats. Veteran opposition politician J. B. Jeyaretnam of the Workers' Party was barred from running. Judicial authorities also declared him bankrupt for being a day late in paying an installment on a damages award to PAP politicians who had successfully sued him for defamation. In 2004, opposition politician Chee Soon Juan found himself in a similar predicament when he failed to fend off a defamation lawsuit brought against him by two leaders of the PAP.

Lee Hsien Loong, the son of Lee Kuan Yew, became Singapore's prime minister

in August 2004 as part of a planned transfer of power. His inauguration ended the 14-year tenure of Goh Chok Tong, but he has done little to change the country's political climate. Although he made concerted efforts to appear more approachable, Lee is still regarded as being more conservative and potentially more authoritarian than his predecessor.

In September 2005, President Sellapan Ramanathan (SR Nathan) was sworn in for a second term as Singapore's largely ceremonial head of state. He was reinstated unopposed after authorities judged all three of his potential challengers to be unfit for office.

While not obligated to hold elections until 2007, Lee called a general election in May 2006 to secure a mandate for his economic reform agenda, since he had effectively inherited his office. In the months ahead of the announcement, a series of moves by the government suggested that elections were imminent. The electoral rolls were prepared in February, redrawn electoral boundaries were unveiled in March, and the PAP named its candidates in April. However, the fact that the prime minister has the power to call elections at any time resulted in a campaign period of just nine days for the opposition parties. Elections continued to serve more as a referendum on the prime minister's popularity than as an actual contest for power, with opposition candidates hampered by defamation lawsuits and lack of fair access to a government-dominated media.

The May 2006 elections brought no significant change to the PAP's firm grip on power, with the party ultimately retaining its 82 out of 84 elected seats in Parliament. Still, the opposition made some progress by contesting more than half of the seats, meaning the PAP was not automatically returned to power on nomination day. The opposition also secured 33 percent of the vote, compared with 25 percent in the 2001 elections. Moreover, for the first time, the PAP came close to losing a Group Representation Constituency (GRC) in Aljunied, where the Workers' Party—the opposition party that made the greatest showing—secured 44 percent of the vote. Nevertheless, the 66 percent support secured by the PAP overall enhanced the standing of the prime minister and secured his mandate, effectively reducing the chances for political reform in the near term.

Also in 2006, new restrictions were imposed on foreign media following a July interview of Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) leader Chee Soon Juan in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. The article referred to Chee as a "martyr" and included his criticism of the prime minister, who then, along with his father, sued the publication for libel. The government subsequently banned it in September for failing to comply with media regulations. The country's lack of freedom of association was also brought to light in September when Singapore hosted the annual International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank meetings. The government prohibited all protests related to the meetings and even warned civil society activists that they would be caned, claiming that such measures were necessary to prevent terrorist attacks. A three-day stand-off between Chee and the police developed when the opposition leader tried to march to the meetings in protest of Singapore's restrictions on free speech. More broadly, the government continued to invoke security concerns to justify its firm restrictions on social freedoms during the year.

A recent economic acceleration continued in 2006, with gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the third quarter in particular far surpassing consensus expecta-

tions. There was also a notable increase in both domestic demand and exports. GDP growth rates reached 7.9 percent for the year as a whole.

In January, the government's investment arm, Temasek Holdings, bought Shin Corp., a Thailand-based telecommunications and media company previously owned by then Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, for \$1.9 billion. The highly controversial transaction strained relations between the two countries throughout the year and provoked public protests in Thailand in the spring. The protesters were infuriated that the Singapore government had gained control of critical Thai assets and allowed Thaksin's family to avoid paying taxes on the sale. Prime Minister Lee came out in defense of Temasek in October, maintaining that it did not violate any Thai laws.

Singapore's most important foreign relationships remained those with the United States and neighboring Malaysia. Ties with Malaysia, traditionally strained, have generally improved since the accession of new figures to political leadership in both countries (in Malaysia, Abdullah bin Ahmad Badawi had replaced Mahathir Mohamed as prime minister in October 2003). In April 2006, the Malaysian government announced that it was abandoning plans, adopted under Mahathir, to build a new bridge across the Johor Strait between the two countries. The bridge had previously been advocated by Malaysia and opposed to some extent by Singapore; the change in course might suggest an effort by Malaysia to secure other concessions from Singapore.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Singapore is not an electoral democracy. The 1959 constitution created a parliamentary system of government, and periodic elections are held on the basis of compulsory universal suffrage. In practice, however, the ruling PAP dominates the government and the political process, using a variety of methods to handicap opposition parties.

The largely ceremonial president—currently SR Nathan—is the head of state, elected by popular vote for six-year terms; a constitutionally mandated committee is empowered to vet presidential candidates. The prime minister, the head of government, is not chosen through elections; like the cabinet, the prime minister is appointed by the president. Singapore has had only three prime ministers since it gained independence in 1965. Lee Kuan Yew governed for 31 years, after which he appointed Goh Chok Tong as his successor. Goh named Lee's eldest son, Lee Hsien Loong, deputy prime minister in 2003, and the younger Lee assumed the post of prime minister in August 2004.

The legislature is a unicameral parliament with 84 elected members. The PAP currently holds 82 elected seats, and two are held by opposition party members (the Workers' Party holds one and the Singapore Democratic Alliance, or SDA, holds one). Nine of the 84 are directly elected from single-member constituencies, while 75 are elected in GRCs, a mechanism established in 1988 to help foster minority representation in the ethnic Chinese-dominated country. Up to nine additional, nonpartisan members can be appointed by the president, and up to three members can be appointed from among opposition parties to ensure a minimum of opposition representation. The PAP received 66 percent of the vote in the May 2006 parliamentary elections, while among the main opposition parties, the Worker's Party received 16.3 percent, the SDA received 13 percent, and the SDP took 4.1 percent.

Though general elections are free from irregularities and vote rigging, the PAP's

manipulation of the political system and the significant disadvantages experienced by opposition candidates mean that they cannot be termed fair. Opposition parties are constrained by a ban on political films and televised programs; expressions of political opinion are curtailed by the threat of libel or slander suits; there are strict regulations and limitations on associations, including political associations; and the PAP's influence on the media and in the courts remains strong. The net result is that opposition efforts to attain power are effectively futile.

The run-up to the May 2006 elections generally reflected these conditions, with the PAP widely expected to retain its hold on power and the opposition severely constrained by a short campaign period. The prime minister officially called the elections nine days prior to the actual balloting, preventing voters from learning about their candidates, and electoral boundaries were redrawn just weeks before the voting, preventing candidates from establishing themselves in their constituencies. Commentators noted that the mechanics of voting—in assigned lines and with serialized ballots—left voters generally unconvinced that the process was secret and thus afraid to vote as they pleased.

A progovernment media environment forced opposition parties to resort to the internet for campaigning, but the PAP's hard-line campaign tactics extended to that realm as well when the Elections Department ordered the SDP to remove a podcast that allegedly violated campaign advertising rules. Other typical PAP tactics were employed, including the party's notorious use of defamation lawsuits to bankrupt leading opposition candidates. For example, James Gomez, a Workers' Party candidate credited with driving the opposition's use of the internet as a tool for mobilization, was specifically targeted. The PAP also brought legal actions against SDP leader Chee Soon Juan and 11 other SDP central committee members on the day after the election was called.

The winner-take-all nature of the GRC system meant that the opposition failed to gain any additional seats in Parliament despite securing a greater percentage of the popular vote than in the past. The system also limits the extent to which GRCs actually facilitate minority representation and, in effect, helps perpetuate the return of incumbents. The prime minister retains control over the Elections Department, and the country lacks a structurally independent election authority. Twenty-two women contested the 2006 elections, and overseas voting was allowed.

The government is known for its transparency and relative lack of corruption. There is no special legislation facilitating access to government information, but many government websites make such information available. Singapore was ranked 5 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Singapore's press is somewhat freer than in the past, but the country's media market remains tightly constrained, and the authorities clamped down particularly hard on the foreign press in 2006. Two companies own all of the newspapers in the city-state: one is government controlled, and the other has close ties to the government. Although editorials and news coverage generally support government policies, newspapers occasionally publish letters, columns, and editorials that are critical of the government. The U.S. State Department's 2006 human rights report noted that there was a moderate level of debate in newspapers and on the internet on some public issues, such as rising income inequality and the role of foreign workers.

More generally, journalists face pressure from the ruling party not to oppose the government's goals, leading them to practice self-censorship and avoid reporting on sensitive topics like alleged government corruption or nepotism, and the supposed complicity of the judiciary. All television channels and radio stations, except for the British Broadcasting Corporation's World Service, are operated by government-linked companies. The Newspaper and Printing Presses Act allows authorities to restrict the circulation of any foreign periodical whose news coverage has been deemed to interfere in domestic politics, while the Broadcasting Act entitles the minister for information, communication, and the arts to place formal restrictions on any foreign broadcaster deemed to be engaging in domestic politics. The Seditious Act, in effect since the days of British colonial rule, makes it an offense to commit an act with "seditious tendency"; to utter seditious words; or to print, publish, or distribute seditious materials.

Foreign newspapers and magazines are available, although authorities can restrict their circulation if they carry articles that the government finds offensive. The government used those powers and launched several defamation suits against foreign news organizations in an effort to curb critical media in 2006. Its response to the *Far Eastern Economic Review's* July article on SDP leader Chee Soon Juan, perhaps the country's most antagonistic opposition figure and a regular target of PAP attacks, garnered world attention. The prime minister and his father filed a civil defamation lawsuit against the publication in August, and in September, the government revoked the magazine's right to distribute in the city-state when it failed to comply with new regulations on foreign media that were imposed in the wake of the July story. International media watchdogs largely interpreted the government's new requirements that all foreign publications appoint legal representatives and provide significant financial deposits—regulations from which many foreign publications had been exempt—as a reaction to the *Review's* portrayal of Chee as a "martyr." Ruling party members in Singapore regularly use defamation suits and the revoking of licenses to threaten, silence, and bankrupt political opponents and (especially foreign) critical media outlets. In another incident, the prime minister and his father teamed up in May to file criminal defamation charges against the politicians and company responsible for publishing the *New Democrat*, an opposition-run newspaper. On several occasions, publications apologized for critical statements or paid undisclosed amounts in damages for commentary perceived as negative or skeptical. While internet access is unrestricted in Singapore, all content is subject to the same regulations as traditional media, and the government closely monitored internet material, especially podcasts and blogs, during the run-up to the May 2006 elections. In April, the government prohibited the use of podcasts as campaign tools for these particular elections.

The government monitors and sometimes censors films, television programs, videos, music, books, and magazines, mainly for excessive amounts of sex, violence, and drug references, although all films with a political purpose are banned unless they are sponsored by the government. Officials in recent years have eased censorship restrictions on the arts, particularly plays, and the prime minister has vowed to make some moves in the direction of liberalization.

Singapore's constitution guarantees freedom of religion as long as its practice does not violate any other state regulations, and Singaporeans of most faiths can

worship freely. However, religious actions perceived as threats to racial or religious harmony are not tolerated, and the government has banned unconventional groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church. Restrictions on the Jehovah's Witnesses stem from the fact that the group's roughly 2,000 members in Singapore refuse to perform compulsory military service. The 1966 Societies Act stipulates that all religious groups must register with the government.

Faculty members of public universities and political research institutions are not entirely free from government influence, since all such institutions have direct government links. The authorities prohibit public discussion of sensitive racial and religious issues and closely regulate political speech. While academics engage in political debate, their publications rarely deviate from the government line.

The government restricts freedom of association through the Societies Act, which includes a provision that permits only groups registered as political parties or associations to engage in organized political activities. The Societies Act covers most organizations of more than 10 people, and these groups must also register with the government. Singaporeans need police permits to hold public talks or make political speeches, and public assemblies of more than five people must have police approval. In 2005, the prime minister issued a decree stating that people no longer needed a permit for private, indoor gatherings as long as the topic of discussion was not race or religion. Freedom of association and assembly declined further in 2006, however, due to the government's preparations for expected protests during the IMF and World Bank meetings hosted by Singapore in September. In what was portrayed as an effort to protect the city-state against the kinds of terrorist attacks that have occurred in other Southeast Asian countries, the government tightly regulated the activities of nongovernmental organizations and civil society groups in the period surrounding the meetings. It permitted foreign groups to participate in peaceful protests, but prohibited local groups from doing so. Authorities told 27 foreign activists accredited by the IMF and World Bank to attend the meetings that they would not be allowed entry to the country on security grounds. Home Affairs Minister Wong Kan Seng reportedly threatened "severe punishment, including caning and imprisonment," for violators of the country's strict controls, garnering strong public criticism from World Bank head Paul Wolfowitz. Twenty-two foreign activists were ultimately allowed entry after significant pressure from the financial institutions.

A "Speaker's Corner" is designated as the only area in the country where free public speaking is permitted. SDP leader Chee staged a three-day sit-in there after police stopped him from marching toward the venue of the IMF and World Bank meetings.

Unions with generally broad rights are permitted under the Trade Unions Act, albeit with some notable restrictions (government employees may not join unions, for example). Almost all unions are affiliated with the National Trade Union Congress, which freely acknowledges that its interests are closely aligned with those of the PAP. Collective bargaining is commonplace, and strikes are legal—except for workers in the water, gas, and electricity sectors—but rare. Singaporean families employ approximately 160,000 domestic workers, primarily from the Philippines, Indonesia, India, and Sri Lanka. They are excluded from the Singapore Employment Act, and are regularly exploited. A new standard contract for migrant domestic workers, established in 2006, addresses the problem of food deprivation and requires

employers to allow replaced workers to seek other employment in Singapore rather than being immediately repatriated; however, according to Human Rights Watch, the contract fails to provide other basic worker protections, such as rest days and limits on recruitment fees.

The judiciary's independence has been called into question by the government's overwhelming success in court proceedings, particularly defamation suits against political opponents. It is not clear, however, whether the government pressures judges or simply appoints judges who share its conservative philosophy. Many judges have ties to the PAP and its leaders. Still, the judiciary is efficient, and defendants in criminal cases enjoy a presumption of innocence, the right to confront witnesses, and other due process rights.

The government generally respects citizens' right to privacy. However, the issue is not specifically addressed in the constitution, and the Internal Security Act (ISA) and the Criminal Law Act (CLA) give the government the power to search a person or property without a warrant in the interest of preserving national security, public safety and order, and the public interest. The government can also detain suspects without trial under both laws. The ISA was previously applied against suspected Communist security threats, but the government has recently used the law to detain suspected Islamist terrorists. It allows authorities to detain suspects without charge or trial for an unlimited number of two-year periods. A 1989 constitutional amendment prohibits judicial review of the substantive grounds for detention under the ISA and of the constitutionality of the law itself. At year's end, 26 suspected terrorists were held in detention. The government uses the CLA to detain mainly organized crime and drug-trafficking suspects; the act includes provisions for a one-year, extendable, preventive detention period. Meanwhile, the Misuse of Drugs Act allows authorities to commit suspected drug users, without trial, to rehabilitation centers for up to three years.

Security forces are not known to commit serious abuses. Police occasionally mistreat detainees, and the government has in recent years jailed officers convicted of such abuses. The penal code mandates caning, in addition to imprisonment, for about 30 offenses; it is discretionary for certain other crimes involving the use of force. Caning is reportedly common in practice. The U.S. State Department's 2006 human rights report stated that Singaporean prisons are spartan, but generally within international standards.

The government actively promotes racial harmony and equity in Singapore's diverse society, and there is no legal discrimination. Despite government efforts to boost their educational achievement, ethnic Malays have not on average reached the schooling and income levels of ethnic Chinese or ethnic Indians, and they reportedly face unofficial discrimination in private sector employment. All citizens enjoy freedom of movement, although the government occasionally infringes on citizens' rights to choose their residence by enforcing its policy of ethnic balance in public housing, in which most Singaporeans live.

Women enjoy the same legal rights as men in most areas, and many are well educated and hold professional jobs. Relatively few women, however, hold top positions in government and the private sector. There are currently 19 female members of Parliament, including 17 out of the 84 elected members (all of whom are from the PAP), plus 2 nominated members.

Slovakia

Population: 5,400,000

Capital: Bratislava

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,4PF	2,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In 2006, the broad coalition that had delivered Slovakia from government by the far right in the 1990s fell apart. The new coalition government that emerged from June elections, led by the leftist populist party Smer, included the ruling party of the 1990s, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), as well as a nationalist party. The economy continued to perform well, and the new government proposed modest reforms of the flat-tax system as well as new spending. But Slovakia's European Union (EU) partners expressed concern at some of the coalition's positions on political and social issues.

Anti-Communist opposition forces brought about the collapse of the Czechoslovak government in 1989, and the country held its first free elections the following year. After elections in June 1992, negotiations began on increased Slovak autonomy within the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic. These discussions led to a peaceful dissolution of the federation and the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic on January 1, 1993.

From 1993 to 1998, Vladimir Meciar—who served twice as prime minister during this period—and his Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) dominated politics in the newly independent Slovakia. Meciar battled with then-president Michal Kovac over executive and governmental powers, opposed direct presidential elections, flouted the rule of law, and intimidated independent media. His policies resulted in Slovakia's failure to meet the criteria necessary to open European Union (EU) accession talks and join NATO.

In the 1998 parliamentary elections, voters supported a major shift in Slovakia's political orientation by rejecting Meciar's rule and electing a broad right-left coalition. The new parliament selected Mikulas Dzurinda as prime minister and pursued policies to enhance judicial independence, combat corruption, undertake economic reforms, and actively seek membership in the EU and NATO.

In September 2002, 25 parties competed in free and fair parliamentary elections, although only seven exceeded the 5 percent representation threshold. Meciar's HZDS won with 19.5 percent of the vote, but his party did not receive sufficient support to form a new government. Dzurinda's Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU)

finished second and succeeded in forming a center-right government in partnership with the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK), the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), and the Alliance of the New Citizen (ANO). Seventy percent of eligible voters participated in the elections. Slovak nongovernmental organizations were particularly active during the campaign.

In April 2003, the legislature ratified Slovakia's accession to NATO. In a binding national referendum that was held the following month, Slovaks voted overwhelmingly in favor of joining the EU, with 92 percent supporting membership. Slovakia duly joined NATO and the EU in April and May 2004, respectively.

In April 2004, Slovakia held a two-round election for the presidency. Former prime minister Meciar did best in the first round, but lost a runoff against his former right-hand man, Ivan Gasparovic, later in the month. In 2005, the government's economic reforms caused it to lose popular support. ANO left the coalition in the fall, after its founder, the minister of the economy, was dismissed by the president at Dzurinda's request. Opposition legislators boycotted the opening of parliament, leading to a lack of quorum that delayed parliament's new session.

In February 2006, KDH left the coalition, prompting the government to schedule early elections in June. In the balloting, the leftist populist party Smer (Direction) took the largest share of the votes, winning 50 of 150 seats. Dzurinda's party came second, but several of his potential coalition partners failed to make the 5 percent threshold. To some surprise, Smer's leader, Robert Fico, formed a coalition with the far-right Slovak National Party (SNS) and Meciar's party, now called the People's Party-Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (LS-HZDS).

International and domestic concern immediately arose about the unusual new coalition's stability and responsibility. The Party of European Socialists (PES), the EU-level group of European center-left parties, suspended Smer in October for its coalition with the SNS, which the PES leadership considered racist and extremist. The SNS leader, Jan Slota, had made highly insulting and inflammatory remarks about Slovakia's Hungarian and Romany (Gypsy) minorities. For example, he said he would "jump in a tank and flatten Budapest" to stop Hungary from reoccupying Slovakia, which had been under Austro-Hungarian control until after World War I.

Economic forecasters predicted that despite his populist rhetoric, Fico's reforms would not damage Slovakia's overall economic progress. He had campaigned on promises to scrap Slovakia's 19 percent flat tax in favor of a more progressive one and to institute two-tier value-added taxes that would tax staples like food at a lower rate. He insisted that Slovakia still planned to adopt the euro as its currency in 2009, which would require the country to meet strict fiscal and economic standards.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Slovakia is an electoral democracy. Voters elect the president for five-year terms and members of the 150-seat, unicameral National Council (Parliament) for four-year terms. A 2001 law granted voting privileges to foreigners, allowing permanent residents to vote in elections for municipal and regional governments. The prime minister is appointed by the president but must have majority support in the Parliament in order to govern. Parliamentary elections in 2006 were considered free and fair.

Slovakia's political party system is fragmented. In 2006, the governing parties

were Direction-Social Democracy (known as Smer), the HZDS, and the SNS. The SDKU, the ethnic Hungarian SMK, and the Christian democratic KDH form the opposition. All other parties failed to reach the 5 percent electoral threshold required for representation in parliament.

Corruption is a problem in Slovakia, especially in health care, education, law enforcement, and the judiciary, according to the European Commission, the EU's executive arm. Slovakia began a program of reforms in 1999 that have centralized and increased staffing for government anticorruption efforts. Moreover, the Law on Free Access to Information has contributed to improved transparency in government administration. Slovakia was ranked 49 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Slovakia was required to meet the "Copenhagen criteria" in order to join the EU; these standards include "stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities." The European Commission issued a positive assessment of Slovakia's candidacy in November 2003 (allowing it to join in May 2004), saying Slovakia had "reached a high level of alignment with the *aquis* [the body of EU law] in most policy areas." However, the commission noted that more work remained to be done, including in the area of antidiscrimination law. Subsequently, an Anti-Discrimination Act was passed in 2004, bringing Slovakia into line with EU legal standards.

Freedom of speech and freedom of expression are guaranteed by the constitution; any restriction must be designed "to protect the rights and liberties of others, state security, public order, or public health and morality." Slovakia's media are largely free but remain vulnerable to political interference. Prison terms for press abuses such as defamation were eliminated in a 2002 reform, though threats of civil defamation lawsuits still affect media outlets. In December 2004, a court ordered *Sme*, a daily newspaper, to pay \$96,750 for libeling a Supreme Court judge. The government does not limit access to the internet.

The government respects religious freedom. Registered churches and religious organizations are eligible for tax exemptions and government subsidies. The Roman Catholic Church is the largest denomination in the country and consequently receives the largest share of government subsidies. Although Slovakia has not banned or impeded any groups from practicing their faith, the U.S. State Department has noted the persistence of anti-Semitism among some parts of the population. Academic freedom is respected in Slovakia.

The authorities uphold the rights to assemble peacefully, petition state bodies, and associate in clubs, political parties, and trade unions. However, civil society is not as active as in other countries in Central Europe. Judges, prosecutors, firefighters, and members of the armed forces may not strike.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary and a Constitutional Court, and an independent Judicial Council oversees the assignment and transfer of judges. The European Commission has noted the perception of a high level of corruption in the Slovak courts and expressed concern over the judiciary's perceived lack of impartiality. Corruption and a significant backlog of cases have raised questions about the judicial system's capacity to function at EU levels.

There are more than 10 recognized ethnic minorities in Slovakia. While minorities have a constitutional right to contribute to the resolution of issues that concern

them, Roma continue to experience widespread discrimination and inequality in education, housing, employment, public services, and the criminal justice system. In 2003, there were reports of coerced or forced sterilization of Romany women the year before, on the orders of local health officials. Roma also face the persistent threat of racially motivated violence. Even though the law criminalizes such acts, reports indicate that law enforcement officials do not always investigate crimes against Roma. In response to these problems, the government began a new program to improve education and housing for Roma in 2002. The government has also established an informal advisory board to widen dialogue with the Romany community.

In December 2003, Slovakia reached an agreement with Hungary on the application of Hungary's Status Law, which grants special health and educational benefits to ethnic Hungarians residing outside of Hungary. A foundation in Slovakia will administer the support for Hungarians living there. Hungarians are represented by the SMK in the Parliament, currently in opposition.

Slovakia has a market economy in which the private sector accounts for approximately 80 percent of gross domestic product. Official unemployment remains high—approximately 10 percent in 2006—but has fallen steadily in recent years. The government contends that many of those who collect unemployment benefits may simultaneously be working on the black market.

Although women enjoy the same legal rights as men, they continue to be underrepresented in senior-level business positions and in the government. Domestic violence is punishable by imprisonment, but remains widespread. Human trafficking from and through Slovakia, mainly for the purposes of sexual exploitation, remains a problem. In 2005, the government began a National Action Plan to combat trafficking, resulting in increased attention to, and prosecution of, traffickers.

Slovenia

Population: 2,000,000

Capital: Ljubljana

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In October 2006, a government decision to relocate a Romany (Gypsy) settlement was harshly criticized by Slovenia's human rights ombudsman. The country's executive branch continued during the year to refuse to implement Constitutional Court decisions on a number of topics. In municipal elections conducted in October and November,

a strong showing by independent candidates revealed considerable voter dissatisfaction with established parties.

The territory now constituting Slovenia was part of the Hapsburg empire from 1335 to 1918. At the end of World War I, Slovenia became a part of the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929), and after World War II, it became a constituent republic of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1990, Slovenia held its first postwar, multiparty, democratic elections, in which the Democratic United Opposition (DEMOS) secured victory. Voters also elected former Communist leader Milan Kucan as president. The country won independence after a brief conflict with Yugoslav troops in 1991, and Kucan was reelected in 1992 and 1996.

Slovenia was spared the war and destruction experienced by much of the rest of Yugoslavia as the federation disintegrated, and Slovenian society has enjoyed remarkable consensus in the postindependence period. Throughout the 1990s, a large majority of citizens agreed that Slovenia should concentrate on entering the European Union (EU) and NATO, and domestic policy focused on maintaining a social democratic model for Slovenian society. After 1990, Slovenia was generally ruled by center-left governments, the most important element of which was Janez Drnovsek's Liberal Democratic Party (LDS).

In Slovenia's latest presidential elections, held in two rounds in late 2002, Drnovsek won 56 percent of the vote in the second round, comfortably defeating his opponent, Social Democratic Party of Slovenia (SDS) candidate Barbara Brezigar. Seventy-one percent of the electorate turned out to vote in the first round, and 65 percent participated in the second round.

In 2004, the 12-year lock on power enjoyed by Slovenia's left-of-center parties was broken when Prime Minister Anton Rop's LDS-led coalition suffered a number of political defeats. In the October 2004 parliamentary elections, Janez Jansa's center-right SDS succeeded in unseating the LDS and becoming Slovenia's most popular political party. Turnout for the parliamentary elections was 60 percent.

After 15 years of independence, ethnocentrism and high levels of social intolerance toward individuals from other former Yugoslav republics remained a serious problem in Slovenia. The fate of the "erased"—some 18,000 non-Slovene citizens of the former Yugoslavia who remained in Slovenia after independence, but who were administratively removed from official records after they failed to apply for citizenship or permanent resident status during a brief window of opportunity in 1992—remains largely unresolved, despite considerable international criticism over Slovenia's handling of these individuals. The erased have been systematically denied driver's licenses, access to state health care, and pensions. Under pressure from the EU, the Slovenian government began drafting legislation in 2003 to restore their rights. In April 2004, an LDS-sponsored bill granting retroactive residency rights to the erased was rejected in a referendum called by the opposition; 95 percent of participating voters opposed the government-backed bill, although with a low turnout of only 31 percent of the electorate. Despite a ruling by Slovenia's Constitutional Court that the rights of the "erased" must be reinstated, the government has for several years refused to implement the decision.

Municipal elections were held over two rounds in October and November 2006,

and approximately one million of Slovenia's 1.6 million eligible voters participated. Independent candidates won a number of mayoral seats, suggesting voter dissatisfaction with the Slovenian political establishment. The most interesting development in the municipal elections was the election of an ethnic Serb, Zoran Jankovic, to the prominent position of mayor of Ljubljana.

Social intolerance towards Slovenia's small Romany (Gypsy) population also remains at very high levels. In October 2006, about 30 Roma were moved from their residences in the village of Ambrus after authorities began to fear that demonstrations against them could turn violent. Slovenia's human rights ombudsman, Matjaz Hanzek, claimed that the government's decision to relocate the Roma meant the end of the rule of law and suggested that the government had given in to the demands of an angry mob.

Slovenia has achieved its primary foreign policy goals, having joined both the EU and NATO in 2004, making it the first of the former Yugoslav republics to do so. Aiding Slovenia's successes in this regard have been its relatively favorable geographical location and historical ties to Western Europe, a strong economy, and the advantages of ethnic homogeneity. Slovenia has also sought to adopt the EU's euro as its official currency, and in June 2006, the EU gave its formal approval for Slovenia to become the first of the new 2004 member states to make the change.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Slovenia is an electoral democracy. Voters directly elect the president to a five-year term. The country has a bicameral Parliament: members of the 90-seat National Assembly, which chooses the prime minister, are elected to four year terms, and the 40-seat National Council, a largely advisory body, represents professional groups and local interests. Elections during the postindependence period have been considered free and fair. Slovenia's main political parties since 1991 have been Drnovsek's LDS and the center-right SDS, currently led by Prime Minister Jansa.

Although Slovenia is reputedly the most corruption-free of the Central and Eastern European states that recently entered the EU, corruption remains a problem and is publicly perceived as such. It usually takes the form of conflicts of interest among government officials, an intertwining of the public and private sectors, and private businesses' reliance on official connections to obtain lucrative government contracts. Slovenia was ranked 28 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government respects the constitutional rights of freedom of speech and of the press, although insulting public officials is prohibited by law. The ownership structure of the Slovenian media, which in many ways has not been reformed since independence, remains an issue of some contention. The largest stakeholder in one of Slovenia's main dailies, *Delo*, is the Lasko brewery, which is partly owned by the state. In a September 2005 referendum, voters approved by a very narrow margin a new State Broadcasting Law. Critics charged that the new law increases the government's control over the main state-owned television and radio network (RTV); under the terms of the new law, 21 out of 29 members of RTV's program council have to be approved by Parliament. Some analysts characterized the new broadcasting law as an attempt by the Jansa government to acquire more control of the public broadcasting system, which it has argued is biased against the center-right. A major

complaint against the various media is that they do not represent a wide range of political or ethnic interests. There are also reports of some degree of self-censorship resulting from indirect political or economic pressure on media outlets. During the course of 2006, it was reported that officials were pushing advertisers not to take out ads in media outlets deemed unfriendly to the government. There were no reports of government attempts to restrict access to the internet during the year.

The constitution guarantees freedom of conscience and religion. Most Slovenians are Roman Catholics, although the number of practicing Catholics has been dropping sharply in recent years. Societal discrimination against Muslims remains a problem. For the past 30 years, Slovenian authorities have refused to allow the country's small Muslim community to build a mosque in Ljubljana, which some Slovenian officials have justified by citing the risk that it would provide "infrastructure for terrorism." In July 2004, the Constitutional Court blocked a proposed referendum challenging zoning laws that would allow construction of the mosque to proceed, ruling that fundamental, universal human rights can override the democratically expressed will of the population. However, the mosque's construction is being delayed by a denationalization claim filed by the Catholic Church for the property on which the mosque is supposed to be built. There were no reports of government restrictions on academic freedom during the year.

The government respects the right of individuals to assemble peacefully, form associations, participate in public affairs, and submit petitions. Numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate without government interference, and the government on the whole supports the role they play in the policy-making process. Workers enjoy the right to establish and join trade unions, to strike, and to bargain collectively. Slovenia's social welfare programs, however, have come under criticism for reducing the economy's competitiveness in world markets. In November 2005, labor unions launched the largest demonstrations in the country's postindependence history to protest planned reforms to the social welfare system.

According to the EU, the Slovenian judiciary enjoys a high degree of independence. The judiciary consists of the Supreme Court, an administrative court, regional and district courts, and an appeals court, along with the Constitutional Court. The constitution guarantees citizens due process, equality before the law, and a presumption of innocence until proven guilty. The main problem facing the judicial system is a growing backlog of cases, with some criminal cases taking two to five years to complete. Slovenia's human rights ombudsman reported in 2006 that the number of unimplemented Constitutional Court decisions had doubled in 2005 in comparison with 2004. Prison conditions are in line with international standards, although some overcrowding has been reported.

According to Slovenia's Criminal Code, incitement to racial hatred is illegal. The constitution entitles the "autochthonous" Italian and Hungarian ethnic communities to one deputy each in the National Assembly, and Roma are automatically given seats on 20 municipal councils. Despite these official rights, however, Slovenia has had persistent problems in dealing with various ethnic minorities—Italians, Muslim residents and guest workers, and citizens of the former Yugoslavia. In December 2003, the Italian member of Slovenia's Parliament resigned from the presidential commission for minorities after claiming that the Italian minority was being pressured to assimilate.

There have been persistent reports of police harassment of Roma and residents from other former Yugoslav republics, who have become known as the "new minorities." Public opinion polls conducted among non-Slovenes in 2004 showed that almost 10 percent of respondents frequently encounter ethnic intolerance, 5 percent frequently hide their ethnic identity, and 36 percent occasionally do. An April 2004 referendum overwhelmingly rejected restoring a variety of rights to individuals who had been "erased" from official government registries after independence from the former Yugoslavia. The results of the referendum increased both domestic and international concern about the civil rights of non-Slovenes living in the country. The problem remains unresolved, as the Slovenian Parliament continues to debate the issue.

In February 2006, the Slovenian Parliament passed a law that human rights groups claim will reduce the ability of asylum seekers to obtain residence in Slovenia. While government officials said the new law was completely in line with EU standards, human rights activists warned that it made police officials the ultimate arbiters of asylum requests. UN refugee officials have expressed similar concerns.

According to the constitution, Slovenian citizens enjoy all recognized personal rights and freedoms, including the freedom to travel and choose one's place of residence, and the right to own private property.

Women enjoy the same constitutional rights and freedoms under the law as men. On average, Slovenian women receive 90 percent of the pay of their male counterparts, which compares favorably with rates in Western European countries. At the same time, women remain underrepresented in political life. Currently, there are 11 women serving in the 90-seat National Assembly, 3 women in the 40-seat National Council, and 1 woman in the 17-member Cabinet of Ministers. In February 2005, the Slovenian Parliament adopted a measure requiring that 40 percent of the electoral lists for the European parliamentary elections be reserved for women. Some 60 percent of Slovenia's women are in the workforce, the largest proportion of any of the 10 countries that joined the EU in 2004.

Domestic violence remains a concern. There are no laws prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace. Slovenia is primarily a transit country, and secondarily a country of destination, for women and girls trafficked from Eastern Europe for the purpose of prostitution. In November 2005, the National Assembly passed a law on witness protection to prosecute forced-prostitution and trafficking cases more effectively.

Solomon Islands

Population: 500,000

Capital: Honiara

Political Rights: 4*

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: The Solomon Islands' political rights rating declined from 3 to 4 due to the poor conduct of April parliamentary elections, which were followed by two days of riots.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	4,4PF	4,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	4,3PF

Overview: Law and order remained fragile in the Solomon Islands in 2006. The selection of Snyder Rini as prime minister following the April parliamentary elections sparked racially charged riots in the capital. Rini resigned, and Manasseh Sogavare was chosen as the new prime minister in May. Sogavare survived a no-confidence vote in Parliament in October.

The Solomon Islands, consisting of more than 27 islands and 70 language groups, were a British protectorate until independence in 1978. Clan and ethnic identity remain much stronger than national identity and serve as a deep source of friction in the country. Tensions between the two largest groups—the Guadalcanalese, natives of the main island of Guadalcanal, and the Malaitans, who come from the nearby province of Malaita—over jobs and land rights erupted into open warfare in 1998. The Isatambu Freedom Movement (IFM), claiming to represent native Guadalcanalese interests, forced the eviction of 30,000 Malaitans from Guadalcanal. Scores were injured or killed in the fighting that ensued between the IFM and the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF), a band of armed Malaitans. The MEF in June 2000 succeeded in capturing the prime minister and forcing his resignation. Fighting officially ended with the Townsville Peace Agreement of October 2000, which Australia and New Zealand helped to broker.

Parliamentary elections in December 2001 brought a new government to power under Sir Allan Kemakeza. Both a UN mission and the Australian-led multinational Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) have worked to restore peace and order. Change has been slow, but some important progress has been made. In May 2004, the National Parliament convened for the first time since the MEF took the capital in June 2000. Several leaders of the armed factions have been arrested and brought to trial. Former MEF leader Harold Keke was sentenced to life in prison in 2005, and several senior officials have been arrested and charged

for their alleged involvement in the 2000 coup and related crimes. The police's Corruption Targeting Task Force, with help from RAMSI, has arrested several high-ranking officials for corruption, fraud, and other crimes. In 2005, the minister of health was arrested and charged with theft of development aid money while in office, and former prime minister Ezekiel Alebua was arrested for the inappropriate use of a victims' compensation fund.

Parliamentary elections were held on April 5, 2006, and monitored by international observers. All 50 parliamentary seats were up for election, yet no single party secured a dominant majority. Each of the nine parties took between two and four seats, and independents won 30. Half of all Parliament members were replaced.

The subsequent selection of Snyder Rini, deputy to former prime minister Kemakeza, as the country's new leader sparked two days of riots, on April 18 and 19, in the capital because of allegations that lawmakers were bribed to back Rini for the benefit of Asian-owned businesses. Both Kemakeza and Rini have close personal business and families ties to the ethnic Chinese business community. Australia and New Zealand sent in hundreds of troops to restore order. Rini resigned just eight days after his selection. In May, Parliament held a secret ballot and chose Manasseh Sogavare as the new prime minister; he had previously held the post in 2000 and 2001, after the coup.

A lack of improvement in government institutions has prompted Australia to threaten a termination of financial assistance. Sogavare drew criticism when he decided to grant government positions to members of Parliament who were held for alleged involvement in the April riots. He later rescinded the decisions but publicly pushed to end criminal investigations against the two men.

In July, the government raised wages for the most senior civil servants, and members of Parliament approved a pay hike for themselves. The move would cost taxpayers an additional \$4 million a year as the economy remained in a dire state and essential public services faltered due to a lack of funds. The riots in April demonstrated that domestic security and law enforcement agencies were incapable of ensuring peace and order in the country, leading Sogavare in August to ask Australia to maintain RAMSI for another year. The request, made without consulting the Parliament, incited a motion of no confidence in October, which Sogavare survived.

The case of Julian Moti, a Fijian-born Australian citizen who was hired to serve as attorney general in the Solomon Islands, caused further embarrassment for Sogavare as well as diplomatic tensions with Australia. Moti is wanted in Australia for child sex offense charges, yet Sogavare refused to extradite him. When Moti fled to Papua New Guinea, then jumped bail and returned to the Solomon Islands in a Papua New Guinean military aircraft without a passport, the police and RAMSI raided Sogavare's office for evidence of alleged involvement in Moti's unlawful return. In retaliation, the government declared the Australian-born police chief an "undesirable" immigrant and expelled Australia's high commissioner to the Solomon Islands. Although a local court cleared Moti of all charges related to his reentry, further allegations of Sogavare's involvement in the Moti case strained an important partnership for the country. The Solomon Islands needs Australian financial aid and forces for economic and social stability, while Australia is intent on preventing the island nation from sliding into trouble even if it means working with a leadership that it does not support.

Schoolteachers nationwide went on strike on October 30 when the government failed to meet their demand for an increase in wages and other benefits. The strike ended in a matter of days when the government agreed to a unified salary structure for all government employees, including teachers, doctors, nurses, paramedics, police, prison service workers, and civil servants.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The Solomon Islands are not an electoral democracy. Recent elections have been marred by fraud allegations. The country is a member of the Commonwealth, and the British monarch is the head of state. She is represented by a governor-general appointed on the advice of Parliament for a five-year term. Nathaniel Waena, the current governor-general, was appointed in July 2004. The government is a modified parliamentary system with a 50-member, unicameral National Parliament; members are elected for four-year terms. A parliamentary majority elects the prime minister, and the cabinet is appointed by the governor-general on the advice of the prime minister

The leading political parties are the People's Alliance Party and the Solomon Islands Alliance for Change Coalition. However, political activity is driven more by personalities and clan identities than party affiliations. The August 2006 passage of a bill to prevent members of Parliament from easily switching parties was intended to promote political stability.

Corruption is a serious problem, serving to stir public resentment and hamper economic development. An independent audit in 2005 and 2006 found nearly \$5 million missing from a loan borrowed from the Export-Import Bank of Taiwan to provide compensation to victims of ethnic conflict between 1998 and 2000. Former prime minister Kemakeza was alleged to have been involved in stealing the funds, and his claims of \$121,000 in personal losses have been called excessive. Children of high-ranking government officials have reportedly received a large number of government scholarships for overseas study. Petty corruption among the lower ranks of government also appears to be widespread. After the April 2006 elections, critics charged that Chinese businessmen had bankrolled Rini's selection as prime minister. In that month's rioting, Chinese businesses were targeted, and the capital's Chinatown district was extensively damaged. A small number of Chinese have lived in the country for decades, but a recent influx of Chinese migrants and their expanding presence in the domestic economy has fueled anti-Chinese sentiment. The World Bank classifies the Solomon Islands as a fragile state because of the underlying ethnic and political tensions and weakness in the institutions tasked with addressing them. The Solomon Islands were not ranked in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression and the press is generally respected. Reports on corruption and abuses by police and politicians appear in the local media. Those charged with wrongdoing sometimes use legal and extralegal means to intimidate journalists, but the government generally leaves matters to the courts for adjudication. The print media include a daily, a weekly, and two monthly publications. The government operates the only radio station. There is no local television station, but foreign broadcasts can be received via satellite. Internet penetration is low, mainly because of the lack of telecommunications infrastructure and prohibitive costs.

Freedom of religion is generally respected. In May 2006, the government de-

cided to ban the movie *The Da Vinci Code* due to local church opposition. Academic freedom is also respected despite serious disruptions in instruction and research as a result of the recent violence and a lack of government funds. The new government of Prime Minister Sogavare says it will double funding for the College of Higher Education to \$1.6 million by 2007.

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly and the government generally recognizes this right. Laws require organizers of demonstrations to obtain permits, which are typically granted. Many civil society groups operate freely, with the largest numbers of groups promoting development and religion. Workers are free to organize, and strikes are permitted. Wage earners make up 10 to 15 percent of the workforce; the rest engage in subsistence farming and fishing.

Threats against judges and prosecutors have weakened the independence and rigor of the judiciary. Judges and prosecutors have also been implicated in corruption and abuse scandals. In October 2004, the chief justice was dismissed for alleged misconduct. A lack of resources limits the government's ability to provide legal counsel and timely prosecution of trials. Traditional chiefs have asked the government to provide more funds for traditional courts in rural areas to ease demand on the formal court system.

The constitution provides for an ombudsman, with the power to subpoena and investigate complaints of official abuse or unfair treatment. The ombudsman's office has potentially far-reaching powers but is limited by a lack of funds.

There is no army. Domestic security and law enforcement are provided by a civilian-controlled police force of about 1,000 people. Factional and ethnic rivalries within the police since the 2000 coup have rendered the force virtually useless. Many Malaitan officers joined the MEF, and the hiring of 1,200 untrained former militants as "special constables" to stop the fighting also caused problems. Many of these "special constables" have been involved in criminal activities; police reform is a major focus for RAMSI. Prisons conditions are basic but meet international standards. A new prison building, with a recreation center, a kitchen, toilets in every cell, and a family visitation center, has improved living conditions for prisoners. In 2005, two police officers were charged with the abduction and rape of a woman.

Despite legal guarantees of equal rights, discrimination limits the economic and political roles of women. No law prohibits domestic violence, although rape and common assault are illegal. Reports of violence against adult and teenage women have increased since the 2000 coup. Lack of funds for public education and health programs in the face of traditional attitudes have hindered efforts to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS, and an estimated 16 percent of the population currently carries the virus.

Somalia

Population: 8,900,000
Capital: Mogadishu

Political Rights: 7*
Civil Liberties: 7
Status: Not Free



Ratings Change: Somalia's political rights rating declined from 6 to 7 due to the consolidation of power—especially in Mogadishu—by the Islamic Courts Union, which was not a freely elected government accountable to the people and which worked to limit political participation.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	6,7NF	6,7NF	6,7NF	6,7NF	6,7NF	6,7NF	7,7NF

Overview: For much of 2006, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), an Islamist movement, expanded its control over southern Somalia and largely routed the forces of the internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government, which was based in the town of Baidoa. After months of speculation about the extent of Ethiopia's military involvement in Somalia, Ethiopian leaders in late December declared that their goal was to crush the Islamists and support the transitional government. By year's end, Ethiopian and government troops had captured Mogadishu, the capital, and driven the ICU to the southernmost portion of the country.

Somalia gained independence in 1960 as an amalgam of former British and Italian colonies populated largely by ethnic Somalis. A 1969 coup by an army general, Siad Barre, led to two decades of instability, brutal civil strife, and the manipulation of clan loyalties for political purposes. Somalia was also plagued by natural disasters including floods, drought, and famine. When Barre's government was toppled in 1991, the clan-based militias began fighting each other, and Somalia has lacked an effective central government ever since.

Extensive television coverage of famine and civil strife that took some 300,000 lives in 1991 and 1992 prompted a UN humanitarian mission led by U.S. forces. The intervention soon deteriorated into urban guerrilla warfare with the Somali militias, and over 100 UN peacekeepers, including 18 U.S. soldiers, were killed. The \$4 billion operation was eventually terminated, and international forces had departed by March 1995. Civil conflict continued over the subsequent decade with varying degrees of intensity.

In 2000, many of the faction leaders agreed to participate in a Transitional National Government (TNG) established at the Conference for National Peace and Reconciliation, hosted by neighboring Djibouti. The conference charter called for a three-

year transitional government with a 245-seat Transitional National Assembly (TNA). In August, the TNA elected Abdiqassim Salad Hassan as transitional president. The TNG and more than 20 rival factions signed a ceasefire in Kenya in October 2002, an initial step toward establishing a lasting federal system. Serious fissures in the process developed over the next year, as some factions launched their own power-sharing negotiations in Mogadishu.

The political process was revitalized in 2004 at another conference in Kenya, which resulted in the establishment of a 275-seat parliament, the Transitional Federal Assembly, and a new Transitional Federal Government (TFG). The country's four largest clans were each given 61 TFA seats, and an alliance of minor clans took the remaining 31. The members in October elected controversial Ethiopian-backed warlord Abdullahi Yusuf to serve a five-year term as the first transitional president. Yusuf had previously been the leader of the breakaway region of Puntland. A month later, he appointed Ali Muhammad Gedi as his prime minister.

Despite the political process, clashes between rival factions continued and hundreds of civilians were killed. The TFG moved from its base in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2005 and established itself by early 2006 in Baidoa, a town about 155 miles north of Mogadishu.

In 2006, a fierce battle for control of Mogadishu broke out between an alliance of warlords and the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), a local Islamist group. Critics of the ICU, including Ethiopia and the United States, accused it of links to the terrorist network al-Qaeda. The ICU alleged that the United States was violating a UN weapons embargo by supplying arms to the anti-ICU warlords. By June 2006, the ICU had taken control of Mogadishu and much of southern Somalia, gaining a popular following for its promise to deliver law and order. The TFG in Baidoa feared it would lose any claims on control of the country and called for the intervention of East African peacekeeping troops, a move bitterly opposed by the ICU. Some Somalis warned that the involvement of regional troops would lead to a prolonged conflict, since neighboring states had supported different factions in Somalia, undermining their neutrality. There are credible allegations that Ethiopia's enemy Eritrea supported the ICU by providing arms to the movement. The UN Security Council passed a resolution on December 6 calling for a force of regional troops to support the TFG, but the measure had not been implemented by year's end.

Meanwhile, the ICU had taken control of the southern city of Kismayo in September and appeared poised to move on the small territory left to the TFG. By November, peace talks between the TFG and ICU had broken down. Ethiopia said it was obliged to repel the ICU threat, and in December Ethiopian troops were openly deployed in Somalia. A major Ethiopian and TFG offensive ensued late that month, and by year's end the ICU had been driven from Mogadishu and forced to retreat to the extreme south of the country.

Somalia is a poor country, and the economic problems Somalis face are compounded by both civil strife and natural disasters. The majority of Somalis are pastoralists or subsistence farmers. In the cities, because of the lack of government regulation, businesses and telecommunications industry have continued to function with some success. The absence of central authority since 1991 left a void that allowed businesspeople to enter the market without bureaucratic hurdles.

Since May 1991, the northwestern region of Somaliland, roughly comprising the

territory of the former British colony, has functioned with considerable stability as a de facto independent state, though it has not received international recognition. The region of Puntland, in the northeastern corner of the country, has also been relatively autonomous since 1998. However, unlike Somaliland, it has not sought full independence, declaring only a temporary secession until Somalia is stabilized.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Somalia is not an electoral democracy. The ICU, which controlled large swaths of the country for much of 2006, had not publicly committed to creating democratic institutions. Nationwide elections have not been held since the 1969 military coup, but 3,000 representatives of various clans and civic and religious groups chose an internationally recognized transitional parliament in 2000. A new, 275-member Transitional Federal Assembly was convened in 2004, which elected Abdullahi Yusuf to a five-year term as president. The transitional government controlled only a small portion of southern and central Somalia for most of the year. The country has no effective political parties, and the political process is driven largely by clan loyalty.

As in most countries experiencing long-term civil strife, corruption is rampant in Somalia. Transparency International did not rank Somalia in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Somalia's charter provides for press freedom, but journalists face threats and harassment. In the second half of 2006, there was an increase in the frequency of attacks on journalists, both by the ICU and the TFG. After the ICU took control of southern and central Somalia, the relative freedom that journalists enjoyed when the situation was more lawless was replaced by an atmosphere of fear. In one case, award-winning Swedish freelance journalist and photographer Martin Adler was murdered in June while filming a demonstration in Mogadishu. Also that month, the TFG shut down local radio station Radio Shabelle after it reported that a few hundred Ethiopian troops had entered Somalia. In November, Abdulahi Yasin Jama, a journalist who worked for two private radio stations, was detained for three days after he also reported that there were Ethiopian troops in Somalia. The ICU in September began closing critical radio stations and detaining journalists. The private Radio HornAfrik and Radio Simba were both temporarily shuttered for their critical reporting. Radio HornAfrik was told it could resume broadcasting if it agreed to stop playing romantic music and refrained from critical reporting about the ICU.

In December 2006, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) expressed its concern over the rising attacks on journalists as the conflict intensified. CPJ criticized the ICU for not permitting the head of the independent National Union of Somali Journalists to leave the country. At the same time, the organization also chided the TFG for shuttering Radio Warsan, which at the time was the only remaining private station in Baidoa, for its critical reporting.

Somalia is overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, but there is a small Christian community and some followers of traditional African religions. Even before the ICU's rise to prominence, religious freedom was limited, and it dwindled further after the Islamists took power in most of the country. While some of the ICU leaders stressed that their aim was to restore law and order in Somalia and not to impose a strict interpretation of Sharia (Islamic law), the courts acted with varying degrees of conserva-

tism, and the overall effect on personal freedoms—particularly those of non-Muslims and secular Muslims—was negative.

Academic freedom faces some restrictions similar to those imposed on the media, and there is no organized higher education system in most of the country.

Xenophobic sentiment escalated after the ICU took power, increasing the operating risks faced by foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other agencies. In September 2006, an Italian nun who had lived in Somalia for decades was murdered in a hospital along with her bodyguard by unidentified gunmen. Even though the situation is dangerous and chaotic, there are still several local and international relief groups and NGOs operating in the country. The state of civil conflict has made broad economic and labor policies impossible to establish, but Somalia's informal economy still functions and the country has an extensive telecommunications sector.

The ICU had dominated the judiciary in Somalia before it seized political control. Much of the popular support it built up was due to its ability to establish a semblance of law and order in the war-torn country. The courts of the ICU interpreted Sharia with varying degrees of severity, but some judges have been accused of supporting an al-Qaeda or Taliban style of leadership.

Prior to Ethiopia's attack on the ICU, human rights abuses occurred on a regular basis in Somalia. However, the outbreak of more intense warfare raised the possibility of abuses on a larger scale. Extrajudicial killing, torture, and arbitrary detention are common. Under the ICU, residents faced imprisonment or more severe forms of punishment for ordinary activities that were considered un-Islamic. During the first few days of war with Ethiopia, there were media reports of high civilian casualty rates and the threat of a humanitarian crisis as residents fled the violence.

Discrimination in Somalia is generally clan based, rather than ethnic or religious, since most Somalis share the same ethnicity and faith. Clan loyalty means that the larger, more established clans are able to dominate political and social life and harass those from smaller clans.

Travel throughout Somalia is restricted by poor security, and the situation worsened as fighting involving the ICU, government forces, and Ethiopian troops intensified.

Women's groups were instrumental in galvanizing support for Somalia's peace process. The country's new charter prohibits sexual discrimination, but women experience intense discrimination under customary practices and variants of Sharia. The ICU's advances in 2006 threatened to amplify the influence of the latter. UN agencies and NGOs are working to raise awareness about the health dangers of female genital mutilation. Various armed factions have recruited children into their militias.

South Africa

Population: 47,300,000

Capital: Pretoria

Political Rights: 2*

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Ratings Change: South Africa's political rights rating declined from 1 to 2 due to the ruling ANC's growing monopoly on policy making and its increasingly technocratic nature.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	2,2F

Overview:

After several trial delays, former deputy president and ruling African National Congress (ANC) party stalwart Jacob Zuma was acquitted of rape charges in May 2006 and resumed his duties as deputy president of the ANC, resurrecting his prospects of succeeding President Thabo Mbeki in 2009. Zuma's chances were further bolstered in September by a High Court decision to withdraw the state prosecutor's landmark corruption case against him. Local elections in March led to another decisive victory for the ANC, confirming the party's unrivaled hold on political power in the country. However, the elections were preceded by violent demonstrations of public discontent with redistricting plans and the pace and extent of service delivery in South Africa. In addition, in September provincial ANC leaders employed antidemocratic means in a failed attempt to remove the opposition mayor of Cape Town from office. Meanwhile, South Africa's vibrant independent media came under increasing pressure from the government in 2006.

In 1910, the Union of South Africa—including the British colonies of the Cape and Natal and the two Afrikaner republics of Transvaal and Orange Free State—was created as a self-governing dominion of the British Empire. Most political and civil rights were limited to South Africa's minority white population; the majority black population, as well as the colored (mixed-race) and Asian (primarily Indian) minorities, were effectively disenfranchised. In 1948, the Afrikaner-dominated National Party (NP) came to power on a platform of comprehensive, institutionalized racial separation, or "apartheid." Partly as a result, South Africa declared formal independence in 1961 and withdrew from the British Commonwealth. The NP continued to govern South Africa under the apartheid system for decades. Eventually, mounting domestic and international pressure prompted President F. W. de Klerk to legalize the previously banned African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress and, in 1990, to release ANC leader Nelson Mandela from prison. Between then and

1994, when the first multiracial general elections were held, almost all apartheid-related legislation was abolished and an interim, democratic constitution was negotiated and enacted.

The April 1994 elections—judged free and fair by international observers despite significant political violence—resulted in a landslide victory for the ANC and the election of Mandela as president. As required by the interim constitution, a national unity government was formed, including the ANC, the NP, and the Zulu-nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). A Constitutional Assembly produced a permanent constitution that was signed into law by Mandela in December 1996. In 1999, general elections saw the ANC claim almost two-thirds of the national vote; Thabo Mbeki, Mandela's successor as head of the ANC, won the presidency.

National elections in April 2004 demonstrated the continuing political dominance of the ANC. The party won 70 percent of the vote—its best showing yet—and claimed 279 of the 400 seats in the National Assembly; Mbeki was sworn in for a second five-year term. The ANC also secured outright majorities in seven of the nine provincial legislatures. The liberal (and primarily white-based) Democratic Alliance (DA) won 12.4 percent of the vote and 50 seats in the National Assembly, while the IFP won almost 7 percent and 28 seats. Several small opposition parties captured the remainder.

The ANC's rise to power has been accompanied by increasing tensions within the party's governing alliance, including the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), as well as with its core constituents. These trends were exacerbated in 2006 by the increasingly vocal opposition of the SACP and COSATU to the Mbeki government's economic policies, approach to land reform, record of public service delivery, and, most importantly, its alleged role in the controversies surrounding Jacob Zuma. In 2005, Mbeki had sacked then-deputy president Zuma after he was implicated in the corruption trial of his financial advisor, Schabir Shaik. Zuma's supporters—primarily from the ANC-led coalition's left wing, including the ANC Youth League, COSATU, and the SACP, as well as ethnic Zulus—claimed that the scandal was the product of a political conspiracy spurred by Mbeki's allies in the ANC and the media, and redoubled the accusations after Zuma was accused of raping a family friend.

Two Johannesburg High Court judges recused themselves in February 2006 from Zuma's rape trial, but Judge Willem van de Merwe acquitted him in May. The trial was marked by regular pro-Zuma demonstrations outside the courtroom, with many of the protesters espousing Zulu nationalist rhetoric and expressing violent disdain for both Zuma's accuser and Mbeki. Zuma's testimony was itself a source of controversy. He admitted to knowingly having unprotected sex with his HIV-positive accuser and attributed his allegedly nonconsensual sexual behavior to Zulu cultural mores. Later in May, Zuma officially resumed his duties as deputy president of the ANC and unofficially reclaimed his status as a prime candidate to succeed Mbeki in 2009. In September, Zuma's long-awaited corruption trial began. Soon thereafter, the Pietermaritzburg High Court struck the National Prosecuting Authority's case against Zuma from the roll, citing procedural missteps. Though the case was not dismissed, the move rendered Zuma eligible to be president of South Africa, a development greeted with much enthusiasm by COSATU, the SACP, and Zuma's Zulu supporters. COSATU called for Zuma's reinstatement as the country's deputy president.

Municipal elections held in March 2006 were preceded by a series of violent protests over the pace and extent of public service delivery and the government's plan to redistrict a number of municipalities into different provinces. Nevertheless, the ANC captured 66.6 percent of the overall vote and 194 city councils, including the mayoralties of five of the country's six major cities. The DA won 14.9 percent and 10 city councils, including—after extended negotiations—the mayoralty of Cape Town, marking the first time the ANC had lost control of a major municipality in the democratic era. However, in September the ANC-controlled Western Cape provincial government attempted to alter the city's governance system and replace Mayor Helen Zille of the DA with a 10-member committee, claiming that Zille's city council coalition was not sufficiently representative of the city's population. The effort failed, largely because of the intervention of President Mbeki; however, the controversy spurred opposition and civic leaders to question the ANC's tolerance for political competition.

Some 5.5 million South Africans are infected with HIV/AIDS, about 12 percent of the population; South Africa has the largest number of people living with the disease of any country in the world. Mbeki's government, arguing that the HIV virus does not necessarily cause AIDS, has resisted making antiretroviral drugs available to the public health system and has clashed with increasingly vocal HIV/AIDS activist groups. In 2003, the government yielded to substantial international and domestic pressure to provide universal antiretroviral (ARV) drug treatment, and the process began in 2004. (By September 2006, only 194,000 people—less than half of the targeted population—were using ARVs; of these, only 58 percent were obtaining them from the public health system.) Shortly thereafter, however, Mbeki reappointed controversial health minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, who has publicly recommended traditional remedies such as garlic, lemon, olive oil, and beetroot as superior to antiretroviral drugs in combating HIV/AIDS. Calls for Tshabalala-Msimang's resignation were voiced throughout 2006, though she received vocal support from a coalition of traditional healers. In September, 60 international HIV/AIDS experts wrote to Mbeki requesting her dismissal, and the request was echoed by the head of the influential Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), Zackie Achmat, at a COSATU conference later that month. However, in a significant policy reversal, the government coordinated closely with the TAC in formulating a new five-year plan to halve infection rates and extend ARV treatment to 80 percent of the infected population; the new plan was introduced in December 2006.

While a significant black middle class has emerged in recent years amid an economic boom and aggressive affirmative action policies in the corporate sector, substantial wealth remains concentrated in a small segment of the population. Officially reported at 25.6 percent, real unemployment is estimated at 30 to 40 percent. In February 2006, the government announced the launching of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative, aimed at producing a 6 percent economic growth rate accompanied by significant job creation.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: South Africa is an electoral democracy. Three successful national elections have taken place since 1994, the last in April 2004. The Parliament is bicameral; elections for the 400-seat National Assembly are determined by proportional representation based on party lists, and the 90 members of the National Council of Provinces are selected by

the provincial legislatures. The National Assembly elects the president to serve concurrently with the five-year parliamentary term. In general, the electoral process—including voter registration, voter education, and reliable balloting and vote counting—has functioned properly. However, the state-owned South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has been accused of pro-ANC election coverage. While political violence has decreased substantially with each election cycle, several people were killed in the run-up to the 2004 elections.

The ANC dominates the South African political landscape, as evidenced by its sweeping electoral victory in April 2004. However, policy disputes and the controversy surrounding ANC deputy president Jacob Zuma controversies have produced significant splits in the party's governing alliance with COSATU and the SACP. In May 2006, COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi warned that the country was "drifting toward dictatorship," and in October, Mbeki and SACP leader Blade Nzimande engaged in a public dispute over economic policy. The DA is South Africa's main opposition party, with 50 seats in the National Assembly. The IFP, no longer a significant force outside of KwaZulu-Natal province, holds 28 seats.

While the country features a wide-ranging anticorruption framework, with several agencies and special bodies claiming a legal mandate to prevent, detect, and combat corruption among public officials, enforcement of these laws and related sanctions are inadequate. In addition to the ongoing corruption scandals—including the Zuma-Shaik affair—connected with a series of government arms contracts from the late 1990s, several other major corruption stories emerged in 2006. In January, Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka was accused of using a state aircraft to travel to a holiday junket in the United Arab Emirates; she claimed that the trip combined leisure and state business. In March, Auditor General Shauket Fakie reported that more than 14 executive cabinet ministers and deputies, along with 50,000 other public servants, had failed to publicly declare their business interests as required by law. In August, former member of Parliament and major ANC figure Tony Yengeni began serving a prison sentence stemming from his 2003 corruption conviction in the 1999 arms deal scandal. South Africa was ranked 51 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression and the press is protected in the constitution and generally respected in practice. A number of private newspapers and magazines are sharply critical of the government, political parties, and other powerful figures and institutions. For primarily socioeconomic reasons, most South Africans receive the news via radio outlets, a majority of which are owned and controlled by the state broadcaster, the SABC. The SABC also dominates the television market with three stations, but the country's two commercial television stations, e.tv and Mnet, are reaching growing proportions of the population.

Press freedom in South Africa deteriorated in 2006, as the government continued to act on its sensitivity to criticism by restricting private media and compromising the editorial independence of the SABC. In June, the SABC—apparently under pressure from the government—opted not to air a commissioned documentary about President Thabo Mbeki because it contained allegedly defamatory statements about him. Two months later, press freedom and civil society organizations protested the introduction of the government's Film and Publication Amendment Bill to Parliament. The measure would subject print and broadcast media to the same republication

screening for "indecent content" currently required of films, computer games, and magazines. The legislation was pending at year's end. In the year's most worrying development, the website of the independent and adversarial *Mail & Guardian* newspaper in October leaked excerpts from an internal SABC report that found several outspoken government critics had been barred from SABC airwaves. The leaked report accused head of news Snuki Zikalala of repeated and inappropriate interventions in the SABC's news programs. The SABC then attempted to interdict the *Mail & Guardian* Online's publication of the full "blacklist" report, but the interdiction request was struck down by the Johannesburg High Court. In an unrelated development, the Johannesburg High Court in February did enforce an interdiction request from a Muslim religious organization to prevent the country's largest newspaper, the *Sunday Times*, from reprinting allegedly offensive cartoons of the prophet Muhammad. The move was decried by press freedom organizations.

Freedom of religion and academic freedom are constitutionally guaranteed and actively protected by the government in practice.

Freedoms of association and peaceful assembly are secured by the constitution, and South Africa hosts a vibrant civil society and an embedded protest culture. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely, and citizens are able to easily form NGOs and obtain the required certificates of registration. NGOs regularly testify before and submit presentations to parliamentary committees regarding pending legislation. In April 2006, however, the exclusion of the TAC from the South African delegation to a UN-sponsored AIDS conference highlighted the adversarial relationship between the government and the country's most prominent advocacy organization. Vocal and sometimes violent protests have mounted in recent years amid dissatisfaction with public service delivery, disease treatments, and, in 2006, the planned redistricting of a number of municipalities into different provinces. In February, a series of protests broke out in the Khutsong township, resulting in dozens of arrests, significant property damage, and peacemaking visits from several high-ranking ANC officials. Currently in Guateng province, Khutsong's move to the North-West province is being challenged in court.

South Africans are free to form, join, and participate in independent trade unions. Labor rights codified under the 1995 Labor Relations Act are respected, and more than 250 trade unions exist. Unions have been active since the early twentieth century and played a critical role in the anti-apartheid movement; as a result, organized labor remains politically engaged and influential. COSATU—which includes the National Union of Mineworkers and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa and claims over two million affiliate members—is part of a tripartite governing alliance with the ANC and the SACP. In March 2006, about 90,000 private security guards began a strike to demand better wages and working conditions. The strike, resolved in June, led to violence in several cities, including clashes with police, the murder of strike-breakers, and attacks on bystanders. In May, COSATU called a general protest against the recent loss of some 100,000 jobs in the powerful mining and textile sectors.

The independence of the South African judiciary is guaranteed by the constitution, and the courts—particularly the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court—operate with substantial autonomy. In December 2005, the government introduced legislation intended to reorganize the judiciary by reforming apartheid-era structures

and extending more executive control over judicial administration. The plan provoked wide opposition from legal professionals and civil society organizations, who saw it as a threat to judicial independence. In July 2006, the government stated that parliamentary debate on the measure would not continue until there had been widespread consultation and approval by the judicial branch.

Although defendants are granted a range of procedural rights, staff and resource shortages in practice undermine South Africans'—particularly poor South Africans'—rights to a timely trial and state-funded legal counsel and have produced a significant backlog of cases. While corruption in the upper courts is not a significant concern, the lower (magistrates') courts have proven more susceptible. In addition, there have been reports of violent intimidation directed at judges and magistrates. The recusal of the first two judges picked to try the Zuma rape case in the Johannesburg High Court—attributed to differing conflicts of interest—caused some concern about the ability of the judiciary to try high-level defendants. That concern was exacerbated by Zuma's acquittal and the subsequent withdrawal of the separate corruption case against him.

Despite constitutional prohibitions and government efforts to curtail the practices, there were reports of torture and the use of excessive force by police during interrogation, arrest, and detention. Deaths in police custody continue to be a problem. Excessive pretrial detention and poor conditions for pretrial detainees were cited by a UN Working Group in 2005 as major shortcomings of the South African penal system. While most prisoners wait an average of three months before trial, some wait up to two years. Prisons often do not meet international standards and are characterized by overcrowding, inadequate health care, and abuse of inmates by staff or other prisoners. In March 2006, more than 240 inmates at a prison in Durban called a hunger strike to protest their lack of access to HIV/AIDS drugs.

South Africa has one of the highest violent crimes rates in the world, and a murder rate that has hovered around 0.5 per 1,000 people since 2000. Such crime, along with concerns about police capabilities, has fueled regular instances of vigilante justice and a burgeoning private security industry. In June 2006, Security Minister Charles Nqakula caused a major controversy by telling opposition lawmakers that South Africans who "whine" about crime should leave the country. He later suggested that police officers complaining about the lack of cars in the national police fleet should ride donkeys to crime scenes. In November 2006, allegations of links between National Commissioner of the South African Police Service Jackie Selebi and organized crime figure Glen Agliott surfaced in the South African media, spurring calls from civic organizations.

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on "race . . . ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth." State entities, such as the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and the Office of the Public Prosecutor (OPP), are empowered to investigate and, in the OPP's case, prosecute violations of antidiscrimination laws. Citing the legacy of the apartheid system, the government has passed a significant amount of legislation mandating affirmative action for previously disadvantaged groups (defined as "Africans," "Coloureds," and "Asians") in both public and private employment as well as education. However, racial imbalances in the workforce persist, and a majority of the country's business assets remain in the hands of white-

owned companies. The government has focused its policies—with mixed results—on reforming inequities in housing, health care, and land ownership. It has also instituted a Black Economic Empowerment program that aims to increase the black stake in the economy, mostly through aggressive preferences in employment and government tenders.

The protection of property rights is a subject of great controversy in South Africa. The state generally protects citizens from arbitrary deprivation of their property. However, some 80 percent of farmland is owned by white South Africans, who make up 14 percent of the population. As a result, thousands of black and colored farm workers suffer from insecure tenure rights, and illegal squatting on white-owned farms is a serious problem. The government has vowed to transfer 30 percent of land to black owners by 2014. In 2005, the government agreed to reconsider its "willing buyer, willing seller" land redistribution program in favor of a more expedient approach; Mlambo-Ngcuka caused a major stir when she later stated that South Africa should "learn lessons" from and employ "the skills" of Zimbabwe in pursuing more rapid land reform. (Since 2000, Zimbabwe has seized thousands of white-owned farms and evicted both farm owners and laborers, precipitating a massive economic collapse.) In February 2006, Chief Land Claims Commissioner Tozi Gwanya stated that his agency would begin confiscating land in cases where negotiations with owners had lasted for more than three years; in April, a farm marked for the country's first expropriation in 2005 was sold by mutual agreement. In August, Agriculture and Land Affairs Minister Lulu Xingwana announced that white farmers engaged in current negotiations with the government had six months to agree to a selling price or face expropriation.

Increased illegal immigration, particularly from Zimbabwe and Mozambique, has led to a rise in xenophobia and occasional attacks by both police and non-state actors. In January 2006, the government announced plans to establish a facility—in coordination with the Zimbabwean government—to "regularize" undocumented immigrants from Zimbabwe in the northern province of Limpopo. Still, Human Rights Watch in June published a report accusing South African officials, including immigration and police forces, of mistreating Zimbabwean immigrants. There are an estimated three million to five million Zimbabweans in South Africa. The nomadic Khoikhoi and Khomani San peoples, indigenous to South Africa, suffer from social and legal discrimination.

South Africa has one of the world's most liberal legal environments for homosexuals. In November 2006, the National Assembly passed—and Deputy President Mlambo-Ngcuka enacted—the Civil Unions Act, legalizing same-sex marriage in South Africa. The Act followed a February 2004 Supreme Court of Appeals ruling in favor of a lesbian couple who argued that the country's Marriage Act should include same-sex marriage. In 2002, the Constitutional Court had ruled that homosexual couples should be allowed to adopt children. Nevertheless, in December 2006 a report issued by the Human Sciences Research Council documented a recent increase in anti-homosexual hate crimes in South Africa.

Equal rights for women are guaranteed by the constitution and promoted by the constitutionally mandated Commission on Gender Equality. While the constitution allows the option and practice of customary law, it does not allow such law to supersede the constitutional rights assured to women as South African citizens. Never-

theless, women suffer de facto discrimination with regard to issues surrounding marriage, divorce, inheritance, and property rights. Domestic violence and rape, both criminal offenses, are serious problems: South Africa has one of the world's highest rates of sexual abuse. The Zuma rape case brought the issue to the fore, particularly given the cavalier attitudes displayed by Zuma and many of his supporters toward rape and the supporters' violent treatment of women's rights advocates demonstrating outside the courthouse. In May 2006, a new and long-awaited sexual offenses bill tabled in Parliament was condemned by gender activists as an unacceptably weak version of an earlier bill that had relied heavily on input from civil society. The bill was pending at year's end. In December, the ANC sacked its chief parliamentary whip for sexually harassing a female intern. Women are also subject to sexual harassment and wage discrimination in the workplace and are not well represented in top management positions. However, women hold 131 seats in the National Assembly and head 12 of 28 ministries and four of nine provincial governments. In 2005, Mbeki appointed Mlambo-Ngcuka as deputy president.

South Korea

Population: 48,500,000
Capital: Seoul

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview:

The popularity of President Roh Moo-huyn continued to decline in 2006, as his liberal Uri Party lost several provincial governorship elections. At the United Nations, South Korean foreign minister Ban Ki-moon was elected to succeed Kofi Annan as secretary general. Also during the year, South Korea, a member of the UN Commission on Human Rights with an otherwise strong voting record, changed policy to vote in favor of a resolution condemning North Korean violations after three years of "absence" or "abstention" on the issue.

The Republic of Korea (ROK) was established on the southern portion of the Korean Peninsula in 1948, three years after the Allied victory in World War II ended Japan's 35-year occupation. U.S. and Soviet forces had divided the peninsula between them, initially in order to accept the surrender of the Japanese army. The subsequent Korean War (1950-1953) pitted the U.S.- and UN-backed ROK, or South Korea, against the Soviet- and Chinese-backed Democratic People's Republic of

Korea (DPRK), or North Korea, and left some three million Koreans dead or wounded. In the decades that followed the 1953 armistice, South Korea's mainly military rulers crushed left-wing dissent and kept the nation on a war footing in response to the continuing threat from the North. South Korea also led an industrialization drive that transformed the poor, agrarian land into one of the world's largest economies.

South Korea began its democratic transition in 1987, when military strongman Chun Doo-hwan acceded to widespread student protests and allowed his successor to be chosen in a direct presidential election. In the December balloting, Chun's protege, Roh Tai-woo, defeated the country's two best-known dissidents, Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung.

After joining the ruling party in 1990, Kim Young-sam defeated Kim Dae-jung in the 1992 presidential election to become South Korea's first civilian president since 1961. As president, he reduced corruption, sacked hard-line military officers, curbed the domestic security services, and successfully prosecuted former presidents Chun and Roh for corruption and treason. However, the country was hit hard by the regional financial crisis of 1997-1998. Angry over the government's failure to better supervise the country's banks and business conglomerates, South Koreans in December 1997 elected as president the former dissident Kim Dae-jung, who became the first opposition candidate to win a presidential election. Under his leadership, South Korea's economy rebounded to become one of the most robust in Asia.

Public frustration with a series of corruption scandals, along with criticism that Kim Dae-jung's policy of engagement with North Korea had reaped few benefits, helped the opposition Grand National Party (GNP) take the most seats in the 2000 parliamentary elections. It captured 133 out of 273 seats, with Kim's Millennium Democratic Party (MDP) taking 115. With Kim constitutionally barred from seeking a second term, Roh Moo-huyn, 56, won the December 2002 presidential elections on the MDP ticket. He narrowly beat Lee Hoi-chang of the GNP, after a campaign in which Roh mixed populist promises with anti-American rhetoric. (Anti-American sentiment has grown in recent years due to disputes over the U.S.-ROK Status of Forces Agreement, the location of a huge U.S. army base in downtown Seoul, the handling of the accidental killings of Korean schoolchildren by a U.S. armored vehicle in 2002, and contrasting approaches to North Korea.)

Roh took office in February 2003 facing an economic slowdown, an opposition-led parliament, and public moves by North Korea to revive its nuclear weapons program. In addition, a major fundraising scandal added urgency to long-standing calls for an overhaul of South Korea's campaign finance laws. Late in the year, prosecutors were investigating allegations that former top aides to Roh, as well as legislators from across the political spectrum, had accepted millions of dollars in illegal corporate donations before and after the 2002 presidential election. The parliament put off consideration of several bills as it remained at loggerheads with Roh over how to investigate the scandal. In October 2003, lawmakers loyal to Roh—mostly from the MDP, but a few from the GNP—formed the Uri Party. The following month, Roh vetoed a GNP bill calling for an independent counsel to investigate allegations of corruption in his administration. The president said that any independent investigation should wait until prosecutors investigating three of his former aides finished their work. Elected on pledges to improve corporate governance, bring greater

transparency to state institutions, and engage (rather than contain) bellicose North Korea, Roh was forced to reshuffle his priorities.

In February 2004, Roh survived a political crisis when the opposition brought a parliamentary motion to impeach him. The charges against him concerned a minor, at most technical, breach of election rules (Roh had urged support for the Uri Party), and were widely seen as exaggerated, if not inappropriate. South Korean voters demonstrated their disapproval of the proceedings by supporting the president's party in parliamentary elections held in April 2004. The Uri Party won 152 seats, taking control of the chamber. The GNP and the MDP, the main opposition parties and the instigators of the impeachment vote, won 121 seats and 9 seats, respectively. The MDP's loss was particularly severe and proved that the impeachment vote had been an enormous miscalculation. Although Roh had stepped down from power following the impeachment vote, the Uri Party's victory in the parliamentary elections led the Constitutional Court to overturn the impeachment vote, and Roh was reinstated as president. Nevertheless, his popularity entered a period of sustained decline and the Uri Party suffered substantial losses in provincial gubernatorial elections in May 2006.

South Korea's relations with North Korea—particularly the appropriateness of the 1948 National Security Law (NSL)—remained a major issue in 2006. The NSL assumes an antagonistic relationship between North and South Korea and combines legitimate counterespionage measures with vague prohibitions on "anti-state activities" and "benefiting the enemy," and restrictions on expression, movement, and the media. The NSL retained support among a section of the public and Parliament, while opponents were divided between advocates of reform and total abolition. In the absence of a consensus on the matter, the NSL remained unchanged.

- Roh for the most part maintained his "peace and prosperity" engagement policy toward North Korea—a continuation of the "sunshine" policy of his predecessor, Kim Dae-jung—despite North Korea's missile tests in July and its test of a nuclear device in October, which drew international condemnation. Also in October, ROK foreign minister Ban Ki-moon was elected to succeed Kofi Annan as UN secretary general.

The following month witnessed a major change in South Korea's human rights policy toward North Korea. Previously, in 2003, 2004, and 2005, South Korea had "absented" itself or "abstained" on European Union-sponsored resolutions at the UN Commission on Human Rights and the UN General Assembly that criticized North Korea's severe human rights violations. In November 2006, however, South Korea voted with the majority of member states to recognize and condemn North Korea's violations.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

South Korea is an electoral democracy. Elections are free and fair, and the government is elected on the basis of universal suffrage. The constitution, which was created in 1988, vests executive power in a directly elected president, who is limited to a single five-year term. The unicameral National Assembly, consisting of 299 members, is elected for a four-year term. The 2004 parliamentary elections demonstrated that major steps had been taken since 2002 to improve electoral processes. The advances included adherence to campaigning rules, record levels of voter turnout, and a reduction in electoral irregularities under the watch of the National Election Commission.

Political pluralism is robust in South Korean politics, with multiple political parties competing for power. Major parties include the Uri Party, the MDP, the GNP, the United Liberal Democrats (ULP), and the Democratic Labor Party (DLP).

Despite the overall health of the South Korean political system, bribery, influence peddling, and extortion by officials have not been eradicated from political, business, and everyday life. South Korea was ranked 42 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

South Korea's news media are free and competitive. Newspapers are privately owned and report fairly aggressively on governmental policies and alleged official and corporate wrongdoing. The government directly censors films for sex and violence, though it has been increasingly liberal in recent years. Violent and sexually explicit websites are also censored. The administration of President Roh has recently come under attack for trying to push through legislation that would restrict the circulation of conservative dailies, thereby curbing their influence in a sharply divided country; the law did not pass. The NSL stipulates that South Koreans may not listen to North Korean radio. However, no effective measures are in place to block access to broadcasts by North Korean stations.

The constitution in South Korea provides for freedom of religion, and the government does not enforce any state religion. Academic freedom is also unrestricted, with the exception of limits on statements of support for the North Korean regime or pro-Communist comments. In 2006, legal proceedings were initiated against a Dongguk University (Seoul) professor for writings and remarks considered to be pro-North Korean.

South Korea maintains freedom of association, and the Law on Assembly and Demonstrations requires only that the police be informed in advance of all demonstrations, including political rallies. Human rights groups, social welfare organizations, and other nongovernmental groups are active and operate freely.

The country's independent labor unions strongly advocate workers' interests, organizing high-profile strikes and demonstrations that sometimes lead to arrests. The law still bars defense-industry and white-collar government workers from forming unions and bargaining collectively, although government workers can form more limited workplace councils. Even those federations not recognized by the government operate in practice without restriction. Collective bargaining is widespread among both legal and unrecognized labor federations.

South Korea's judiciary is generally considered to be independent. There is no trial by jury; judges render verdicts in all cases. Officers of the National Police Administration, under the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs, are occasionally responsible for human rights abuses such as verbal and physical abuse of detainees. The police are generally considered well disciplined and uncorrupt. In 2005, a handful of long-term prisoners held under the 1948 NSL were released, leaving only a few cases in 2006.

Because South Korean citizenship is based on parentage rather than place of birth, residents who are not ethnic Koreans face extreme difficulties obtaining citizenship. Lack of citizenship bars them from the civil service and also limits job opportunities at some major corporations. The country's few ethnic minorities face legal and societal discrimination.

The government generally respects citizens' right to privacy. An Anti-Wiretap

Law sets out the conditions under which the government can monitor telephone calls, mail, and e-mail. Travel both within South Korea and abroad is unrestricted; the only exception is travel to North Korea, for which government approval is required.

Although women in South Korea possess de jure equality, there is de facto discrimination in society, with men enjoying more social privileges and better employment opportunities. However, a landmark ruling by the Supreme Court in July 2005 granted married women in South Korea equal rights with respect to the inheritance of property owned by family clans. Previously, married women were considered to be part of their husband's family and were not eligible to inherit family property. Women's rights groups in South Korea hailed the decision as a significant step in the reduction of gender discrimination within the family. A South Korean diplomat, Mrs. Kang Kyung-wha, chaired the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and in late 2006 she was appointed deputy UN high commissioner for human rights.

Spain

Population: 45,500,000

Capital: Madrid

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: The militant Basque separatist group ETA announced its first permanent ceasefire in March 2006. However, talks between the separatist group and the Spanish government broke down in December after a car bomb exploded in a Madrid airport. Also that month, Spain's Parliament approved definitive autonomy plans for the northeastern region of Catalonia. In June, a Spanish court struck down defendant Imad Yarkas's conviction and 15-year prison sentence for helping to plan the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States. However, the court upheld the Syrian-born man's 12-year sentence for membership in a terrorist group. A Spanish court ruled in October that Tayssir Alouni, an Al-Jazeera news presenter convicted of terrorist activity, could serve the remainder of his seven-year prison sentence under house arrest. Separately, more than 26,000 migrants, many traveling in boats from Senegal, arrived on Spain's Canary Islands in 2006, causing one of the country's worst humanitarian crises since the Civil War of the 1930s.

Peninsular Spain's current borders were largely established by the sixteenth century, and after a period of great colonial expansion and wealth, the country de-

clined in relation to its European rivals. Most of its overseas possessions had been lost in wars or revolts by the end of the nineteenth century. The Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 led to the deaths of more than 350,000 people and ended in victory for General Francisco Franco's right-wing Nationalists, who executed, jailed, and exiled the leftist Republicans. During Franco's long rule, many countries cut off diplomatic ties, and his regime was ostracized by the United Nations from 1946 to 1955. The militant Basque separatist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), or Basque Fatherland and Freedom, was formed in 1959 with the aim of creating an independent Basque homeland and went on to carry out a campaign of terrorist bombings and other illegal activity. After a transitional period following Franco's death in 1975, Spain emerged as a parliamentary democracy, joining the European Economic Community, the precursor to the European Union (EU), in 1986.

During the March 2004 parliamentary elections, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) won more than 43 percent of the vote, capturing 164 seats in the Congress of Deputies, the Parliament's lower house. The conservative Popular Party (PP), which had been in power for 11 years, was reduced to 148 seats. Other parties winning seats included Convergence and Union (CiU), the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC), the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), the United Left (IU), and the Canarian Coalition (CC). Lacking an outright majority, the PSOE relied on the support of various regionalist parties to support its legislation. In the Senate, the PP led by winning 102 directly elected seats, while the PSOE took 81.

The elections came only three days after multiple terrorist bombings of commuter trains in Madrid that killed close to 200 people. Shortly after the bombings, the conservative government blamed ETA, a factor that angered voters when it was discovered that the perpetrators were instead linked to al-Qaeda, the international Islamist terrorist group. The attacks allegedly came in response to the conservative government's staunch support of the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Shortly after his accession to the post of prime minister, the PSOE's Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero pulled the 1,300 Spanish troops out of Iraq. However, Spanish troops remained in Afghanistan as part of a NATO security assistance force.

ETA announced its first permanent ceasefire in March 2006. The move was followed by formal talks between the Spanish government and Batasuna, the group's political wing, in July 2006. In September, ETA announced that it would not disarm before the Basque region gained independence from the Spanish state and, in December, Prime Minister Zapatero suspended talks with ETA when the separatist group claimed responsibility for a car bomb explosion in a parking garage at the Barajas Airport in Madrid late that month. The bombing caused minor injuries to 19 people, including two police officers. Spain, the EU, and the United States all considered ETA a terrorist organization. In a separate development, Spanish police dealt a blow to the far-left group, the October First Anti-Fascist Resistance Group (GRAPO), with the arrest of three of the group's key leaders during the year.

In March 2006, Spain's Parliament approved definitive autonomy plans for the northeastern region of Catalonia despite resistance from the opposition PP. Catalanian voters in June approved the autonomy plan in a regional referendum, 74 percent to 21 percent. The plan gives the region national status within Spain, affording it greater powers over taxation and judicial matters, as well as more control over airports, seaports, and immigration.

Spain has actively sought out terrorism suspects in recent years. In March 2006, a Spanish court charged 32 suspected Islamist militants with an alleged plot to blow up the National Court in Madrid. In another case, a court in June struck down a 15-year prison term for a suspected planner of al-Qaeda's September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States. The Syrian-born man, Imad Yarkas, had been arrested in 2001 and convicted in 2005. The court overturned his conviction on the 2001 plot charge, but upheld his 12-year sentence for belonging to a terrorist group. In October 2006, a Spanish court ruled that Tayssir Alouni, a presenter for the Qatar-based Arabic satellite television network Al-Jazeera who had become famous for interviewing al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, could serve the remainder of his seven-year prison sentence under house arrest. Alouni had been sentenced in September 2005 along with 23 other people implicated in terrorist activities.

In September, the Spanish foreign minister admitted that Spain might have been a stopover point for secret CIA flights that were part of the U.S. policy of extraordinary rendition, in which terrorism suspects were allegedly transferred abroad for coercive interrogation. Although none of the planes that supposedly stopped in Spain were said to have been carrying detainees, investigators were seeking to determine whether the planes were used for that purpose before or after their stops in the country.

Also in September, Spain sent more than 500 troops to Lebanon to bolster a UN force tasked with patrolling the border area separating Israel from the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. The UN force was part of a ceasefire agreement that ended open hostilities in July and August. Spain was the third-largest contributor of troops to the mission after Italy and France.

During the year, over 26,000 migrants, many traveling in small boats from Senegal, arrived on Spain's Canary Islands, causing one of the country's worst humanitarian crises since the Civil War. Spain and Senegal in October signed a cooperation deal that would discourage illegal migration while also organizing the recruitment of legal workers from Senegal. Separately, a visit in February by the Spanish prime minister to the country's North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla was called "untimely" by officials in Morocco, which lays claim to the territories. The enclaves had been ruled by Spain for 500 years and were a major entry point for illegal immigrants into Europe.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Spain is an electoral democracy. The Congress of Deputies, the lower house of the National Assembly, has 350 members elected from party lists in provincial constituencies. The Senate has 259 members, with 208 elected directly and 51 appointed by regional legislatures. Members of both the Senate and Congress serve four-year terms. Following legislative elections, the prime minister, known as the president of the government, is selected by the monarch and is usually the leader of the majority party or coalition. The candidate must also be elected by the National Assembly. The country's 50 provinces are divided into 17 autonomous regions with varying degrees of power, in addition to the two North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla.

People generally have the right to organize in different political parties and other competitive groups of their choice. The main political parties are the PSOE, the PP, the CiU, the ERC, the PNV, the IU, and the CC. The Basque separatist Batasuna party was permanently banned in 2003 for its alleged ties to the armed group ETA.

Spain ranked 23 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. According to a 2004 report by Transparency International, the country's anticorruption efforts have improved in recent years.

Spain has a free and lively press with more than 100 newspapers covering a wide range of perspectives and actively investigating high-level corruption. Daily newspaper ownership, however, is concentrated within large media groups like Prisa and Zeta. Journalists who oppose the political views of ETA are often targeted by the group. Internet access is not restricted.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed in Spain through constitutional and legal protections. Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion and enjoys privileges that other religions do not, such as financing through the tax system. Jews, Muslims, and Protestants have official status through bilateral agreements with the state, while other religions (including the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons) have no such agreements. The government does not restrict academic freedom. However, ETA has sought to silence academics who criticize its political goals.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, and the government respects this right in practice. People are free to demonstrate and speak publicly. Domestic and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely without government restrictions. With the exception of members of the military, workers are free to organize and join unions of their choice. Workers also have the right to strike, although there are limitations imposed on foreigners. The Basic Act on Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners in Spain, which went into force in 2001, limits the rights of foreign workers to organize and strike. The law, which forces foreigners to "obtain authorization for their stay or residence in Spain" before they can organize, strike, or freely assemble, is intended to distinguish between "legal" and "irregular" foreigners. The issue is currently before the Constitutional Court. In 2005, the Comisiones Obreras, Spain's largest trade union confederation, called for labor rights for prostitutes. According to the confederation, about 90 percent of the 300,000 to 400,000 prostitutes working in the county were immigrants.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary. However, there have been concerns about the functioning of the judicial system, including the impact of media pressure on sensitive issues like immigration and Basque terrorism. There have been reports of police abuse of prisoners, especially immigrants. Police can also hold suspects of certain terrorism-related crimes for up to five days with access only to a public lawyer. Prison conditions generally meet international standards.

Spanish law allows judges to try foreigners for serious crimes, such as genocide, that are committed outside of the country. In February 2006, Ricardo Taddei, a former Argentine police officer, was arrested in Spain on an international warrant for human rights abuses during Argentina's "dirty war" against suspected dissidents between 1976 and 1983, when the country was under military rule. In April 2005, a former Argentine naval officer, Adolfo Scilingo, was convicted of crimes against humanity and given 640 years in prison by a Spanish court. Mr. Scilingo was the first suspect to go before a court in Spain for crimes against humanity in another country.

Over 20,000 migrants, many traveling in boats from Senegal, arrived on the Canary Islands during 2006, causing a major humanitarian crisis. In October, Spain signed a cooperation deal with Senegal that would discourage illegal immigration while allowing Spain to open a recruitment office in Senegal to enlist legal workers. Spain

also signed deals with two other West African countries, Guinea and Gambia, which agreed to repatriate their respective nationals who were in Spain illegally in return for aid money.

In 2005, after international criticism of its deportation policies, Spain halted a recently resurrected 1992 agreement with Morocco, which had allowed the return of all illegal immigrants who entered Spanish territory from Morocco, regardless of their nationality. Many illegal immigrants enter Spain by way of the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, which border Morocco. The country's Aliens Law also allows for the expulsion of legal immigrants if they are involved in activities that are considered threatening to the country's national security.

The Spanish Parliament in 2005 enacted legislation that legalized same-sex marriage and allowed gay couples to adopt children. Two judges challenged the new law during the summer of 2005, noting that the constitution referred only to heterosexual marriage. However, the country's constitutional court rejected their challenges, arguing that the judges had no standing to question such laws. A separate constitutional challenge to the law by the conservative People's Party remained unresolved at year's end. Women enjoy legal protections against rape, domestic abuse, and sexual harassment in the workplace. However, violence against women, particularly within the home, remains a serious problem in the country. The current prime minister has made the protection of women's rights and gender equality a centerpiece of his administration.

Trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation remains a problem. In its 2006 Trafficking in Persons Report, the U.S. State Department found that the country continued to tackle the problem through prosecution, protection, and prevention. The Spanish National Police aggressively investigated and dismantled trafficking networks and provided specialized training to police recruits on both recognition of trafficking victims and victim assistance. The government also increased funding for NGOs that assist victims, and city and regional governments continued with demand-reduction initiatives.

There are no quotas for women in national elective office. However, women won 36 percent of the seats in the lower house of Parliament in the March 2004 elections, marking a 7 percent increase from the previous elections in 2000.

Sri Lanka

Population: 19,900,000

Capital: Colombo

Political Rights: 4*

Civil Liberties: 4*

Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: Sri Lanka's political rights and civil liberties ratings each declined from 3 to 4 because of heightened political intimidation by the rebel Tamil Tigers, increased harassment of the media, and higher levels of violence directed at members of the Tamil ethnic minority by the government and Tamil rebels.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	4,4PF

Overview: The southern political parties were less fractious during 2006 as newly elected President Mahinda Rajapakse of the ruling People's Alliance coalition gradually consolidated his own position within his party and his coalition's strength in Parliament. However, an escalation of violence beginning in December 2005 by the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, or Tamil Tigers), possibly intended to provoke the new president into an aggressive stance, initiated a slow slide back into civil war during the year. Although the February 2002 ceasefire technically remained in place, it was flouted on a daily basis by a growing multitude of violations, including military skirmishes between government troops, the LTTE, and a breakaway faction of the Tigers; aerial bombardment of Tiger-held territory; LTTE attacks and bombings directed at both military and civilian targets; politically motivated killings and abductions; and the forcible conscription of child soldiers. A humanitarian crisis unfolded, with more than 3,500 people killed and 250,000 newly displaced by the conflict during the year, mostly in the north and east. In a prevailing climate of impunity, numerous human rights abuses occurred, and rights to freedom of expression and association were increasingly restricted.

Since independence from Britain in 1948, political power in this island nation, formerly known as Ceylon, has alternated between the conservative United National Party (UNP) and the leftist Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). While the country made impressive gains in literacy, basic health care, and other social needs, its economic development was stunted and its social fabric tested by a long-running civil war that has killed an estimated 70,000 people. The conflict initially pitted several ethnic Tamil guerrilla groups against the government, which is dominated by the Sinhalese majority. The war, although triggered by anti-Tamil riots in 1983 that claimed hundreds of lives, came in the context of long-standing Tamil claims of discrimination in

education and employment opportunities. By 1986, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, or Tamil Tigers), which called for an independent Tamil homeland in the merged North Eastern Province, had eliminated most rival Tamil guerrilla groups and was in control of much of the northern Jaffna Peninsula. At the same time, the government was also fighting an insurgency in the south by the leftist People's Liberation Front (JVP). The JVP insurgency, and the brutal methods used by the army to quell it in 1989, killed 60,000 people.

In 1994, Chandrika Kumaratunga ended nearly two decades of UNP rule by leading the SLFP-dominated People's Alliance (PA) coalition to victory in parliamentary elections and then winning the presidential election. Early in her term, she tried to negotiate a peace agreement with the LTTE, but following a renewal of hostilities by the rebels, she reverted to focusing on a military solution to the conflict. Kumaratunga won early presidential elections in 1999, but the UNP and its allies gained a majority in parliamentary elections held in December 2001, and UNP leader Ranil Wickremasinghe became prime minister.

In response to an LTTE ceasefire offer, the new government declared a truce, lifted its ban on the LTTE and its economic embargo on rebel-held territory, and restarted Norwegian-brokered peace talks. A permanent ceasefire accord (CFA) with provisions for international monitoring was signed in February 2002; the accord prohibited political assassinations and recruitment of child soldiers but left large chunks of territory under LTTE control. By December, the government and the Tamil Tigers had agreed to share political power in a federal system. Although the LTTE suspended its participation in peace talks in April 2003, it stated that it remained committed to a political solution.

The peace process remained constrained by conflict between the main political parties about how to approach the Tigers, as well as intransigence by the Tigers themselves. In November 2003, Kumaratunga declared a state of emergency and temporarily suspended Parliament, stating that recently revealed LTTE proposals for the establishment of a Tiger-dominated interim self-governing authority (ISGA) in the North Eastern Province were a threat to national security. Although the state of emergency was pulled back and Parliament resumed functioning, Wickremasinghe claimed that his ability to govern had been severely curtailed by the fact that Kumaratunga continued to hold the important defense portfolio.

The impasse was broken when the president dissolved Parliament and called for elections to be held in April 2004. Bolstered by the direct support of the Marxist JVP, Kumaratunga's new PA-led United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) coalition won 105 out of 225 seats and managed to form a minority government. Apart from the JVP, other extremist and ethnic-based parties also made inroads, including a new party formed by Buddhist clergy, the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU, or National Heritage Party), which won nine seats. The new government's tenuous grip on power became immediately apparent when it failed to secure the election of its candidate to the post of Speaker of Parliament; instead, the UNP was able to win the position with the help of votes from the smaller ethnic parties.

Though Kumaratunga remained committed to finding a political solution to the ethnic conflict, progress in resuming meaningful peace talks was complicated by the addition to the ruling coalition of the JVP, which adamantly opposed granting more powers to the provinces or to the LTTE, and by the presence of pro-Sinhalese forces

such as the JHU in Parliament. Such stances were completely at odds with the LTTE's insistence that any future talks include discussions on the formation of an ISGA, which would give the LTTE effective rule over the North Eastern Province, and Kumaratunga was unwilling to risk the stability of her coalition government by proceeding with talks on the Tigers' terms.

Meanwhile, the ceasefire with the LTTE continued to hold, despite an increasing number of violations. Further instability emerged in March 2004 when Colonel Karuna (the nom de guerre of Vinayagamoorthi Muralitharan), an LTTE commander in the east who controlled an estimated 6,000 out of the total 15,000 LTTE troops, formed a breakaway faction, alleging discrimination in the treatment of eastern Tamils by the LTTE leadership. His rebellion was initially quashed with relative ease by the LTTE; after fierce internecine fighting in April, Karuna disbanded his forces and went into hiding. However, he gradually rebuilt his cadres, and armed clashes between the two groups continued, as both attempted to reassert their control over the east. By 2006, the reinvigorated Karuna faction had become loosely allied with the government, which provided it with logistical support in exchange for valuable intelligence information. As with the other parties in the conflict, the faction also increasingly engaged in killings, abductions, forced conscription, and other abuses against civilians.

The December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami devastated parts of the Sri Lankan coast, killing 35,000 people and displacing up to 500,000. Initially, observers expressed hope that the disaster would force the LTTE (whose cadres had been weakened by the destruction) and the government to work together on the extensive rehabilitation efforts required, but after a short period of cooperation, tensions emerged over the details of the proposed Post-Tsunami Operations Management Structure (P-TOMS) agreement. While some alleged that it discriminated against Tamils and Muslims, the JVP opposed the overall framework of the agreement, arguing that it gave the LTTE too large a role in the reconstruction effort. Although Kumaratunga signed the agreement in June 2005, the Supreme Court (in a case brought by the JVP) rejected several of its provisions, thereby hindering overall implementation. With diminished strength in the legislature, the ruling coalition was further weakened and unable to move forward with its policy objectives, including restarting the peace talks.

In another key decision, the Supreme Court ruled in August 2005 that the presidential elections, which Kumaratunga had controversially tried to postpone until 2006 on technical grounds, should be held in 2005. As Kumaratunga was barred from standing again because of term limits, the PA nominated Mahinda Rajapakse, prime minister since 2004, as its candidate. Against the wishes of Kumaratunga and some other party leaders, Rajapakse immediately took a hard line, alienating minority groups and forging preelection alliances with the JVP and JHU by committing himself to abolishing the P-TOMS mechanism and renegotiating the CFA. Largely as the result of an LTTE boycott, which led to extremely low voter turnout in the Tamil-majority northern and eastern areas (1.2 percent in Jaffna, for example, compared with more than 70 percent nationally), Rajapakse narrowly won the November presidential election with 50.3 percent of votes cast, as opposed to 48.4 percent for Wickremasinghe, the former prime minister. Calls for the vote to be re-administered in certain areas were rejected by the election commission.

Rajapakse began 2006 with a narrow mandate, and his primary political objectives were to consolidate his position within the SLFP and solidify his UPFA coalition's position in Parliament. The UPFA scored an early victory with a strong showing in the Colombo municipal elections in March, winning 225 out of 266 seats contested with 48.2 percent of the overall vote. The poll also considerably weakened the opposition UNP and the hard-line JVP and JHU. Rajapakse then strengthened his position within the SLFP by engineering his election as president of the party, thus sidelining former president and party leader Kumaratunga. Under the terms of a groundbreaking memorandum of understanding signed between the SLFP and UNP in October 2006, the UNP agreed to support the government in six key areas for two years. Despite the memorandum of understanding, UNP members were urged by the ruling party to defect and join the government, which several of them did during the year, further weakening the party's morale. Rajapakse also wooed smaller parties with promises of cabinet seats and other perks, thus assembling a loose parliamentary alliance.

In addition to consolidating his position within the party and his coalition's position within Parliament, Rajapakse cultivated a more authoritarian style of rule, whereby political power became centralized around the presidency and Parliament played a secondary role. According to a report by the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), the president and his brothers—Gotabaya Rajapakse, who was appointed defense secretary, and Basil Rajapakse, who was named a presidential adviser—made all the crucial decisions, with the cabinet and other party stalwarts basically serving as implementers and advisers. The governmental appointments process, by which a constitutional council nominates members of key independent commissions, was sidestepped; the council itself was not reconstituted after the terms of the previous members expired, and in its absence the president unilaterally appointed loyalists to official posts.

The president tried to address one serious shortfall of previous administrations by building a consensus among the main southern political parties on the government's approach to the peace process. Shortly after being elected, he convened an All-Party Representatives Committee, tasked with discussing possible solutions to the conflict. It met on several occasions during the year and was expected to submit a report in January 2007. After a hiatus of almost three years, talks between the government and the LTTE took place in February 2006, but they accomplished little except to bring both sides to the negotiating table. Further rounds of talks planned for April and June were postponed because of disagreements between the two parties, and a final round held in October similarly achieved little of substance.

By year's end, following the December death of Anton Balasingham in London, the prospects for a resumption of peace talks looked even more unlikely. Balasingham, the LTTE's chief negotiator, had been the only senior rebel who spoke English fluently enough to conduct meaningful dialogue. The government's hands may also have been further tied by a final Supreme Court decision handed down in October (prompted by a petition submitted by three JVP members), in which the Court ruled that the 1987 merger of the northern and eastern provinces was illegal. Although both sides professed a commitment to upholding the 2002 ceasefire and working toward a negotiated settlement, these statements seemed to be largely for the benefit of the international community and were eclipsed by events on the ground.

The defining trend of the year was one of escalating conflict, as the government and LTTE appeared more interested in pursuing military options and slid inexorably back into an undeclared war. Levels of violence started to rise after Rajapakse's election as president in November 2005, when the LTTE launched a series of ambushes on government forces in the north and east. In the two months that followed, at least 150 people were killed in the conflict, including a prominent pro-LTTE member of Parliament who was assassinated in a church on Christmas Day. Rajapakse appointed several hard-line generals to key positions, and planned to increase the military budget by 23 percent. After a suicide attack targeting the army chief of staff in April, the government responded by launching air strikes on LTTE positions in the first major military operation since the 2002 ceasefire. During the year, a pattern of daily attacks in the north and east resumed, punctuated by a number of LTTE land-mine and suicide attacks throughout the country, each of which killed dozens of people. The bombing of a bus in Anuradhapura district in June killed at least 58 civilians, and an attack in October struck the tourist city of Galle. Government forces focused on trying to weaken the LTTE's military capacity, particularly in the east, through attacks on its camps and on several high-profile leaders. The LTTE simultaneously targeted the security forces as well as the Karuna group in the east. Military operations intensified after June 2006, and the advantage shifted back and forth between the government and LTTE, favoring the government by year's end. More than 3,500 soldiers, rebels, and civilians died in the conflict in 2006, in what was termed a "low intensity war" by the international monitoring mission.

Conditions in the north and east dramatically deteriorated during the year, with the rising hostilities creating a humanitarian crisis and leading to a variety of human rights abuses. Largely indiscriminate aerial shelling by the Sri Lankan military in Tiger-controlled territory, including attacks on a school and a camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs), led to the death of dozens of people and the displacement of tens of thousands. People's mobility as well as their commercial and social activities were curtailed by curfews, road closures, and security checkpoints. All parties to the conflict—the security forces, paramilitary groups, the LTTE, the Karuna faction, and other armed groups—engaged in a pattern of human rights violations, including civilian killings; abductions and disappearances; arrests and detentions; political assassinations; child conscription; and extortion. Young Tamil males were most at risk of harassment by all sides.

This drastic increase in violations was accompanied by the international monitors' growing inability to track the situation. After the European Union (EU) designated the LTTE a terrorist group in May 2006, the Tigers demanded the withdrawal from the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission (SLMM) of members who were citizens of EU states. Threats to the monitors intensified during the year, forcing the SLMM to reduce the scope of its activities—it suspended naval monitoring in May and temporarily closed its office in Trincomalee. Under international censure, the president did agree to establish a commission to investigate some recent abuses, but it had not been constituted by year's end.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Sri Lanka is an electoral democracy. The 1978 constitution vested strong executive powers in a president who is directly elected for a six-year term and can dissolve Parliament. The

prime minister leads the ruling party in Parliament but otherwise has limited powers. The 225-member unicameral Parliament is directly elected for a six-year term through a mixed proportional representation system. Elections are open to multiple parties, and fair electoral laws and equal campaigning opportunities ensure a competitive political process.

While elections are generally free and fair, they continue to be marred by some irregularities, violence, and intimidation, and the LTTE generally refuses to allow free elections in the areas under its control. The interim report issued by the independent Center for Monitoring Election Violence noted that with 368 incidents on election day, the 2004 parliamentary elections were considerably less beleaguered by violence and malpractice than previous polls had been. The interim report of the EU's Election Observation Mission on the November 2005 presidential election noted that it had proceeded fairly smoothly in the south, despite some inappropriate use of state resources for campaign purposes and biased reporting by both state-run and private media outlets. However, voting in the north, held under a boycott enforced by the LTTE, was marred by violence and intimidation—including political killings and grenade attacks on polling stations and on the buses designed to carry voters into government-controlled territory—and featured very low levels of voter participation. During 2006, intimidation by armed groups dramatically shrank the space for nonviolent Tamil politics in the north and east, while the warlike situation led to more muted opposition from southern political parties.

Governmental coherence has been improved by the fact that the executive and legislative branches are now controlled by the same political party. Although President Mahinda Rajapakse began his term without a strong mandate, he gradually consolidated his position and introduced a more centralized, authoritarian style of rule in which he and a small circle of trusted advisers made most key decisions. However, some observers charge that this has led to a lack of transparent, inclusive policy formulation.

The seventeenth amendment to the constitution was designed to improve governance and depoliticize key institutions by creating a constitutional council responsible for appointing members to a number of independent commissions that would oversee the police, judiciary, and public servants. Owing to a parliamentary impasse, Rajapakse failed to reconstitute the council during 2006 after the terms of the previous council members expired, and instead made unilateral appointments to the public service commission and national police commission in April, and to the human rights commission, judicial services commission, the Supreme Court, and other judicial bodies in May. Some local groups allege that these actions have threatened the independence of the institutions and created a class of appointees who owe their positions and loyalty to the president.

Official corruption, particularly in the executive and legislative branches, is a continuing concern, and the legal and administrative framework currently in force is inadequate in terms of either promoting integrity or punishing the corrupt behavior of public officials. Sri Lanka was ranked in 84 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. Although hundreds of cases are under investigation or prosecution by the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption, no current or former politician has been sentenced. The trial of former deputy defense minister Anuruddha Ratwatte,

who was indicted in September 2005 on charges of bribery, was ongoing at the end of 2006.

Media freedom was one of the main casualties of the slide into war in 2006, as increasing numbers of journalists, particularly Tamils, were targeted and media outlets faced censorship and other restrictions. Although freedom of expression is provided for in the constitution, this provision was severely tested during the year. Official rhetoric toward journalists and media outlets perceived to be "unpatriotic" or critical has become more hostile. In September, unofficial prepublication censorship concerning issues of "national security and defense" was imposed by the government's Media Centre for National Security. Antiterrorism regulations introduced in December 2006 led to overt self-censorship on the part of journalists, and several were summoned for questioning under the new law. Several groups, including the Colombo-based Free Media Movement (FMM) and the EU's Election Observation Mission, noted that state-run media—including Sri Lanka's largest newspaper chain, two major television stations, and a radio station—remained heavily influenced by the government, citing cases of pressure on editors, unwarranted dismissals of staff, and biased coverage of the November 2005 election. While private media are diverse, they have become even more polarized, shrinking the space for balanced views.

A sharp increase in tension and violence during 2006, both between the government and LTTE and between the LTTE and other Tamil factions, severely affected journalists' ability to cover the news freely, particularly in the troubled north and east. The LTTE does not permit free expression in the areas under its control and continues to terrorize a number of Tamil journalists and other critics. The Karuna faction and security forces have also been responsible for abuses. A number of Tamil newspapers have been banned or seized by various factions, and distributors have been attacked or warned not to sell certain papers. According to a Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) report, over two dozen Tamil journalists were abducted, severely assaulted, or killed during the year. The largest-circulation daily in Jaffna, *Uthayan*, faced repeated harassment in 2006 despite calling for protection; staff members were killed by unidentified gunmen in May, and an arson attack hit its printing facilities in August. Journalists throughout Sri Lanka, particularly those who cover human rights issues or official misconduct, continue to face intimidation and threats from security forces and government officials. In a growing trend, those perceived as being supportive of Tamil interests have also drawn ire from Sinhalese nationalist groups. Internet access is not restricted.

Religious freedom is respected, and members of all faiths are generally allowed to worship freely, although the constitution gives special status to Buddhism and there is some discrimination and occasional violence against religious minorities. The LTTE discriminates against Muslims in the areas under its control and has attacked Buddhist sites in the past. The U.S. State Department's 2006 Report on International Religious Freedom notes that Christian missionaries are occasionally harassed by Buddhist clergy and others opposed to their work. Tensions between the island's Buddhist majority and the Christian minority—and in particular, evangelical Christian groups, who are accused of forced conversions—are worsening, according to a 2004 report released by the U.S.-based Jubilee Campaign, with a sharp increase in attacks against churches and individuals noted from the end of 2003 and the introduction of anticonversion legislation in July 2004. This trend continued in

2006, although attacks have abated somewhat since 2005, when dozens of incidents were alleged and government leaders promised to crack down on Buddhist extremists. In April, a special parliamentary committee met for the first time to discuss the JHU-sponsored Prohibition of Forcible Conversions bill, and it remained under consideration at year's end.

The government generally respects academic freedom. However, the LTTE has a record of repressing the voices of intellectuals who criticize its actions, sometimes through murder or other forms of violent intimidation. Groups such as the University Teachers for Human Rights-Jaffna have faced particularly severe harassment at the hands of the LTTE. Local watchdog groups noted an increase in attacks on academics in 2006, particularly in the areas affected by conflict.

Freedom of assembly is generally respected, although political parties occasionally disrupt each other's rallies and gatherings. On several occasions during 2006, police used excessive force to disperse demonstrations. The LTTE does not allow for freedom of association in the regions under its control and reportedly uses coercion to force civilians to attend pro-LTTE rallies. Caught between both sides, aid workers were increasingly unable to operate safely in conflict-affected areas. In a particularly chilling example, 17 local staff for the international humanitarian group Action Against Hunger were killed execution-style in their compound in Mutur in August, allegedly by government forces. International staff of groups such as Doctors Without Borders were subject to new visa and work-permit regulations imposed by the Ministry of Defense, and were on occasion barred from working in rebel-held areas. During the year, human rights and social welfare nongovernmental organizations throughout the country, particularly those considered "unpatriotic" or unwilling to support the official line, faced greater threats and harassment from authorities, including assaults on their gatherings and a proposed parliamentary investigation into their activities.

Sri Lanka has a strong workers' rights tradition, with more than 1,500 trade unions registered. Most unions are independent and are legally allowed to engage in collective bargaining. Except for civil servants, most workers can hold strikes. However, under the 1989 Essential Services Act, the president can declare a strike in any industry illegal. Even though more than 70 percent of the workforce on tea plantations is unionized, employers routinely violate the rights of the mainly Tamil workforce. The government has increased penalties for employing minors, but thousands of children continue to be employed as domestic servants, and many face abuse.

Successive governments have respected the constitutional provision for an independent judiciary, and judges can generally make decisions in an atmosphere free of overt intimidation from the legislative and executive branches. However, there is concern about the growing politicization of the judiciary, particularly with respect to the chief justice of the Supreme Court, Sarath Nanda Silva. According to the FMM, in recent years Silva has narrowed the scope of human rights litigation, dismissed a number of judges without holding an inquiry or disciplinary hearing, and consistently defended the government in legal actions relating to political disputes. During 2006, there were several questionable judicial rulings in favor of members of the government, and two senior Supreme Court judges resigned. At the lower levels of the judiciary, corruption is fairly common among both judges and court staff, and those willing to pay bribes have better access to the legal system.

The rule of law remains weak, and conditions deteriorated during the year. In November 2005, the new government transferred authority over the police force, including the paramilitary Special Forces, to the Ministry of Defense. Heightened political and military conflict in 2006 led to a sharp rise in the number of human rights abuses committed by police and security forces, including extrajudicial executions, torture, custodial rape, and prolonged detention without trial. Such practices are facilitated by legislation such as the emergency regulations reintroduced after the August 2005 assassination of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, under which detainees can be held for up to a year without trial. In December 2006, the government reinstated certain provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which had been suspended as part of the 2002 ceasefire accord (CFA), giving security personnel powers to arrest and detain suspects indefinitely without court approval. Additional legislation introduced in December, the Prevention and Prohibition of Terrorism and Specified Terrorist Activities Regulations, was criticized for providing an overly broad definition of terrorism and granting immunity to those accused of rights abuses.

The independent National Human Rights Commission, established in 1997, is empowered to investigate human rights abuses but has traditionally suffered from insufficient authority and resources. During 2006, it recorded several hundred instances each of politically motivated disappearance, torture, and prolonged detention without charge. Torture by the security forces and police occurs in the context of fighting the insurgency as well as during routine interrogations to extract confessions. A lack of aggressive prosecution of the majority of past abuses, coupled with inadequate protections for witnesses, contributes to a climate of impunity for those who have overstepped the bounds of the law. Throughout 2006, as a result of the continuing impasse over reconstituting the constitutional council, appointments to key bodies such as the National Human Rights Commission and the National Police Commission were made unilaterally by the executive branch, raising questions about the suitability and independence of the appointees and further weakening these institutional mechanisms.

The LTTE has effective control over sections of the north and east constituting approximately 10 percent of Sri Lankan territory, and operates a parallel administration that includes schools, hospitals, courts, and police and other law enforcement personnel. The Tigers raise money through extortion, kidnapping, theft, and the seizure of Muslim property, and have used threats and attacks to close schools, courts, and government agencies in their self-styled Tamil homeland. The LTTE also imposes mandatory military and civil-defense training on civilians living in areas under its control. Rebels continue to engage in summary executions of civilians, disappearances, arbitrary abductions and detentions, torture, and the forcible conscription of children. All of these forms of abuse reportedly worsened in 2006. The Tigers typically deny all involvement in politically motivated violence, as well as in the abduction of children, despite clear evidence to the contrary.

Press reports indicate that the Tigers continue to recruit hundreds of teenage girls and boys to serve as soldiers or in support functions despite their June 2003 pledge to release all children within their ranks. Recruitment efforts, which increased in 2004 as the LTTE tried to replenish forces that joined the Karuna faction, are at times so intense that parents keep their children home from school to prevent their

abduction. More than 1,400 children reportedly remained in LTTE custody at year's end. Such practices were not confined to the LTTE; the Karuna faction was reportedly responsible for the abduction of hundreds of boys and young men in eastern Sri Lanka, often with the complicity of security forces and police.

During the year, the incidence of politically motivated violence increased dramatically, creating a humanitarian crisis in the north and east. All groups were responsible for the violence, including government forces, the LTTE, the breakaway Karuna faction, and other Tamil armed groups. From February 2005 through December 2006, the SLMM recorded 346 violations of the CFA by the government and 3,827 by the LTTE, with the majority occurring in late 2005 and 2006. The LTTE targeted Tamil political parties, journalists, and human rights activists that challenged its claim to represent the Tamil people. Hundreds of people were killed as a consequence of their political affiliation during the year, including Tamil political party activists, followers of the breakaway Karuna faction, military intelligence agents and suspected informers, elected officials, and members of civil society. Kethesh Loganathan, the Tamil deputy head of the government's peace secretariat, was assassinated by suspected LTTE gunmen in August. In retaliation, the government and the Karuna faction targeted LTTE officials and members of pro-LTTE political factions such as Joseph Pararajasingham, a Tamil National Alliance member of Parliament who was assassinated while attending church in December 2005.

Tamils maintain that they face systematic discrimination in several areas, including government employment, university education, and access to justice. Legislation replacing English with Sinhala as the official language in 1956 continues to disadvantage Tamils and other non-Sinhala speaking groups. Thousands of Tamils whose ancestors were brought from India to work as indentured laborers during the nineteenth century did not qualify for Sri Lankan citizenship and faced discrimination and exploitation by the native Sinhalese. However, in October 2003, Parliament approved legislation granting citizenship to about 170,000 previously stateless "Indian" Tamils. Tensions between the three major ethnic groups (Sinhalese, Tamils, and Muslims), which lead to occasional violent clashes, remain a concern. Human Rights Watch noted an increase in communal violence during the year, often in response to LTTE or military strikes. Attacks by Sinhalese against Tamils in Trincomalee in mid-April left at least 20 people dead and over 75 injured, 100 homes and 32 businesses damaged or destroyed, and more than 1,000 people homeless. Both the government and the LTTE generally failed to prevent incidents of communal violence from spiraling out of control.

According to Refugees International, as of 2005 an estimated 350,000 IDPs remained unwilling or unable to return to the north and east, and continued to live in government-run camps throughout the country or as refugees in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Separately, at least 350,000 remain displaced as a result of the December 2004 tsunami. While the total number of IDPs shifted throughout the year, an additional 250,000 people were displaced at various points during 2006 as a result of increased fighting in the north and east; an estimated 80 percent of those were Tamils and 14 percent were Muslims. An army attack that hit an IDP camp in November killed at least 50 people.

Women are underrepresented in politics and the civil service. Female employees in the private sector face some sexual harassment as well as discrimination in

salary and promotion opportunities. Rape and domestic violence against women remain serious problems, with hundreds of complaints reported; authorities weakly enforce existing laws. Although women have equal rights under civil and criminal law, matters related to the family—including marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance—are adjudicated under the customary law of each ethnic or religious group, and the application of these laws sometimes results in discrimination against women. The government remains committed to ensuring that children have good access to free education and health care, and has also taken steps to prosecute those suspected of crimes against children, including pedophilia. A general increase in violence during the year also resulted in greater violence against women in conflict areas, including attacks and rapes.

Sudan

Population: 41,200,000

Capital: Khartoum

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7.7NF	7.7NF	7.7NF	7.7NF	7.7NF	7.7NF	7.7NF	7.7NF	7.7NF	7.7NF

Overview: Although additional peace agreements with rebel groups were signed in 2006, the killing, rape, and displacement of civilians continued in Darfur, a vast area in western Sudan. For much of the year, the Sudanese government was locked in a bitter war of words with the United Nations, refusing to accept a proposed UN force that would replace the underfunded, 7,000-person African Union force already operating in Darfur.

Sudan, Africa's largest country, achieved independence from Britain and Egypt in 1956, and it has been embroiled in civil wars for most of its subsequent history. The Anyanya movement, representing mainly Christian and animist black Africans in southern Sudan, battled Arab Muslim-dominated government forces from 1956 to 1972. In 1969, General Jafar Numeiri toppled an elected government and established a military dictatorship. The south gained extensive autonomy under a 1972 accord, and an uneasy peace prevailed for the next decade. In 1983, Numeiri restricted southern autonomy and imposed Sharia (Islamic law). Civil war between the north and the south resumed and would continue until 2004, causing the deaths of some two million people and the displacement of millions more. Meanwhile, Numeiri was overthrown in 1985. Civilian rule was restored in 1986, with the election of a govern-

ment led by Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi of the moderate Islamic Ummah Party. Lieutenant General Omar al-Bashir ousted al-Mahdi in a 1989 coup, and the deposed leader spent seven years in prison or under house arrest before fleeing to Eritrea. Until 1999, al-Bashir ruled through a military-civilian regime backed by senior Muslim clerics including Hassan al-Turabi, who wielded considerable power as the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) leader and speaker of the National Assembly.

Tensions between al-Bashir and al-Turabi climaxed in December 1999. On the eve of a parliamentary vote on a plan by al-Turabi to curb presidential powers, al-Bashir dissolved Parliament and declared a state of emergency. He fired al-Turabi as NCP head, replaced the cabinet with his own supporters, and held deeply flawed presidential and parliamentary elections in December 2000, which the NCP won overwhelmingly. In June 2000, al-Turabi formed his own party, the Popular National Congress (PNC), but he was prohibited from participating in politics. In January 2001, the Ummah Party refused to join al-Bashir's new government despite the president's invitation, declaring that it refused to support totalitarianism.

Al-Turabi and some 20 of his supporters were arrested in February 2001 after he called for a national uprising against the government and signed a memorandum of understanding in Geneva with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the main southern rebel group. In May 2001, al-Turabi and four aides were charged with conspiracy to overthrow the government; al-Turabi was placed under house arrest. He was moved to a high-security prison in September 2002 and then released in October 2003.

By sidelining al-Turabi, who was considered a leading force behind Sudan's efforts to export Islamic extremism, al-Bashir began to lift Sudan out of international isolation. Although Vice President Ali Osman Mohammed Taha—who replaced al-Turabi as Islamic ideologue—remained committed to Sudan's status as an Islamic state and to the government's self-proclaimed jihad against non-Muslims, al-Bashir managed to repair relations with several countries. After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the United States, al-Bashir offered his country's cooperation in combating terrorism. Sudan had previously provided a safe haven for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, the international terrorist network. In March 2004, al-Turabi was again placed under house arrest, this time on suspicion of plotting a coup with sympathizers of rebel groups in the western region of Darfur; al-Turabi had been outspokenly critical of the government's tactics in the region.

In addition to repairing its international image, the Sudanese government focused on ending its long-running conflict with the SPLA in the south. After intense negotiations, the two sides signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005. The pact marked the first time in decades that the Arab-dominated government compromised and decentralized some authority. The CPA included power-sharing provisions, with the NCP still retaining a slight majority in Parliament, as well as measures to share state revenues. The civil war had been fueled in part by competition for control of southern oil resources. However, the new agreement failed to address the massive and systematic human rights abuses committed by both sides during the conflict. The government had bombed and destroyed civilian targets, denied humanitarian relief to rebel-held areas and internally displaced people, and forced conversions to Islam. For its part, the SPLA had also regularly attacked civilian targets and recruited child soldiers.

A key provision of the CPA allowed a referendum on southern independence to be held after a six-year transitional period, during which the government was obliged to withdraw 80 percent of its troops stationed in the south. While the CPA has generally held, there have been serious disruptions. Just 20 days after he was sworn in as vice president of Sudan under an interim constitution, the SPLA's longtime leader, John Garang, died in an August 2005 helicopter crash, sparking riots by supporters who suspected that the crash was not an accident. At least 130 people were killed in the rioting, and some 2,000 were arrested. Garang's deputy, Salva Kiir, replaced him as SPLA leader and national vice president. A number of the CPA's provisions have yet to be implemented, and many Sudanese have questioned the government's commitment to the deal. Meanwhile, the government of southern Sudan has moved to assert its international position, hosting peace talks between the Ugandan government and a rebel group in 2006.

As Sudan's lengthy north-south conflict was coming to an end, another brutal internal conflict was escalating. In 2003, rebel groups in Darfur, a historically marginalized region in western Sudan, began attacking Sudanese military positions, although some observers have dated the first attacks to 2001 and 2002. The residents of Darfur, mostly black Muslim farmers or herders, had long clashed with some of the region's nomadic Arab tribes, and with one another, over land use. The rebels also complained of discrimination by the Arab-dominated government. There had been periods of violence in Darfur since Sudanese independence, but the new conflict was on a different scale. By early 2004, government-supported Arab militias known as the Janjaweed had begun torching villages, massacring the inhabitants, slaughtering and stealing livestock, and raping women and girls. The military also employed some of the same scorched-earth tactics it had used in the south, bombing and strafing settlements from the air. Those who were not killed fled the violence, and one of the world's most acute refugee crises was born. Many arrived in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps within Darfur, while others gathered in refugee camps in neighboring Chad.

The African Union deployed a force to monitor a ceasefire signed by Sudan and two of the major rebel groups in April 2004 and increased the size of the force to 7,000 troops in 2005. However, it remained underfunded and was not authorized to intervene directly in the fighting, leading to calls for a 17,000-strong UN force.

The scale of the killing and displacement led to charges of genocide by international human rights groups, and the UN Security Council in September 2004 passed a resolution calling for a Commission of Inquiry. The commission's report, delivered to the Security Council in January 2005, stated that although the panel could not designate the killing as genocide, there was mass killing and rape. The commission also requested that the case be referred to the International Criminal Court.

Despite the ceasefire and UN negotiation efforts, the killing continued. As of 2006, credible estimates of the dead ranged from 70,000 to over 400,000, with more than two million displaced. Many in the IDP and refugee camps suffered from disease and starvation.

In May 2006, the Sudanese government signed the Darfur Peace Agreement with a faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), one of the western region's rebel groups, led by Minni Minnawi. All the other major rebel groups refused to sign the agreement, saying it did not address their concerns. After the signing of the pact,

there were demonstrations and riots in the camps by those who opposed the agreement. The fighting in Darfur intensified, and the UN Security Council repeatedly reiterated its position that a UN force should be deployed in the region, but the Sudanese government refused, saying it would not compromise its sovereignty. However, on December 26, al-Bashir sent a letter to outgoing UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, saying that he accepted a compromise plan to strengthen the African Union presence in Darfur and eventually create a hybrid UN-AU force.

Another marginalized area, in eastern Sudan, has also been the scene of conflict in recent years. Local groups had clashed with the government's large military presence around Port Sudan on the Red Sea, an important oil-export terminal. The Beja Congress and the Rashaida Free Lions, an allied pair of rebel groups known as the Eastern Front, signed a peace agreement with the Sudanese government in October 2006. The Eastern Front gained some political power under the agreement.

Sudan's economy, while weak, has been improving thanks to high oil prices. The oil wealth and the involvement of Chinese firms in the country make economic sanctions over the Darfur issue unlikely.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Sudan is not an electoral democracy. The last national elections took place in 2000, but major opposition parties boycotted the process and the European Union refused an invitation to monitor the balloting. President al-Bashir and his NCP won easily, and the NCP remained the dominant party until the peace agreement with the SPLA was implemented in 2005. The SPLM—the SPLA's postconflict political incarnation—and the existing Sudanese government formed a joint transitional administration, with the SPLM leader as first vice president. The joint presidency appointed members of the 450-seat lower house of Parliament, the National Assembly, with the NCP holding 52 percent, the SPLA controlling 28 percent and the rest of the seats divided among other northern and southern parties. The Parliament's upper house is the 50-member Council of States. Although the current members of Parliament were appointed, members of both chambers would serve five-year terms after the first elections, scheduled for 2008-2009. Part of the Sudanese government's reluctance to give Darfur rebel groups more power in Khartoum stems from its desire to maintain its majority in Parliament. Nine of Sudan's 30 cabinet ministries are now headed by members of the SPLM, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Higher Education.

Sudan is one of the world's most corrupt states. It is ranked 156 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The interim constitution guarantees free speech. Khartoum's private press can be extremely critical of government policies. Sudanese journalists can write articles that would have been impossible in previous years, and they have been particularly emboldened following the signing of the CPA. However, reporters still practice self-censorship and face harassment by the government for critical reporting. In September 2006, the decapitated body of Mohamed Taha Mohamed Ahmed, editor of *Al-Wifaq* newspaper, was found a day after he was abducted from his home by unidentified assailants. He had been charged with blasphemy in 2005 after he published an article that questioned the prophet Muhammad's parental lineage; editors were warned not to write about the case. According to Human Rights Watch, at least 15 local and

foreign journalists were detained over the course of 2006, although some of these detentions were very short. Human Rights Watch also charged that the practice of prepublication censorship, which the Sudanese government had ended in 2005, was restarted in September 2006. The same month, the authorities also warned journalists not to cover violent demonstrations that took place after price increases for basic goods were announced.

According to human rights groups, foreign journalists have difficulty obtaining visas to enter Sudan to cover the Darfur crisis, and even those who have visas face restrictions on movement and the ability to conduct interviews freely. Most broadcast media outlets are controlled by the government. Under the CPA, the United Nations was granted a license to establish a radio station in Sudan, and although the station has begun broadcasting, the government has restricted the reach of the broadcast to a very limited area. The news media enjoy more freedom in southern Sudan. The Sudanese government does not actively restrict the internet, but its penetration in the country is very limited.

The 2005 interim constitution stemming from the CPA guarantees freedom of worship. Before the peace agreement, Islam was the state religion, and Sharia (Islamic law) was described as the source of legislation. The majority of the population in the north is Sunni Muslim, while the majority in the south is animist and Christian. There is also a sizeable Christian population in Khartoum. Sudan's northern states are subject to Sharia, but those in the south are not. In the north, Sudanese Christians face discrimination. Permits to build churches are sometimes denied, and Christians are harassed. Under the 1994 Societies Registration Act, religious groups must register in order to legally gather, and registration is reportedly difficult to obtain. Sudan's north-south civil conflict was characterized as jihad by the government, and in some cases non-Muslims were forced to convert to Islam.

The SPLM controls the Ministry of Higher Education, and there are some critical voices in Sudan's private universities. Universities have also held forums for the discussion of critical topics. Overall, however, university professors practice self-censorship. The administration of public universities is controlled by the government.

While international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate in Sudan, the government at times restricts their movement and activities, which often include providing essential humanitarian assistance. In May 2005, Sudanese police arrested a member of Doctors Without Borders after the group published a report describing systematic rape of women in Darfur by government and militia forces. The Sudanese army and police have also at times surrounded IDP camps in Darfur and barred outside access to camp inhabitants. Humanitarian workers have also been targeted, and in some cases kidnapped and killed, by rebel groups. There are several international NGOs operating throughout Sudan, particularly in Darfur and south Sudan. During the year, government authorities harassed NGO employees, sometimes detaining them. In July Tomo Kriznar, a Slovenian human rights activist, was arrested and charged with espionage. President Bashir pardoned him after Slovenia's president Janez Drnovsek, who had sent Kriznar to Darfur, intervened. NGO employees have also been harassed by rebel groups, and as the overall security situation deteriorated, the threat to NGO workers increased.

Al-Bashir's government quickly destroyed Sudan's powerful independent trade unions after coming to power in the 1989 coup. Currently, the only function-

ing union organization is the Sudan Workers Trade Unions Federation, with some 800,000 members. Its elections are rigged to ensure the victory of government-approved candidates.

The judiciary is not independent. The head of the judiciary, the chief justice of the Supreme Court, is a government appointee. Lower civilian courts provide some due process safeguards, but higher courts are subject to political control, and special security and military courts do not apply accepted legal standards. In response to the International Criminal Court investigation into crimes related to Darfur, the Sudanese government created the Special Courts for Darfur. The credibility of the courts has been challenged by legal experts. Sudanese criminal law is based on Sharia and provides for punishments such as flogging and amputation. Non-Muslim southern states are not subject to Sharia. Police and security forces practice arbitrary arrest and torture with impunity, and prison conditions do not meet international standards.

The Sudanese government has been accused of genocide by respected international human rights groups, and serious abuses occur in Sudan on a nearly daily basis. During the war between the north and south, both sides committed serious crimes, although the government was the more frequent perpetrator. According to local sources, both the SPLA and the government of Sudan avoided including accountability for wartime abuses in the CPA. With regard to Darfur, human rights groups have also accused all sides of engaging in serious abuses. Most of the violations, however, have been perpetrated by the government and government-supported militias. The government and the Janjaweed have been accused of mass killings, rape, and looting of property. There have also been confirmed cases of slavery in Sudan.

Sudanese women face discrimination on many levels. Women in northern Sudan who are subject to Sharia face discrimination in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance. As in many other East African states, female genital mutilation is widely practiced despite being illegal. There have been credible reports of rape committed by Janjaweed and security forces on a large scale against women in Darfur. For a man to be found guilty of rape in Sudan, there must be four male eyewitnesses to the act, and accusers whose cases fail face prosecution. Adultery is a capital crime. Sudan has not ratified the international Convention on the Eradication of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, arguing that it contradicts Sudanese values and traditions. Of the 450 members of the National Assembly, 66 are women.

Suriname

Population: 500,000
Capital: Paramaribo

Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview: Ronald Venetiaan, serving his third term as president, was confronted with several high-level government corruption scandals in 2006. Meanwhile, opposition leader and former military ruler Desi Bouterse was indicted for the "December murders" of 15 political opponents in 1982. The government in July issued an official apology and offered compensation to the families of 39 people slain in a 1986 massacre by the military government of the time.

The Republic of Suriname achieved independence from the Netherlands in 1975, after more than three centuries of colonial rule. In 1980, a military coup led by Desi Bouterse established a regime that brutally suppressed civic and political opposition and initiated a decade of military intervention in politics. In 1987, Bouterse permitted elections that were won handily by the center-right New Front for Democracy and Development (NF), a coalition of mainly East Indian, Creole, and Javanese parties. The National Democratic Party (NDP), organized by the military, won just three out of 51 seats in the National Assembly.

In 1990, the army ousted President Ramsewak Shankar, and Bouterse again took power, this time in a bloodless putsch popularly known as the "telephone coup." International pressure led to new elections in 1991. The NF won a majority in parliament, although the NDP increased its share of seats to 12. The National Assembly selected the NF's candidate, Ronald Venetiaan, as president. Bouterse quit the army in 1992 in order to lead the NDP. In the May 2000 legislative elections, the NF again secured a majority of the National Assembly seats—and three times as many as its closest rival.

In May 2001, the fatal heart attack suffered by labor leader Fred Derby, who was to be the star witness in the trial of Bouterse and others for 15 political killings committed in December 1982, initially appeared to rob the prosecution of key testimony. However, the government vowed that testimony given by the witness during a preliminary hearing would be submitted at trial by the judge who questioned him. The death of the witness, the lone survivor of the massacre, came amid a parallel push by the Dutch to bring Bouterse to account for the murders and for his role in the 1980 coup. He had already been tried and convicted in absentia by a Dutch court for

trafficking more than two tons of cocaine into the Netherlands between 1989 and 1997. Suriname did not extradite Bouterse to the Netherlands because of a bilateral agreement barring extraditions of citizens from their home country.

In 2004, the upcoming 2005 legislative elections dominated Suriname's political scene. The NF coalition government's fiscal austerity program had helped to stabilize prices and the economy generally, but there were signs that the policy's negative side effects had increased voter discontent. A July public opinion poll by the Institute for Demographic Research in Suriname (IDOS) showed surprising strength for Bouterse's NDP, which placed less than 1 percentage point behind the NF.

In the 2005 elections, the NF coalition managed to remain the country's single largest political force, winning 41 percent of the vote. The NDP took 23 percent, 8 points more than in the 2000 contest. However, the NF failed to win an outright majority and fell well short of the two-thirds necessary to elect a president in the National Assembly, either alone or in alliance with other parties. On August 3, a United People's Assembly consisting of 891 members—including national, regional, and local lawmakers—gave Venetiaan his third term as president, with 560 votes for the incumbent and 315 for the NDP candidate, Rabindre Parmessar.

Corruption in government was a major problem in 2006. In June, former minister of public works Dewanand Balesar was placed on trial for corruption, having been stripped of his immunity by the National Assembly in 2005. Balesar was charged with awarding more than 30 fraudulent contracts worth a total of about \$36,000 to friends, family, and party loyalists and is thought to be the leader of a national corruption ring. His trial was delayed until the end of 2006.

Much of the corruption in Suriname was drug related. According to the U.S. State Department's International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, in 2006, Suriname remained a major transit point for cocaine en route to Europe and lacked the law enforcement capabilities to stem the tide of drug money entering the country.

In July 2006, the government of Suriname officially apologized for a 1986 massacre in the village of Moiwana, in which 39 people were murdered by the military regime. In order to comply with a prior decision by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the government paid \$13,000 to the 130 survivors and relatives of victims and held a public ceremony to accept responsibility for the crime.

The same year, Bouterse was formally charged for his role in the "December murders" of 1982, but his trial continued to be delayed by his still-strong political presence. The Venetiaan administration, however, pledged to "bring justice to the victims" but the case remained in judicial gridlock.

Suriname's economy continued to benefit from strong commodity prices and significant direct foreign investment in 2006, with gross domestic product expected to expand by an average of 3 percent annually. However, massive flooding caused by torrential downpours in May left more than 20,000 people homeless, and the rebuilding process has been slow.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Suriname is an electoral democracy. The 1987 constitution provides for a unicameral, 51-seat National Assembly, elected by proportional representation to five-year terms. The body elects the president to five-year terms with a two-thirds majority. If it is unable to do so, a United People's Assembly—consisting of lawmakers from the

national, regional, and local levels—convenes to choose the president by a simple majority. A Council of State (Raad van State), made up of the president and representatives of major societal groupings—including labor unions, business, the military, and the legislature—has veto power over legislation deemed to violate the constitution.

Political parties largely reflect the cleavages in Suriname's ethnically diverse society, although political-racial discord is much less acute than in neighboring Guyana. Suriname's major parties include the NDP, the National Party Suriname (NPS), and the People's Alliance for Progress (VVP). The current administration has support from the NF, a political alliance of which the NPS is a leading member.

Corruption remains rampant, due in part to onerous and erratically applied regulations. Suriname was ranked 90 out of 163 surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution provides for freedom of expression and of the press, and the government generally respects these rights in practice. However, some media outlets engage in occasional self-censorship due to fear of reprisal from members of the former military leadership or pressure from senior government officials and others who object to critical stories about the administration. There are two privately owned daily newspapers, *De Ware Tijd* and *De West*. A number of small commercial radio stations compete with the government-owned radio and television broadcasting systems, resulting in a generally pluralistic range of viewpoints. Public access to government information is recognized in law, although it is very limited in practice. The government does not restrict access to the internet.

The authorities generally respect freedom of religion and do not infringe on academic freedom.

Freedoms of assembly and association are provided for in the constitution, and the government respects these rights in practice. Although civic institutions remain weak, human rights organizations function freely. Workers can join independent trade unions, and the labor movement is active in politics. Collective bargaining is legal and conducted fairly widely. Civil servants have no legal right to strike.

The judiciary is susceptible to political influence and suffers from a significant shortage of judges and a large backlog of cases. The courts and the prisons are seriously overburdened by the volume of people detained for narcotics trafficking. The police abuse detainees, particularly during arrests. Prison guards mistreat inmates, and prisons are dangerously overcrowded. Military personnel generally are not subject to civilian criminal law. The government in 2006 continued to move forward with the process of becoming a member of the appellate jurisdiction of the new Caribbean Court of Justice, which was established to serve as a final venue of appeal for member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Discrimination against indigenous and tribal groups is widespread, and Surinamese law offers such groups no special protection or recognition. As a result, Amerindians, who live mostly outside urban areas, have only a marginal ability to participate in decisions affecting their lands, cultures, traditions, and natural resources. Tribal people known as Maroons are the descendants of escaped African slaves who formed autonomous communities in the interior in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their rights to lands and resources, to cultural integrity, and to the autonomous administration of their affairs are not recognized in Surinamese law.

Constitutional guarantees of gender equality are not enforced. Several organizations specifically address violence against women and related issues. Despite their central role in agriculture and food production, 60 percent of rural women, particularly those in tribal communities, live below the poverty level. Trafficking in persons remains a problem, and the country lacks a comprehensive law specifically banning the practice. Some progress was made in February 2006, when a special police unit dealing with the trafficking of persons arrested a prominent brothel owner for smuggling six women into Suriname.

Swaziland

Population: 1,100,000

Capital: Mbabane

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,5NF	6,4NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF

Overview: Swaziland's long-awaited new national constitution came into effect in February 2006, even as the monarchy cracked down on its political opposition following a series of firebombings in Mbabane and Manzini. While the constitution includes some cosmetic concessions to democratic rule, it effectively maintains the monarchy's ultimate governing powers. Throughout 2006, the country's inchoate opposition sparred with the government over the constitution's ambiguities concerning the legality of previously outlawed political parties. Separately, the government in July finally enacted legislation empowering the 10-year-old Anti-Corruption Unit to tackle the country's massive graft problem.

Swaziland's King Mswati III is the latest monarch of the Dlamini dynasty, under which the Swazi kingdom had expanded and contracted in conflicts with neighboring groups. Britain declared the kingdom a protectorate to prevent Boer expansion in the 1880s and assumed administrative power in 1903. Swaziland regained its independence in 1968, and an elected parliament was added to the traditional monarchy and chieftaincies. In 1973, Mswati's father, Sobhuza II, repealed the 1968 constitution, ended the multiparty system in favor of the *tinkhundla* (local council) system, and declared himself absolute monarch. Sobhuza's death in 1982 led to a protracted power struggle and Mswati's eventual accession to the throne in 1986.

Voting in the October 1998 legislative elections was marked by a very low turnout and was neither open nor fair. The process was based on the *tinkhundla* system,

in which nominations and voting for 55 elected seats in the lower House of Assembly were tightly controlled by local chiefs allied with the monarchy. Security forces arrested and briefly detained labor and other prodemocracy leaders before the elections; the crackdown accelerated after a series of bomb blasts struck government targets.

Parliamentary elections in October 2003 were preceded by calls from critics of royal rule to boycott the polls. While the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) did not participate, other banned opposition parties ran candidates. The elections were not deemed credible by international observers. However, three opposition party members were elected.

In May 2003, the Constitutional Drafting Committee, chaired by Prince David Dlamini, a brother of Mswati's, unveiled a draft constitution after three years of deliberations. The committee complemented the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC), formed in 1995 after a period of civic unrest and chaired by another of Mswati's brothers, Prince Mangaliso Dlamini. While the document—intended to replace the 1973 constitution annulled by Sobhuza II—removed the king's ability to rule by decree, it reaffirmed his absolute control over the executive cabinet, both houses of parliament, and the judiciary. It also maintained the tinkhundla electoral system and the ban on opposition political parties. Although the draft constitution included a Bill of Rights that provided for limited freedom of speech, assembly, and association, as well as limited equality for women, the king could suspend those rights at his discretion.

A subsequent period of "public debate" allowed individuals to submit their views on the draft to the CRC, but civic groups were shut out of the consultation process. The draft constitution was met with bouts of civic protest led by trade unions, banned political parties, and church groups. However, the government's use of force to break up demonstrations, and threats against union members participating in a January 2005 general strike, weakened the opposition. Approved by the rubber-stamp parliament in June 2005, the new constitution was rejected by Mswati the following month over clauses on dissolving Parliament, women's rights, religious freedom, and taxation. In July, Mswati signed a revised version of the constitution, which took effect in February 2006. While banned opposition groups and prodemocracy civil society organizations contended that the new constitution's guarantees of freedom of expression and assembly provided a legal basis for the operation of political parties, the government forcefully disagreed, breaking up several prodemocracy demonstrations throughout the year. In March, Prince Mangaliso Dlamini stated that the new constitution did not legalize political parties, a warning echoed the following month by Mswati.

In the latter months of 2005, unknown assailants had firebombed a series of government-associated targets, including the Swazi National Court, the home of government spokesman Percy Simelane, and the homes of three police officers. The government immediately blamed PUDEMO for the attacks. Arrests began in December, and by January 2006, 16 members of PUDEMO or its youth wing, Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO), had been charged with treason, attempted murder, and malicious damage to government property. Those detained included PUDEMO secretary-general Bonginkosi Dlamini. All but one denied the allegations and accused the government of using the attacks as a pretext to crack down on the political opposition. In January, two high schools were bombed. Amid allegations of police

torture of two of the suspects, the two South African lawyers hired by the state to try the case left the country without explanation in March; the suspects were then freed on bail.

Swaziland continued to experience meager economic growth in 2006, held back by retrenchment in the textile sector and a major drop in global prices for sugar, the country's main cash crop. Most Swazis remain engaged in subsistence agriculture, and 80 percent of the population lives on communal Swazi Nation Land. Many families depend on income from men working in South African mines. In February 2006, Finance Minister Majozi Sithole reported that about 800,000 Swazis—roughly two-thirds of the population—were living on only \$21 a month. In July, the UN World Food Program reported that one-fifth of Swazis would require food aid through the end of the year.

The country has the world's highest rate of HIV infection, at 42.6 percent. Only an estimated 4.3 percent of infected Swazis receive antiretroviral drugs to combat the disease. However, in August 2006 a survey by the National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS revealed that a government HIV/AIDS-awareness campaign had positively affected Swazi attitudes toward sexual behavior. The campaign has been opposed by some civic groups, who claim it stigmatizes and insults infected Swazis by suggesting that the disease is caused by marital infidelity.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Swaziland is not an electoral democracy. King Mswati III is an absolute monarch with ultimate authority over the executive cabinet, legislature, and judiciary. Of the 65 members of the House of Assembly, 55 are elected by popular vote within the tinkhundla (local council) system, and the king appoints 10. The king also appoints 20 members of the 30-seat Senate, with the remaining 10 selected by the House of Assembly. Members of both houses serve five-year terms. In November 2006, members of parliament staged an unprecedented suspension of legislative activity after the government failed to pay monthly grants to elderly and widowed Swazis. Traditional chiefs govern designated localities under the tinkhundla system and typically report directly to the king. In August 2006, a group of traditional chiefs gathered by Mswati condemned the new constitution as a political plot to "steal the country" from them, citing the document's Bill of Rights as "un-Swazi."

Political parties are banned, but there are political associations, the two largest being PUDEMO and the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC). The new constitution enshrines freedoms of expression and association, leading PUDEMO, the NNLC, and the umbrella civic organization the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) to claim that parties are now legal. However, the constitution does not explicitly overturn—or even mention—the 1973 ban on political parties, and in 2006, both Mswati and Prince Mangaliso Dlamini stated that political parties were still illegal. Mswati claimed that Swaziland was not economically developed enough for multiparty democracy. However, that year also featured the reemergence of Sive Siyinqaba, a "cultural organization" formed in 1996 by powerful Swazis that has hinted at ambitions of becoming a legal political party under the new constitution. The group counts government officials and members of the royal family among its members. In May, Health Minister Mfomfo Nkambule was rumored to have been fired because of his association with the group.

Corruption is a major problem in Swaziland. The monarchy spends lavishly while presiding over a largely impoverished population, and members of Parliament engage in fraud and graft. Swaziland has a relatively large and well-funded public sector that belies the actual delivery of services; in 2006, 45 percent of the national budget was allocated to paying public sector salaries. The Swazi tradition of *kwetfula*—gift-giving in return for patronage—has exacerbated a culture of corruption among government officials. In 2005 and 2006, Finance Minister Majozi Sithole cited a private consultant's estimate that the government loses 40 million emalangeni (\$6.5 million) per month to corrupt practices. In July 2006, almost 10 years after an Anti-Corruption Unit was established, Mswati signed legislation to enable the unit to seize fraudulently obtained assets and enforce penalties on both bribe payers and bribe takers. In addition, a toll-free telephone hotline was established in August for members of the public to report corrupt practices. The government has mandated that a "public education campaign" be carried out before the new enforcement legislation is actually applied. Swaziland was ranked 121 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The new constitution provides for freedom of expression, but the king may suspend that right at his discretion. Freedom of expression is severely restricted in practice, especially regarding political issues or matters concerning the royal family. Legislation bans publication of any criticism of the monarchy, and self-censorship is widespread, as journalists are subject to threats and intimidation by government officials. However, broadcast and print media from South Africa are received in the country, and both the state-owned (*Swazi Observer*) and independent (*Times of Swaziland*) newspapers occasionally criticize the government. In 2006, the *Times of Swaziland* lost three separate defamation cases and was ordered to pay damages to the government's UN envoy, to a member of Parliament, and to a Mbabane businessman. While the Supreme Court in May 2006 overturned a massive fine imposed on the newspaper in a 2005 defamation case, a number of other cases against it were pending at year's end. In recent years, including 2006, cabinet officials have stressed the importance of "positive" media coverage and threatened to monitor the press if it continued to cover the government in a sensationalist manner. There is one independent radio station, which broadcasts religious programming. The government does not restrict access to the internet, but few Swazis can afford access.

Freedom of religion is respected, although there are no formal constitutional provisions protecting it. Academic freedom is limited by self-censorship. In May 2006, PUDEMO's youth wing, SWAYOCO, announced a campaign to introduce "political awareness" about "governance... rights, and democracy" in Swazi schools. While Swazis criticize the government in private discussions, they are less free to criticize the monarchy itself.

The government has restricted freedom of assembly and association, and permission to hold political meetings, protests, or demonstrations has often been denied. However, freedom of association has recently been enshrined in the new constitution's Bill of Rights. Still, as in recent years, prodemocracy protests were violently broken up by police in 2006. In March, a PUDEMO rally in Manzini was forcibly dispersed, and several party leaders were arrested. Also that month, the Swazi press reported the use of violent tactics by riot police breaking up a SWAYOCO march in Msunduzi. Students involved in an October Mbabane protest march over

scholarship commitments were violently dispersed by police near the prime minister's office. In November 2005, the government passed guidelines governing the creation, registration, and operation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), a longtime goal of local NGOs. In October 2006, the NCA delivered a petition to the prime minister challenging the legitimacy of the constitution, calling for investigations into recent deaths in police custody, and urging the government to respect the rule of law.

Swaziland has active labor unions, and the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU), the country's largest labor organization, has led demands for democratization. However, government pressure has greatly limited union operations. Jan Sithole, the SFTU general secretary, has been jailed several times in recent years, and he and his family have received death threats. Workers in all areas of the economy, including the public sector, can join unions, and 80 percent of the private workforce is unionized. Wage agreements are often reached by collective bargaining.

The dual judicial system consists of courts based on Roman-Dutch law—including magistrate courts, a high court, and a court of appeal—and traditional courts presided over by chiefs employing customary, often unwritten law. The judiciary is generally independent in most civil cases, although the king has ultimate judicial powers, and the royal family and the government often refuse to respect rulings with which they disagree. Swaziland's judicial system became mired in crisis in November 2002, when the six South African judges on the court of appeals resigned after the prime minister declared that the government would ignore court judgments that curbed the king's power. The appeals court was reconstituted in November 2004, following assurances that the government would adhere to its decisions. In 2006, the NCA continued its attempts to challenge the new constitution in the high court. In addition, the NCA in September challenged the government's assertion that Swazis desired monarchical rule by petitioning the high court to force the release of citizens' submissions to the Constitutional Review Commission.

According to the U.S. State Department, 2006 saw numerous instances of severe police brutality, including torture, beatings, and suspicious deaths of suspects in custody. Security forces generally operate with impunity. Prisons are overcrowded, and inmates are subject to torture, beatings, rape, and a lack of basic sanitation. While the new constitution prohibits law enforcement officials from engaging in torture, the prohibition is not enforceable in court. The spread and treatment of HIV/AIDS is a major problem in Swazi prisons.

There were minor advances for Swazi women in 2006. The new constitution officially grants women adult status and equal rights. Previously, women were considered legal minors, enjoying only limited inheritance rights and requiring spousal permission to enter into almost any form of economic activity. In October, Education Minister Constance Simelane was appointed to the largely honorary post of deputy prime minister. However, women's rights are still very restricted. The constitution is unclear about whether it supersedes customary law, which is widely practiced and discriminates against women in family and property matters.

Violence against women is a major problem; while both the legal code and customary law provide some protection against gender-based violence, it is common and often tolerated with impunity. In August 2006, the government proposed a Sexual Offenses and Domestic Violence Act. In addition to punishments for domestic vio-

lence, the act mandates life sentences for rapists who infect victims with HIV and retains the criminalization of homosexuality. The Act was pending at year's end.

Child labor and violence against children are serious problems in Swaziland. According to the South African NGO Reducing Exploitative Child Labor in Southern Africa, children orphaned by AIDS are being exploited as cheap labor, including prostitution. In April 2006, the government launched a \$235 million campaign—the National Plan of Action—aimed at providing for the health and education needs of orphans and vulnerable children through coordination with NGOs and state agencies. In December 2006, the Royal Swaziland Police Force's Domestic Violence and Child Protection Unit—established in 2005—announced a one-third reduction in child abuse cases in its first annual report.

Sweden

Population: 9,100,000

Capital: Stockholm

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: In September 2006 parliamentary elections, a four-party coalition led by Fredrik Reinfeldt of the Moderate Party defeated the incumbent Social Democratic Party. Two weeks before the voting, it was revealed that the Liberal Party, one of the opposition coalition members, had repeatedly hacked into the Social Democrats' computer system in order to obtain information about their election strategy.

After centuries of wars and monarchical unions with its neighbors, Sweden emerged as a liberal constitutional monarchy in the nineteenth century. Norway ended its union with the country in 1905, leaving Sweden with its current borders. Its tradition of neutrality, beginning with World War I, was altered somewhat by its admission to the European Union (EU) in 1995 and was further eroded by a more pragmatic approach to security first presented in 2002. However, Sweden has continued to avoid military alliances, including NATO.

The population overwhelmingly rejected adoption of the EU's euro currency in a referendum in September 2003, despite strong support from government and business leaders. The "no" vote was widely attributed to popular fears of deterioration in Sweden's generous welfare benefits and damage to the national economy. The vote may also have been a reflection of skepticism about the EU as a whole.

On September 10, 2003, just days before the referendum, Foreign Minister Anna Lindh was mortally wounded in a knife attack in a Stockholm department store. Lindh's confessed killer, Mijailo Mijailovic, was sentenced to life in prison. An appeals court found that he should be committed to psychiatric care instead, but the Supreme Court confirmed the prison sentence in December 2004. The appeals court ruling had been met with general dismay by the Swedish public and elicited widespread criticism of the Swedish psychiatric care system.

The UN Committee against Torture ruled in May 2005 that Sweden had violated the absolute ban on torture by expelling two suspected terrorists to Egypt in 2001 with the knowledge that Egypt often tortured detainees. In November 2006, the UN Human Rights Committee again found Sweden guilty of violating the ban in the same case. The case involved the U.S. practice of extraordinary rendition, in which terrorism suspects were secretly transferred from one country to another for potentially coercive interrogation. The two suspects in Sweden, Ahmed Agiza and Mohammed al-Zery, were flown to Egypt aboard a Gulfstream jet leased to the CIA. Both were tortured by Egyptian officials despite Egypt's assurances that they would be treated humanely. Agiza was eventually sentenced by a military court to 15 years in prison for being a member of an illegal organization, while al-Zery was freed. In 2006, Sweden was ordered to compensate Agiza through monetary grants or asylum in Sweden and to make legislative changes that would prohibit the use of diplomatic assurances. None of these orders had been carried out by year's end.

In the September 2006 parliamentary elections, a four-party, center-right alliance headed by Fredrik Reinfeldt of the Moderate Party defeated the Social Democratic Party, which had been in power for 12 years. The Social Democrats had dominated politics since the 1920s, ruling for all but 10 of the previous 89 years. They won 130 parliamentary seats in the latest balloting. The Moderates took 97 seats; the Center Party, 29 seats; the Liberal Party, 28 seats; the Christian Democrats, 24 seats; the Left Party, 22 seats; and the Greens, 19 seats. High unemployment was a major issue in the 2006 elections.

Just two weeks before the vote, Sweden had experienced what was described as its greatest political scandal since the 1930s. During the early run-up to the elections, members of the opposition Liberal Party had hacked into the Social Democrats' computer system, allegedly to steal information about their campaign strategy. The revelation did not decisively affect the outcome of the election; the center-right coalition, which included the Liberal Party, won with 48 percent of the vote. However, criminal charges were brought against six people involved in the scandal, including former party secretary Johan Jakobsson, Press Officer Niki Westerberg, the party secretary of the party's youth wing, and a former journalist from the *Expressen* who aided party members in hacking into the internal network. The case remained ongoing at year's end.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Sweden is an electoral democracy. The unicameral parliament, the Riksdag, has 349 members elected every four years in a proportional representation system. A party must receive at least 4 percent of the vote in the entire country or 12 percent in one of the 29 electoral districts to qualify for any seats. The prime minister is appointed by the Speaker of the Riksdag and confirmed by the Riksdag. King Carl XVI Gustaf,

crowned in 1973, is head of state, but the monarch is largely limited to ceremonial functions.

Seven political parties are currently represented in the Riksdag. The largest is the Social Democratic Party, also known as the "Workers' Party," which led Sweden for the majority of the last century with the aid of the Left Party and the Green Party. Other parties include the Moderates, who represent an ideology that mixes liberalism and conservatism; the Liberals, considered center-right in Sweden's left-leaning political system; the Christian Democrats, who appeal to center-right evangelical voters, and the Center Party, which focuses on agricultural and rural politics.

The principal religious, ethnic, and immigrant groups are represented in parliament. Since 1993, the indigenous Sami community has elected its own parliament, which has significant powers over community education and culture and serves as an advisory body to the government.

Corruption rates are very low in Sweden, which was ranked 6 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. However, recent instances of corporate graft have stained Sweden's image. In December 2004, 77 employees of the state-owned alcohol retail monopoly Systembolaget were formally charged with bribery. Ten people at state-owned Vin och Sprit, the maker of Absolut Vodka, were prosecuted for bribery in 2006. Liberal Party secretary Johan Jakobsson resigned following the 2006 election scandal, in which it was revealed that the Liberals had hacked into the computer systems of the incumbent Social Democratic Party. Agence France-Presse reported that the Liberal Party had hacked into its opponent's system 78 times between January and March 2006 in order to obtain strategy secrets. Jakobsson resigned after admitting that he had learned about the activity but did little to stop or expose it. Sweden's new trade minister, Maria Borelius, resigned after being accused of tax evasion. An official at the Ministry of Industry was sentenced to 18 months in prison for fraud. Other minor incidents of corruption in government led to fines.

Freedom of speech is guaranteed by law, and the country has one of the most robust freedom of information laws in the world. However, hate-speech laws prohibit threats or expressions of contempt for people based on their race, color, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, or sexual orientation. Sweden's media are independent. Most newspapers and periodicals are privately owned, and the government subsidizes daily newspapers regardless of their political affiliation. The Swedish Broadcasting Corporation and the Swedish Television Company broadcast weekly radio and television programs in several immigrant languages. The ethnic press is entitled to the same subsidies as the Swedish-language press. In March 2006, Foreign Minister Leila Freivalds resigned after pressure from the ministry forced the closure of a far-right party's website in February. The website had reportedly been preparing to publish Danish cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad that sparked an international furor at the beginning of the year. Internet access is unrestricted.

Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed. Although the country is 87 percent Lutheran, all churches, as well as synagogues and mosques, receive some state financial support. In November 2005, a mosque in Stockholm was found to be selling media products with anti-Semitic messages. Police seized the materials, which, in 2006, were found not to have violated Sweden's hate-speech laws. Academic freedom is ensured for all.

Freedoms of assembly and association are guaranteed, as are the rights to strike and organize in labor unions. Domestic and international human rights groups generally operate in the country without government restrictions. Trade union federations are strong and well organized, representing about 80 percent of the workforce.

Sweden's judiciary, which includes the Supreme Court, district courts, and a court of appeals, is independent. Swedish courts are allowed to try suspects for genocide committed abroad. In October 2005, Swedish authorities released Abdi Qeybdiid, a Somali colonel, because of insufficient evidence linking him to genocide in his country. He had been detained a few days earlier based in part on a video allegedly implicating him in the execution of two men in 1991. Qeybdiid had been a top aide to Somali warlord Mohamed Farah Aideed, who fought U.S. and UN forces in the early 1990s. Swedish prisons generally meet international standards, although overcrowding and lengthy pretrial detentions sometimes occur.

The government maintains effective control of the security and armed forces. However, in May 2005, the UN Committee against Torture ruled that Sweden had violated the absolute ban on torture in 2001 by expelling two terrorism suspects to Egypt, where they were eventually tortured. The late foreign minister, Anna Lindh, was eventually found by a parliamentary investigation to have approved of the deportations.

In 2003, Sweden passed a hate-crimes law that addressed attacks against homosexuals and covered hate speech. Reverend Ake Green was sentenced in 2004 to one month in jail for hate speech after denouncing homosexuality in his sermon, but the conviction was overturned in 2005. In April 2005, Leif Liljestrom was sentenced to two months in jail for posting material offensive to homosexuals on his website. He was cleared of violating Sweden's hate-speech laws in 2006 on the grounds that he had simply expressed his Christian views, but he was then sentenced to one month in jail for allowing others to post offensive materials on his website.

The number of people seeking asylum in Sweden continued to drop, according to a report issued by the Migration Board in March 2005. The decline is due to increasingly tight immigration policies, which have led to the rejection of 9 out of 10 applications for asylum on the first attempt. In September 2005, the government agreed to change the immigration laws to allow a reevaluation of failed asylum seekers who remain illegally in the country.

Sweden gave formal recognition to adoption by gay couples for the first time in February 2003. In 2005, Sweden amended its laws on artificial insemination to allow lesbian couples the same rights as heterosexual couples, including access to in vitro fertilization.

Sweden is a leader in gender equality. At 47 percent, the proportion of females in the Riksdag is the highest of any parliament in the world, and half of all government ministers are women. Although 80 percent of women work outside of the home, women still make only 70 percent of men's wages in the public sector and 76 percent in the private sector; the government has announced efforts to close this gap.

Sweden is a destination and transit point for the trafficking in persons, particularly women and children, for sexual exploitation. The Aliens Act, which was enacted in October 2004, helped to provide more assistance to trafficking victims. In 2006, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced its intention to appoint a "special ambassador" to aid in combating human trafficking.

Switzerland

Population: 7,400,000

Capital: Bern

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline for Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: Switzerland in 2006 continued to mull the future of its relationship with the European Union (EU). Although a package of bilateral arrangements passed the year before had tied the country more closely to the regional bloc, the Swiss government found that full membership was still not politically acceptable in Switzerland. Also in 2006, an anti-immigration party in the government scored a victory when voters approved a tightening of asylum and immigration laws.

Switzerland, which has existed as a confederation of cantons since 1291, emerged with its current borders at the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, when its tradition of neutrality was also confirmed. The country's four official ethnic communities are based on language: German, French, Italian, and Romansh (the smallest community).

Switzerland remained neutral during the wars of the twentieth century, and it joined the United Nations only after a referendum in 2002. Membership in international institutions has long been a controversial issue in Switzerland. The country is surrounded by members of the European Union (EU), but the Swiss, who fiercely value not only their military neutrality but their political independence, have resisted EU membership. The country even rejected, in a 1992 referendum, membership in the European Economic Area, a "halfway house" to EU membership that features a trade agreement with the EU. However, Switzerland has joined international financial institutions and signed a range of free-trade agreements.

Hostility to both EU membership and immigration has been a hallmark of the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP). During the October 2003 legislative elections, the SVP made blatantly xenophobic appeals, including a newspaper advertisement blaming "black Africans" for crime. The SVP insisted that it had nothing against legal immigrants, who made up a fifth of Switzerland's population, and that it was merely opposed to illegal immigration and abuse of the asylum policy. The SVP captured the largest share of the vote, while the center-left Social Democratic Party (SP) finished just behind. The center-right Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP) received barely half the total of the SVP.

With this success, SVP leader Christoph Blocher called for a second Federal Council seat for his party. Blocher demanded that he and another minister be ap-

pointed to the council, with a seat being taken from the CVP. After extensive negotiations, the other parties agreed. In late 2003, Blocher joined the cabinet as head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police. The rise of the SVP brought new tensions into the Swiss cabinet.

In June 2005, a package of bilateral accords with the EU passed in a referendum, approved by 55 percent of Swiss voters, after years of negotiation. Switzerland joined the Schengen area, a passport-free travel zone consisting of two other non-EU countries (Norway and Iceland) and 13 of the 25 EU member states. The accord also deepened Switzerland's cooperation with the EU on asylum policy, as well as justice and home affairs. In September, a second referendum passed, extending the free movement of labor to the 10 countries that had joined the EU in 2004 (mostly post-Communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe).

The SVP opposed both referendums, and their passage led to speculation that the party had passed its political peak. However, in September 2006, it successfully championed a tightening of asylum and immigration laws in a new referendum. Asylum seekers must now produce an identity document within 48 hours of arrival or risk repatriation. (The SVP claims that many fake asylum seekers throw away their documents to avoid investigation of their claims.) The tightening of immigration policy will limit immigration mainly to EU countries; prospective immigrants from outside the EU must possess skills that are lacking in the Swiss economy.

In June 2006, the Federal Council reassessed its options on the relationship with the EU, and acknowledged that full membership was still not politically possible. That meant that the most likely course of action remained individual bilateral agreements with the bloc, rather than any new overarching framework, even though the piecemeal approach was bureaucratically cumbersome.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Switzerland is an electoral democracy. The constitution of 1848, significantly revised in 1874 and 2000, provides for a Federal Assembly with two directly elected chambers: the Council of States (in which each canton has two members and each half-canton has one) and the 200-member National Council. All of the lawmakers serve four-year terms. The Federal Council (cabinet) is a seven-person executive, with each member elected by the Federal Assembly. The presidency is largely ceremonial and rotates annually among the Federal Council's members. Collegiality and consensus are hallmarks of Swiss political culture. The next national elections are due in 2007.

The Swiss political system is characterized by decentralization and direct democracy. The cantons and half-cantons have significant control over economic and social policy, with the federal government's powers largely limited to foreign affairs and some economic matters. Referendums are also a common feature; any measure that modifies the constitution must be put to a referendum. Any new or revised law must also be put to a referendum if 50,000 signatures in favor of doing so can be gathered, and voters may even initiate legislation themselves with 100,000 signatures.

The main political parties are the SVP, the SP, the right-wing Free Democratic Party (FDP), and the CVP. Traditionally, these last three parties held two seats each in the seven-member Federal Council (cabinet), with the SVP holding just one. However, the SVP's popular support increased gradually over the 1990s as it shifted to

the right, poaching voters initially from small far-right parties and then increasingly from the FDP.

The government is free from pervasive corruption. However, the country has traditionally drawn criticism for its banking-secrecy laws, which financial watchdogs claim enable money laundering and other crimes. The International Monetary Fund has praised Switzerland for tightening laws on money laundering and terrorist financing but, in 2005, the intergovernmental Financial Action Task Force still found Switzerland only "partially compliant" with many of its recommended international norms. Switzerland was ranked 7 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is guaranteed by the constitution. Switzerland has a free media environment, although the state-owned Swiss Broadcasting Corporation dominates the broadcast market. The penal code prohibits racist or anti-Semitic speech. Consolidation of newspaper ownership in large media conglomerates has forced the closure of some small and local newspapers. Internet access is unrestricted.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution, and most cantons support one or several churches. The country is split roughly between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, although an official tally of more than 300,000 Muslims (and perhaps many more undocumented) form the largest non-Christian minority in Switzerland. Religion is taught in public schools, depending on the predominant creed in each canton. Students are free to choose their creed of instruction or opt out of religious instruction. In 2001, a cantonal court ruled that the Church of Scientology could not be a "real church" because it does not advocate belief in God. Scientologists face other legal obstacles, such as difficulty establishing private schools. Academic freedom is generally respected.

Freedoms of assembly and association are respected in practice, and civil society is especially active in Switzerland. The right to collective bargaining is respected, and roughly one-third of the workforce is unionized.

The judiciary is independent, and the rule of law prevails in civil and criminal matters. Most judicial decisions are made at the cantonal level except for the federal Supreme Court, which reviews cantonal court decisions when they pertain to federal law. Refusal to perform military service is a criminal offense for males. Prison conditions are generally acceptable.

The rights of cultural, religious, and linguistic minorities are strongly protected, though there is increasing anxiety about the large foreign-born population, which has led to a tightening of asylum laws and societal discrimination.

Women were only granted universal suffrage at the federal level in 1971, and the half-canton Appenzell-Innerrhoden denied women the vote until 1990. Abortion laws were liberalized to decriminalize abortion in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy following a referendum in 2002, which 72 percent of voters supported. The constitution guarantees equal pay to men and women for work of equal value, but pay differentials remain as a result of general inequality. The National Council has 52 women among its 200 members, which is above the European average.

Syria

Population: 19,500,000

Capital: Damascus

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6*

Status: Not Free



Ratings Change: Syria's political rights rating improved from 7 to 6 because of small gains in personal autonomy.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7.7NF	7.7NF	7.7NF	7.7NF	7.7NF	7.7NF	7.7NF	7.7NF	7.7NF	7.6NF

Overview: The Syrian government continued its repression of political rights and civil liberties in 2006 and renewed its crackdown on dissidents. In May, Syrian political and human rights activists formulated and signed the Beirut-Damascus Declaration, which called for a change in Syrian-Lebanese relations and the recognition of Lebanese sovereignty; many of the signatories were arrested and in some cases jailed. Syria that year continued its public support for the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and its close alliance with Iran's hard-line government. There were small improvements in personal autonomy in areas such as travel, residence, and employment.

The modern state of Syria was established by the French after World War I and formally granted independence in 1946. The country's new democratic institutions functioned intermittently until the Arab Socialist Baath Party seized power in a 1963 coup and transformed Syria into a one-party state governed perpetually by emergency law. During the 1960s, power shifted within the party from civilian ideologues to an ambitious group of army officers hailing mostly from Syria's Alawite minority (adherents of an offshoot Islamic sect comprising 12 percent of the population), culminating in General Hafez al-Assad's rise to power in 1970.

Although the regime cultivated a base of support among public sector employees, peasants, and select private sector beneficiaries that transcended sectarian and ethnic divisions, its grip on power rested squarely on Alawite domination of the military-security establishment and the suppression of dissent. In 1982, government forces stormed the northern town of Hama to crush a rebellion by the Muslim Brotherhood and killed as many as 20,000 insurgents and civilians. By the time of al-Assad's death in 2000, nearly four decades of stifling Baathist rule had made Syria one of the Arab world's poorest countries.

Bashar al-Assad, who succeeded his late father as leader of the country, pledged in his inaugural speech to introduce sweeping political and economic liberalization. The first six months of his tenure featured the release of several hundred political

prisoners, the return of many exiled dissidents, and a substantial expansion of civil liberties as informal reformist networks met openly to discuss the country's social, economic, and political problems. In February 2001, however, the regime abruptly halted the so-called Damascus Spring. Most of the country's leading reformists were arrested and sentenced to lengthy prison terms, while others grew accustomed to constant surveillance and frequent intimidation by the *mukhabarat* (secret police). Economic reform fell by the wayside, as dozens of reform laws remained unimplemented, were put into effect half-heartedly, or lacked supporting regulatory changes. Syria under Bashar al-Assad proved to be less free than under his father and equally resistant to political change.

The toppling of Iraq's Baathist regime by the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 reinvigorated the Syrian opposition. For the first time, secular and Islamist dissidents began cooperating and pushing for a common set of demands, including the release of all political prisoners, the cancellation of the state of emergency, and legalization of political parties. Apparently inspired by the political empowerment of Iraqi Kurds, Syria's Kurdish minority erupted into eight days of rioting in March 2004. At least 30 people were killed as security forces suppressed the riots and arrested some 2,000 people.

Internal opposition to the regime was strengthened by growing international outrage over Syria's failure to combat terrorist infiltration into Iraq and its continuing occupation of Lebanon. Syrian troops had entered Lebanon in 1976, during the latter country's civil war, but they had stayed on after peace was restored in 1990. In September 2004, UN Security Council Resolution 1559 explicitly called on Damascus to immediately end the occupation. As a result of widespread suspicions of Syrian involvement in the February 2005 assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri, international pressure for a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, including mass anti-Syrian demonstrations in Beirut, quickly intensified.

Although al-Assad pulled Syrian troops out of Lebanon in April 2005, Syrian relations with countries in the region and abroad remained strained by his refusal to fully cooperate with the UN International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIC) probing the killing of Hariri. In October 2005, the UNIIC issued an interim report containing circumstantial evidence and anonymous witness testimonies implicating al-Assad's brother-in-law and military intelligence chief, General Assef Shawkat, as well as other senior Syrian officials. Shortly afterward, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1636, calling on Syria to cooperate unconditionally with the investigation under threat of "further action."

In the face of growing internal opposition, the regime released hundreds of political prisoners in 2005. Syrian officials repeatedly hinted that sweeping political reforms would be drafted at a major Baath Party conference. According to state media reports, party leaders issued a set of vague recommendations to legalize political parties, reform the electoral system, permit greater press freedom, and relax emergency law, but no substantial measures were undertaken to implement the recommendations. Al-Assad openly stated that there would be no major constitutional reforms or loosening of Baath Party control of the state. In October of that year, representatives of all three opposition currents—the Islamists, the Kurds, and secular liberals—signed the Damascus Declaration for Democratic and National Change, which explicitly called for the country's leaders to step down and endorsed a broad set of liberal democratic principles. Secular and Kurdish figures who openly com-

municated with the Muslim Brotherhood faced harsh retribution by the state.

In 2006, the government reversed its partial leniency on personal freedom with a renewed crackdown on dissidents. A number of political and human rights activists were arrested or detained over the year. In May, exiled Syrian opposition leaders announced the creation of the National Salvation Front (NSF) to bring about regime change. A Syrian military court charged former vice president Abdel Halim Khaddam, a leader of the NSF, in absentia with inciting foreign attack against Syria.

Progovernment forces, trying to control the pace of reform so that it did not lead to their removal, enacted slow, mostly economic reforms. However, there was a major cabinet reshuffle in February 2006 that introduced 14 new ministers and replaced the foreign, interior, and information ministers. In May, the parliament announced that it would begin drafting a new electoral law to implement a system of proportional representation before scheduled balloting in 2007.

A number of Syrian political and human rights activists formulated and signed in May 2006 the Beirut-Damascus Declaration, which called for a change in Syrian-Lebanese relations and the recognition of Lebanese sovereignty. Many of the signatories, including prominent political activists Anwar al-Bunni and Michel Kilo, have been imprisoned or briefly arrested as a result.

Syria deepened its international isolation in 2006 by failing to stem attacks on the Danish and Norwegian embassies by Muslims upset over the publication of cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad. Syria continued its public support for the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and maintained its close alliance with Iran's hard-line government.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Syria is not an electoral democracy. Under the 1973 constitution, the president is nominated by the ruling Baath Party and approved by popular referendum for seven-year terms.

In practice, these referendums are orchestrated by the regime, as are elections for the 250-member, unicameral People's Council, which serves for four-year terms and holds little independent legislative power.

The only legal political parties are the Baath Party and its six small coalition partners in the ruling National Progressive Front (NPF). Independent candidates are heavily vetted. The ruling party pledged to legalize political parties not based on religious or ethnic identity (a condition that would exclude the Muslim Brotherhood and Kurdish opposition groups) at its June 2005 conference, but no legislation implementing this pledge was forthcoming at year's end.

Key regime officials and their offspring monopolize many lucrative import markets and benefit from a range of illicit economic activities. Corruption is widespread, and bribery is often necessary in order to navigate the government bureaucracy. Equality of opportunity has been compromised by rampant graft. Syria was ranked 93 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is heavily restricted. Vaguely worded articles of the penal code, the Emergency Law, and a 2001 press statute criminalize the publication of material that harms national unity, tarnishes the image of the state, or threatens the "goals of the revolution." Syrian writer and activist Habib Saleh was sentenced in August 2006 to three years in prison for "disseminating false news" after he pub-

lished an article that was critical of the president and his family. Many other journalists, writers, and intellectuals have been arrested or harassed for similar reasons.

Apart from a handful of non-news radio stations, all broadcast media are state owned. However, satellite dishes are common, giving many Syrians access to foreign news broadcasts. While more than a dozen privately owned newspapers and magazines have sprouted up in recent years, only one (owned by the son of Syria's defense minister) is allowed to publish serious criticism of the government. The 2001 press law permits the authorities to arbitrarily deny or revoke publishing licenses and compels privately owned print media outlets to submit all material to government censors. It also imposes punishment on reporters who do not reveal their sources in response to government requests. Since the Kurdish protests in 2004, the government has cracked down on journalists calling for the expansion of Kurdish rights. In June 2006, a military court sentenced Ali al-Abdullah and his son Mohamed for publishing an article calling on the Baath Party to end its repression of Kurds. Syrians are permitted to access the internet only through state-run servers, which block access to a wide range of websites. E-mail correspondence is reportedly monitored by the intelligence agencies.

Although the constitution requires that the president be a Muslim, there is no state religion in Syria, and freedom of worship is generally respected. The Alawite minority dominates the officer corps of the military and security forces. The government tightly monitors mosques and controls the appointment of Muslim clergy.

Academic freedom is heavily restricted. University professors have frequently been dismissed from state universities for expressing dissent, and some have been imprisoned. Between January and March 2006, eight Syrian university students were arrested on unknown charges, but the detentions were apparently related to the students' attempts to develop a youth movement on campus and their publication of articles calling for political reform.

Freedom of assembly is heavily circumscribed. Public demonstrations are illegal without explicit permission from the Interior Ministry, and permission is typically granted only to progovernment organizations. Increasingly, the authorities have relied on plainclothes agents to intimidate activists. Freedom of association is severely restricted. All nongovernmental organizations must register with the government, which generally denies registration to reformist groups. Although a handful of unlicensed human rights groups have been allowed to organize, they are prevented from publishing material inside Syria and are placed under such heavy (and often visible) surveillance that most citizens who suffer abuses at the hands of the authorities are reluctant to communicate with them. Leaders of these organizations have frequently been jailed for publicizing government human rights abuses.

The security services intensified their ban on public and private gatherings in 2006, forbidding any group of five or more people from discussing political and economic topics. This rule has been enforced through surveillance, wiretapping, and informant reports. Syrian security forces broke up private meetings of activists belonging to the Committees for the Defense of Democratic Liberties and Human Rights in Syria conducted in private homes. The attendees were searched, their documents were seized, and they were forcibly removed from the gatherings. Syrian security services even arrested a 70-year-old man for voicing his views on the current situation in Syria with his friends in a cafe.

All labor unions must belong to the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU). Although nominally independent, the GFTU is used by the government to control all aspects of union activity in Syria. Strikes in nonagricultural sectors are legal, but they rarely occur.

While regular criminal and civil courts operate with some independence and generally safeguard defendants' rights, politically sensitive cases are usually tried by the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC), an exceptional tribunal established under emergency law that denies the right to appeal, limits access to legal counsel, tries many cases behind closed doors, and routinely admits as evidence confessions obtained through torture. Only the president and interior minister may alter the verdicts.

The state of emergency in force since 1963 gives the security agencies virtually unlimited authority to arrest suspects and hold them incommunicado for prolonged periods without charge. Many of the estimated 2,500 to 3,000 remaining political prisoners in Syria have never been tried for any offense. The security agencies, which operate independently of the judiciary, routinely extract confessions by torturing suspects and detaining members of their families. There were scores of credible reports of torture by the security services in 2006. After serving prison time, political activists are routinely monitored and harassed by Syrian security services upon their release. The Syrian Human Rights Committee has reported that hundreds of government informants are rewarded for or coerced into writing reports on relatives, friends, and associates who are suspected of being involved in "anti-regime" activities.

The Kurdish minority in Syria faces severe restrictions on cultural and linguistic expression. The 2001 press law requires that owners and top editors of publications be Arabs. Some 200,000 Syrian Kurds are deprived of citizenship and unable to obtain passports, identity cards, or birth certificates, which in turn prevents them from owning land, obtaining government employment, and voting. Suspected Kurdish activists are routinely dismissed from schools and public sector jobs.

In 2005, the government released 312 Kurds who had been detained since the 2004 riots. However, it has continued to detain dozens of members of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), arrested hundreds of other Kurdish activists over the past few years, and prevented many from traveling to Iraqi Kurdistan.

Although most Syrians do not face travel restrictions, prominent opposition figures and relatives of exiled dissidents are routinely prevented from traveling abroad, and stateless Kurds lack the requisite documents to leave the country. In July 2006, the government issued a new list of activists under travel ban that included signers of the Beirut-Damascus Declaration, former Damascus Spring detainees, human rights lawyers, and their family members. Aside from travel bans on political dissidents, Syrians were generally allowed freedom of movement, residence, and employment.

The government has promoted gender equality by appointing women to senior positions in government and providing equal access to education, but many discriminatory laws remain in force. A husband may request that the Interior Ministry block his wife from traveling abroad, and women are generally barred from leaving the country with their children unless they can prove that the father has granted permission. Violence against women is common, particularly in rural areas. Syrian law stipulates that an accused rapist can be acquitted if he marries his victim, and the law provides for reduced sentences in cases of "honor crimes" committed by men against female relatives for alleged sexual misconduct. Personal status law for

Muslim women is governed by Sharia (Islamic law) and is discriminatory in marriage, divorce, and inheritance matters.

Taiwan

Population: 22,800,000

Capital: Taipei

Political Rights: 2*

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ratings Change: Taiwan's political rights rating declined from 1 to 2 due to concerns about corruption, particularly links among politicians, business, and organized crime.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	1,2F	1,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,1F	1,1F	2,1F

Overview: The ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) suffered a resounding defeat in the December 2005 local elections, which reflected growing public frustration with the political gridlock in Taiwan. Following revelations that members of his family and close political aides were being investigated in a series of corruption cases, President Chen Shui-bian was forced to delegate some of his powers to Prime Minister Su Tseng-chang. Despite large-scale, ongoing demonstrations demanding his resignation and approval ratings in the single digits, Chen remained firmly committed to staying on until the end of his term in May 2008.

Located some 100 miles off the southeast coast of China, Taiwan became the home of the Chinese nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) government-in-exile in 1949, when Communist forces drove the KMT off the mainland following two decades of civil war. While Taiwan, still formally known as the Republic of China, is independent in all but name, the People's Republic of China (PRC) considers it to be a renegade province and has long threatened to take military action against the island if it declares de jure independence.

The breakthrough for Taiwan's transition to democracy occurred in 1987, when the KMT's authoritarian leader, Chiang Ching-kuo, ended 38 years of martial law. The media were subsequently liberalized, and opposition political parties were legalized in 1989. In 1988, Lee Teng-hui became the first native Taiwanese president, breaking the mainland emigres' stranglehold on politics. In his 12 years in office, Lee oversaw far-reaching political reforms, as well as Taiwan's first multiparty legislative elections in 1991-1992 and the first direct presidential election in 1996. In order

to undermine Beijing's claim that there was only "one China" and that Taiwan was part of it, Lee downplayed the KMT's historic commitment to eventual reunification with China and promoted a distinct Taiwanese national identity.

Chen Shui-bian's victory in the 2000 presidential race, as a candidate of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), ended 55 years of KMT rule. Chen and his vice presidential running mate Lu Hsiu-lien won reelection in March 2004 by a margin of only 0.2 percentage points after both were injured in an apparent assassination attempt. Although the opposition alleged that the shooting was staged in order to gain sympathy votes, two lawsuits challenging Chen's win were rejected by Taiwan's high court.

In August 2004, the Legislative Yuan passed a resolution for constitutional amendments. Members of an ad hoc National Assembly were elected to vote on what Chen termed "the first phase" of constitutional reform, and they approved the first set of constitutional changes in June 2005. The reforms wrote a national referendum mechanism into the constitution, cut the size of the 225-seat legislature by half, extended legislative terms to four years, and exchanged Taiwan's single-vote, multiple-member-district electoral system for a system of single-member districts with proportional representation (a two-vote system). The new electoral system was set to be put into use in 2007. However, questions remained about the independence of the Central Election Commission, which was overseeing the redistricting of electoral constituencies, and whether the new system would curtail the continuing problem of "vote buying" and influence peddling during elections.

After failing to capture a majority in the December 2004 legislative elections, the DPP suffered a resounding defeat in the December 2005 local elections, with the KMT gaining control of 14 out of 23 local governments. The results reflected growing public frustration with the political gridlock that had resulted from two different, strongly opposed parties controlling the executive and legislative branches of government. The DPP had also failed to live up to its promise to offer an alternative to "dirty politics," and instead came to be racked by infighting and corruption scandals. Although the DPP regained some ground at the end of 2006, retaining the seat of mayor of Kaohsiung and doing better than expected in Taipei, the December 9 elections were marred by accusations of vote buying and bribery on both sides. The Ministry of Justice regarded the charges as "very serious issues" and reported that 81 vote buying and bribery cases related to the mayoral elections and 509 cases related to the city councilor elections were under investigation.

In May 2006, Chen was forced to delegate some of his powers to Prime Minister Su Tseng-chang following revelations that members of his family and close political aides were being investigated in a series of corruption scandals. Chen had also been questioned in an ongoing investigation into the misappropriation of funds from his office. Despite large-scale demonstrations demanding his resignation and approval ratings in the single digits, Chen remained firmly committed to serving out his term, which ends in May 2008. He survived two attempts by opposition legislators to recall him in June and November, as they were unable to gain the two-thirds majority necessary to launch constitutional recall procedures, which would entail a public referendum and review by the Council of Grand Justices. Following the corruption indictment of First Lady Wu Shu-chen in November, Chen declared that he would only resign if she were actually convicted.

The December 2005 election defeat also made it clear that the DPP had to formulate a more effective response to the opposition's conciliatory policy toward the PRC, under which the leaders of the two main opposition parties, the KMT and People First Party, had visited Beijing earlier in 2005. Despite China's March 2005 promulgation of an antiseccession law providing for the use of "non-peaceful means" against Taiwan if efforts to achieve a peaceful reunification were "completely exhausted," the opposition's policy had apparently resonated with the electorate. Nevertheless, polls consistently showed that more than 80 percent of Taiwan's people would prefer to maintain the status quo in cross-strait relations.

In two major speeches in January 2006, Chen risked Beijing's ire by signaling a return to his pro-independence roots. He called for a referendum on a new constitution by 2008, with no subjects barred from consideration; advocated applying to join the United Nations under the name "Taiwan"; and announced tightened rules on investment in mainland China. Despite intense public and private pressure from the United States not to take further measures that would threaten the status quo, Chen in February abolished the National Unification Council, a largely symbolic act demonstrating that reunification with the mainland was no longer a policy goal of Taiwan's government.

In contrast to the bellicose rhetoric with which it had previously responded to such moves, the PRC has recently adopted a far more nuanced approach to Taiwanese politics. Beijing was apparently confident that Chen's pro-independence initiatives had little chance of passing in the KMT-controlled legislature, and that Ma Ying-jeou of the KMT would soon replace Chen in the 2008 presidential election.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Taiwan is an electoral democracy. The 1946 constitution, adopted while the KMT was in power on the mainland, created a hybrid presidential-parliamentary system. The president, who is directly elected for a maximum of two four-year terms, wields executive power, appoints the prime minister, and can dissolve the legislature. The prime minister is responsible to the national legislature, or Legislative Yuan, the members of which are elected to four-year terms. The Executive Yuan, or cabinet, consists of ministers appointed by the president on the recommendation of the prime minister. Constitutional amendments are subject to the approval of two-thirds of the legislature, followed by a national referendum.

For the first time since it was founded in 1912, the KMT held democratically contested elections for the post of party chairman in 2005. The new leader, popular former Taipei mayor Ma Ying-jeou, vowed to reform the party, fight internal corruption, and recruit younger members.

The DPP-led administration of President Chen Shiu-bian has pledged to stem incidents of vote buying and to fight improper links among politicians, business, and organized crime, which flourished under KMT rule. The Ministry of Justice announced in September 2006 that since the establishment in 2000 of the Black Gold Investigation Center, a government anticorruption unit, 8,368 people had been indicted, including 451 senior government officials, 528 elected representatives, and 3,289 members of the general public. However, the DPP's anticorruption efforts have been undermined and its image tarnished by a series of recent scandals: Chen Shui-bian's close aide, former deputy secretary-general of the presidential office Chen

Che-nan, was facing prosecution for corruption and insider trading, as was Chen's son-in-law, Chao Chien-ming. In November, First Lady Wu Shu-chen was indicted for corruption in a case involving embezzlement of funds from the presidential office. In Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index, Taiwan was ranked 34 out of 163 countries surveyed.

According to the Asian Network for Free Elections 2006 report on Taiwan's December 2004 elections, observers in many constituencies "heard reports of widespread vote-buying, and many citizens clearly believe that it is prevalent." The report notes that "statistics of the Ministry of Justice confirm that it is indeed still a significant issue in Taiwan, although they also indicate some success in cracking down on the practice."

The Taiwanese press is "vigorous and active," according to the 2006 human rights report issued by the U.S. State Department. Print media are completely independent, but electronic media and broadcast television stations were subject to government influence through the authority of the Government Information Office (GIO) to regulate programming and the licensing process until mid-2006, when a new oversight body was established. Criticism of the GIO's handling of license renewal and revocation had ramped up in 2005, when TVBS, a Hong Kong-owned satellite television station known for its coverage of corruption and other government scandals, was fined for violating a law restricting foreign ownership to less than 50 percent. Following charges that the government was restricting press freedom, the GIO refrained from taking further action against TVBS. Given that most Taiwanese can access about 100 cable television stations, the state's influence on the media is, on balance, minimal. Moreover, legislation approved in 2003 bars the government, political parties, and political party officials from owning or running media organizations. It also ordered the creation of a National Communications Commission (NCC) to replace the GIO in overseeing the operations of the broadcast media. The legislation to create the NCC as an independent body under the Executive Yuan was passed in October 2005 and the body convened for the first time in February 2006. Although the U.S. State Department report noted that some homosexual rights advocacy groups have reported monitoring and interference in online chat-rooms by the Taiwanese authorities, there are generally no restrictions on internet access.

Taiwanese of all faiths can worship freely. Religious organizations can choose to register with the government; those that do so receive tax-exempt status. Taiwanese professors and other educators write and lecture freely.

Freedoms of assembly and association are well respected, as evidenced by the large-scale yet mainly peaceful demonstrations that took place throughout 2006. Permits are required for outdoor public meetings, but these are routinely granted. All civic organizations must register with the government, although registration is freely approved. Taiwanese human rights, social welfare, and environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are active and operate without harassment.

Trade unions are independent, and most workers in Taiwan have enjoyed the right to free association for many years. However, government employees do not have associational rights, and all teachers, civil servants, and defense industry workers are barred from joining unions or bargaining collectively. A riot by Thai workers in August 2005 highlighted the abysmal living and working conditions of Taiwan's 300,000 foreign workers, who are neither covered by the Labor Standards Law nor

represented by Taiwan's unions. Foreign workers often fail to report abuses for fear of repatriation and subsequent inability to repay debts to the employment brokers through whom they find work in Taiwan.

Taiwan's judiciary is independent, and trials are public and generally fair. There is no trial by jury; judges decide all cases. In August 2004, the Ministry of Justice established a task force to probe corruption in the judiciary, and since then, several officials have been brought under investigation. While political influence over the courts has been reduced, there are lingering concerns about the influence of organized crime on the outcome of some cases. Arbitrary arrest and detention are not permitted, and police generally respect this ban.

The police in Taiwan are under civilian control, although according to the 2006 U.S. State Department report, police corruption continues to be a problem. Suspects are allowed attorneys during interrogations specifically to prevent abuse during detention. The government is in the process of installing video-recording technology in all interrogation rooms in order to document the techniques used. Prison conditions are generally adequate and conform to international norms. Because overcrowding is the most serious problem, expansion projects are in progress at a number of prisons.

Taiwan's constitution provides for the equality of all citizens. Apart from the unresolved issue of ownership of ancestral lands by indigenous peoples, the rights of descendants of speakers of Malayo-Polynesian languages are protected by law, and the government has instituted social and educational programs to help the population assimilate into mainstream Taiwanese society. Companies wishing to compete for government contracts are subject to a quota system for employment of the Malayan aborigines and people with physical disabilities. In a measure to increase a sense of community among Taiwanese aborigines, the first aboriginal television station was launched in July 2005; it broadcasts a mix of news and features focusing on aboriginal communities. When the redistricting of electoral constituencies goes into effect, six seats will be reserved for indigenous peoples.

Laws protecting privacy are generally adhered to. Searches without warrants are allowed only in particular circumstances, and a 1999 law imposes strict punishments for illicit wiretapping. With the exception of civil servants and military personnel traveling to China, freedom of movement is generally not restricted. During the 2005 Lunar New Year holidays, direct airline flights between Taiwan and mainland China commenced for the first time in 55 years, with nearly 50 flights from Beijing and Shanghai to Taipei. The possibility of opening up these routes permanently is still being discussed. Currently, flights between Taiwan and China must touch down in a third country.

Taiwanese women have made impressive gains in business in recent years, but they continue to face job discrimination in the private sector. Rape and domestic violence remain problems despite government programs to protect women and the work of numerous NGOs to improve women's rights. Although the law allows authorities to investigate complaints of domestic violence and to prosecute rape suspects without the victims formally pressing charges, cultural norms inhibit many women from reporting these crimes. The Ministry of the Interior reported that 6,601 charges of rape or sexual assault were filed in 2006; of these, only 1,825 were tried and resulted in 1,535 convictions. According to the U.S. State Department report, experts estimate the actual number of rapes to be 10 times the official number.

Tajikistan

Population: 7,000,000

Capital: Dushanbe

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview: The overwhelming political dominance of President Imomali Rakhmonov and his People's Democratic Party continued with Rakhmonov's landslide victory in the November 2006 presidential election. In the run-up to the vote, the government maintained its tight control of the media and political environment, effectively blunting all real and potential opposition. Meanwhile, Tajikistan strengthened its ties with China and Iran amid attempts to balance the roles of Russia and the United States in its foreign relations.

Conquered by Russia in the late nineteenth century, Tajikistan was made an autonomous region within the Soviet republic of Uzbekistan in 1924 and a separate Soviet republic in 1929. Tajikistan declared independence from the Soviet Union in September 1991, and two months later, former Communist Party leader Rakhman Nabiyev was elected president.

Long-simmering, clan-based tensions, combined with various anti-Communist and Islamist movements, soon plunged the country into a five-year civil war. In September 1992, Communist hard-liners forced Nabiyev's resignation; he was replaced later that year by Imomali Rakhmonov, a leading Communist Party member. The following month, Rakhmonov launched attacks against antigovernment forces that caused tens of thousands of people to flee into neighboring Afghanistan.

As the fighting continued, Rakhmonov was elected president in November 1994, after most opposition candidates either boycotted or were prevented from competing in the poll. Similarly, progovernment candidates won the March 1995 parliamentary elections amid a boycott by the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), a coalition of various secular and Islamic groups that emerged during the war as the main force fighting against Rakhmonov's government.

Following a December 1996 ceasefire, Rakhmonov and UTO leader Said Abdullo Nuri signed a formal peace agreement in Moscow in June 1997. The civil war had claimed tens of thousands of lives and left several hundred thousand as refugees. The accord called for the merging of opposition forces into the regular army; granted an amnesty for UTO members; provided for the UTO to be allotted 30 percent of senior government posts; and established a 26-member National Reconciliation

Commission, with seats evenly divided between the government and the UTO. The commission was charged with implementing the peace agreement and preparing constitutional amendments that would lead to fair parliamentary elections.

During the next two years, the government and the UTO worked to implement the peace accord. In a September 1999 referendum, voters approved a series of constitutional amendments that permitted the formation of religion-based political parties. This move paved the way for the legal operation of the Islamic opposition, including the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), which constituted the backbone of the UTO. The referendum also included an amendment extending the president's single term in office from five to seven years. In November, Rakhmonov was reelected with a reported 97 percent of the vote in a poll criticized by international election observers for widespread irregularities.

As the final stage in the implementation of the 1997 peace accord, Tajikistan held elections in February 2000 for the 63-seat lower house of Parliament. Rakhmonov's People's Democratic Party (PDP)—which he joined in 1998—received nearly 65 percent of the vote, followed by the Communist Party with 20 percent, and the IRP with 7 percent. Although the participation of six parties and a number of independent candidates in the poll provided some political pluralism, international election observers, including a joint mission by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations, cited serious problems, such as the exclusion of certain opposition parties, biased state media coverage, and a lack of transparency in the tabulation of votes. In the March elections to the 33-seat upper house of Parliament, in which local assemblies elected 25 members and Rakhmonov appointed the remaining 8, the PDP obtained the overwhelming majority of seats.

After the elections, the National Reconciliation Commission was formally disbanded, and a UN observer mission withdrew in May 2000 after nearly six years in Tajikistan. However, important provisions of the peace accord remained unimplemented, with demobilization of opposition factions incomplete and the government failing to meet the 30 percent quota of senior government posts to be awarded to the UTO.

Rakhmonov's already substantial powers as president were further consolidated in a June 2003 constitutional referendum. A reported 93 percent of voters approved a package of 56 amendments, the most controversial of which permitted the president to serve two additional seven-year terms beyond the next presidential election in 2006. (The constitution previously limited the president to a single seven-year term.) Rakhmonov, who argued that the change would better address post-civil war needs and bring the country continued stability, could theoretically remain in office until 2020. Critics charged that most voters were not fully aware of the proposed changes, which were not printed on the ballot papers and had not been given much media coverage. The opposition Democratic Party (DP) urged its supporters to boycott the vote, while the opposition Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the IRP adopted less openly confrontational positions.

As February 2005 parliamentary elections approached, the government increased pressure on real and potential opposition figures. Former Rakhmonov allies were jailed, including Drug Control Agency head Ghaffor Mirzoyev, who was arrested in August 2004 on numerous criminal charges. DP leader Mahmudi Iskandarov was

arrested in Russia on a Tajik warrant in December, released in April 2005, and then forcibly repatriated under mysterious circumstances. He was tried on charges including terrorism and sentenced to 23 years in prison in October 2005. The parliamentary elections ended in an easy victory for the PDP, which won 52 of 63 seats in the lower house. Election monitors from the OSCE concluded that "despite some improvement over previous elections, large-scale irregularities were evident," and that the balloting "failed to meet many of the key OSCE commitments for democratic elections."

The pressure continued in the run-up to the November 2006 presidential election. IRP head Said Abdullo Nuri was the target of a defamation lawsuit in March, and the DP split in April amid charges of government involvement. The SDP and the unrecognized opposition wing of the DP announced that they would boycott what they termed an unconstitutional and illegal election, while the IRP declined to take part, pointing to flaws in election legislation and global suspicion toward Islamic parties. The IRP suffered another blow when Nuri died in August after a long illness. The four registered presidential challengers were little known and broadly pro-Rakhmonov, suggesting a government-engineered attempt to create the impression of a competitive election. Rakhmonov won the contest, garnering more than 70 percent of the vote, although the OSCE noted in its report that the lackluster campaigning and general absence of real competition rendered the election a less-than-impressive test of Tajikistan's fledgling democracy.

On the international front, Tajikistan in 2006 established closer ties with Iran, which was investing \$180 million in the construction of the Sangtuda-2 hydroelectric power plant, and China, which was funding a \$300 million highway construction project. Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was warmly received in Dushanbe in July. U.S.-based energy company AES announced that it hoped to invest \$1 billion to build electrical transmission lines connecting Tajikistan and Afghanistan, and U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld visited in early July. Business ties with Russia cooled, as Russian Aluminum (Rusal) quarreled publicly with Tajik officials over alleged delays in the Russian company's \$1 billion project to finish construction of the Roghun hydroelectric power station, and Rakhmonov announced that the Tajik Aluminum Plant, which Rusal had reportedly hoped to acquire, would not be privatized.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Tajikistan is not an electoral democracy. The 1994 constitution provides for a strong, directly elected president who enjoys broad authority to appoint and dismiss officials. Amendments to the constitution adopted in a 1999 referendum further increased the powers of the president by extending the term in office from five to seven years. The amendments also created a full-time, bicameral parliament. In the Assembly of Representatives (lower chamber), 63 members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms. In the 33-seat National Assembly (upper chamber), 25 members are chosen by local assemblies and eight are appointed by the president, all for five-year terms. Constitutional amendments adopted in a 2003 referendum allow the president to run for two additional seven-year terms in office. Neither the presidential polls in 1994, 1999, and 2006, nor the parliamentary elections of 1995, 2000, and 2005 were free and fair.

Patronage networks and regional affiliations are central to political life, with officials from the Kulyob region—the home of President Rakhmonov—dominant in government. Rakhmonov's PDP is the ruling political party. Secular opposition parties, including the DP and SDP, are weak and enjoy minimal popular support. The IRP, currently the only legal religion-based party in Central Asia, has limited political influence within government structures but has also faced opposition accusations that it has been co-opted by the authorities. The IRP's fading influence was compounded by the August 2006 death of Said Abdullo Nuri, the party's widely respected leader.

Corruption is reportedly pervasive throughout society, with payments often required to obtain lucrative government positions. According to the 2006 U.S. State Department human rights report, the government recognized that corruption remains a serious problem in the police, army, and security forces, and arrested 89 Interior Ministry officials for corruption and abuse of power. Tajikistan was ranked 142 out of 163 countries in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and the press, independent journalists continue to face harassment and intimidation, selective tax audits, and denial of access to state printing facilities. The penal code criminalizes public defamation or insult to a person's honor or reputation. Consequently, journalists often avoid reporting on sensitive political issues, including corruption, and directly criticizing the president and other senior officials. The government controls most printing presses, newsprint supplies, and broadcasting facilities. Most television stations are state owned or only nominally independent, and the process of obtaining broadcast licenses is cumbersome. In the run-up to the November 2006 presidential election, Tajik authorities apparently ordered local internet providers to temporarily block access to five websites that featured materials critical of the government.

Dozens of journalists were murdered during the country's five-year civil war in the 1990s, and most of the cases have not been solved. In January 2004, the prosecutor-general's office announced that it had established a special group to investigate the killings. However, according to the 2006 report by the press freedom watchdog Committee to Protect Journalists, the wartime murders of 29 journalists remain unsolved.

Independent and opposition journalists and media outlets faced government pressure both before and after the February 2005 parliamentary elections, and by 2006, there were few truly independent or opposition news organizations left in Tajikistan. Against this generally grim backdrop, independent reporter Jumaboy Tolibov, who had been sentenced in July 2005 to two years in prison on charges including hooliganism and trespassing, was released in December 2005, and a new media coalition was formed in June 2006 to promote cooperation among journalists; nevertheless, negative tendencies persisted. In January, British Broadcasting Corporation FM radio broadcasts were shut down in a licensing dispute. After the opposition wing of the DP succeeded in September in publishing the first issue of the party newspaper *Adolat* in two years, it experienced printing problems in October. Later that month, each of the DP's two rival factions published its own edition of *Adolat*.

The government generally respects religious freedom in this predominantly Muslim country, although it has shown an increasing willingness to impose restrictions. Religious communities must register with the State Committee on Religious

Affairs (SCRA), a process sometimes used to control religious and political activities. The authorities monitor the activities of religious institutions to keep them from becoming overtly political. The Council of Religious Scholars, a body close to the authorities, issued a ruling in 2004 banning women from worshipping in mosques. In October 2005, the minister of education banned the wearing of the hijab in schools and higher educational institutions; in 2006, expulsions continued to take place under this regulation. In 2006, the SCRA put forward a draft law on religion that contained numerous restrictions; it remained under discussion in Parliament at year's end. There were reportedly no arrests of high-profile Muslims during the year. According to the U.S. State Department, the Tajik government does not restrict academic freedom.

The government at times restricts freedom of assembly and association. Local government committee approval is required to hold public demonstrations. Unapproved protests are rare because of the fear of reprisal from the authorities and concerns about a return to the political unrest of the civil war period. All nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) must register with the Ministry of Justice. A number of NGOs operate in the country without restrictions. However, following the recent political upheavals in several post-Soviet countries, which the Tajik government perceived to have been at least partly the result of intervention by foreign-backed organizations, the authorities became increasingly wary of foreign-funded NGOs in 2005. As of April 2005, all foreign embassies and international NGOs were required to notify the Tajik government about any meetings with local political and civil society activists.

Citizens have the legal right to form and join trade unions and to bargain collectively, which they do in practice. Although the law does not restrict the right to strike, no strikes occurred in 2006, reportedly because workers fear government retaliation.

The judiciary is strongly influenced by the executive branch, as well as by some criminal groups. Many judges are poorly trained and inexperienced, and bribery is reportedly widespread. The government took some steps to address the problem during the year by trying some corrupt judges and officials. Police often conduct arbitrary arrests and beat detainees to extract confessions. Detainees are commonly refused access to legal counsel, and they frequently face lengthy pretrial detention. Conditions in prisons—which are overcrowded, unsanitary, and disease-ridden—are often life-threatening.

A January 2006 government order provided financial incentives for Tajik families to move to the city of Tursunzadah, with plans to relocate 1,000 families by year's end. The move raised concerns that the government-sponsored initiative aimed to alter the ethnic composition of Tursunzadah, which was home to some 70,000 residents, roughly 80 percent of whom were ethnic Uzbeks. The government offer was extended to residents of central Khatlon Province, who are ethnic Tajiks.

Most of the population lives in poverty and survives on subsistence agriculture, remittances from relatives working abroad (mainly in Russia), and foreign humanitarian aid. Widespread corruption, patronage networks, regional affiliations, limited privatization of land and industry, and the narcotics trade restrict equality of opportunity and limit economic growth. Child labor, particularly on cotton farms, remains a problem.

Tajikistan is a major conduit for the smuggling of narcotics from Afghanistan to Russia and then on to Europe. A side effect has been an increase in drug addiction

within Tajikistan, as well as a rise in the number of cases of HIV/AIDS. Although there were only 600 officially registered HIV cases in Tajikistan in 2006, unofficial estimates by doctors put the total at 6,000.

Women are often sexually harassed in the workplace and continue to face traditional societal discrimination. Violence against women, including spousal abuse, is reportedly common, but cases reported to the authorities are rarely investigated. Despite a 2004 law against human trafficking that addresses prevention, protection of victims, and the prosecution of traffickers, Tajikistan remains a source and transit country for persons trafficked for prostitution.

Tanzania

Population: 37,900,000
Capital: Dar-es-Salaam

Political Rights: 4
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5.5PF	5.4PF	4.4PF	4.4PF	4.4PF	4.3PF	4.3PF	4.3PF	4.3PF	4.3PF

Overview: Presidential and parliamentary elections were held in December 2005. Foreign Minister Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, a longtime stalwart of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party, was elected president, and the CCM won overwhelmingly in the parliamentary vote. In addition, polling took place for the presidency and parliament of the semiautonomous islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. Some violence occurred in the run-up to those elections, and the postelection atmosphere was tense as the opposition Civic United Front alleged fraud in the CCM victory.

Three years after mainland Tanganyika gained independence from Britain in 1961, the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba merged with Tanganyika to become the United Republic of Tanzania. The ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party, under longtime president Julius Nyerere, dominated the country's political life. For much of his presidency, Nyerere espoused a collectivist economic philosophy known in Swahili as *ujamaa*. While this policy may have promoted a sense of community and nationality, it also resulted in significant economic dislocation and decline. During Nyerere's tenure, Tanzania also played an important role as a "frontline state" in the international response to white-controlled regimes in southern Africa. Nyerere retained strong influence after his official retirement in 1985 until his death in 1999. His successor, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, held the presidency from 1985 to 1995 and oversaw a carefully controlled political liberalization process.

A CCM landslide legislative victory in the 1995 parliamentary elections was seriously tainted by poor organization of the electoral process, fraud, and administrative irregularities. In addition, extensive use of state broadcasting and other government resources during the campaign favored the ruling party. The CCM won 80 percent of the 232 directly elected seats in the National Assembly. The voting in Zanzibar was plainly fraudulent, but the island's high court summarily rejected opposition demands for fresh polls.

Tanzania again conducted legislative and presidential elections in October 2000, the second since the reintroduction of multiparty politics. President Benjamin Mkapa, who first took office in 1995, was reelected with about 70 percent of the vote, and the CCM won an overwhelming victory in the Parliament. Although the conduct of the elections represented a modest improvement over the 1995 vote, they were nonetheless marred by fraud in favor of the ruling party in Zanzibar and Pemba; the status of the islands in relation to the mainland had long provoked tension. The opposition Civic United Front (CUF) and independent observers convincingly demonstrated that the ruling CCM had engaged in fraud to retain power. Rioting in Zanzibar in early 2001 resulted in the deaths of more than 40 people. In October 2001, the CCM and the CUF announced a reconciliation agreement designed to resolve the political crisis and allow for a more transparent government.

Subsequently, there were delays in the implementation of the agreement, which called for reforms related to police oversight, publicly owned media institutions, and the function and structure of the Zanzibar Electoral Commission. The delays included the postponement of voter registration in Zanzibar, and the CUF complained that mainland Tanzanians were being fraudulently included in the Zanzibari voting rolls.

In presidential and parliamentary elections in December 2005, Foreign Minister Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, a longtime CCM stalwart, was elected president with approximately 80 percent of the vote. The CCM captured 206 of 232 directly elected Parliament seats. Polling also took place for president and Parliament of Zanzibar and Pemba. There were some violent incidents in the run-up to those votes, and the postelection atmosphere was tense as the CUF once again accused the victorious CCM of electoral fraud.

Tanzania is one of the poorest countries in the world. According to IMF statistics, Tanzania's per capita gross domestic product was estimated to be \$800, although annual economic growth of approximately 6 percent is buttressed by low inflation, growing foreign investment, and increased tourism. The country has hosted some 400,000 refugees, mostly from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but some Burundian refugees have begun to return to their country.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Tanzania is not an electoral democracy. Although opposition parties were legalized in 1992, the ruling CCM continues to dominate the country's political life. Executive power rests with the president, who is elected by direct popular vote for a five-year term and can serve a maximum of two terms. The constitution provides for universal adult suffrage. Legislative power is held by a unicameral National Assembly, the Bunge, which currently has 323 members serving five-year terms. Of these, 232 are directly elected in single-seat constituencies, 75 are women chosen by the political parties according to their representation in the Bunge, 10 are appointed by the president,

and five are members are the Zanzibar legislature. The attorney general is also an ex-officio member of the Bunge.

Eighteen parties presented candidates in the 2005 legislative elections. Some of these parties are active, but they tend to be divided and ineffectual. The opposition CUF, based in Zanzibar and Pemba, has sought to establish significant support on the Tanzanian mainland. Another major opposition party, the National Convention for Construction and Reform (NCCR-Mageuzi), fractured after its former leader, Augustine Mrema, lost to Benjamin Mkapa in the 1995 presidential election. Parties with parliamentary representation receive government subsidies, but they criticize the low level of funding and the formula by which it is allocated. In 2003, most opposition parties came together in an electoral alliance, which the CUF did not join. The opposition fielded nine separate presidential candidates in the 2005 polls. To register in Tanzania, political parties must not be formed on religious, ethnic, or regional bases and cannot oppose the union of Zanzibar and the mainland.

Corruption remains a serious problem, although the government has taken some steps to address it, including the development of a national anticorruption action plan. The country's high court in 2006 ruled in favor of legal rights organizations that had challenged the formerly officially sanctioned practice of *takrima*, or the provision of free goods to voters by candidates during election campaigns. President Kikwete has stated that the government plans to strengthen the powers of the Prevention of Corruption Bureau, improve guidelines for concluding contracts, and reexamine procedures for procuring public goods. Tanzania was ranked 93 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech, it does not specifically guarantee freedom of the press. Nevertheless, Tanzania has a higher level of press freedom than other countries in its region. Print and electronic media are active, but media impact is largely limited to major urban areas. The country has more than 50 regular newspapers, including 17 dailies. The growth of the broadcast media has been hindered by the lack of capital investment needed to set up television and radio stations, both public and private. Still, a number of private FM radio stations have gone on the air, most of them in urban areas. The number of journalists has increased from only 230 in 1991 to more than 4,000 currently, but journalists in general have serious concerns about press laws that could limit freedom of expression. In 2005 Tanzania had the third lowest number of "press alerts" issued by the Media Institute of Southern Africa amongst the 11 countries surveyed. Internet access, while limited to urban areas, is growing.

Press freedom rights in Zanzibar have been constrained by its semiautonomous government. Reforms contained in a 2001 media bill did not apply to the island group. In recent years, the government there has not permitted private broadcasters or newspapers, though many islanders can receive mainland broadcasts and read the mainland press. The Zanzibari government often reacts to media criticism by accusing the press of being a "threat to national unity." In 2005, it banned leading columnist Jabir Idrissa. The weekly newspaper *Dira* was banned in November 2003, with no reason given until April 2006, when the government defended its decision on the grounds that the paper had been "publishing articles bent on destabilizing the unity and solidarity" of Zanzibar.

Freedom of religion is generally respected in Tanzania, and relations between the various faiths are mainly peaceful. In recent years, however, religious-based tensions have increased. Separately, the 2001 Mufti Law allowed the Zanzibari government to appoint a mufti, or a professional jurist who interprets Islamic law, to oversee Muslim organizations. Some Muslims are critical of this law, contending that it permits an excessive government role in the religious sphere. Academic freedom is respected in the country.

Constitutional protections for the rights of freedom of assembly and association are generally, but not always, respected. The laws allow rallies only by officially registered political parties. Many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are active, and some have been able to influence the public policy process. However, critics have cited serious flaws in an NGO act passed by Parliament in 2002, including compulsory registration backed by criminal sanctions, lack of appeal to the courts, alignment of NGO activities with government plans, prohibition of national networks and coalitions of NGOs, and inconsistencies with other legislation. The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights and the World Organization Against Torture criticized the legislation on the grounds that it contravened the Tanzanian constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Less than 5 percent of the Tanzanian labor force is unionized, and workers' rights are limited. Essential workers are barred from striking, and other workers' right to strike is restricted by complex notification and mediation requirements. The government has stated that a labor law passed in 2004 would help safeguard the rights and welfare of workers. Approximately 85 percent of Tanzania's people survive through subsistence agriculture.

Tanzania's judiciary has displayed signs of autonomy after decades of subservience to the one-party CCM regime, but it remains subject to considerable political influence. Arrest and pretrial detention rules are often ignored. Prison conditions are harsh, and police abuse is said to be common. According to government estimates, there are some 45,000 inmates in the country's prisons, although the facilities' intended collective capacity is only 21,000. Questions have been raised regarding the safety and health of prisoners, including minors and women, who have been subjected to sexual harassment and human rights abuses. In 2006, an increase in daylight armed robberies, especially in Dar-es-Salaam, marred Tanzania's reputation for having relatively low crime rates.

The 2002 Prevention of Terrorism Act, which some NGOs have criticized for containing inconsistencies and anomalies, gives the government considerable latitude by not clearly defining the term terrorism. The act merely lists acts of terrorism, which include, among other things, attacks on a person's life, kidnapping, and serious damage to property. The law gives the police and immigration officials sweeping powers to arrest suspected illegal immigrants or anyone thought to have links with terrorists.

Compared with many of its neighbors, Tanzania has enjoyed relatively tranquil relations among its many ethnic groups. The presence of refugees from conflicts in Burundi, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, however, has in the past raised tensions.

Women's rights guaranteed by the constitution and other laws are not uniformly

protected. In the new Kikwete cabinet, women were appointed to the key ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs. Traditional or Islamic customs that discriminate against women prevail in family law, especially in rural areas and in Zanzibar, and women have fewer educational and economic opportunities than men. Domestic violence against women is reportedly common and rarely prosecuted. Human rights groups have sought laws to bar forced marriages, which are most common among Tanzania's coastal peoples.

Thailand

Population: 65,200,000

Capital: Bangkok

Political Rights: 7*

Civil Liberties: 4*

Status: Not Free



Status Change: Thailand's political rights rating declined from 3 to 7, civil liberties rating from 3 to 4, and status from Partly Free to Not Free due to a September military coup that ousted democratically elected leader Thaksin Shinawatra, abrogated the constitution, dissolved Parliament and the Constitutional Court, and resulted in new restrictions on media freedoms and bans on political gatherings.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,3PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	3,3F	7,4NF

Overview: Democracy was suspended in Thailand in September 2006 when a military junta ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and dissolved existing political institutions. The year's crisis began in January with the Thaksin family's highly controversial sale of the Shin Corporation telecommunications firm to Temasek Holdings, the investment arm of Singapore's government. The move set off a wave of anti-Thaksin protests in the capital, prompting the prime minister to call snap elections for early April. While Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party secured a majority of the vote nationwide, the elections were perceived to be illegitimate because all three opposition parties boycotted it. Thaksin promised to step down for the sake of "national unity," but a political impasse developed when the House of Representatives was unable to convene due to unfilled seats, and new elections were scheduled for October 15. However, on September 19, a military coup preempted the vote, ousting Thaksin from office and installing a junta led by General Sonthi Boonyaratglin. The constitution was abrogated, Parliament dissolved, and the Constitutional Court replaced with an appointed military tribunal. A number of restrictions on the me-

dia and freedom of association and assembly were also imposed. The coup leaders established an interim civilian government within weeks, with former army commander Surayud Chulanont as prime minister. An interim constitution promulgated on October 1 outlined a process for drafting a new permanent constitution over the next year, but was criticized for its omission of many democratic protections. While the coup was undertaken peacefully and initially enjoyed significant public and royal support, the inadequacies of the interim constitution, unrelenting violence in the south, a major dip in the Thai stock market in December, and bomb blasts in Bangkok just before New Year's celebrations combined to undermine public confidence in the junta by year's end.

Known as Siam until 1939, Thailand is the only Southeast Asian nation that was never colonized by a European country. Beginning with a 1932 coup that transformed the kingdom into a constitutional monarchy, the army ruled periodically for the next six decades. The military more recently seized power in 1991, but Thailand returned to civilian rule the following year, when the country's revered monarch, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, convinced the military to appoint a civilian prime minister.

Thailand's export-led economy experienced strong growth in the decade prior to 1997, when it was dragged down by that year's regional financial crisis. Amid street protests by middle-class Thais in Bangkok against corruption and economic mismanagement, the parliament voted no confidence in Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh and replaced him with Democrat Party leader Chuan Leekpai, a former prime minister with a clean reputation. The parliament also approved a reformist constitution, which created independent election and anticorruption bodies and introduced the direct election of the Senate.

Criticizing the government for favoring the urban middle class over ordinary Thais, Thaksin Shinawatra, a former deputy prime minister who built his fortune in telecommunications, unseated Chuan in the January 2001 elections. Thaksin pledged to help poorer Thais hurt by the financial crisis by introducing inexpensive health care, a debt moratorium for farmers, and investment funds for each village. Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai (TRT, or Thais Love Thais) party won 248 of the lower house's 500 seats despite a December 2000 ruling by Thailand's new National Counter-Corruption Commission that Thaksin, then a cabinet minister, had falsified wealth-disclosure statements in 1997. In a controversial move, the Constitutional Court reversed this ruling and cleared Thaksin in August 2001.

Thaksin's government won praise from many Thais for introducing programs to help small businesses and the poor. Low interest rates and populist spending programs fueled a consumption-driven economic growth spurt. Wanting to portray Thailand as a well-ordered country that was safe for foreign investors and tourists, the government clamped down on negative news, denied the presence of terrorists in the country, and maintained that Thailand was safe from the deadly avian influenza sweeping Asia. However, by February 2004, officials confessed that six million chickens had been culled and numerous human flu cases were confirmed. The revelations led to international bans on Thai chicken and widespread questions about government priorities.

Many of Thaksin's moves undercut the reformist spirit of the country's new constitution, and a number of observers even accused the prime minister of sub-

verting the charter itself. While the constitution requires the prime minister and cabinet members to divest themselves of all business interests, many officials simply transferred these holdings to family members. Critics coined the phrase "policy corruption" to describe alleged efforts by Thaksin and his associates to use government power to enrich themselves. For example, Shin Satellite, a subsidiary of the Shin Corporation, in which Thaksin's family held a significant stake, won an eight-year tax holiday worth \$401 million from Thailand's Board of Investment. In 2005, similar allegations of corruption emerged surrounding tender procedures in the construction of the new Suvarnabhumi International Airport.

Thailand's four southernmost provinces, home to most of the country's four million Muslims, erupted into violence in 2004. In January, more than 100 attackers raided a military depot, killing four soldiers and making off with 400 firearms in an operation whose meticulous planning and execution led to suspicions of outside involvement. In a series of coordinated attacks on 11 bases and checkpoints in April, insurgents killed five members of the Thai security forces, which responded with attacks that left more than 100 people dead. The most notorious moment thus far in the insurgency came in October 2004, when 78 of 1,300 people arrested for demonstrating suffocated in trucks while they were being transported to a detention center.

The government declared martial law and introduced draconian security laws in most of Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala provinces in July 2005. Those conditions were extended and broadened in October 2005 and again in January 2006. Many Thais, particularly those residing in the south, were harshly critical of the Thaksin government's hard-line approach, fearing that it would only fuel the insurgency and create fertile recruiting grounds for the international terrorist groups Jemaah Islamiyah and al-Qaeda, both of which had past links to Thailand. More than 2,000 people have been killed since the insurgency began in January 2004.

The February 2005 parliamentary elections marked a second landslide for the TRT party, which captured 377 seats in the 500-seat lower house and formed a government without entering into a coalition. However, rising inflation and interest rates, mounting fatalities from bird flu, corruption, the government's general disregard for the constitution, and its heavy-handed approach to persistent fighting in the south all combined to fuel significant anti-Thaksin sentiment in the country by December 2005, particularly in Bangkok and the south. The influential King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who rarely intervenes in politics, even advised the prime minister that month that he should be more receptive to criticism, prompting Thaksin to drop a host of defamation suits against media mogul and fierce Thaksin critic, Sondhi Limthongkul.

For many, the Thaksin family's 73 billion baht (\$1,858 billion) sale of its 49.6 percent stake in the Shin Corporation telecommunications firm to Singapore's state-owned Temasek Holdings in January 2006 proved to be the catalyst, setting in motion a series of events that would return the country to military rule by year's end. Although the prime minister's children justified the deal as an effort to protect their father from future accusations of conflict of interest, Thaksin's critics accused him of prioritizing his family's business interests over national interests. Opposition leaders led massive protests in the capital, with one drawing 50,000 people on February 4. Protesters were infuriated by the fact that the nature of the transaction—through the stock exchange—allowed the Thaksin family to avoid paying capital-gains tax on the sale, and that it coincided with the passing of new legislation increasing the

limit on foreign holdings in telecom firms. The same month, the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD)—a coalition of 27 civil society groups opposed to Thaksin's leadership, including human rights and media freedom activists, privatization opponents, and trade campaigners—officially assumed leadership of the opposition campaign. February also saw dissent emerge within the TRT, and some ministers resigned from the government.

With opposition mounting in the capital, Thaksin dissolved the parliament on February 24 and called a snap election for April 2 with hopes of renewing his mandate. Over the next two months, the country further polarized between pro- and anti-Thaksin forces, with numerous protests held by both Thaksin's "caravan of the poor"—supporters from the country's rural north and northeast—and the PAD, with Sondhi and democratic reformer Chamlong Srimuang at the helm. The PAD worked relentlessly through massive rallies to pressure Thaksin to resign and even sought assistance from the king. Yet Thaksin refused to step down. The country's three major opposition parties, the Democrat Party (DP), Chart Thai, and Mahachon, all saw the snap elections as a ploy that would allow Thaksin to sidestep the host of credible allegations against him, and they ultimately boycotted the polls, leaving the TRT uncontested in 270 constituencies.

While Thaksin's party secured a 56 percent majority of votes nationwide, with strong support in the north and northeast, the election results reflected the extent to which support for the party had declined since the elections of February 2005, particularly in the capital. Voting is mandatory in Thailand; with no other parties to vote for, an "abstention" was effectively a vote against TRT. The DP actively encouraged citizens to vote "no" in the weeks before the vote, and in Bangkok, TRT received fewer votes than the number of abstention votes in 28 of 36 constituencies. In what he portrayed as a bid for national unity, Thaksin promised to step down as prime minister, but stated that he would retain his position as leader of the TRT party as well as his seat in the lower house. Unsatisfied with such an incomplete exit from politics, the PAD continued protesting under a new name, the Assembly of the People for Democracy, and lobbied the king to invoke Article 7 of the constitution to install a royally appointed government of national unity. Meanwhile, 1,477 candidates—without party affiliations per Thai laws—contested the Senate elections on April 19.

With the results of 40 seats in the House, mostly in the south, rendered invalid because the TRT failed to secure the required 20 percent of registered voters, and a constitutional requirement that the House of Representatives convene with all members within 30 days of the elections, the country faced a political impasse. While he refused the PAD's demands to invoke Article 7, in May the king called on the courts to rule the April 2 elections unconstitutional and they complied. New parliamentary elections were scheduled for October 15, but it remained uncertain whether they would be held, since both the TRT and the DP faced the possibility of dissolution; the attorney general had charged them with unconstitutional acts in the April balloting, citing the TRT for allegedly paying small parties to contest the elections and the DP for boycotting the vote and thus abandoning the democratic process. When Thaksin resumed the position of caretaker prime minister in June, claiming the country's drifting economy necessitated his return, charges were brought against him as well, on the grounds that his leave of absence was illegal. The Thaksin care-

taker government's heavy-handed response that month to a major spike in violence in the south, with the rate of bombings reaching 50 per day, further fueled public antipathy.

Political uncertainty reigned throughout the summer, with the Constitutional Court announcing in July that it would consider the parties' cases but that they could take up to six months to decide. Thais generally remained unsure of Thaksin's political intentions, with the prime minister simultaneously maintaining that he would step down and that he would run for his TRT seat in Parliament in the fall. Roughly a month prior to the scheduled elections, however, the Council for Democratic Reform (CDR), a military junta later dubbed the Council for National Security (CNS), staged a coup. It ousted Thaksin from office, installed a military-led government, and declared martial law across the country. In explaining the coup, top army general Sonthi Boonyaratglin cited government corruption, Thaksin's lack of regard for the constitution and the king, and his national divisiveness. While promising to return Thailand to a more genuine democracy, the CNS dissolved Parliament, abrogated the constitution, and replaced the Constitutional Court with an appointed tribunal. Within two weeks, Surayud Chulanont, a former army commander and member of the Privy Council, was appointed prime minister, and a 25-member cabinet comprised mainly of former bureaucrats assembled.

The coup was generally peaceful and initially enjoyed widespread public support as well as official endorsement by the king, who publicly expressed his backing "for the sake of peace and national unity." However, while the junta conveyed its intentions to return power to the people within a year, no official dates had been set for elections by the end of 2006. Moreover, the CDR took a number of steps in the coup's immediate aftermath to reverse the country's recent democratic progress and curb the political rights and civil liberties of Thai citizens. All political activity was suspended, and significant restrictions were imposed on the media, particularly the government-run broadcast sector, preventing public discussion of the coup itself and silencing opposition to the new military regime. Broadcast outlets in Thaksin strongholds were specifically targeted, with more than 300 radio stations in three provinces closed down in just a few days.

An interim constitution, promulgated on October 1 as promised, was widely criticized for falling short of the democratic guarantees of the 1997 constitution and failing to reverse the host of restrictions on political activity and freedom of the press and assembly that had been implemented in the days after the coup. In practice, however, many of these restrictions were loosely enforced, particularly toward the end of the year, and martial law was lifted in more than half of the country's provinces in November. Martial law was maintained in a number of provinces in the north and northeast where support for Thaksin remained strong. The interim charter also replaced the Senate and the House with a National Assembly fully appointed by the king, and gave the CNS near-complete control of an outlined process for drafting a new permanent constitution, although a referendum on the new draft was promised.

Thaksin, who was in New York at the time of the coup, remained in exile through the end of the year. The TRT party splintered just weeks following the coup when more than 60 former ministers and lawmakers issued their resignations as the CNS pushed forward with investigations of systemic graft under Thaksin's leadership.

The new leadership's openness to dialogue with the southern insurgents,

coupled with the fact that the chairman of the CNS, Sonthi Boonyaratglin, was himself a Muslim, initially raised hopes that the military government might achieve greater progress toward reconciliation in the south. However, the fighting failed to relent through the rest of the year. Unrest reached Bangkok on December 31, when a series of bombings killed two people, injured 12, and undermined public confidence in the CNS. Some suspected Thaksin supporters of mounting the attacks.

The September coup brought a shift in the country's economic policy from Thaksin's emphasis on economic expansion at all costs to a self-sufficiency model publicly advocated by Surayud soon after he took office. Thaksin's more controversial efforts toward privatization and trade liberalization were expected to be abandoned. The CNS government's December attempt to impose capital controls to curb massive appreciation in the local currency caused Thai stocks to suffer their greatest plummet in a single day since 1980, taking a toll on the country's credibility with international investors.

The CNS was condemned internationally for removing a democratically elected government, but the coup generally had little impact on Thailand's relations with traditional foreign allies and its Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) partners.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Thailand is not an electoral democracy. Prior to the September 2006 military coup, the 1997 constitution mandated a parliamentary system with a bicameral legislature, including a House of Representatives with 500 members elected for four-year terms, and a Senate with 200 members elected for six-year terms. After national parliamentary elections, the head of the party that formed a majority in parliament became prime minister. When it ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra from office in September, the CDR abrogated the 1997 constitution, the most democratic in the country's history, and dissolved the parliament. The interim constitution promulgated on October 1, 2006, replaced the bicameral legislature with a National Assembly of 250 members, all appointed by the king. The interim constitution also gave the chairman (Sonthi Boonyaratglin) of the military government, by then dubbed the Council for National Security, the authority to appoint and remove the prime minister at any time. A former army commander, Surayud Chulanont, was appointed prime minister within weeks of the coup.

The interim constitution stipulates the process for drafting a permanent constitution over a six-month period, granting substantial control over the process to the CNS, which retains the final say over the composition of the 100-member Constitutional Drafting Committee. None of the committee's members are permitted to belong to political parties or to have been members of political parties in the last two years. The CNS promised that a national referendum on the final draft of the new constitution would be held, although the interim constitution gives the CNS the right to select any previous constitution and revise it for use if the new draft is not approved, either in the public referendum or by the CNS.

Thailand's head of state, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, is an unelected hereditary leader with little responsibility in day-to-day politics but tremendous moral and symbolic influence, particularly in times of national or constitutional crisis. The king exercised an inordinate amount of influence in December 2005 and over the course

of 2006, calling on Thaksin to accept greater criticism and possibly influencing the prime minister's decision to announce that he would step down in the aftermath of the April elections. While he refused to meet the PAD's demands to invoke Article 7 and install a royally appointed government, the king was seen to have influence again in May 2006 to help end the political impasse, calling on the country's courts to rule against the constitutionality of the April elections.

Prior to the September coup, Thailand's multiparty democracy was dominated by Thaksin's TRT party, which is generally described as populist and draws important support from rural voters. Three other important political parties are the Phak Prachathipat (Democrat Party), the country's oldest political party, with strong middle-class support, particularly in Bangkok; the conservative Phak Chart Thai (Thai Nation Party), previously a member of the TRT-led coalition government in 2001; and the smaller Phak Mahachon (Great People's Party). By late 2005, all three of these parties had begun to take strong stands against the TRT party. As the TRT party had consolidated its political dominance—partly through sweeping electoral victories and partly by absorbing formerly independent parties, such as the Chart Pattana and the New Aspiration Party—the opposition lost many tools to check the government. With 377 of 500 parliamentary seats prior to the April 2 elections, which were ultimately considered a farce, the TRT party deprived the opposition of the requisite 200 votes necessary to introduce a motion of censure against the prime minister (long an important symbolic measure, even when such resolutions failed). Under Thaksin, opposition representatives lost a number of seats on important parliamentary committees, and the government generally showed less patience for the basic procedures of democratic consultation and debate.

Extensive efforts were taken in the coup's immediate aftermath to bar those opposed to the military government (particularly Thaksin supporters) from wielding any political influence. The CNS banned meetings by all political parties and barred the establishment of new parties. However, the interim constitution blocks the chairman of the CNS, members of the National Assembly, and those involved in the constitution-drafting process from seeking elected office in the general elections and the senatorial race for two years from whenever elections are first held.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that official corruption is widespread, including bureaucrats demanding bribes in exchange for routine services and law enforcement officials being paid to ignore trafficking and other illicit activities. Corruption ranked among Thais' key frustrations with the Thaksin regime and was cited as part of the military's justification for the coup, primarily because of the strong nexus between politics and big business and conflict-of-interest charges related to the Thaksin family's ownership of significant national assets, particularly in the media sector. After seizing power in September, the CNS reinstated the county's anticorruption commission, which had been dormant for more than a year, and established the Asset Scrutinizing Committee, a body with the power to seize assets from Thaksin and other former officials. While driven by clear political motives, the CNS moved quickly to investigate Thaksin's alleged corruption offenses, and in December Finance Minister Pridiyathorn Devakula announced that the Bank of Thailand would bring charges against Thaksin to a criminal court for his involvement in a controversial land deal in 2003 and for the costly purchase of equipment at Bangkok's new Suvarnabhumi airport. The military government also began investigations into the

Shin Corporation sale in January. Thailand was ranked 63 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. Access to information laws remained in force following the coup.

The September coup abrogated the 1997 constitution and its strong protections for freedom of expression. Despite heavy lobbying by a coalition of Thai media advocates and assurances by coup leader General Sonthi Boonyaratglin, the interim constitution does not explicitly protect freedom of expression beyond a recognition of "basic rights, human dignity, and equality," and failed to rescind restrictions on the press imposed in the immediate aftermath of the coup. Meanwhile, a number of preexisting restrictive laws remained in force, such as defamation provisions in the 2004 Thai penal and criminal code, lese majesty laws that limit criticism of the king, and others that reserve the government's right to restrict the media to preserve national security or public order.

Prior to the coup, Thaksin continued in 2006 to launch criminal and civil defamation suits against harsh media critics, especially those covering his family's sale of the Shin Corporation and the wave of opposition protests in the capital during the run-up to the April elections. By June 2006, Sondhi Limthongkul was facing 50 criminal lawsuits, largely for activities associated with his role as a leader of the PAD opposition movement. The status of many of these cases remained uncertain at year's end in light of Thaksin's exile. In a positive development, media activist Supinya Klangnarong and four journalists from the daily *Thai Post* were acquitted in March 2006 of defamation charges brought in 2005 by the Shin Corporation. The journalists had suggested a conflict of interest between Thaksin's public office and his family's private businesses, but the court ruled that public companies, like public figures, should be open to criticism in the public interest.

The CNS imposed a number of restrictions on the media just after the coup. The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology was empowered to "control, block, and destroy" information detrimental to the new administration, and the CNS issued military order No. 10, urging media cooperation in promoting "peace and national unity." The broadcasting sector faced the greatest restrictions, since all radio and television frequencies were owned by the government both before and after the coup. All expressions of public opinion and discussions of the coup itself were essentially banned, and all media were asked to stop broadcasting related text messages sent in by the public. Radio stations were ordered to cancel call-in news programs, and more than 300 radio stations in three provinces known for being Thaksin strongholds were closed down in just a few days. The print media and foreign outlets generally faced no new restrictions and continued to report on Thaksin and his whereabouts despite discouragement from the authorities. One website was closed down for serving as a public forum on the coup, and another was shuttered for criticizing the interim constitution.

The government has more generally censored the internet since 2003 largely to prevent circulation of pornography or illegal products and continues to block sites considered a threat to national security in light of ongoing violence in the south. Following the coup, the focus of internet censorship shifted to potentially disruptive political messages.

The interim constitution does not specifically protect freedom of religion, but Thais of all faiths have traditionally worshipped freely in this predominantly Bud-

dhist society, and they largely continued to do so in 2006. Muslims in the south experience some discrimination in jobs, education, and business opportunities. Heightened violence related to the insurgency has contributed to tensions between Buddhist and Muslim communities in the southern provinces, and Buddhist monks and temples there have been targeted for attack. A study by the government-appointed National Reconciliation Commission, released in early 2006, found that poverty and corruption are much greater factors in fueling the southern insurgency than religion and separatism. The fact that the chairman of the CNS is a Thai Muslim raised hopes that progress might be made in bridging communal differences in the south. Professors and other educators can generally lecture and publish freely.

Massive but generally peaceful protests of up to 200,000 people swept the country, especially Bangkok and other major cities, in early 2006 following the Shin Corporation sale and in the final run-up to the April elections. Thailand has an extremely vibrant nongovernmental organization (NGO) community representing farmers, laborers, women, students, and human rights interests. Activists affiliated with the NGO movement—especially the PAD—played a large role in galvanizing anti-Thaksin sentiment in 2005-06.

Freedom of assembly was restricted after the coup and omitted from the interim constitution. The CNS banned protests immediately following its takeover and prohibited political gatherings of more than five people. A separate decree prohibited all political gatherings or activities of local and provincial government officials, and the interim constitution was criticized for failing to lift such initial restrictions. Protests against the coup were nevertheless held in downtown Bangkok, with attendance ranging from 20 to 100 participants per rally. Military forces arrested activist Chalard Worachat and former member of parliament Thawee Kraihup for holding a protest against the junta in front of the city's Democracy Monument. Otherwise, these decrees were not strictly enforced but reportedly discouraged many from organizing. In November, the National Assembly voted to lift the decree prohibiting political gatherings of more than five people, and it was officially lifted on December 27. Legally, private associations must register with the government, but in practice it is not required. The Emergency Decree for the three restive provinces in the south permits the government to limit freedom of assembly, but that authority was not invoked in 2006.

Thai trade unions are independent, though fewer than 4 percent of the total workforce is unionized. More than 50 percent of state-enterprise workers are unionized, however. According to the U.S. State Department's 2006 Human Rights report, low rates of labor organization can be attributed to the fact that unions are not permitted in the sizable agricultural and informal sectors, and to efforts by the government and the private sector to diminish union cohesiveness. Labor laws allowing certain workers to join unions, collective bargaining, and protections against forced labor were unchanged by the September coup, but they remained poorly enforced. Exploitation of migrant workers from Burma, Cambodia, and Laos was an ongoing problem, as was child and sweatshop labor.

Judicial independence was eliminated after the coup with the dissolution of the Constitutional Court, whose authority and jurisdiction were transferred to an appointed Constitutional Tribunal. All cases pending with the Constitutional Court were transferred to the new tribunal. While the interim constitution specifically noted

that judicial independence would be upheld, international human rights groups cited the judiciary as one of the institutions most concretely affected by the coup. All appointed judges can be removed at any point, and with the nullification of the 1997 constitution, Thai citizens no longer have habeas corpus rights.

Pretrial detention—often up to 84 days in criminal cases—is a serious problem, and trials often take years to complete. Prison conditions are dire, including the shackling of prisoners and widespread torture and abuse of pretrial detainees by police and military agencies. State officials are rarely prosecuted for such acts. Human rights groups continue to lament the security forces' use of excessive force in response to persistent unrest in the south. In January 2006, one police officer was sentenced to three years in jail and four were acquitted for lack of evidence for the 2004 murder of Somchai Neelaphajit, a Muslim lawyer who had been campaigning against martial law in the south and defending five Muslims tortured by police. Human Rights Watch assailed the verdict for leaving the case unresolved. NGOs and the CNS criticized the Thaksin regime for failing to effectively investigate the 2,245 deaths that occurred during 2003 antinarcotics crackdowns and bring the perpetrators to justice. Disappearances and extrajudicial killings continued to occur in 2006 but to a lesser extent than previously. The arbitrary arrest of activists was widespread under Thaksin; political leaders close to him were arrested and detained following the coup.

Many of the estimated one million members of hill tribes have never been fully integrated into society. Half of hill-tribe members reportedly lack citizenship, which renders them ineligible to vote, own land, attend state schools, or be protected under labor laws. They are required to carry identification cards, their movement is restricted, and they continue to face forced eviction and relocation. An estimated 150,000 Burmese refugees live in camps along the Burmese border. Late in 2006, authorities detained a growing number of North Korean, Burmese Rohingya, and Laotian Hmong asylum seekers.

Rape, domestic abuse, HIV/AIDS, prostitution, and the trafficking of women and children all present critical problems in Thailand. Thai government records indicate that the number of domestic abuse cases per day has multiplied since 2002. According to the U.S. State Department, the Thai police reported 5,060 cases of rape nationwide in 2006 (through November), up from 4,693 rape cases in 2005. Rape is illegal, and there are a range of penalties for sexual assault. Some 200,000 to 300,000 Thai women and children work as prostitutes, according to NGO estimates. Many prostitutes work under debt bondage, forced to repay traffickers' loans to their parents. Authorities prosecute relatively few traffickers, and many police, soldiers, local officials, and immigration officers reportedly are involved in trafficking or take bribes to ignore it. One percent of adult Thais are infected with HIV/AIDS; aggressive prevention and treatment policies, especially a program launched in 2004 to provide HIV-positive people with antiretroviral drugs, have reduced both the number of new HIV/AIDS cases and the number of deaths from the disease.

Togo

Population: 6,300,000

Capital: Lome

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,5NF	6,5NF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

In August 2006, during talks held in Burkina Faso, all of the major Togolese political parties signed an agreement, which formed a government of national unity, created an independent electoral commission and scheduled legislative elections for October 2007. However, implementation was frequently halted by disputes between rival political factions. Nonetheless, as a result of the agreement, the EU agreed to release \$20.2 million in aid contingent upon the successful completion of the 2007 legislative election. At the same time, little to no progress has been made toward investigating the large-scale human rights abuses that took place during both the coup and the presidential election in 2005; not a single perpetrator of the violence has been prosecuted.

Togoland, a German colony for more than three decades, was seized by France and Britain at the outset of World War I. The British portion became part of Ghana, and the French portion gained independence as Togo in 1960. The country's founding president, Sylvanus Olympio, was murdered in 1963 in one of the first coups in independent African history to topple a country's democratically elected government. Gnassingbe Eyadema, then a demobilized sergeant who had served in France's colonial wars, participated in the revolt. He went on to lead a bloodless 1967 coup against Olympio's civilian successor, assuming direct power and suspending the constitution. He maintained his repressive rule through a single-party political system, mock elections, and a faithful military.

In 1991, under pressure from European governments and the newly democratized African countries surrounding Togo, Eyadema agreed to institute a multiparty system and prepare for free elections. However, soldiers and secret police loyal to Eyadema harassed, attacked, or killed opposition supporters who became too assertive and too vocal with their criticisms. By 1993, Eyadema had dissolved the newly appointed government, and thousands of opposition supporters had fled to neighboring Benin and Ghana.

Despite Eyadema's tolerance of opposition participation in the electoral process, his Rally of the Togolese People (RPT) party dominated all subsequent elections, primarily through military campaigns of harassment and intimidation coupled

with alleged fraud and ballot stuffing. Eyadema also altered the constitution just prior to the 2003 presidential election to prevent the strongest opposition candidate—Gilchrist Olympio, son of former president Sylvanus Olympio—from running, by requiring that all candidates reside in Togo for a year preceding an election; Olympio has lived in exile in Ghana and France since surviving an assassination attempt in 1992.

Eyadema secured another five-year term in 2003 with 57 percent of the vote, compared with 34 percent for Emmanuel Bob-Akitani, who ran in Olympio's place for the opposition Union of Forces for Change (UFC). The European Union (EU) declined to send observers, saying it was unlikely that the vote would be fair. However, monitors from the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) claimed that the election was free and fair.

In an effort to rebuild trade relations with the EU—which had been severed since 1993 due to human rights abuses and Eyadema's resistance to democratic change—Eyadema signed a pledge in April 2004 to undertake 22 reform measures, including the launch of talks with the political opposition and amendments to press and communications laws.

At the time of his death in February 2005, Eyadema had presided over the longest-running dictatorship on the African continent. Days after his passing, the military installed his son, Faure Gnassingbe, as head of state and amended the constitution to bolster the legality of the move. Gnassingbe, who studied in France and the United States and had a background in business, had served as minister for telecommunications prior to his father's death. Natchaba Ouattara, the president of the National Assembly and the rightful successor to the presidency, was prevented from returning to Togo after attending a political meeting in Brussels. Protests and opposition activity were formally banned for two months after Eyadema's death, but demonstrations were frequent and the law enforcement response was brutal. ECOWAS and the AU condemned the military coup, severed economic ties, and pushed for immediate elections and a "return" to democratic rule. Gnassingbe relented, and the poll was held in April 2005.

Gnassingbe was officially declared the winner, with 60 percent of the vote, and the results were backed by African leaders and ECOWAS. Even so, American and European diplomats and other observers cited numerous incidents of fraud, including allegations that there were almost a million phantom voters, swelling the ranks of eligible voters by a third; irregularities in the revising of the electoral rolls; and many cases of the military snatching ballot boxes ahead of the official count. Numerous instances of intimidation and repression by security forces and members of the ruling party were also cited, along with direct attacks on opposition media outlets and the enforcement of complete broadcast and communication silence on election day.

Clashes between opposition supporters and security forces escalated after the results were announced. The violence claimed between 400 and 500 lives, according to a report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; thousands of others were wounded. Some 40,000 people fled to neighboring countries over the course of 2005. The United Nations said that most of those killed in Togo were attacked in their homes, and that security forces bore the greatest responsibility for the violence and human rights violations.

In August 2005, Gnassingbe named Edem Kodjo—the leader of a moderate

opposition party and an economist who had served as prime minister under Eyadema in the 1990s—as the new interim prime minister. The RPT and leaders of the opposition were cajoled by African heads of state—and by the promise of renewed EU economic aid—into holding talks to alleviate the political tension and prepare for legislative elections. The talks were generally sporadic and unproductive.

However, at a round of talks held in neighboring Burkina Faso in August 2006, all participating parties finally signed an agreement that formed a government of national unity, created an independent electoral commission, and scheduled legislative elections for October 2007. The agreement also proposed investigations into the 2005 human rights abuses and a restructuring of the military, although there has been little progress on either of those points. Less than a month after the deal was struck, the main opposition party, the UFC, complained about the implementation of a component that allegedly entailed a UFC representative being named as interim prime minister. Instead, Gnassingbe named Yawovi Agboyibo, a human rights lawyer and member of the Action Committee for Renewal party, a distinct opposition party, to the position.

The preparations for legislative elections were an integral part of the 22 steps required for a renewal of EU economic aid. Soon after the conclusion of the Burkina Faso negotiations, the EU agreed to release \$20.2 million to support rural development. The continuance of the aid was contingent on the free and fair conduct of the upcoming elections.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Togo is not an electoral democracy. The 2005 presidential election, in which Faure Gnassingbe was confirmed in office with 60 percent of the vote, was blatantly fraudulent and marked by violence. Democratic legislative elections are planned for 2007 and are to be monitored by the newly formed National Electoral Commission (CENI). The president is elected to five-year terms, and appoints prime minister. Members of the 81-seat, unicameral National Assembly are elected to five-year terms.

During the 2006 Burkina Faso talks, the rival parties agreed that the new CENI would consist of 10 seats for opposition parties, 5 for the ruling RPT, and 2 each for the cabinet and civil society groups. Nonetheless, the most popular opposition figure, Gilchrist Olympio, is still prohibited from participating in any elections because he lives abroad.

Corruption in Togo has been a serious impediment to development and stability. The Anti-Corruption Commission has been largely ineffective. It did not follow fair and transparent procedures in its investigations of corruption allegations against relatively low-level and former high-level officials; allegations lodged against current senior officials remained uninvestigated. Togo was ranked 130 of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are legally guaranteed in Togo, but these rights are not always respected in practice. In 2004, then-President Gnassingbe Eyadema initiated legal reforms that improved the status of press freedom in Togo as part of an effort to end EU trade sanctions. The improvements included amendments to Togo's harsh 2000 Press and Communications Law, which abolished prison sentences for libel and prohibited the government from seizing and closing media outlets without judicial approval. However, following Eyadema's death in 2005, the

independent media faced frequent harassment from government security personnel. All media communications, including those on the internet, were silenced on the day of the April 2005 presidential election and remained obstructed in subsequent months. In 2006, the environment for the press largely returned to its state under Eyadema, with journalists wary of criticizing the government but infrequently facing direct physical harassment. However, in November, two of President Gnassingbe's brothers physically attacked a journalist with the private radio station Nana FM for having criticized their late father. Media outlets that cover the government sympathetically continue to receive favorable treatment from government officials. Coupled with the severe intimidation campaign of 2005, this has led to self-censorship among much of the press.

Constitutionally protected religious freedom is generally respected, though tension sometimes emerges between Togo's Christian majority and Muslims, who make up 15 percent of the population. In an apparent effort to rebuild interfaith ties, Gnassingbe in October 2006 joined with Muslims in Lome to celebrate the end of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting. Academic freedom is not usually respected, and government informers and security forces are believed to maintain a presence on university campuses.

Freedoms of assembly and association are often restricted for the government's political opponents, and all demonstrations were banned immediately after Eyadema's death in 2005. Though citizens' ability to assemble peacefully improved in 2006, the memory of 2005 continues to discourage anti-RPT rallies, and many people refuse to go back to the Be district of Lome, an opposition stronghold where the majority of the 2005 nighttime raids by security forces took place. Any political party planning a demonstration on public property must notify the minister of territorial administration and decentralization. Violent demonstrations in August 2006 broke out in the northern city of Kara, an RPT stronghold, after police failed to apprehend the suspected murderer of a local motorcycle-taxi driver. Unable to disperse the crowd of angry motorcycle-taxi drivers on their own, the police called in military troops, who used tear gas and imposed a strict curfew.

Togo's constitution includes the right to form and join labor unions, with an exception for "essential" workers such as security personnel. Unions have the right to bargain collectively, but the government often views demands for better working conditions as political manipulation or attacks on state security. In November 2006, the five main syndicates in Togo joined together and staged a general strike to protest the government's lack of progress in implementing a labor agreement signed earlier in the year.

The judiciary is heavily influenced by the president, and tribal courts handle many minor matters. Courts are understaffed and inadequately funded, pretrial detentions are lengthy, and prisons are severely overcrowded. Lome's central prison, intended for 500 inmates, currently holds close to 1,200. Almost all of them are pretrial detainees, and many have been incarcerated for political reasons. There are also reports that prison guards require inmates to pay fees for access to medical treatment, showers, and places to sleep.

Following the 2005 campaign of extrajudicial killings, abduction, and intimidation, human rights groups and victims called for justice in the prosecution of those responsible. However, in the summer of 2006, then prime minister Edem Kodjo or-

dered the police and the courts "to urgently abandon all pending cases and investigations against persons believed responsible for crimes in connection with the elections." Soon afterward, two senior army officers suspected of past human rights abuses were promoted, and no investigation into their behavior is currently expected. An Amnesty International report released in 2006 noted that the country's long-standing culture of impunity made the 2005 abuses possible and did not subside in 2006. In the course of the Burkina Faso negotiations, all parties agreed that impunity was a serious problem in Togo, especially during elections, and they pledged to establish a commission to investigate all past politically motivated violence. However, this proposal has not been implemented, and independent investigations and impartial hearings on the 2005 abuses are still lacking.

Ethnic discrimination is rife among the country's 40 ethnic groups and, during the 2005 electoral conflict, violence often erupted between northern and southern groups. While tensions still persist and discrimination remains prevalent, the level of interethnic violence diminished in 2006. The army is composed predominantly of soldiers from the president's northern Kabiye ethnic group and was responsible for many of the 2005 abuses. Critics have called for the Togolese military to be restructured to reflect more accurately the diversity of the population and ensure equal treatment for all ethnic groups, including the Kabiye's traditional rivals in the south. In the agreement signed in Burkina Faso in August 2006, the security forces were slated for reform, but there was no action on that front by year's end.

Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, women's opportunities for education and employment are limited. A husband may legally bar his wife from working or choose to receive her earnings. Customary law discriminates against women in divorce and inheritance, giving women the mere legal rights of a minor. Female genital mutilation is widely practiced by the country's northern ethnic groups, and a law prohibiting it is not enforced.

Child trafficking for the purpose of slavery is a problem in Togo, as in much of West Africa. Togo serves as both an active participant in and a point of transit for the trade. A long-pending, tough anti-child trafficking law was finally approved in July 2005. However, inconsistencies in the law have since made implementation difficult and prosecutions rare. A draft child code, currently pending, would improve the law if adopted, and a law criminalizing all forms of human trafficking is currently being debated in the National Assembly.

Tonga

Population: 100,000
Capital: Nuku'alofa

Political Rights: 5
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF

Overview: A commoner was named prime minister following the sudden resignation of Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata from the post in February, and King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV died in September after a long illness, to be succeeded by Crown Prince Tupouto'a. Nobles were brought to public trial for criminal offenses for the first time during the year. The push for political reform continued, and violence erupted in the capital when the government proposed an alternative roadmap, resulting in a declaration of martial law that lasted through year's end.

Tonga consists of 169 islands that King George Tupou I united under his rule in 1845. It became a constitutional monarchy in 1875 and a British protectorate in 1900. Tonga gained independence in 1970 as a member of the Commonwealth and is the last remaining Polynesian monarchy.

During the long reign of King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, which began in 1945 and ended with his death in 2006, Tonga's politics and economy were dominated by the monarchy, hereditary nobles, and a few prominent commoners. The first strong show of public support for democratic reform came with the 2002 parliamentary elections, when prodemocracy candidates won seven of the nine directly elected seats reserved for commoners. One influential democracy advocate within the royal family was the king's nephew, Prince Tu'ipelehake. His proposal for a referendum to allow the popular election of all representatives won narrow approval in the parliament in 2004. Prodemocracy candidates again won the majority of commoners' seats in the 2005 elections. The king reappointed Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata as prime minister and chose two "people's representatives" to join the cabinet, marking the first time commoners had held cabinet posts. However, political reform was apparently moving too slowly for the people. Strikes by civil servants and teachers for higher pay in 2005 quickly turned into public marches for more comprehensive political reform. The protesters' actions pushed the king to approve the formation of a special constitutional review committee in October 2005. Prince Tu'ipelehake chaired the special committee until he and his wife were killed in a July 2006 car accident in the U.S. city of San Francisco, where they were consulting with the overseas Tongan community.

Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata resigned as prime minister in February 2006. Al-

though he gave no reason for his departure, he and his government had been severely criticized for losing millions of dollars in the failed Tonga Airline. To replace the prince, the king appointed Fred Sevele, a people's representative and prodemocracy activist who had called for the prince's resignation. Sevele's appointment marked the first time a commoner held the premiership. To improve government efficiency, Sevele proposed cutting the number of cabinet posts by half, privatizing many government enterprises, and reducing the number of government workers. By the middle of 2006, several hundred teachers and other public workers had accepted the government's offer of early retirement.

In another sign that the authorities were acknowledging the public's demand for political reform and an end to corruption, nobles were tried for criminal offenses for the first time in 2006. One case involved the Speaker of Parliament, who was found guilty in January of bribing customs officials to evade import taxes on a large shipment of alcohol. Another case involved a noble who was charged with rape and indecent assault. Although he was acquitted in July, the queen stripped him of his title, marking the first time a noble had lost his title since 1926.

The Privy Council enacted an additional reform in June, approving recognition of dual citizenship. The move was expected to boost the political influence of the overseas Tongan community. The country relies heavily on remittances from its citizens living abroad, including more than 30,000 in the United States. Despite its economic and political problems, Tonga ranked 55 out of 177 countries in the 2006 UN Human Development Index, relatively high for the region.

In September, the 88-year-old king died in New Zealand following a long illness. Crown Prince Tupouto'a—single, childless, and 58 years old—assumed the title King Siaosi Tupou V. A major businessman educated in Europe and New Zealand, the new king was seen to have a more modern outlook and to be more accepting of political reform than his father. Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, the former prime minister and younger brother of the new king, was named the new crown prince.

In October, the National Committee for Political Reform submitted its report to the government, calling for a parliament of 26 members with 17 members elected by the people and 9 by the country's 33 nobles, as well as a prime minister and cabinet chosen from among the 26 members of Parliament. The government proposed an alternative that would allow the king to retain his power to appoint the prime minister and cabinet and choose from persons outside the assembly. Prodemocracy activists rejected the alternative proposal and, on November 17, led a protest at what should have been the final session of Parliament in 2006.

Yet the government declared Parliament closed, sparking a public riot in the capital, in which many stores were burned and looted. Prodemocracy activists allegedly bused youths into the capital to target businesses owned by the royal family, their business partners, and the Chinese population, which now owns 70 percent of all businesses in Tonga. Public calls for restraint by the activists ended the riot, and Australia and New Zealand sent about 150 defense personnel and police at Prime Minister Sevele's invitation. The king declared martial law, banning public processions and assemblies and gave special powers to the police and the military. In the end, seven alleged looters were killed in fires; 700 persons were arrested for arson, looting, and other crimes associated with the riot; and the total loss was estimated at \$147 million.

The king and pro-democracy leaders met to bridge their differences, resulting in

an agreement to increase the number of elected representatives to 21 in a 30-person parliament at the time of the next general elections in 2008, with the remaining 9 seats reserved for the nobles, and allowing for the prime minister and cabinet to be chosen from among Parliament's 30 members. However, within days of the agreement, the king received a signed petition from nearly 2,000 citizens, including academics, professionals, and general members of the public, rejecting the accelerated pace of political reform sought by prodemocracy activists. A tense atmosphere enveloped the country through year's end, and the king extended martial law in the capital to mid-January 2007.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Tonga is not an electoral democracy. The king, 33 hereditary nobles, and a few prominent commoners have long dominated politics and the economy through their majority in the unicameral Legislative Assembly and their substantial land holdings. The king selects the cabinet, which consists of 10 life appointees, 2 nobles drawn from the assembly, and 2 commoners drawn from the assembly. The four selected assembly members are replaced through by-elections. The king, cabinet, and two appointed governors—sitting as the Privy Council—make major policy decisions. The Legislative Assembly consists of 9 popularly elected members, 9 nobles elected by their peers, and the 14 cabinet members sitting *ex-officio*. The 18 elected legislators serve three-year terms. In an effort to bring an end to public riots in the capital in November, the king met with prodemocracy leaders and agreed to increase the number of elected representatives to 21 in a 30-person parliament in the next general election in 2008, with the remaining 9 seats being reserved for the nobles. Whether this agreement will hold remains uncertain, however; while the push to expand democratic representation has gained generally widespread public support, there is no clear consensus on how rapidly political reform should take place.

Prodemocracy activists who have participated in recent elections align themselves with the Human Rights and Democracy Movement, which serves more as an alliance among prodemocracy activists than as a political party. There are no formal political parties.

Corruption is a major source of public discontent with the government and a hindrance to economic growth. The royals, the nobles, and their top associates have allegedly used state assets for their personal benefit, from taking land and granting themselves monopoly licenses to securing government loans and guarantees. Tonga was not ranked in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and of the press, the government has a long history of suppressing criticism in the media. The Newspaper Act, the Media Operators Act, and a set of 2003 constitutional amendments had been used to silence the *Tonga Times*, a vocal critic of the government, and the opposition paper *Ko e Kele 'a*. Foreign publications and journalists were also restricted. However, in October 2004, the Supreme Court ruled the two laws and the constitutional amendments void and invalid. In addition, the election of prodemocracy candidates to the parliament in 2005 and public pressure for accountability have encouraged more lively political news reporting. The government owns shares in several private media companies and runs the country's television and radio stations. Internet diffusion is limited mainly by cost and technical access challenges.

Freedom of religion is generally respected in this predominantly Christian society. However, the Tongan Broadcasting Commission requires that all references to religion on radio and television conform to mainstream Christian beliefs. There were no reports of government restrictions on academic freedom, but academics reportedly practice self-censorship to avoid conflicts with the government.

Freedoms of assembly and association are generally respected for groups not involved in politics and not critical of government policies, but those participating in protests and marches for political reform have faced government harassment. In November, the government imposed martial law to restore order and calm after initial political protests exploded into violent public riots throughout the capital. Special powers were allocated to the police and the military. Many civil society organizations are active in promoting education, public health, and children's and women's welfare.

The 1963 Trade Union Act gives workers the right to form unions and to strike, but regulations for union formation were never promulgated. The introduction of a new 15 percent consumption tax in April 2005 sparked Tonga's first-ever strike by civil servants in July 2005. They were soon joined by teachers, who demanded an 80 percent salary increase. Their marches then turned into public protests for political reform and greater transparency in government.

The judiciary is generally fair, efficient, and independent of the king and the executive branch. Traditional elders in villages also exercise considerable authority and frequently adjudicate local disputes. Suspects may exercise the right to an attorney and a court hearing. Prisons are spartan, but there are no reports of prisoner abuse.

Relations between Tongans and Chinese immigrants have worsened in recent years, as evidenced by attacks against Chinese-owned shops, including their widespread destruction and looting in the November 2006 riots in the capital. Many Chinese entrepreneurs and their families left Tonga for safety.

Citizens enjoy freedom of travel, movement, and migration. Immigration laws were tightened after the illegal sale of Tongan passports (particularly to persons from China and Taiwan) became a sore point in relations with major aid donors.

Women enjoy equal access to education and health care and receive fairly equal treatment in employment. Women hold several senior government posts, including cabinet positions and the majority of commissioned officer posts in the police. However, they often need support from the nobility to rise to positions of leadership. Women can lease, but not own, land. Domestic violence against women is not uncommon.

Trinidad and Tobago

Population: 1,300,000
Capital: Port-of-Spain

Political Rights: 2*
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Ratings Change: Trinidad and Tobago's political rights rating improved from 3 to 2 due to the loosening of former prime minister Panday's grip on the UNC opposition party as several dissidents split off to form their own party.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	2,2F	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,2F	2,2F

Overview:

As the economy of Trinidad and Tobago benefited from an ongoing oil and gas boom in 2006, the government of Prime Minister Patrick Manning began to make headway in the struggle against dramatic increases in violent crime. Opportunities for new leadership in the opposition United National Congress (UNC) party emerged after the party's leader, former prime minister Basdeo Panday, was sentenced to two years' hard labor on corruption-related charges. The Congress of the People party emerged under the leadership of former-UNC leader Winston Dookeran, and will likely be a viable third party in the upcoming elections in January 2008.

Trinidad and Tobago, a member of the Commonwealth, achieved independence from Britain in 1962 and became a republic in 1976. In July 1991, Jamaat al-Muslimeen, a small radical Muslim group, staged a coup attempt in Port-of-Spain. The prime minister and eight cabinet members were held hostage for four days, and 23 people died in bombings at the police headquarters, the state television station, and the parliament building. The militants eventually surrendered to the authorities.

After disputed elections in December 2001, former prime minister Patrick Manning returned to the premiership. A nine-month deadlock ensued in the evenly divided lower house of Parliament, leading to street demonstrations and a legal challenge. Manning eventually called for new legislative elections in October 2002. The polling was generally peaceful, and more than 100 candidates from six parties contested the lower house's 36 seats. Manning's People's National Movement (PNM) won 20 seats, while the United National Congress (UNC) also had a strong showing, reinforcing the dominance of the two parties. Manning was sworn in as prime minister for the third time since 1991. In previous elections, there were concerns over the impartiality of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC), but no major improprieties surfaced during the latest national or local polls. However, the UNC opposed plans to redraw electoral districts, arguing that the changes were partisan

and favored the PNM. In June 2005, the EBC approved of the creation of 5 new electoral constituencies in Trinidad, now totaling 41, designed to prevent an electoral tie as happened in 2001.

In local elections held in July 2003, the PNM won a majority of seats and took control of two districts that had been strongholds of the UNC, which won just 5 of 14 local councils. Also during the year, the UNC became increasingly confrontational, forcing Manning's government to compromise when legislation required a two-thirds majority in Parliament. Basdeo Panday, leader of the UNC, refused to step down despite promising to do so when he turned 70 in May 2003. In April 2006, Panday was sentenced to two years of hard labor for having failed to declare London bank accounts that he held while serving as prime minister in the late 1990s. He retained his UNC chairmanship while appealing the sentence. However, the UNC was embroiled in infighting, and several high-level defections fueled speculation that Trinidad's politics could split into a three-party system. In September 2006, former UNC leader Winston Dookeran created the Congress of the People, calling for national unity.

Yasin Abu Bakr, the leader of Jamaat al-Muslimeen, was arrested in August 2003 on charges of conspiracy to commit murder, but was released on bail. He was re-arrested in July 2004 on charges of conspiring to murder two former members of his group, including his son-in-law. The jury in the case deadlocked, and he was released pending retrial, but police detained him and several followers once again after four bombs injured nine people in October 2005. They were later released, and it remained unclear whether the bombers were engaged in criminal mischief or pursuing a broader political agenda.

Crime, including kidnapping, robbery, and homicide, was a critical problem throughout 2006, but the levels of violence improved slightly over the previous year. There were 369 homicides in 2006, down from the 386 homicides in 2005, the highest number in the country's history. The police response was also criticized. In April 2006, Amnesty International reported that at least 35 people had been killed by the police between 2003 and 2005. In October 2006, Panday called on business leaders to create a \$3.5 million fund aimed at forming an anticrime vigilante squad, but few were willing to back the proposal.

Currently, Trinidad and Tobago is experiencing an economic boom driven by its natural gas industry. The country has become the biggest supplier of liquefied natural gas to the United States and the world's top exporter of methanol and ammonia. On the back of high energy prices, in the past two years the country has enjoyed growth rates in excess of 12 percent. Further, Trinidad and Tobago is attracting new foreign investment and increased tourism while maintaining relatively low inflation and low unemployment. Wages in the nonskilled sectors continue to rise, further elevating the Caribbean's highest living standard. Moreover, Trinidad's booming energy sector allowed it to remain unencumbered by oil-related agreements with Venezuela's Hugo Chavez that were being signed by many other Caribbean countries.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Trinidad and Tobago is an electoral democracy. The 1976 constitution established the two-island nation as a republic, with a president replacing the British monarch, who had been represented by a governor-general, as head of state. The president is elected to a five-year term by a majority of the combined houses of Parliament. Executive

authority remains vested in the prime minister. Parliament consists of the 36-member House of Representatives, elected for five years, and the 31-member Senate, also serving for five years. The president appoints 6 senators on the advice of the opposition, 16 on the advice of the prime minister, and 9 at his own discretion.

Political parties are free to organize, but in practice, the dominance of the PNM and UNC has led to a two-party system. The parties are technically multiethnic but in practice, the PNM is favored by Afro-Trinidadians whereas the UNC is affiliated with Indo-Trinidadians.

In July 2001, then-prime minister Panday of the UNC lashed out at a Transparency International report that rated Trinidad and Tobago, for the first time, as a country with high levels of perceived official corruption. Panday, who was engaged in a long-running feud with prominent members of the local press, denied that there was corruption in his administration. An Integrity Commission, established under the 2000 Integrity in Public Life Act, has the power to investigate the financial and ethical performance of public functionaries; Panday was the first person to be investigated by the commission. He was sentenced in April 2006 to two years in prison for failing to declare overseas bank accounts. Trinidad and Tobago was ranked 79 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech is legally guaranteed by the constitution. Press outlets are privately owned and vigorous in their pluralistic views. There are four daily newspapers and several weeklies, as well as both private and public broadcast media outlets. Panday in 1998 refused to sign the Inter American Press Association's Declaration of Chapultepec on press freedom until it addressed the media's dissemination of "lies, half-truths and innuendoes." However, on September 12, 2002, Prime Minister Manning signed the declaration. As a result, under Prime Minister Manning, the government has not interfered with freedom of speech and the press. The press has become incrementally more professional in recent years. Access to the internet is not restricted.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed under the constitution, and the government honors this provision. Foreign missionaries are free to operate, but the government allows only 35 representatives of each denomination. Academic freedom is generally observed.

Freedoms of association and assembly are respected. Civil society in Trinidad and Tobago is relatively robust, with a range of interest groups engaged in the political process. Labor unions are well organized, powerful, and politically active, although union membership has declined in recent years. Strikes are legal and occur frequently.

The judicial branch is independent, though subject to some political pressure and corruption. As a result of rising crime rates, the court system is severely backlogged, in some cases for up to five years, with an estimated 20,000 criminal cases awaiting trial. The government permits human rights monitors to visit prisons, which are severely overcrowded.

Street crime remains a serious problem, and many Trinidadians of East Indian descent, who are disproportionately targets of abduction, blame the increase in violence and kidnapping on government corruption and police collusion. Drug-related corruption extends to the business community, and a significant amount of money is believed to be laundered through front companies. The Proceeds of Crime Act of 2000 provides severe penalties for money laundering and requires that major finan-

cial transactions be strictly monitored. The government works closely with U.S. law enforcement agencies to track drug shipments in and out of the country.

Corruption in the police force, which is often drug-related, is endemic, and law enforcement inefficiency results in the dismissal of some criminal cases. The police have won praise, however, for establishing a branch of Crime Stoppers, an international organization that promotes community involvement in preventing and informing on crime through a telephone hotline.

The population is multiethnic, consisting of Afro-Trinidadians, Indo-Trinidadians, and those of mixed race. The Indo-Trinidadian community continues to edge toward numerical, and thus political, advantage. Accusations of racial discrimination are often leveled in Parliament, and racial disparities persist, with Indo-Trinidadians composing a disproportionate percentage of the country's upper class. However, the country's leadership does alternate among the two dominant parties, and voting does not occur on strict ethnic lines. Parties have loose ethnic affiliations, but are not strictly defined by ethnicity.

Trinidad's booming economy has opened up new employment opportunities and led to an expansion of related businesses. According to the World Economic Forum's Competitiveness Index, Trinidad and Tobago fell one ranking to 67th in the year 2006.

Domestic-violence concerns remain quite significant. While serious crimes such as murder and rape are reported, other instances of abuse go unreported. Gender discrimination is forbidden under the constitution, and women participate in high-level politics. As of 2007, women held one-sixth of the seats in the House of Representatives, one-fifth of the Senate's seats and 10 cabinet-level positions in Prime Minister Manning's government. Women are present in the public and private sectors, but men still dominate most leadership positions, and salary gaps continue to favor men.

Tunisia

Population: 10,100,000

Capital: Tunis

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in February 2006 announced plans to release several hundred political prisoners. Many such prisoners, including high-ranking mem-

bers of the banned Islamist movement Ennahda, were in fact freed as part of the amnesty. In November, the president once again called on political parties and intellectuals to "provide... their views and proposals" on democratization. Those who had heeded such requests in the past had often faced imprisonment if their views contradicted Ben Ali's. Separately, the president cancelled a European Union (EU)-sponsored conference due to be held in the summer of 2006, drawing criticism from the EU. Also that year, the government began enforcing a ban on the wearing of headscarves by women in public.

Tunisia, which had been a French protectorate since 1881, gained its independence in 1956. The country was then ruled for more than 30 years by Habib Bourguiba, a secular nationalist who had been an opponent of the French presence. He ran Tunisia as an autocratic, one-party state, focusing on the modernization of the economy and society, rather than the introduction of political liberties. Under Bourghiba's rule, women's rights were advanced and the economy fared better than in many neighboring countries. Tunisia maintained positive relations with Western powers, as well as with fellow Arab states.

In 1987, then-prime minister Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali ousted Bourguiba and seized the presidency in a bloodless coup. He continued in Bourghiba's footsteps to a large degree, working to advance Tunisia's economy, as well as women's rights. However, he also emulated the former leader's autocratic style. His initial promises to allow more political openness were quickly eclipsed by the imprisonment of opposition leaders, intellectuals, and journalists, and it became clear that Ben Ali would not tolerate much dissent. Subsequent democratization pledges were also followed by crackdowns on the opposition. Islamists in particular drew the attention of the authorities, and hundreds were imprisoned after sham trials in the early 1990s. On a positive note, Ben Ali in February 2006 announced plans to release several hundred prisoners whose detentions were considered political, and also said that the government-appointed human rights group would have the right to visit prisons unannounced.

The government has generally reacted with indifference to constant pressure from international human rights groups over the years. Local human rights activists have been punished with imprisonment, beatings, threats, and harassment. The EU and the United States have often tolerated Tunisia's poor rights record in light of its economic modernization, its advances in women rights, and its nonideological role in regional conflicts. Ben Ali has also positioned himself as ally in antiterrorism efforts, further shielding his government from criticism. However, in recent years, the United States and the EU have begun to focus on the country's human rights conditions and have publicly criticized Tunisia on several occasions. The EU openly scolded Tunisia for its cancellation of an EU-sponsored regional labor conference in September 2006.

Ben Ali has exhibited few signs that he intends to move Tunisia toward democratization and openness, and his hold on government institutions remains strong. He won the last presidential election in October 2004 with over 95 percent of the vote amid opposition boycotts and claims of fraud, and his party, the Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD), currently controls more than 80 percent of the seats in Parliament. In November 2006, the president again asked the opposition to offer their reform ideas, but those who have responded to similar requests in the past have

faced a backlash by the authorities. The officially recognized opposition groups remain mostly toothless, and unrecognized opposition figures have been detained, harassed, beaten, and prevented from leaving the country.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Tunisia is not an electoral democracy. President Ben Ali has exercised authoritarian rule since he ousted former president Habib Bourghiba in a 1987 coup. Beginning in 1989, he won four successive five-year terms in tightly controlled elections, either running unopposed or easily defeating token challengers. A 2002 referendum removed the constitution's three-term limit for presidents, allowing Ben Ali to secure reelection in 2004. The president appoints the cabinet, the prime minister, and regional governors. The bicameral legislature, composed of a 189-seat Chamber of Deputies with five-year terms and a Chamber of Advisors with 126 members appointed or indirectly elected to six-year terms, is a rubber-stamp institution dominated by Ben Ali's RCD party. Parliamentary elections are neither free nor fair.

A handful of nominal opposition parties operate in Tunisia, but any party with real popular support or an agenda that opposes Ben Ali's policies is banned.

In the area of corruption, Tunisia was ranked 51 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

In theory, the constitution guarantees press freedom, but in practice Tunisia's press is one of the Arab world's most tightly controlled. Private and government-owned media outlets, both print and broadcast, are allied to Ben Ali and endorse his rule on a regular basis. Critical voices are generally excluded. The media are also used to attack opponents of the state. Independent and opposition journalists have been jailed, physically assaulted, threatened, monitored, and subjected to travel restrictions. Tunisia is home to some of the region's longest-imprisoned journalists. Hamadi Jebali of the banned Islamist newspaper *Al-Fajr* was released in February 2006 after spending more than 15 years in prison.

Foreign media are also scrutinized by the state. In October, after the Qatar-based pan-Arab satellite channel Al-Jazeera interviewed Tunisian dissident Moncef Marzouki, the government accused the station of involvement in a campaign to destabilize the country. Marzouki said on the broadcast that Tunisians should peacefully protest government repression. Al-Jazeera did not have a bureau in Tunis due to opposition from the authorities, but the Tunisian government registered its displeasure with the station's behavior by suspending diplomatic relations with Qatar.

Having been barred from the mass media, Tunisian dissidents and independent journalists have resorted to publishing their work on the internet. However, the government has moved to quash dissent there as well, imprisoning and threatening journalists and bloggers. Mohamed Abbou, a lawyer and human rights activist, has been jailed since his March 2005 arrest. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists has reported that Abbou is serving a three-and-a-half-year prison sentence for defaming the judicial process and publishing an article "likely to disturb public order." On the website Tunisnews, Abbou had compared Tunisia's prison conditions to those of the notorious Iraqi prison at Abu Ghraib. According to the New York-based Human Rights Watch, another such internet dissident is Ali Ramzi Bettibi. He was also arrested in March 2005 and was sentenced to four years in prison for re-posting a statement containing terrorist threats from an obscure Islamist group

during a scheduled visit to Tunis by then Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon. During the World Summit on the Information Society in November 2005, Tunisian authorities beat and threatened journalists and censored the speeches of participants who were critical of the government.

Islam is the state's official religion, and the population is predominantly Muslim. The country's small populations of Jews and Christians are free to practice their religions and are protected by the government, which appears more concerned with potential political activity by Muslims. Mosques are monitored, controlled, and subsidized by the authorities, and must remain closed except during prayer times. Imams are appointed and paid by the state.

Authorities limit academic freedom. Debates and discussions of politically sensitive topics are avoided by professors and student groups alike, and the government is wary of Islamist activity on campuses. The Ministry of Culture censors works of art that the government deems inappropriate. The play *Captive Bodies* by Tunisian playwright Jalila Baccar, which had a successful run in Paris, was banned in Tunisia.

Rights to freedom of association and assembly are guaranteed in the constitution. However, the government restricts or tries to infiltrate independent human rights organizations. The outspoken Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH) has been harassed with numerous lawsuits, and according to international human rights groups, police have blocked access to several LTDH offices since 2005 without any legal basis for doing so.

Tunisia has one legal organized labor group, the General Union of Tunisian Workers. The government actively limits independent labor activity, particularly if it threatens the country's image. In September 2006, Tunisian authorities cancelled the International Conference on Employment and the Right to Work in the Euro-Mediterranean Area, fearing that it could provide a platform to opponents of the regime.

The judiciary is largely seen as a pliant extension of Ben Ali's regime. Local and international human rights activists have long criticized Tunisia for the routine detention and ill-treatment of opposition figures for political reasons. While the authorities still hold several political dissidents, Ben Ali announced in February 2006 that he would free about 1,300 prisoners and grant conditional parole to more than 350 others, including many considered by international human rights groups to be political prisoners. Many prisoners, including some senior members of the banned Islamist group Ennahda, were indeed released in February, but the exact number of those freed was difficult to ascertain. Ben Ali also announced that month that the state-appointed human rights monitor, the Higher Committee for Human Rights and Basic Freedoms, would now have the right to make unscheduled visits to prisons.

Tunisian women enjoy many more social freedoms and legal rights than women in other Arab countries. The 1956 Personal Status Code grants women equal rights in divorce, and children born to Tunisian women are automatically granted Tunisian citizenship. In September 2006, the authorities, ever wary of Islamist activity, began to enforce a 15-year-old edict that bars women from wearing headscarves in public places. Ben Ali criticized the garments as sectarian and said they were being used as a political tool, but human rights groups argued that the crackdown infringed on women's right to free expression.

Turkey

Population: 73,700,000

Capital: Ankara

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview: Formal European Union (EU) accession talks, officially launched in 2005, were partially halted in December 2006; support for Turkish membership continued to fall in both the EU and Turkey itself during the year. Meanwhile, violence in predominantly Kurdish southeastern Turkey grew increasingly out of control, and a new Kurdish rebel group claimed responsibility for bombings throughout the country.

Turkey emerged as a republic following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. Its founder and the author of its guiding principles was Mustafa Kemal, dubbed Ataturk (Father of the Turks), who declared that Turkey would be a secular state. He sought to modernize the country through measures such as the pursuit of Western learning, the use of the Roman alphabet instead of Arabic script for writing Turkish, and the abolition of the Muslim caliphate.

Following Ataturk's death in 1938, Turkey remained neutral for most of World War II, joining the Allies only in February 1945. In 1952, the republic joined NATO to secure protection from the Soviet Union. However, Turkey's domestic politics have been unstable, and the army has overthrown civilian governments on four occasions since 1960. The military, which sees itself as a bulwark against both Islamism and Kurdish separatism, has traditionally wielded great influence over the functioning of the government.

The role of Islam in public life has been one of the key questions of Turkish politics in the 1990s and early twenty-first century. In 1995, the Islamist party Welfare won parliamentary elections but failed to obtain a majority. Initially, two other parties formed a majority coalition without it, but the breakup of that bloc in 1996 led the True Path Party to form a coalition with Welfare. The army, ever protective of Turkey's secular identity, forced the coalition to resign in 1997. Welfare's Necmettin Erbakan was replaced as prime minister by a member of the Motherland Party. The Welfare Party was banned in 1998 on the grounds that it was seeking to introduce Islamic rule.

The governments that followed failed to stabilize the shaky economy, leading to an economic crisis in 2001 and growing discontent among voters. The Justice and Development (AK) Party, whose roots lay in the disbanded Welfare Party, won a

sweeping majority in the November 2002 elections by promising to end governmental corruption and put the country on a firm path toward European Union (EU) membership. AK's leader, former Istanbul mayor Recep Tayyip Erdogan, had previously been banned from politics after he was convicted of crimes against secularism for reading a poem that seemed to incite religious intolerance. However, the party sought to distance itself from Islamism. The AK Party's Abdullah Gul served as prime minister until the Parliament changed the constitution, allowing Erdogan to replace him in March 2003.

Erdogan used his party's large parliamentary majority to push through successive wide-reaching reforms that were crucial to Turkey's application to join the EU. Formal accession talks officially began in October 2005 and were expected to continue for at least 10 years. However, difficulties soon arose, especially regarding Cyprus. The island had been divided since 1974 between an internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus, populated mostly by ethnic Greeks, and a Turkish-backed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). The southern republic, an EU member state since 2004, wanted Turkey to open its ports to Greek Cypriot ships as called for in an EU customs agreement, but Turkey refused, as the EU had not fulfilled its promise to end the economic isolation of the TRNC. Moreover, EU public opinion, and increasingly the EU's political leaders, were turning against Turkish membership as union officials continued to issue negative evaluations of Turkish progress on reforms. Support for membership among the Turkish population was falling as well, raising fears of renewed Turkish nationalism, although a majority were still in favor of joining the EU. In December 2006, the entry talks were partly frozen due to the Cyprus ports dispute.

The prime minister and his cabinet have experienced tension with entrenched, secularist state officials, including judges, prosecutors, and the military. Government rhetoric appealing to the AK Party's religious voter base has increased ahead of elections in 2007, while some segments of the bureaucracy seem to be purposefully rebelling against reforms they see as threatening to Turkey's secular system. This internal tension has jeopardized Turkey's democratic progress, as well as its EU aspirations.

Also in 2006, violence continued to rise in the southeast, where Kurdish separatists had fought a 15-year guerrilla war against government forces. That conflict had ended after the 1999 capture of the separatist leader, Abdullah Ocalan, but his Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) abandoned its ceasefire in 2004, and fighting has resumed. Although the PKK showed interest in a renewed ceasefire with the government in 2006, a new group known as the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK)—which appears to have links to the PKK—claimed responsibility for a number of bombings across Turkey.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Turkey is an electoral democracy. The 1982 constitution provides for a 550-member unicameral Parliament, the Grand National Assembly, which is elected to five-year terms. The Parliament elects the president for a single seven-year term, and the president appoints the prime minister from among the lawmakers. The prime minister is head of government, but the president has limited power, including to veto legislation and appoint judges and prosecutors. Democratic choice has been undercut by the army

in the past, most recently in 1997, when the military forced the government of the religious Welfare party out of office. The November 2002 elections were widely judged as free and fair.

A party must win at least 10 percent of the votes cast nationwide to have representation in Parliament. As a result, although a large number and variety of parties participated in active campaigning in 2002, only two—the AK Party and the secularist, center-left Republican People's Party (CHP)—won seats. Nevertheless, both of these parties had been in the opposition, and the elections demonstrated the ability of the electorate to bring about change. Because of shifts in party affiliation, eight parties now hold seats in Parliament, but opposition parties remain weak. The Motherland Party, which was voted out in the last election, now holds more than 20 seats; no other party besides AK and the CHP has more than 10 seats. AK, which controls more than 350 seats, appears to have abandoned its former Islamist aspirations, but much of its popular base is very religious. Although the party has supported some loosening of restrictions on religious activity, it has not made any attempt to undermine Turkey's secular underpinnings.

In 2003, legal amendments loosened restrictions on party names and candidates and circumscribed the reasons for closure of a political party. However, a party can still be shut down if its program is not in agreement with the constitution, and this criterion is broadly interpreted. The Communist Party and parties representing Kurdish interests face court cases threatening their closure and can function only minimally.

Recent reforms have increased civilian oversight of the military. The National Security Council, once dominated by the military, had its policy-setting role downgraded to a purely advisory one in 2003, and a civilian was chosen to head the council for the first time in 2004. Significantly, the military did not intervene in 2003 when the AK's Recep Tayyip Erdogan was chosen as prime minister, despite its known reservations. Nevertheless, the opinions of top generals on subjects well beyond military affairs continue to generate press attention, as with the new hard-line chief of staffs praise for secularist demonstrations in May 2006. Military intervention in policy making on key topics remains a possibility.

Turkey struggles with corruption in government and in daily life. The AK Party—*ak* means "pure" in Turkish—came to power with promises to clean up governmental corruption, and it has adopted some anticorruption measures. However, enforcement is lacking, and a culture of tolerance of corruption pervades the general population. Parliamentary immunity prevents the prosecution of many politicians, though there are allegations of corruption against several cabinet members. Transparency has improved through EU-related reforms, but the government seemed to be reversing that trend through 2006 changes in the procurement law that, for example, exempt certain contract award procedures from procurement provisions. Turkey was ranked 60 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The right to free expression is guaranteed in the constitution. Legal impediments remain to freedom of the media, although recent reforms have had some positive effect. Publications in Kurdish are now permitted, and television broadcasts in Kurdish began in March 2006. Journalists are sometimes prosecuted under the penal code instead of being sued according to the press law, and a new antiterrorism

law reintroduces jail sentences for journalists. Nearly all media organizations are owned by giant holding companies with interests in other sectors, which contributes to self-censorship by journalists. Article 301 of the 2004 revised penal code includes tight restrictions, allowing journalists and others to be prosecuted for discussing controversial subjects such as the division of Cyprus and the 1915 mass killings of Armenians by Turks; the article has drawn criticism from the EU and others. Several well-known writers, publishers, and journalists were charged and/or tried in 2006 for crimes that included insulting the armed services and denigrating "Turkishness"; very few have been convicted and charges are often dropped, but trials are time-consuming and expensive. Most prominently, novelist and 2006 Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk was charged in 2005 for comments he made to a Swiss newspaper about the 1915 Armenian killings; the charges were dropped in January 2006. Article 301 was also unsuccessfully invoked against a Dutch member of the European Parliament and a Turkish work of fiction in late 2005 and 2006. The government does not specifically restrict access to the internet, but it is subject to the same censorship policies that apply to other media.

The constitution protects freedom of religion. Turkey is a predominantly Muslim country, and much of its population is very devout. Three non-Muslim groups—Jews, Greek Orthodox Christians, and Armenian Christians—are officially recognized, and attitudes toward them are generally tolerant, although they are not integrated into the Turkish establishment. Other groups lack legal status, and their activities are subject to legal challenges. In unusual violence against Roman Catholics, three priests were attacked in separate incidents in 2006.

The Turkish republic was set up on the premise of secularism, in which state and religious affairs are separated. In practice, this has meant considerable government control of religion. Women wearing headscarves are not allowed in public universities and government offices, and observant men are dismissed from the military. The European Court of Human Rights has ruled repeatedly in favor of the headscarf ban's legality, and AK dropped its attempt to introduce an easing of the ban in the 2004 penal code reforms. Turkey saw mass protests in early 2006 amid a worldwide scandal over the publication of Danish cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad. The government does not restrict academic freedom, although self-censorship on sensitive topics, such as the role of Islam and the Kurdish problem, is common.

Freedoms of association and assembly are protected in the constitution. Prior restrictions on public demonstrations have been relaxed, but police sometimes monitor public meetings of nongovernmental organizations. A 2004 law on associations was expected to reduce state interference in civil society, but 2005 implementing legislation allows the state to restrict groups that might oppose its interests. Members of local human rights groups sometimes receive death threats. Nevertheless, civil society plays a growing role in Turkish politics. Trade union activity remains restricted in practice, although laws to protect unions are in place. EU-related reforms have improved the legal framework, but implementation lags.

The Turkish constitution establishes an independent judiciary, but the government can influence judges through its control of appointments, promotions, and financing. The judiciary has been strengthened in recent years by structural reforms. The 2004 overhaul of the penal code, which took effect in 2005, is expected to have wide-reaching positive effects on the criminal justice system. The death penalty was

fully abolished in 2004, and State Security Courts, where many human rights abuses occurred, were replaced by so-called Heavy Penal Courts. Still, some trials last so long as to become an inconvenience and financial burden for the defense. Amnesty International has accused the Heavy Penal Courts of accepting evidence extracted under torture.

An attacker shot five judges in a committee meeting in May 2006, killing one. The gunman announced that the attack was a protest against the court's ruling that schoolteachers could not wear headscarves. After the shooting, thousands of people demonstrated in support of secularist policies.

The Erdogan government has a "zero tolerance" policy concerning torture, backed up by new laws and training to improve implementation. However, while there continue to be reports that torture has decreased, particularly in its harshest forms, rights groups still cite new cases and highlight the fact that perpetrators are not consistently punished. The government has established a variety of bodies to investigate and field complaints on human rights, but so far their impact has been limited.

Prison conditions, including overcrowding, are improving but can still be harsh. Most controversial are the F-type prisons, which are criticized for isolating prisoners. An especially contentious imprisonment is that of Abdullah Ocalan, former leader of the Kurdish guerrilla movement, who is serving a life sentence in solitary confinement on an island off the Turkish coast.

The legacy of the 1990s Kurdish conflict in the southeast, in which more than 35,000 people were killed, remains in the form of discrimination and lingering tensions. At least 15 people were killed in clashes between Kurds and police during rioting in March 2006. Meanwhile, full-scale fighting between the PKK and the government continued to increase in 2006, along with bombings in Istanbul, the southeast, and tourist regions. Responsibility for many bombings has been claimed by the TAK. Ocalan called for a renewed ceasefire in September, but it was rejected by Erdogan and the military's chief of staff.

Turkey claims that all Turkish citizens are treated equally, but its unwillingness to acknowledge minority differences results in de facto unequal treatment under the law. Because recognized minorities are limited to the three defined by religion and there has been a traditional emphasis on Turkish national identity, Kurds in particular have faced restrictions on their language, culture, and freedom of expression. The situation has improved with EU-related reforms, but official and informal discrimination remains. Alleged collaboration with the PKK can be used as an excuse to arrest Kurds who challenge the government. Human Rights Watch condemned the arrest of three Kurdish activists during a peaceful protest in May 2006.

Property rights are generally respected in Turkey. The most significant problem is the tens of thousands of Kurds who were driven from their homes by government forces during the conflict in the 1990s. While increasing numbers have returned to their homes since a new program to address the situation was launched in 2004, and the first families received monetary compensation in 2006, progress has been slow. Local paramilitary "village guards" have been criticized for obstructing returning families through intimidation and violence.

The amended constitution provides women full equality before the law, but they face discrimination in employment and are underrepresented in government. Domestic abuse and so-called honor crimes continue to occur. The 2004 penal code

revisions include increased penalties for crimes against women and the elimination of sentence reductions in cases of honor killing and rape. A delegation of Turkish Parliament members visited the southeast in December 2005 to conduct research into honor killings, and the government has been working to raise awareness about domestic violence. Suicide among women reportedly increased in 2006, possibly stemming from familial pressure as stricter laws have made honor killings less permissible. A national poll in March found that Turks hold deeply conservative values, including disapproval of homosexuality and the cohabitation of unmarried couples.

Turkmenistan

Population: 5,300,000

Capital: Ashgabat

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview: Before his sudden death in December 2006, President Saparmurat Niyazov continued past practices, ruling single-handedly behind a facade of vitiated formal institutions, frequently reshuffling high-level officials, fomenting a cult of personality, maintaining iron control over the media environment, and crushing all real and imagined hints of political opposition. The emergence of a successor, Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov, raised hopes of improvement, although no substantive reforms took place through the end of 2006. Meanwhile, the country's natural gas reserves underpinned its place in the international arena; Turkmenistan secured price increases from Iran, Russia, and Ukraine, even as it established closer ties with China amid plans to build a new gas pipeline across Central Asia to China by 2009.

The southernmost republic of the former Soviet Union, Turkmenistan was conquered by the Mongols in the thirteenth century, seized by Russia in the late 1800s, and incorporated into the USSR in 1924. Turkmenistan gained formal independence in 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Saparmurat Niyazov, the former head of the Turkmenistan Communist Party, was the sole candidate in elections to the newly created post of president in October 1990. After the adoption of a new constitution in 1992, he ran unopposed again and was reelected for a five-year term with a reported 99.5 percent of the vote. The main

opposition group, Agzybirlik, which was formed in 1989 by leading intellectuals, was banned. In a 1994 referendum, Niyazov's tenure as president was extended for an additional five years, until 2002, which exempted him from having to run again in 1997 as originally scheduled. In the December 1994 elections to the National Assembly (Mejlis), only Niyazov's Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT), the former Communist Party, was permitted to field candidates.

In the December 1999 Mejlis elections, every candidate was selected by the government and virtually all were members of the DPT. The Central Election Commission (CEC) claimed that voter turnout was 98.9 percent. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), citing the lack of provision for nongovernmental parties to participate and the executive branch's control of the nomination of candidates, refused to send even a limited assessment mission. In a further consolidation of Niyazov's extensive powers, parliament unanimously voted in late December to make Niyazov president for life. With this decision, Turkmenistan became the first country in the Commonwealth of Independent States to formally abandon presidential elections.

Although Niyazov continued to exercise widespread power throughout the country, cracks in his regime emerged during 2002. Several high-level government defections, along with a purge by Niyazov of Turkmenistan's intelligence service, highlighted growing political tensions and challenges to the government. On November 25, Niyazov survived an alleged assassination attempt in Ashgabat when gunmen fired at the president's motorcade. The incident sparked a widespread crackdown against the opposition and perceived critics of the regime, drawing condemnation from foreign governments and international organizations, including the OSCE and the United Nations.

While some observers speculated that Niyazov himself had planned the shooting as an excuse to increase repression of his political enemies, others maintained that it was a failed attempt by certain members of the opposition to oust the president from power. According to the government, former foreign minister and prominent opposition leader Boris Shikhmuradov, along with three other former high-ranking officials living in exile, had organized the attack. Shikhmuradov was alleged to have returned to Turkmenistan from exile in Russia with the help of the Uzbek authorities, an accusation which soured already strained relations between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Shikhmuradov was arrested on December 25, 2002 and made a televised confession four days later that critics maintain had been coerced. On December 30, he was sentenced to life in prison following what human rights groups condemned as a Soviet-style show trial. Two of the alleged co-conspirators received life sentences in absentia, while many other suspects were given lengthy prison sentences.

The president subsequently announced early elections for the Halk Maslahaty (People's Council) in April 2003. Observers noted that the decision to hold the poll two years ahead of schedule was most likely intended to eliminate any remaining opposition to Niyazov's government through a redistribution of legislative posts. There was no election campaign, and the state media did not provide information about the candidates, all of whom were nominated by the presidential administration. The CEC announced voter turnout of 99.8 percent, although the true figure is believed to have been much lower.

In the run-up to the December 19, 2004, Mejlis polls, the list of candidates was

reportedly personally approved by Niyazov. The government refused to invite any international observers to monitor the election, which most analysts described as little more than a staged vote. As in previous elections, only the DPT was allowed to field candidates. Voter turnout was officially listed as 77 percent.

High-level government reshuffles, a prominent feature in Turkmen political life in 2005, continued in 2006, pointing to the irrelevance of formal institutions under Niyazov's rule and the president's deepening political paranoia. Long-serving prosecutor-general Gurbanbibi Atajanova, who had presided over a far-reaching purge of the country's energy sector leadership, was herself purged amid traditional accusations of corruption. As in past years, Niyazov also dismissed several governors and district heads for failing to meet projected cotton harvest targets.

Niyazov's death on December 21 from an apparent heart attack was followed by the rapid and seemingly well-orchestrated ascent of Deputy Prime Minister Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov to the position of acting president. The succession was orderly but appeared to circumvent constitutional norms, as criminal charges were brought against Speaker of Parliament Ovezgeldy Ataev, who would have been next in line to succeed Niyazov according to the constitution, within hours of Niyazov's death. This removed Ataev from contention and cleared the way for Berdymukhammedov to assume the presidency. The Security Council, which brings together the country's top military and security officials, played a key role in the succession process, suggesting that the country's powerful security and intelligence services continue to play a crucial role in the absence of independent institutions and oversight.

Turkmenistan's importance as a supplier of natural gas dominated the country's relations with the outside world. When Russia cut off gas deliveries to Ukraine in January 2006 in the course of a pricing dispute, cheap Turkmen gas made possible a compromise solution in which Ukraine agreed to pay \$95 per 1,000 cubic meters for a combination of expensive Russian natural gas and cheaper gas from Turkmenistan. Later in the year, Turkmenistan threatened to cut off gas to Russia and successfully secured a higher price in the fall.

In April, Turkmenistan signed an agreement to build a gas pipeline to China by 2009. However, skeptics cast doubt on the project's feasibility and suggested it could be a bargaining ploy to secure future price increases from Russia, Ukraine, and Iran, the main buyers of Turkmen gas. Meanwhile, an April report by Global Witness pointed to massive corruption in the Turkmen-Ukraine gas trade.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Turkmenistan is not an electoral democracy. President Saparmurat Niyazov enjoyed virtually absolute power over all branches and levels of government. While the extent to which Niyazov's successor, Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, would be able to consolidate his own power remained unclear by the end of 2006, the legacy of absolute presidential power is likely to prove difficult to overcome. In recent years, the government underwent a rapid turnover of personnel as Niyazov dismissed many officials whom he suspected could challenge his authority.

The country has two parliamentary bodies, neither of which enjoys genuine independence from the executive branch: the unicameral Mejlis (National Assembly), composed of 50 members elected by popular vote for five-year terms, and the

approximately 2,500-member Halk Maslahaty (People's Council), composed of various elected and appointed members, which was officially made the country's supreme legislative body in 2003.

None of the country's legislative elections have been free or fair. Only one political party, the DPT, has been officially registered. Opposition parties have been banned, and their leading members face harassment and detention or have fled abroad.

Niyazov established an extensive cult of personality, including erecting monuments to his leadership throughout the country. In 1994, he renamed himself Turkmenbashi, or "leader of the Turkmen." He enacted bizarre decrees, including ordering the renaming of the days of the week and months of the year after himself and his mother. As part of a stated attempt to fend off foreign influences in the country, he banned opera and ballet performances. In 2006, he gave ministers six months to learn English and continued the practice of sponsoring vast construction projects of little evident value to the populace.

In one of his first statements, acting President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov pledged to "continue the policy of Samarurat Niyazov," although he also promised on December 26 to hold a planned presidential election "on a democratic basis" in February 2007. No resolution to the evident contradiction emerged by year's end. On December 28, 2006, the Central Election Commission announced the registration of six candidates for the presidency, but all were members of the DPT and part of the power structure Niyazov established. Of the six, five were little-known figures, suggesting that their participation was intended to lend a democratic veneer to Berdimukhammedov's eventual ascent from acting to actual president.

Corruption is widespread, with public officials often forced to bribe their way into their positions. The authorities have used anticorruption campaigns as a way to remove potential rivals. Turkmenistan was ranked 142 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and the press is severely restricted by the government, which controls all radio and television broadcasts and print media. Reports of dissenting political views are banned, as are even mild forms of criticism of the president. Subscriptions to foreign newspapers and magazines are forbidden, and foreign journalists have few opportunities to visit Turkmenistan. In 2004, the government shut down broadcasts of Russia's Radio Mayak, the last foreign media outlet to reach Turkmenistan. The state-owned Turkmen Telekom is the only authorized internet service provider in the country.

Few international correspondents work in Turkmenistan, and many have been expelled from the country. In 2005, journalist Viktor Panov of the Russian news agency RIA-Novosti was deported from Turkmenistan to Russia on espionage charges. In 2006, Radio Liberty correspondent Ogulsapar Muradova, who had been arrested in the course of a dubious spy scandal, died in custody under suspicious circumstances, prompting international condemnation and protests. Two human rights activists who had been arrested along with Muradova received six- and seven-year prison terms in a 10-minute trial.

The government restricts freedom of religion, and independent religious groups continue to face persecution. A 2003 law on religion criminalized the practice of religious groups not officially registered and prescribed up to one year of corrective

labor against violators. In May 2004, Niyazov decreed that practicing an unregistered religion would no longer be a criminal offense, although it remains illegal, with violators subject to fines. Seventh-day Adventist, Baha'i, Hare Krishna, Baptist, and several Protestant communities have subsequently achieved formal registration, but other groups have experienced difficulties in attempting to register. Furthermore, members of independent religious congregations—including those legally registered by the government—continue to face pressure from the authorities.

The government controls access to Islamic education and restricts the number of mosques throughout the country. The authorities coerce Christian and Muslim houses of worship to display a copy of the *Rukhnama*, a quasi-spiritual guide allegedly authored by Niyazov.

The government places significant restrictions on academic freedom, with schools increasingly being used to indoctrinate, rather than educate, students. The *Rukhnama* is required reading throughout the school system and has largely replaced many other traditional school subjects. Textbooks must meet the government's strict ideological requirements. In 2004, Niyazov issued an order invalidating most higher education degrees received outside the country since 1993, dismissing holders of such degrees from state jobs. Analysts viewed this decree as part of a broader effort to eliminate foreign influences from Turkmen society. Bribes are commonly required for admission to various schools and institutes. In early 2005, Niyazov announced a decision to close most libraries in the country on the grounds that most books that Turkmen citizens need—many allegedly written by the president himself—should already be present in homes, schools, and workplaces.

The state security services regularly monitor the activities of citizens and foreign nationals, limiting open and free private discussion. Security officers use such surveillance techniques as wiretapping, the interception of mail, and the recruitment of informers. After the November 2002 assassination attempt, Niyazov reportedly directed law enforcement bodies to carefully monitor people's conversations in public places and called on people to assist the police by informing on their fellow citizens. In February 2004, Niyazov ordered the government to intensify video surveillance, including at all strategic economic facilities, public buildings, and government offices.

While the constitution guarantees peaceful assembly and association, these rights are severely restricted in practice. Public demonstrations against state policies are extremely rare. After changes in pension law in January 2006 reportedly stripped 100,000 retirees of their pensions and reduced payments to another 200,000, opposition sources provided scattered reports of protests, but these could not be confirmed.

A 2003 law on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) effectively criminalized the activities of unregistered organizations and imposed penalties that included heavy fines, the confiscation of property, and imprisonment. In an apparent reversal, a new law was adopted the following year abolishing criminal penalties for unregistered NGOs. However, most observers suspected that the law was designed primarily to counter international criticism of the country's poor human rights record, rather than to genuinely improve the environment for Turkmenistan's civil society sector.

The government-controlled Colleagues Union is the only central trade union permitted. There are no legal guarantees for workers to form or join unions or to strike, although the constitution does not specifically prohibit these rights. Strikes in Turkmenistan are extremely rare.

The judicial system is subservient to the president, who appoints and removes judges without legislative review. The authorities frequently deny rights of due process, including public trials and access to defense attorneys. Police abuse and torture of suspects and prisoners, often to obtain confessions, is reportedly widespread. Those arrested and sentenced for complicity in the assassination attempt against Niyazov suffered ill-treatment or torture, had no access to legal counsel of their own choosing, and were convicted in closed trials; many of their friends and relatives were targeted for harassment and intimidation. The trial of Radio Liberty correspondent Ogulsapar Muradova, who subsequently died in custody, and two human rights activists in 2006 highlighted a variety of abuses and flaws in the judicial system.

In early 2003, the government broadened the definition of treason to cover a wide range of activities, including attempting to undermine the public's faith in the president's policies and failing to inform the authorities of a wide range of crimes. Prisons suffer from overcrowding and inadequate nutrition and medical care, and international organizations are not permitted to visit prisons.

Turkmenistan remains a smuggling corridor for drugs from neighboring Afghanistan, with numerous reports suggesting the involvement of high-level officials in the narcotics trade and a growing problem of drug addiction within Turkmenistan.

Employment and educational opportunities for ethnic minorities are limited by the government's policy of promoting Turkmen national identity and its discrimination against those who are not ethnic Turkmen. Following the 2002 assassination attempt against Niyazov, which Turkmenistan openly accused Uzbekistan of supporting, the Turkmen authorities took a harder line against ethnic Uzbeks in Turkmenistan. The government reportedly ordered the forced relocation of part of the Uzbek population living along the Uzbekistan border and their replacement with ethnic Turkmen. In March 2004, the country's former chief mufti, Nasrullah ibn Ibadullah, an ethnic Uzbek, was sentenced to 22 years in prison on charges of treason; he had been removed from his post in January 2003 and was succeeded by an ethnic Turkmen. The authorities have ordered the closure of a variety of Russian-language institutions, including schools, throughout the country.

Freedom of movement, particularly overseas, is severely restricted. In 2004, Niyazov formally abolished the country's exit-visa requirement—which had been eliminated in January 2002 but reintroduced the following year—to stave off trade restrictions by the United States. However, travel abroad remains extremely difficult for most Turkmen citizens and often requires the payment of bribes to government officials. In addition, the government is believed to maintain a lengthy blacklist of people—possibly thousands—who are not permitted to travel outside the country, including those suspected of opposition to the authorities. The State Service for the Registration of Foreign Citizens monitors foreign visitors, whose activities are strictly regulated.

A continuing Soviet-style command economy and widespread corruption diminish equality of opportunity. The government sets extremely high production targets for farmers, who must then sell their crops at very low prices set by the state monopoly grain purchaser. Profits from the country's extensive energy exports rarely reach the general population, most of whom live in poverty. Employees working in the dominant public sector are tested on their knowledge of the *Rukhnama* as a condition of their employment. In January 2005, Niyazov announced a ban on the

practice of child labor. However, there are concerns that the practice is so widespread and central to the country's economy, particularly during the annual fall cotton harvest, that the ban will not be enforced.

According to the Vienna-based International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, the Turkmen government has engaged in "widespread violations of property rights" as part of a dramatic urban reconstruction project in Ashgabat that was launched in 2001. Hundreds of residents have reportedly been forced to vacate their homes on extremely short notice and have received little or no financial compensation or equivalent accommodation from the authorities.

The government restricts various personal social freedoms, including the wearing of long hair or beards by men. Traditional social and religious norms and a lack of employment prospects limit professional opportunities for women, and anecdotal reports suggest that domestic violence is common.

Tuvalu

Population: 10,000

Capital: Funafuti

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: General elections were held in Tuvalu in August 2006. Half of the elected members of Parliament were newcomers to the chamber, and Apisai Ielemia, a former civil servant, was chosen as prime minister.

The Gilbert and Ellice Islands, situated in the central South Pacific Ocean, became a British protectorate in 1892 and a British colony in 1916. During World War II, the United States used the northernmost atoll of the Ellice Islands as a base to fight the Japanese. Polynesian Ellice Islanders voted to separate themselves from the Micronesian Gilbertese in 1974 as they moved toward independence. The Ellice Islands became an independent country in 1978 under the precolonial name of Tuvalu, while the Gilberts went on to become part of independent Kiribati. Climate change and rising sea levels threaten the population of these low-lying islands, which are only 4.5 meters above sea level.

The country has had several changes of government since 2001 due to intense personal and political rivalries and the frequent use of no-confidence votes. Individual and tribal loyalties rather than formal party affiliations drive political alliances,

and elected representatives frequently change sides while in office. This situation has sustained a decade-long debate over proposals to introduce direct popular elections for prime minister.

Public disappointment with incumbent lawmakers led to a large voter turnout in the August 2006 general elections, with many first-time candidates winning Parliament seats. Some 6,000 registered voters out of a population of 10,000 went to the polls; of the 32 candidates, 18 (including two women) were newcomers to politics. Of the 15 seats in Parliament, 7 were taken by these newcomers representing constituencies in Nui (2), Nanumaga (1), Nanumea (1), Nukulaelae (1), Vaitupu (1), and Nukufetau (1). Apisai Ielemia, a former civil servant, was chosen as prime minister, and he would also hold the foreign affairs portfolio. On taking office, Ielemia promised to expand media freedom in response to criticisms from human rights groups that the Tuvalu Media Corporation, a public corporation that runs the sole radio and produces the only newsletter in the island republic, has limited coverage on politics and human rights. However, there were no criticisms of censorship or imbalances in reporting.

In July 2006, 300 Tuvaluan laborers who had worked in a Taiwanese-owned phosphate mine on Nauru were repatriated to Tuvalu. Many had refused earlier repatriation offers in order to seek back pay owed to them by their Taiwanese employer.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Tuvalu is an electoral democracy. It is also a member of the Commonwealth, and the head of state, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, is represented by a governor-general who must be a citizen of Tuvalu. The current governor-general is Filoimea Telito. The prime minister, chosen by Parliament, leads the government. The unicameral, 15-member Parliament is elected to four-year terms. A six-person council administers each of the country's nine atolls. Council members are chosen by universal suffrage for four-year terms.

There are no formal political parties, although there are no laws against their formation. Political allegiances revolve around geography and personalities.

Tuvalu is one of the few places in the Pacific Islands where corruption is not a serious problem. The country was not ranked in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press, and the government generally respects these rights in practice. The country's sole radio station, Radio Tuvalu, broadcasts a variety of domestic and international programs, including British Broadcasting Corporation news. The government runs a television station, but financial constraints limit broadcast time and the variety of programs. Many residents use satellite dishes to access foreign programming. There is one fortnightly newspaper, *Tuvalu Echoes*; the government news sheet, *Sikuelo o Tuvalu*, is published in Tuvaluan. Both Radio Tuvalu and *Tuvalu Echoes* are operated by the Tuvalu Media Corporation, a public corporation. The government does not restrict internet access, but penetration is largely limited to the capital because of access costs and connectivity issues. Telecommunication links can be tenuous; for example, all telecommunication services were disrupted for two weeks in December 2005 when equipment malfunctioned and replacement parts had to be flown in from Fiji before service could resume.

Religious freedom is generally respected in practice. Religion is a major part of life in this overwhelmingly Christian country, and Sunday service is typically considered the most important weekly event. Academic freedom is also generally respected.

The constitution provides for freedoms of association and assembly, and the government generally respects these rights in practice. For example, public demonstrations are permitted and nongovernmental groups provide a variety of health, education, and other services for women, youths, and the population at large. Workers are free to organize unions and choose their own representatives for collective bargaining. Workers have the right to strike, but no strikes have occurred in the country's history. Public sector employees, who total fewer than 1,000, are members of professional associations that do not have union status. With two-thirds of the population engaged in subsistence farming and fishing, Tuvalu has only one registered trade union—the Tuvalu Seaman's Union, with about 600 members who work on foreign merchant vessels. In December 2005, Tuvalu joined the International Labor Organization.

The judiciary is independent and provides fair trials. Tuvalu has a two-tier judicial system. The higher courts include the Privy Council in London, the court of appeal, and the high court. The lower courts consist of senior and resident magistrates, the island courts, and the land courts. The chief justice, who is also the chief justice of Tonga, sits on the high court about once a year. A civilian-controlled, 70-member constabulary force maintains internal order. Prisons are spartan, but there have been no reports of abuse.

Major sources of revenue for the state include funds generated from the sale of coins and stamps, sale of tuna-fishing licenses to foreign fleets, and lease of the country's internet domain name, ".tv," to foreign firms. Copra and handicrafts are Tuvalu's main exports. About 10 percent of the annual budget is derived from the Tuvalu Trust Fund, a well-run overseas investment fund set up by Britain, Australia, and South Korea in 1987 to provide development assistance.

There is general respect for human rights, but traditional customs and social norms condone discrimination against women and limit their roles in society. Violence against women is rare. Rape is a crime punishable by law, but spousal rape is not included in the definition. No law specifically targets sexual harassment. Women enjoy equal access to education, although they remain underrepresented in positions of leadership in business and government.

Uganda

Population: 27,700,000

Capital: Kampala

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,4PF	4,4PF	5,5PF	6,5PF	6,5PF	6,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF

Overview: President Yoweri Museveni defeated Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) candidate Kizza Besigye in the March 2006 presidential election. Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) also won a large majority in simultaneous parliamentary elections. Separately, the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) entered into intermittent peace talks with the government, raising hopes that the vicious and long-running guerrilla war in northern Uganda might be winding down.

In the years following its independence from Britain in 1962, Uganda experienced considerable political instability. Milton Obote, an increasingly authoritarian leader who served as prime minister and then president, was overthrown by Major General Idi Amin in 1971. Amin's brutality made world headlines as hundreds of thousands of people were killed. His 1978 invasion of Tanzania finally led to his overthrow, with Tanzanian forces and Ugandan exiles routing his army. After Obote returned to power in 1980 in fraudulent elections, he and his backers from northern Uganda savagely repressed his critics, who were primarily from southern Ugandan ethnic groups.

Obote was ousted for a second time in a 1985 army coup. Conditions continued to worsen until the National Resistance Army, led by Yoweri Museveni, entered Kampala in January 1986 and assumed power. The new government imposed a ban on most formal political party activities, including the sponsoring of candidates for elections and the staging of political rallies. Arguing that majoritarian democracy exacerbated religious and ethnic tensions in Africa, Museveni introduced a "no party" system with only one, supposedly nonpartisan political organization—the National Resistance Movement (NRM)—allowed to operate unfettered. This system remained in place for two decades.

Museveni and his NRM comfortably won presidential and legislative elections in 2001. However, the elections were held under conditions that called their legitimacy into question. Reports on the presidential election by human rights groups and donor countries noted that state media and other official resources were mobilized in support of Museveni's candidacy, and that the ban on most formal party activities further hindered the opposition. Most observers agreed, however, that Museveni would have won in an open contest and described the actual balloting

and vote-tabulation processes as largely transparent. The opposition, which claimed that the elections were rigged, boycotted subsequent parliamentary elections; the NRM's comfortable majority was buttressed by dozens of special-interest representatives nominated by the president.

In 2002, the parliament passed the Political Parties and Organizations Act, putting forth the conditions under which political parties could be registered and function fully. In 2003, the Constitutional Court ruled that parts of the law were unconstitutional, as they effectively prevented political parties from carrying out their activities. Despite the ruling, the NRM continued to dominate the nation's political life. In 2004, the Constitutional Court voided restrictions on the freedom of political parties to function. With the 2006 presidential election looming, Ugandan voters in 2005 approved constitutional amendments that both lifted the ban on political parties and repealed the prohibition on sitting presidents running for a third term. As a result, Museveni was able to seek reelection in 2006.

In October 2005, Obote, the former authoritarian president and longtime opposition leader, died in exile in Zambia. As a testament to his controversial standing among Ugandans, his passing was both mourned and celebrated inside the country. Another leading Museveni opponent, Dr. Kizza Besigye, returned from exile and announced his intention to run for president. Besigye, of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), was subsequently arrested on charges of treason, terrorism, rape, and unlawful possession of firearms.

Benefiting from the advantages of incumbency, Museveni defeated Besigye in the March 2006 presidential election, taking 59 percent of the vote according to official results. The NRM also won a large majority in simultaneous parliamentary elections. Besigye was later cleared of the rape charges, but the treason charge was still pending at year's end.

Regional tensions, especially with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Sudan, have continued in recent years. In 2005, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a cult-like Ugandan rebel movement with no clear agenda, moved to bases in the DRC, further heightening regional concerns. LRA violence in the north continued throughout the year, with human rights violations committed on both sides. Also in 2005, five LRA leaders were indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC), which called for their arrest. In 2006, the guerrilla group entered into intermittent peace talks with the government. Despite several serious hitches, a truce was signed in late August between the rebels and the Ugandan government, sustaining hopes for overall peace talks being mediated by the autonomous government of southern Sudan. LRA leader Joseph Kony, under indictment by the ICC, has insisted that the international charges be dropped before any peace deal is finalized.

Uganda is home to more than 500,000 people infected with HIV. According to the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the presence of HIV/AIDS in Uganda has declined in recent years. The overall prevalence in the country is approximately 6 percent, which is a more than 50 percent reduction since 1992, although recent reports suggest that the infection rate may be starting to climb again.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Uganda is not an electoral democracy. A long-standing ban on political party activity was formally lifted only in 2005,

and the change was coupled with the removal of a two-term limit for presidents. The president and the single-chamber National Assembly are elected for five-year terms. Of the current Assembly's 332 members, 215 are directly elected and 104 indirectly elected from special interest groups, including women, the army, youth, the disabled, and trade unions. There are also 13 ex-officio seats filled by cabinet ministers, who are not elected members of Parliament and do not have voting rights.

The personalized nature of the Ugandan power structure was reflected in the 2006 parliamentary contest, in which a number of junior cabinet ministers were defeated, while the NRM won nearly two-thirds of the seats. Parliament does assert some independence vis-a-vis the executive branch. High-level government officials have been censured, and several government actions and policies have been influenced or altered by parliamentary oversight. Significant concerns exist, however, regarding the ability of opposition parties to compete on a relatively level playing field with the NRM. Opposition parties have protested restrictive party registration requirements and the dominant status of the NRM. Other controversial issues have included federalism, voter and candidate eligibility, the use of government resources to support NRM candidates, and the use of illegal paramilitary groups to intimidate voters.

In 2006, Human Rights Watch identified a number of methods used by the NRM to impede the free expression of political will, including intimidation of the opposition, military interference in the courts, and bias in campaign funding and media coverage. The army also occupies a position in politics incompatible with democratic principles; its representatives sit in Parliament and have openly campaigned in support of Museveni.

Under the 1995 constitution, new institutions were set up to investigate corruption and human rights violations and promote the return to democratic governance. These have made some headway in the fight against corruption and abuse of office, although a number of alleged corrupt acts by government officials have not been fully pursued. Some governmental corruption has been reported in the media. In 2005, the Global Fund suspended disbursement of more than \$200 million in assistance to fight HIV/AIDS due to evidence of "inappropriate expenditure and improper accounting" in the Health Ministry's project management unit. Museveni subsequently fired the top leadership of the Health Ministry. The suspension was lifted three months later, after Museveni appointed a judicial panel to investigate the concerns and named international auditing firm Ernst & Young to oversee the troubled unit. Also that year, the Parliament passed a provision creating special anticorruption courts to try government officials. Uganda was ranked 105 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The Ugandan constitution provides for freedom of speech. Independent print media outlets, including more than two dozen daily and weekly newspapers, are often highly critical of the government and offer a range of opposition views. Several private radio and television stations report on local political developments. Buttressed by legislation limiting press freedoms, the government at times selectively arrests or harasses journalists. A sedition law remains in force and is applied selectively to journalists and others who hold views that are at variance with those of the NRM.

Journalists in Uganda face increasing pressure from the government. In December 2005, after the start of the election campaign, the state brought criminal charges of "promoting sectarianism" against editor James Tumusiime and reporter Semujju

Ibrahim Nganda of the privately owned *Weekly Observer*. They face up to five years in prison. The paper had reported accusations from the FDC that the president and top military officials were persecuting its presidential candidate, Kizza Besigye, on ethnic grounds. In March 2006, a Canadian journalist resident in Uganda was refused reentry to the country on the grounds that he posed a security threat.

The number of internet service providers has grown rapidly in recent years, although access remains limited mostly to major urban centers. The government drew criticism from press watchdog groups during the election campaign by blocking the website of Radio Katwe, which was highly critical of the ruling party.

There is no state religion, and freedom of worship is constitutionally protected and respected. Various Christian sects and the country's Muslim minority practice their creeds freely. The 2006 U.S. State Department Report on International Religious Freedom determined that "government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion." Academic freedom is also generally respected.

Freedoms of association and assembly are officially recognized. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) currently make a significant contribution to Uganda's social, economic, cultural, and political life. They encourage the expression of different views and have been willing to address politically sensitive issues. The existence and activities of NGOs are, however, vulnerable to the abuse of legal restrictions, including the manipulation of registration requirements. In 2006, the parliament passed the government-sponsored NGO Registration Amendment Act, requiring all NGOs and Pentecostal churches to reregister with the Internal Affairs Ministry a year after their initial registration. The bill was opposed by the NGO sector.

According to the International Confederation of Trade Unions, despite repeated requests from the International Labor Organization (ILO), the government has delayed revising restrictive labor legislation that makes it difficult to unionize or strike. Many private firms refuse to recognize unions. The National Organization of Trade Unions, the country's largest labor federation, is largely independent of the government and political parties.

The judiciary is still influenced by the executive, although it has demonstrated increasing autonomy in recent years. However, sensitive human rights issues, such as police brutality, rape, domestic violence, and vigilante justice, remain serious concerns. Prolonged pretrial detention, inadequate resources, the army's occasional refusal to respect civilian courts, and poor judicial administration combine to impede the fair exercise of justice.

Prison conditions are difficult, especially in local jails. The number of inmates is estimated at 19,000, of which approximately 10,000 are awaiting trial. Prison capacity is estimated to be about 9,000. More than 500 prisoners die annually as a result of poor diet, sanitation, and medical care. Pretrial detainees constitute more than half of the prison population. A 2006 report by the NGO Foundation for Human Rights Initiative identified the police Violent Crime Crack Unit as engaging in torture and maintaining safe houses for that purpose. The 2002 Suppression of Terrorism Act, which defines any act of violence or threat of violence for political, religious, economic, or cultural ends as a terrorist act, imposes harsh penalties on suspected terrorists, raising fears that it could be used against political opponents. The unlawful possession of arms is also defined as terrorism. Publishing news that is "likely to promote terrorism" can result in up to 10 years' imprisonment.

In its 2006 report, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) stated that the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs) had improved, partly as a result of a government policy to decongest IDP camps. Concerns remained, however, about serious human rights violations related to the ongoing guerrilla war in the northern part of the country between LRA rebels and the military. Torture by security forces, especially at the local level, has continued despite the government's assurance that it is not condoned on an institutional level. Northern ethnic groups complain of official neglect.

Although the constitution enshrines the principle of equality between women and men, discrimination against women remains pronounced, especially in rural areas. Incidents of domestic violence and sexual abuse, including rape, are often not reported to police and are rarely investigated. According to the UHRC, the most common complaints registered relate to child maintenance and neglect. Polygamy remains legal. There are no laws protecting women from domestic violence; draft laws, such as the Domestic Relations Bill and the Sexual Offenses Bill, have languished in the National Assembly for years. Cultural practices such as female genital mutilation continue to exist. The UHRC and other NGOs indicate that sexual abuse of minors is increasing. According to the ILO, more than 2.7 million children are employed as workers.

Uganda has legislated quotas for women officials in all elected bodies, from village councils to the national parliament. Almost 20 percent of parliament members are female. One-third of local council seats must, by law, go to women. The law gives women inheritance rights over land, but customary patriarchal practices mean that the formal legal provisions are often ignored. Abortion is permitted when the mother's mental or physical health would otherwise be seriously affected.

Ukraine

Population: 46,800,000

Capital: Kyiv

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,3PF	3,2F	3,2F

Overview: More than a year after the 2004 Orange Revolution, Ukraine further consolidated its democracy with parliamentary elections in March 2006 that were universally declared free and fair. After months of political crisis caused by divisions within the alliance that had been victorious in 2004, Viktor Yanukovich won the prime minister's seat. This position is now much more powerful thanks to the enactment of consti-

tutional amendments at the beginning of 2006 that shifted power from the presidency to the cabinet and Parliament Corruption continued to pervade the political and economic systems, with the murky energy-trading firm RosUkrEnergo holding a monopoly on supplying Russian and Central Asian natural gas to the country.

In December 1991, Ukraine's voters ratified a declaration of independence from the Soviet Union and elected Leonid Kravchuk as president. Communists won a plurality in parliamentary elections in 1994, and Leonid Kuchma, a former director of the Soviet Union's largest missile production facility, defeated Kravchuk in the presidential poll. Over time, Kuchma's government became the target of domestic and international criticism for extensive and high-level corruption and for the erosion of political and free speech rights.

The 1999 presidential election—which Kuchma won in the second round with 56.2 percent of the vote over Communist Party challenger Petro Symonenko's 37.5 percent—was marred by harassment of independent media, biased coverage by state media, intimidation of candidates and their supporters, and illegal campaigning by state officials. The still-unsolved 2000 murder of independent journalist Heorhiy Gongadze and credible evidence that appeared to implicate Kuchma in the journalist's abduction contributed to mass public demonstrations and calls for the president's dismissal. The controversy prevented Kuchma from implementing his plans to consolidate more power.

In the March 2002 parliamentary elections, Our Ukraine, the bloc headed by reformist former prime minister Viktor Yushchenko, emerged as the single largest political force in the party-list portion of the vote, marking the first electoral success for the democratic opposition since independence. However, the propresidential For a United Ukraine bloc received enough postelection support from the United Social Democratic Party of Ukraine, as well as from independent candidates and even some members of Our Ukraine, to create a parliamentary majority; half of the Parliament's seats were filled through single-member district races at the time, reducing the impact of the party-list vote. Nevertheless, the strong showing by Yushchenko's electoral bloc signaled the growing power of democratic forces in the country and galvanized thousands who took to the streets during the year to demonstrate against Kuchma's increasing authoritarianism and corruption.

As the 2004 presidential election approached, members of Kuchma's entourage became increasingly concerned about preserving their power, wealth, and influence after his second term in office expired. Ultimately, they threw their support behind Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, a convicted felon and representative of the eastern, Russian-speaking Donbas region, where economic oligarchs tightly controlled the local media and political life.

In the significantly tainted first-round vote pitting Yushchenko against Yanukovich on October 31, 2004, Yushchenko came in first among 24 candidates with 39.7 percent of the vote; Yanukovich, who enjoyed backing from Russian president Vladimir Putin, won 39.3 percent. In the November 21 runoff, the results from the Central Election Commission (CEC) showed Yanukovich to be the winner by less than 3 percentage points. The CEC's results, moreover, showed a voter turnout of nearly 100 percent in Yanukovich's home region (well above the national average of 78 percent) as well as massive last-minute infusions of absentee ballots in

southern and eastern Ukraine. Domestic opposition and international monitors declared Yanukovich's apparent victory "not legitimate."

In what became known as the "Orange Revolution" because of Yushchenko's ubiquitous campaign color, millions massed peacefully in Kyiv and other major Ukrainian cities to protest fraud in the second-round vote. The Supreme Court agreed to reexamine the voting on Yushchenko's appeal, and on December 4, it struck down the second-round results and ordered a rerun on December 26, thus acknowledging the claims of the opposition. In the middle of the crisis, the Parliament ratified constitutional reforms that shifted certain powers from the president to the Parliament, effective January 1, 2006. The compromise changes effectively lowered the stakes of the upcoming rerun, making it more palatable to Yushchenko's opponents.

The rerun of the second round of presidential elections was carried out in a new political and social atmosphere, with significantly less fear of political repression. The growing independence of the media, the Parliament, the judiciary, and local governments allowed for a fair and properly monitored ballot. As a result, Yushchenko won easily with 52 percent of the vote, to Yanukovich's 44 percent, with 75 percent of the eligible voters participating. Former deputy prime minister Yuliya Tymoshenko, who had been briefly imprisoned in 2001—and as head of her own eponymous party was Yushchenko's chief ally in the Orange Revolution—was approved as prime minister in February 2005.

Yushchenko was inaugurated as president amid high expectations of a new beginning with a clean, responsible, and efficient government. His honeymoon period ended quickly, however, as the new administration was forced to deal with the legacies of its predecessor, such as mismanagement of the economy, corruption, and the unreformed institutional structure of the state. The government was particularly divided over how to deal with its promises of revising the last-minute privatization of Ukraine's most lucrative assets, such as the Kryvorizhstal metal works, which had been sold to Kuchma's cronies just months before his rule ended, as well as more than 3,000 privatizations conducted under Kuchma in which the law was allegedly violated. No less important, many of the Orange elites were carry-overs from the past, with significant economic interests that shaped the way they made policy. Ultimately, some of the new ministers were implicated in a variety of scandals.

Within months of Yushchenko's ascension to the presidency, two rival groups emerged within the Orange alliance: followers of Tymoshenko and the Socialist Party of Ukraine on the one hand, and supporters of Petro Poroshenko, secretary of the National Security and Defense Council, on the other hand. Both sides, however, were motivated by more than ideology in their internal fights. Tymoshenko was accused of ruining the economy for the benefit of her own popularity, as economic growth virtually halted in the middle of 2005 owing to spending on social programs and wages under her government. The feuding sides began to resort to the old methods of behind-the-scenes grappling over economic control and lucrative assets, such as Ukraine's natural monopolies and energy transportation networks.

The deterioration of the Orange alliance continued over the course of 2005, culminating on September 8, when Yushchenko dismissed his entire government. The assertion of presidential power came shortly before the recent constitutional amendments took effect at the beginning of 2006 and the country prepared to elect a new, more powerful Parliament in March. The voting was conducted in a way that

respected basic political and civil rights, provided voters with a choice among candidates, and allowed an active media discussion of the issues. Ultimately, five parties crossed the 3 percent barrier and entered the Parliament: Yanukovich's Party of the Regions (32 percent of the vote, 186 seats), Bloc Yuliya Tymoshenko (22 percent, 129), Our Ukraine (14 percent, 81), the Socialist Party (6 percent, 33), and the Communist Party (4 percent, 21).

The outcome of the elections was a political stalemate in which neither the fractured Orange coalition nor Yanukovich's group initially could form a majority. In July, Socialist leader Oleksandr Moroz abandoned his erstwhile allies in the Orange alliance to join the Party of the Regions and the Communists in a coalition that made him speaker of parliament and Yanukovich prime minister. The result therefore left Yushchenko and Yanukovich, the main rivals in the 2004 presidential election, in the position of president and prime minister.

The new situation creates an uneasy balance in which neither Yushchenko nor Yanukovich has a monopoly on power. Although the president has less power under the new constitutional system, he still has the constitutional right to appoint the foreign and defense ministers directly and fills important law enforcement posts. Nevertheless, on December 1, the parliament fired Foreign Minister Borys Tarasyuk, creating a direct conflict with Yushchenko, who assumed that he alone had the right to remove the foreign and defense ministers.

Although Yanukovich's powers were growing, by the end of the year, his coalition lacked the votes necessary to override a presidential veto. Yanukovich, however, refused to implement seven presidential decrees, arguing that he had not countersigned them as the constitution required. Additionally, he challenged the president's right to appoint regional governors without the cabinet's approval. Yanukovich suggested to Yushchenko on September 28 that he remove five governors. According to the constitution, the president appoints and dismisses the governors at the request of the cabinet. Additionally, the president must dismiss governors if two-thirds of the regional legislators vote no-confidence in them, as happened in these cases. Yushchenko refrained from removing the governors, waiting for a Constitutional Court decision, which would decide who would prevail in the struggle for power. The conflict remained unresolved at year's end.

These various tussles between the president and prime minister are due primarily, though not exclusively, to the fact that the constitutional reform that was hurriedly adopted during the Orange Revolution did not clarify precisely who does what and how conflicts are to be resolved. Thus, in the above cases, both Yushchenko and Yanukovich can legitimately claim to have authority, but the constitution does not specify who has the final authority. Many fear that Yanukovich has been promoting his Donetsk cronies to important positions of power in Kyiv, using his electoral victory to advance a variety of individuals with checkered backgrounds.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Ukraine is an electoral democracy. Despite the falsification of several million ballots in the first two rounds of the 2004 presidential election, massive citizen protests doomed the attempt at voter fraud and ensured that a democratically elected president, Viktor Yushchenko, would emerge from the process in the third round, mandated by Ukraine's Supreme Court. Parliamentary elections in March 2006 were deemed free and fair.

Citizens elect delegates to the Verkhovna Rada (Supreme Council), the 450-seat unicameral Parliament, for five-year terms. All seats in the Parliament are chosen on the basis of party-list proportional representation, according to a new electoral law first used in the March 2006 elections. A related package of constitutional reforms shifted the balance of power from the president to the Parliament. The Parliament now approves the prime minister proposed by the president on the recommendation of the coalition representing the parliamentary majority. The president, who is elected to a maximum of two five-year terms, no longer has the right to dismiss the cabinet. Unfortunately, the 2004 amendments to the constitution created a lot of ambiguity in the division of power between the president and prime minister, leading to an intense power struggle. The result has been a political stalemate, causing paralysis that led to a decline in the overall functioning of Ukraine's elected representatives.

The Yushchenko government introduced a series of anticorruption initiatives in 2005, including the dismantling or reform of several of the most bribery-prone government agencies, such as the state road police and the customs office. However, the fact that Ukraine must buy its Russian and Central Asian natural gas from the secretive trading company RosUkrEnergo, set up in 2004 to take over from the discredited EuralTransGaz, provides evidence that there is still extensive corruption at the highest level of the economy and political system in Ukraine. Both EuralTransGaz and RosUkrEnergo are creatures of the opaque Russian natural gas monopoly Gazprom. There is no apparent reason for RosUkrEnergo to serve as a middleman beyond facilitating corruption, and Yushchenko has come under attack for allowing it to play such a prominent role. RosUkrEnergo's position was confirmed in early 2006 as part of a deal between Ukraine and Gazprom, which held a 50 percent stake in the energy trader. The agreement ended a pricing dispute in which Gazprom had briefly cut off Ukraine's gas supplies in January. Nevertheless, Ukraine now has a strong and active opposition in the form of the Tymoshenko bloc, whose leader is an ardent critic of the RosUkrEnergo deal. Ukraine was ranked 99 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The 1996 constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression, and under changes adopted in 2001, libel is no longer a criminal offense. Since the 2004 Orange Revolution, the government has abstained from direct political interference and has not used media outlets as vehicles for political propaganda and slander against its opponents. Accordingly, the media have grown increasingly independent, and a far broader range of opinions is available to the public.

Nevertheless, there has been little progress in turning state television into a public broadcaster. Opaque economic control over the press remains in place, which means that media coverage often follows the will of a wealthy owner who might at the same time be an influential political figure. For example, offshoots of the old regime, such as former president Leonid Kuchma's son-in-law Viktor Pinchuk and Donetsk-based business magnate Rinat Akhmetov, control hundreds of broadcasting licenses. Journalists who investigate wrongdoing at the local level still face physical intimidation, and local police and prosecutors do not energetically pursue such cases. Igor Mosichuk, editor in chief of the newspaper *Vecherny Vasilkov*, was beaten in August 2006 after publishing stories on local officials who benefited from the privatization of land and sought to reopen an oil depot that had been closed for environmental reasons. Arsonists torched journalist Sergei Yanovsky's apart-

ment in Kherson in June 2006 after he wrote about local corruption and campaign irregularities. Use of the internet is growing rapidly in Ukraine; the number of users increased from 200,000 in 2000 to more than 5 million in March 2005. However, murky ownership of internet media sites remains a problem.

The constitution and the 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion define religious rights in Ukraine, and these are generally well respected. There are some restrictions on the activities of foreign religious organizations, and all religious groups with more than 10 members must register with the state. Acts of anti-Semitism are consistently investigated and condemned by state authorities. Muslims are occasionally subjected to document checks by local police, particularly in the eastern parts of Ukraine. Local officials sometimes block the attempts of nontraditional religious groups to register and buy property. The courts frequently side with the dominant local religious group.

Academic freedom is generally respected in most disciplines. The repression of students who engaged in opposition political activity during the Kuchma administration ended in 2005. New private universities now augment state-supported higher education. Nevertheless, despite the changing atmosphere, bribes for entrance exams and grades remain a problem.

The constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly but requires advance notification of government authorities. Ukraine has several thousand nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and an increasingly vibrant civil society. Observers consistently note the growing importance of social organizations in the country, and such organizations have not faced the crackdowns that have become common in other post-Soviet states. Trade unions function in Ukraine, but strikes and worker protests are infrequent. Factory owners are still able to pressure their workers to vote according to the owners' preferences.

The judiciary consists of the Supreme Court, specialized high courts, appeals courts and local courts of general jurisdiction, as well as a Constitutional Court. The constitution guarantees equality before the law, but the president, members of Parliament, and judges are immune from criminal prosecution unless Parliament consents. During the Kuchma era, the judiciary was inefficient and subject to corruption. Problems remain, but to a lesser degree than in the past. Given the novelty of the constitutional amendments that took effect at the beginning of 2006, the Constitutional Court will play a large role in defining the new balance of power between the president and the Parliament. From late October 2005 until August 2006, the Constitutional Court was not operating because the outgoing Parliament refused to make the required appointments to the bench. Once the Parliament fulfilled its duty, both the Constitutional and Supreme Courts had new chairmen. Among other innovations, a law approved in December 2005 gives the public access to court decisions and requires that a register of all decisions be published on the internet, a decision that is being partially implemented. Despite this progress, Ukraine has a long way to go before it meets European Union standards for the judiciary.

Police often subject drug users and sex workers to physical and psychological intimidation, according to Human Rights Watch. Law enforcement officers often harass these vulnerable members of the population as a way of fulfilling their arrest quotas.

While the country's Roma population suffers from discrimination, the government has actively interceded to protect the rights of most ethnic and religious mi-

norities, including the Jewish minority and the Turkic Crimean Tatar community. However, the government remains insensitive to requests by Russians to be acknowledged as a separate nationality.

The government generally respects personal autonomy and privacy, and the constitution guarantees individuals the right to own property, to work, and to engage in entrepreneurial activity. Yanukovych's government has agreed to respect existing property rights and is not considering major reviews of past privatization deals. When the interests of oligarchic clans are involved, cronyism and the protection of insider interests prevail. While not forgoing the advantages of insider connections, big business interests are also helping to push Ukraine forward by working to open the economy to greater global influence, as in the case of magnate Rinat Akhmetov, a member of Parliament with extensive influence on the government. In 2001, the Constitutional Court struck down the country's Soviet-era *propiska* system, which had required individuals to register with the Interior Ministry in their place of residence; opponents of the provision had long argued that the regulation violated freedom of movement.

Gender discrimination is prohibited under the constitution, but women's rights have not been a priority for government officials. There are few women in legislative or executive posts. Human rights groups have complained that employers advertising for jobs often specify the gender of the desired candidate. The trafficking of women abroad for the purpose of prostitution remains a major problem and a threat to women's rights and security.

United Arab Emirates

Population: 4,900,000

Capital: Abu Dhabi

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5*

Status: Not Free



Ratings Change: The United Arab Emirates' civil liberties rating improved from 6 to 5 because of gains in freedom of association.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF

Overview: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) in December 2006 held the first-ever elections for half of the 40-member Federal National Council. However, only a small electoral college was permitted to vote. Also during the year, the government formed a new Higher National Security Council to coordinate the federation's security policy, and pro-

posed significant labor reforms amid destructive protests by workers. The legal changes would allow collective bargaining and limited union activity for the first time.

For most of its history, the territory of the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—a federation of seven emirates formerly known as the Trucial States—was controlled by various competing tribal forces. Attacks on shipping off the coast of this territory led the British to mount military expeditions against the tribes in the nineteenth century. A series of treaties followed, and in 1853 the local leaders signed a truce agreement with Britain that led to a decline in the raids on shipping. Though never formal British colonies, the territories were provided protection by the British, and leaders of the emirates often referred their disputes to Britain for mediation.

In 1971, Britain announced that it was ending its treaty relationships with the seven emirates of the Trucial States, as well as with nearby Bahrain and Qatar. Six of the seven states entered into a federation called the United Arab Emirates, and Ras al-Khaimah, the seventh state, joined in 1972. The 1971 provisional constitution kept significant power in the hands of each emirate.

The government in 2001 cracked down on corruption, arresting some senior officials. In the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, the government introduced reforms in its financial services and banking sectors to block the financing of terrorism.

In January 2006, Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid al-Maktoum, ruler of the emirate of Dubai and vice president and prime minister of the UAE, died while visiting Australia. His brother and Dubai's crown prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, succeeded him in both the emirate and the federal posts. This shift did not result in any meaningful or substantive changes in the UAE's power structure, with the ruling families maintaining a firm grip on political power.

In March, state-owned Dubai Ports World met with scrutiny from the U.S. Congress over an international acquisition deal that would have allowed it to manage six major U.S. ports. The lawmakers' security concerns ultimately forced the company to jettison the U.S. portion of the deal. Despite the negative fallout from the dispute, the United States and the UAE continued talks on a bilateral free-trade agreement. However, U.S. opposition to the UAE's boycott of Israel threatened to hamper progress on the deal.

Also in March, the government proposed amendments to the 1980 labor law that would allow workers to engage in limited unionization, collective bargaining, and strikes for the first time. The announcement came after foreign construction workers mounted violent protests against poor living and working conditions.

The government in June approved the creation of a Higher National Security Council, intended to manage and coordinate national security and the economy. The council would be chaired by the president of the UAE, with the vice president and prime minister serving as vice chairmen. Other members of the council included the deputy supreme commander of the armed forces, the defense minister, the foreign minister, and the interior minister.

The first-ever elections for half of the 40-seat, largely advisory Federal National Council were held in December 2006. However, participation was limited to a small electoral college appointed by each emirate's rulers in September. Of the college's

6,689 members, 1,189 were women. Dr. Amal al-Qubaisi from Abu Dhabi was the only woman elected to the council. However, the 20 appointed members of the body included eight women.

In contrast to many of its neighbors, the UAE has achieved some success in diversifying its economy to reduce dependency on the petroleum sector. The country has built a leading free-trade zone in Dubai and a major manufacturing center in Sharjah, and has invested resources to develop its profile as a leading center for tourism in the region.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The UAE is not an electoral democracy. All decisions about political leadership rest with the dynastic rulers of the seven emirates, who form what is known as the Federal Supreme Council, the highest executive and legislative body in the country. These seven leaders select a president and vice president, and the president appoints a prime minister and cabinet. The UAE has a 40-member Federal National Council, with 20 delegates appointed by the seven leaders every two years. In December 2006, the UAE held its first-ever elections for the other 20 seats. However, participation was limited to an appointed electoral college of 6,689 UAE citizens. The Federal National Council serves only as an advisory body, reviewing proposed laws and questioning federal government ministers.

The UAE does not have political parties. Instead, the allocation of positions in the government is largely determined by tribal loyalties and economic power. The emirate of Abu Dhabi, the major oil producer in the UAE, has controlled the federation's presidency since its inception. Citizens have a limited opportunity to express their interests through traditional consultative sessions.

The UAE is considered one of the least corrupt countries in the Middle East region. It was ranked 31 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although the UAE's constitution provides for some freedom of expression, the government severely restricts this right in practice. The Printing and Publishing Law (No. 15 of 1980) applies to all media and prohibits "defamatory material and negative material about presidents, friendly countries, [and] religious issues, and [prohibits] pornography." Consequently, journalists commonly practice self-censorship, and the leading media outlets frequently publish government statements without criticism or comment. However, Dubai has a "Media Free Zone," where few restrictions have been reported on print and broadcast media produced for audiences outside of the UAE. In February 2006, the government passed a 29-point law on internet-based crime, covering crimes such as the forgery of government documents, the use of the internet for exploitative ends, and the abuse of Sharia (Islamic law). Internet access is widely available, though there have been reports that a leading internet service provider, the government-owned Etisalat, sometimes blocks sites deemed morally objectionable.

The UAE's constitution provides for freedom of religion. Islam is the official religion, and the majority of citizens are Sunni Muslims. However, the minority Shiite Muslim sect and non-Muslims are free to worship without interference. The government controls content in nearly all Sunni mosques. Academic freedom is limited, with the Ministry of Education censoring textbooks and curriculums in both public

and private schools. In February 2006, a foreign lecturer at a university was dismissed for showing and discussing controversial Danish cartoons of the prophet Muhammad.

The government places limits on freedoms of assembly and association. Small discussions on politics in private homes are generally tolerated, but there are limits on citizens' ability to organize broader gatherings. Public meetings require government permits. All nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) must register with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and registered NGOs reportedly receive subsidies from the government.

In March 2006, the government proposed new labor legislation to address labor disputes and protests that had rocked the country. The protests were in response to the poor working conditions and poor treatment of foreign workers. The unrest brought unwanted attention to the UAE as its economy boomed and trade negotiations with the United States continued. No unions had previously existed in the country, but in a concession by the government, the new law would allow workers to have one collective union with separate representatives for each industry. In July 2003, the government had issued a ban on the long-standing practice of employers forcing foreign workers to surrender their passports as a condition of employment.

The judiciary is not independent, with court rulings subject to review by the UAE's political leadership. The UAE has a dual system of Sharia (Islamic law) courts, which handle family and criminal matters, and secular courts, which cover civil law. Although the constitution bans torture, Sharia courts sometimes impose flogging sentences for individuals found guilty of drug use, prostitution, or adultery. Overcrowding is reported in the prisons of the larger emirates, and other conditions vary by jurisdiction. Recent violence among the non-indigenous community has led to arbitrary arrests and detention. In July 2004, the UAE passed new legislation setting stricter punishments for crimes involving terrorism, including financing terrorism and harboring terrorists. The federal Ministry of the Interior oversees police forces in the country, but the police force in each emirate enjoys a great deal of autonomy.

Discrimination against noncitizens, who make up the vast majority of the population and at least half of the workforce, occurs in many aspects of life, including employment and access to education, housing, and health care. Fewer than 20 percent of residents are UAE citizens. The government announced in October 2006 that it planned to naturalize 10,000 people who had been living without citizenship for more than 30 years. Often known as the *bidoon*, or stateless people, they are eligible for naturalization if they have lived permanently in the UAE since before the creation of the federation, possess no documents proving former nationality, and have no criminal record.

Dubai enacted a law in March 2006 that allowed citizens of the UAE and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to own land and property in the emirate. Citizens of non-GCC countries could own land only in approved areas.

The constitution provides for equality before the law but does not specifically mention gender equality. In practice, women's social, economic, and legal rights are not always protected because of incomplete implementation of the law and traditional biases against women. Muslim women are forbidden to marry non-Muslims, and according to the interpretation of Sharia in the UAE, a brother inherits double what a sister inherits when a parent dies. Women are underrepresented in govern-

ment, although there are signs of limited openings, with women receiving appointments at various levels of government in recent years. Sheikha Lubna al-Qasimi became the first woman minister in the UAE when she was appointed minister of the economy and planning in 2004. In addition, Sheikh Sultan al-Qasimi, ruler of the emirate of Shaijah, has appointed five women to his consultative council.

Human trafficking and forced labor remain serious problems in the UAE. According to the U.S. State Department's 2006 Trafficking in Persons Report, foreigners are lured into the country by employment opportunities and then subjected to harsh working conditions, physical abuse, and the withholding of passports. However, the government enacted an antitrafficking law in November 2006, providing penalties for those convicted of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual or economic exploitation. The State Department that year placed the UAE on its Tier 2 watch list for trafficking in persons, up from Tier 3, the worst ranking. The UAE has received a great deal of attention for its use of young children from South Asia as jockeys in camel races. It took a major step forward in addressing this problem by passing a new law in 2005 that banned the employment of children as camel jockeys.

United Kingdom

Population: 60,500,000

Capital: London

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Tony Blair announced in September 2006 that he would step down as prime minister by mid-2007 at the latest, with Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown expected to replace him. The Conservative Party chose a new leader, David Cameron, in December 2005. An alleged plot to bomb transatlantic flights leaving London further increased terrorism concerns after the bombings of mid-2005 and contributed to a growing debate about the integration of Muslims in Britain.

The English state emerged before the turn of the first millennium and was conquered by Norman French invaders in 1066. Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, all home to speakers of Celtic languages, were subdued or incorporated into the kingdom over the course of centuries, initially through the sovereignty of the monarch and then through the union of parliaments. The union with Wales was formally completed in 1536, and Scotland joined with the creation of Great Britain in 1707. Ireland

was formally absorbed in 1801, when the country became the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689 began a gradual—but eventually total—assertion of the powers of Parliament, as Britain became one of the modern world's first democracies. A significant extension of voting rights was passed in 1832, and subsequent reforms led to universal adult suffrage.

Separatism has persisted in the Celtic lands; most of Ireland won independence after World War I, with Protestant-majority counties in the north remaining a restive part of what became, as of 1927, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Most of Britain's global empire, the most important portion of which was India, gained independence in the decades after World War II, although many former colonies maintain links with the country through the Commonwealth. Significant powers were devolved to a Scottish parliament, and fewer to a Welsh assembly, established under the Labour Party government in 1997. Peace negotiations restored home rule to Northern Ireland in 1998, but the local government has since been suspended because of breakdowns in the peace process.

After nearly two decades of Conservative Party rule, Tony Blair's "New Labour"—so called because of the party's radical shift from its Socialist past—adopted Conservative-style positions on a number of issues and swept general elections in May 1997. In the June 2001 parliamentary elections, the Labour Party secured a second term in office with another landslide victory, trouncing the opposition Conservatives.

Despite a promise to focus on public services, particularly the troubled health and transport systems, Blair's second term as prime minister was dominated by his support of the U.S.-led war in Iraq amid opposition from within his own party. After the end of the initial hostilities in Iraq, the government suffered renewed criticism over the evidence and arguments it had offered to support its position during the run-up to the conflict.

A combination of slow progress in improving public services, the continuation of the war, and frustration with the government's European Union (EU) policy led to a far less decisive Labour victory in May 2005 elections, with the margin of parliamentary majority reduced from 165 seats to 66. Labour took just 36 percent of the vote, the smallest total for a majority-winning party in Britain's democratic history.

Blair remained prime minister after the 2005 election, but he was considerably weakened by speculation about the timing of his long-standing promise to give up the premiership in favor of Gordon Brown, the chancellor of the exchequer. Blair said in September 2006 that he would step down within a year. Michael Howard, the Conservative Party leader who had been seen as ineffective in capitalizing on Blair's weakness, resigned as party leader, and David Cameron was elected to replace him in December 2005.

Britain's sometimes troubled relationship with the EU remained in the spotlight at a summit in Luxembourg in June 2005, when a group of EU countries led by France demanded an end to Britain's annual rebate from the EU budget. (Former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher had negotiated the annual refund in the early 1980s, claiming that Britain was unfairly taxed by the EU's Common Agricultural Policy.) The argument left Britain further embittered with France and forestalled agreement on the budget.

On July 7, 2005, three bombings in London's Underground railway system and

one on a London bus killed more than 50 people and wounded hundreds. The bombers, also killed in the attacks, were British Muslims, three of Pakistani descent and one a convert to Islam. The attacks set off a public debate about the failure of many immigrants and racial and religious minorities to become integrated into British society. Shortly after the attacks, British police shot and killed an innocent Brazilian man, suspecting he was a terrorist. More than a year after the shooting, no definitive punishments had been handed down for the deadly mistake.

The aftermath of the terrorist attacks led to government proposals to toughen antiterrorism laws, which in turn sparked concerns about civil liberties. The proposals, first introduced in August 2005, were wide ranging. However, in one of the first bills to be voted on by the House of Commons, Blair was defeated. Instead of extending the time terrorism suspects could be held without detention from 14 to 90 days, the Commons extended the period to 28 days. In another government setback, the Law Lords (the highest court in Britain) ruled in December that evidence obtained through torture could not be used at trial.

Concerns about terrorism extended into 2006. In February, a radical and outspoken Muslim cleric, Abu Hamza al-Masri, was convicted of soliciting murder and inciting racial hatred. (British National Party leader Nick Griffin was cleared of incitement charges in November after calling Islam a "vicious, wicked faith," prompting claims by some observers that the justice system was biased against Muslims.) In August, authorities reported that they had disrupted a plot to blow up transatlantic airliners departing London. In October, the *Guardian* newspaper published what it said was a leaked document from the Department for Education and Skills advising professors to keep watch on Muslim students suspected of extremism.

A related issue flared in October after an assistant teacher was fired for refusing to remove her *niqab*, a face-covering veil worn by some Muslim women. Jack Straw, the Labour Party leader in the House of Commons, created a stir by saying he disliked the veil and asked his constituents—many of whom were Muslim—to remove it when they visited him. Despite an outcry against Straw, Blair supported him, calling the veil a "mark of separation." The incident further fed the national debate over the integration of Muslims, both immigrants and their British-born children.

Northern Ireland's peace efforts made some progress in 2005 and 2006, though home rule had yet to be restored by year's end. The Good Friday agreement of 1998 called for a locally elected assembly to take responsibility for much of the province's governance. However, the assembly was suspended in 2002 after Sinn Fein, a hard-line Catholic nationalist party allied to the Irish Republican Army (IRA) paramilitary group, was caught spying on rival politicians and security officials. In new elections for the Northern Ireland Assembly in December 2003, Sinn Fein and the Protestant and loyalist Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) took the lead, edging out their more moderate rivals on both sides.

Nevertheless, after verifying in 2005 that the IRA had put a large number of arms permanently "beyond use," the Independent Monitoring Commission, a body set up by the peace process, confirmed in October 2006 that the IRA had dismantled its paramilitary structures and seemed fully committed to peace. The DUP leadership remained skeptical, however. The British and Irish governments pushed the DUP's leader, Ian Paisley, to meet with Sinn Fein's leader, Gerry Adams. They called new Northern Ireland provincial elections for March 2007, and set up a transitional North-

ern Irish assembly as a placeholder until then. Adams and Paisely did not meet directly, but spoke to each other across the aisle in the transitional assembly. Sinn Fein support for the reformed police services remained a crucial sticking point; Paisley refused to work with Sinn Fein without such a commitment from the republicans.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

The United Kingdom is an electoral democracy. Each of the 646 members of the House of Commons, the dominant lower chamber of the bicameral Parliament, is elected in a single-member district. This procedure multiplies the power of the two largest parties—the Labour Party and the Conservative Party—at the expense of smaller parties. The Liberal Democrats are the most disadvantaged; although they won 22.1 percent of the vote in the 2005 election, they received only 9.4 percent of the seats in the House of Commons. The separation of executive and legislative powers is weak, since the prime minister is typically the leader of the majority party or coalition in the Commons. Furthermore, the executive has in recent years become more powerful, at the expense of the legislature. The opposition party plays a crucial role in the Commons; although it is unable to block legislation, it holds ministers accountable in parliamentary debates that are widely covered in the press. Parliamentary elections must be held at least every five years.

The House of Lords, Parliament's upper chamber, can delay, but not ultimately block, legislation initiated in the Commons. Its membership (currently 725) has been reformed under Prime Minister Tony Blair's Labour government. Nearly all hereditary peers (nobles) have been removed from the body, with 92 remaining pending further reform. The rest are "life peers," chosen by governments to serve for life; Law Lords, who serve as the country's highest court; and a small number of bishops and archbishops of the Church of England. As the head of state, the monarch, currently Queen Elizabeth II, plays a largely ceremonial role.

The center-left Labour Party and the center-right Conservative Party dominate the political scene—one or the other has governed without coalition partners since World War II. The Liberal Democratic Party, now somewhat to the left of Labour, is the third-largest party. The other chief parties are mainly regional; these include the Welsh nationalist Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party. In Northern Ireland, the main Catholic and republican parties are Sinn Fein and the Social Democratic and Labour Party, while the leading Protestant and unionist parties are the Ulster Unionist Party and the Democratic Unionist Party.

After a period of centralization under Conservative governments from 1979 to 1997, the Labour Party made constitutional reform a key part of its 1997 election platform. In government, it has delivered a far-reaching (though asymmetrical) devolution of power to Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. The first elections to the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly were held in 1999. The Scottish body has more power (including some tax-raising authority) than its Welsh counterpart, largely because of stronger separatist sentiment in Scotland. Welsh nationalism is primarily cultural. The Northern Ireland Assembly was temporarily suspended in October 2002 after complications in the peace process.

The government is largely free of pervasive corruption. The United Kingdom was ranked 11 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The law provides for press freedom, and the media in Britain are lively and competitive. Daily newspapers across a broad political spectrum compete for readers. Although broadcasting is dominated by the state-owned British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the organization is editorially independent and faces significant private competition. In 2003, the BBC claimed that the government exaggerated evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, which led to an extensive inquiry that eventually exonerated the government. While the episode tarnished the reputations of both the government and the BBC, it was a sign of the healthy political debate that is possible in Britain's media. Internet access is not restricted by the government.

Although the Church of England and the Church of Scotland are established churches, the government both prescribes freedom of religion in law and protects it in practice. Scientology is not recognized as an official religion for charity purposes. Muslims and other religious minorities complain of discrimination in Britain. In 2005, the government proposed banning Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation), an Islamist group that advocates the creation of a transnational Muslim caliphate and is opposed to democracy, but the plan stalled and the group remains legal. Although it officially disavows violence, the government sees Hizb ut-Tahrir as an ideological source of violent extremism. Academic freedom is respected by British authorities.

Freedoms of assembly and association are respected, as demonstrated by massive protests in recent years against the government's participation in the Iraq war. Civic organizations and nongovernmental organizations are allowed to operate freely. Workers' right to organize in unions is protected. Trade unions have traditionally played a strong role in the Labour Party, though this connection is weakening as the party moves to the center and seeks a larger role for the private sector in traditional public sector areas, such as health care.

Legislation approved in 2005 launched a major reform of the top tiers of the justice system, calling for the Law Lords to be removed from the House of Lords and established as a separate Supreme Court. The original bill would also have abolished the ancient post of Lord Chancellor, the second-oldest office in Britain after the monarchy, which combined a legislative role in the House of Lords, a senior executive position in the cabinet, and a powerful judicial position as, effectively, the top judge in the country. As such, it had represented a serious breach of the separation of powers, which was already weak in Britain. The final version of the legislation stopped short of eliminating the office of Lord Chancellor, but it still removed the post's judicial function and ended the Lord Chancellor's role as Speaker of the House of Lords. The police maintain high professional standards, and prisons generally meet international guidelines.

Britain has large numbers of immigrants and locally born children of immigrants, who receive equal treatment under the law. In practice, their living standards are lower than the national average, and they complain of having come under increased suspicion since the July 2005 terrorist attacks in London and the alleged foiled plot in August 2006.

Women receive equal treatment under the law but are underrepresented in politics and top levels of business.

United States of America

Population: 299,100,000

Capital: Washington, D.C.

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: By far the most significant development in the United States in 2006 was the sweeping victory of the Democratic Party in midterm congressional elections. Running on a campaign that stressed popular discontent with the conduct of the war in Iraq, unease over the economic impact of globalization, and a perception of widespread corruption among the incumbent Republicans, the Democrats gained enough seats to recapture control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. An issue that generated considerable debate among Americans—although it did not figure substantially in the election returns—was immigration policy, especially regarding undocumented immigrants. The year also saw a series of developments concerning the counterterrorism policies adopted by the administration of President George W. Bush, including court decisions and new legislation enacted by Congress that placed some restrictions on the administration's activities.

The independence of the United States of America was declared in 1776 during a revolution against British colonial rule. The current system of government began functioning in 1789, following the ratification of the country's constitution. Because the founders of the United States distrusted concentrated government power, they set up a system in which the federal government has three coequal centers of power—executive, legislative, and judicial branches—and left many powers with the state governments and the citizenry.

The interaction between the three branches of the federal government came to the fore most recently in 2005, when President George W. Bush nominated two people to fill vacancies on the Supreme Court. The Senate confirmed the appointment of appeals court judge John G. Roberts Jr. as chief justice, despite objections from the opposition Democratic Party. However, senators within Bush's own Republican Party forced him to withdraw his nomination of White House counsel Harriet Miers to fill the other open seat. He nominated appeals court judge Samuel A. Alito Jr. instead, and the Senate confirmed him in January 2006. The appointment of the two conservative jurists was expected to shift the ideological balance of the nine-member court to the right, raising concerns among many liberals and moderates.

Also in 2005, Bush's declining approval ratings received a major blow when his

administration failed to respond effectively to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, which battered swathes of Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana in August. The storm inundated New Orleans, and although many evacuated the low-lying city prior to the storm, those who remained—mainly poor African Americans—suffered death, lawlessness, and homelessness in the glaring absence of swift government assistance. The media followed the drama closely, adding to the widespread perception that all levels of government in the world's most powerful country were unprepared to cope with a natural catastrophe.

The Democratic Party's triumph in the November 2006 congressional elections ended 12 years of Republican domination in Congress. In the House of Representatives, the Democrats gained a total of 29 seats; in the Senate, the Democratic gain was 6 seats, enough to give the party a razor-thin edge.

The elections were a major setback for President Bush. Opinion polls indicated that many voters were strongly influenced by frustration with the president's policies. Especially important was disapproval of the conduct of the war in Iraq, which Bush had launched with a 2003 invasion. The escalation of sectarian violence in Iraq convinced many voters that the U.S. presence there was not leading to the establishment of a stable democracy, but was fueling what many feared was evolving into a full-scale civil war. Although the Democrats themselves were divided on future war policies, with some urging a U.S. withdrawal and others calling for a new strategy, the voters rejected the administration's adherence to what many saw as a failed policy. Shortly after the elections, Bush dismissed Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, a chief architect of the war.

The Democrats also benefited from the public's apprehensions over economic conditions. Although unemployment, at 4.6 percent, was at a five-year low, many Americans were concerned about job stability, rising income inequality, growth in the number of people lacking health insurance, and fears over the security of pension payments. In response, Democratic candidates promised to support an increase in the minimum wage and improvements in medical insurance and expressed skepticism of free-trade agreements that were seen as threats to U.S. job security.

Another issue that favored the Democrats was corruption. Over the previous year, a number of prominent Republicans had been implicated in scandals that ranged from bribery to marital infidelity. In the most prominent case, the majority leader of the House of Representatives, Tom DeLay, had resigned after being indicted on charges of violating campaign-funding laws. DeLay and other notable Republicans (as well as a few Democrats) were embarrassed by association with Jack Abramoff, a lobbyist who pleaded guilty to various corruption charges. In another high-profile case, Mark Foley, a Republican congressman from Florida, resigned abruptly after it was revealed that he had sent salacious e-mails to young male pages working in the House of Representatives. The Republicans were also damaged by publicity over the practice of "earmarking" legislation, whereby congressionally appropriated funds were channeled to legislators' specific projects, many of which were of dubious value to the general public. During the Republican domination of Congress, the use of earmarks had mushroomed, and the practice became an issue of public concern as the DeLay and Abramoff scandals grew.

A major controversy emerged over the country's policies toward undocumented immigrants, who had been entering the United States in record numbers in recent

years. Opinion polls indicated that the American people were ambivalent about illegal immigrants. Many were concerned that millions of undocumented workers would depress wages by accepting jobs at less pay and become a drain on educational and social services. Others saw undocumented workers as an economic boon to the country because of their willingness to take menial but essential jobs that citizens would not accept. As the intensity of the debate increased, national policy veered toward a more restrictive and punitive approach. More resources were allocated to the Border Patrol, and a greater emphasis was placed on deporting illegal workers than in the past.

The immigration debate culminated, in 2006, in a series of legislative proposals and massive demonstrations by undocumented workers and their supporters. On the legislative front, conservative Republicans advanced a bill that, in its initial form, would have imposed criminal penalties on undocumented workers and ordered the construction of a fence along the border with Mexico. It also rejected "amnesty" for illegal immigrants, barring them from any expedited path to citizenship or regularized immigrant status. The bill was countered by a measure, backed by the Bush administration, that would have established a new guest-worker program and eased the path to citizenship for illegal immigrants already in the United States, while at the same time strengthening efforts to discourage the illegal crossing of the Mexican border.

As the legislative proposals were advanced and discussed in the media, including on conservative talk-radio programs, immigrant advocacy groups organized a series of major rallies in Los Angeles, Dallas, and other urban centers with a substantial immigrant presence. However, while hundreds of thousands participated in these rallies, the political impact was muted. In the end, the only immigration legislation to win adoption was a measure calling for the construction of a fence along 700 miles of the country's 2,000-mile-long border with Mexico. At the same time, immigration issues played a small role in the elections, and several of the most vocal advocates of a strict policy against undocumented immigrants were defeated in House races.

The counterterrorism policies adopted by the Bush administration in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States remained a source of political friction and litigation. One issue, whether the government could use torture or similar rough techniques during interrogation of terrorism suspects, was possibly resolved in December 2005, when Congress adopted a bill that outlawed the cruel, degrading, or inhumane treatment of prisoners in U.S. custody. After initial resistance, Bush signed the legislation, which established the Army Field Manual's guidelines for interrogation of prisoners as the basis for U.S. policy. The bill was sponsored by Senator John McCain, a Republican and potential presidential candidate who had been a prisoner of war during the Vietnam War.

The administration suffered a setback in June 2006 when the Supreme Court invalidated plans to use special military commissions to try terrorism defendants detained at the U.S. military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In its decision, the Court asserted that the commissions stood in violation of the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war. In response to this and other legal defeats involving terrorism suspects, Republicans in Congress pushed through legislation in September that handed the president statutory authority to identify suspects in terrorism

cases, detain them indefinitely, and interrogate them without the full judicial review ordinarily enjoyed by criminal defendants. Although the new law expanded the legal rights of "enemy combatants," it significantly restricted the role of the courts in determining the legal status of terrorism suspects. The law also broadened the definition of enemy combatant to include not only those who are involved in military action or acts of terrorism, but also those who assist terrorist actions against the United States. The law, strongly opposed by civil liberties organizations, would almost certainly be challenged in the federal court system.

Several other controversies swirled around the administration's counterterrorism initiatives, driven by the president's assertion of broad executive authority in national security matters and critics' arguments that policies should conform to international law and be subject to oversight by Congress and the judiciary. One involved the practice of extraordinary rendition, in which the United States arrested or seized terrorism suspects who were then shifted to third countries for interrogation and alleged torture. The practice, which was revealed by the press in 2005, was the subject of an investigation by the Council of Europe. The report issued by the Council asserted that a number of European Union countries had been complicit in the renditions, either by allowing the United States to detain the prisoners on their soil or by assisting in their international transit. A prosecutor in Italy has brought charges against several high-ranking Italian intelligence officials and employees of the CIA for allegedly seizing a radical Muslim cleric in Italy and sending him to Egypt for interrogation. Another controversy involves the administration's policy of warrantless surveillance, whereby telephone conversations and e-mail contacts between people in the United States and individuals abroad were monitored without prior approval from a judicial body. Challenges to the surveillance program were pending in the federal court system in 2006.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The United States is an electoral democracy with a bicameral federal legislature. The upper chamber, the Senate, consists of 100 members—two from each of the 50 states—directly elected to six-year terms, with one-third of the chamber coming up for election every two years. The lower chamber, the House of Representatives, consists of 435 members directly elected for two-year terms. As a result of the 2006 elections, Democrats control the House, 233-202. In the Senate, the Democrats and Republicans each hold 49 seats, but two independents are aligned with the Democratic caucus, ensuring the party's control of that body. All national legislators are elected directly by the voters in the districts or states they represent. The president and vice president are elected for four-year terms. By constitutional provision, the president is limited to two terms in office.

In the U.S. political system, a great deal of government responsibility rests with the 50 individual states. Most law enforcement matters are dealt with at the state level, as are education, family matters, and many land-use decisions, and states have the power to raise revenues through various forms of taxation. In some states, citizens have a wide-ranging ability to influence legislation through institutions of direct democracy, such as referendums, which have been conducted on such diverse issues as gay marriage, tax rates, affirmative action, and immigrant rights. Although hailed by some as a reflection of the openness of the U.S. system, direct democracy

has come under criticism by others, who contend that making government policy through referendum or recalling democratically elected officeholders midway through their terms weakens the party system and the institutions of indirect democracy in the executive and legislative branches.

In electing a president, the United States uses a unique system that combines a popular vote and ballots cast by an electoral college. The Electoral College apportions votes to each state on the basis of population and congressional representation. In most cases, all of the electors in a particular state then cast their ballots for the candidate who won the popular vote in that state, no matter what the margin. Two states, Maine and Nebraska, have chosen to apportion their electoral votes between the candidates according to the percentage of the state's votes each receives, and other states are considering similar systems. The Electoral College vote determines the winner of the election. Thus, it is possible for a candidate to win the presidency even though an opposing candidate won a greater number of popular votes nationwide. Such was the anomalous situation in 2000, when the winning candidate, George W. Bush, actually received fewer popular votes than his main opponent, Democratic nominee and outgoing vice president Al Gore.

The United States has an intensely competitive political environment dominated by two major parties, the Republicans and the Democrats. The U.S. electoral system is based on a "first past the post," or majoritarian, system for legislative seats, which tends to discourage a multiplicity of parties. In addition, the U.S. system is characterized by specific legal and other hurdles that act to prevent the rise of new parties. Yet, on occasion, independent candidates or those representing third parties or particular causes have had a significant impact on presidential politics or at the state level. A number of new parties, such as the Green Party, have modestly influenced politics in a number of municipalities in recent years.

Presidential election campaigns in the United States are long and expensive. Candidates often begin campaigning two years prior to the election. Because of the high costs involved, serious candidates often find themselves in what has been called a "permanent campaign," with a never-ending process of fundraising. In 2001, Congress passed the McCain-Feingold bill, intended to limit the effect of moneyed interests on national politics. Nevertheless, the two parties and the constituency and interest groups that support them have used various methods to circumvent the spirit of the legislation. The 2006 congressional race was the most expensive ever, with a total expenditure of \$2.6 billion, much of which was spent by advocacy groups supporting or opposing the major candidates, rather than by the parties or candidates themselves.

A serious and growing problem for American democracy is the widespread practice of redrawing districts for the House of Representatives and state legislatures so as to maximize the success of a particular party or protect incumbent legislators of either party. The practice, known as gerrymandering, has been a part of the American system since its inception. Recently, however, sophisticated computer techniques have strengthened the ability of the dominant party in a state to carve out districts that considerably limit the competitive nature of legislative elections. Although the substantial turnover in the House of Representatives in 2006 has dampened the gerrymandering debate, most observers continue to regard the practice as a significant problem. A number of prominent voices, both liberal and conservative,

have called for a reform of redistricting procedures, but the reform movement suffered a setback in 2005, when voters in Ohio and California rejected proposals to hand authority over the drawing of district lines to nonpartisan commissions. In 2006, the Supreme Court refused to nullify a redistricting plan for Texas that critics said was meant to guarantee Republican domination of the state's congressional delegation.

Corruption is a complex phenomenon in the United States. American society has a tradition of intolerance toward corrupt acts by government officials, corporate executives, or labor leaders. In recent years, executives from a number of large corporations have been given lengthy prison sentences for various illegal acts, and officials at the local, state, and federal levels are regularly prosecuted for corrupt acts. The United States also has in place a variety of strict measures to reduce the level of corruption in the private sector. The most recent corporate governance legislation, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, was passed in the wake of a series of scandals involving inflated earnings reports by major corporations. The U.S. media are aggressive in reporting on cases of corporate and official corruption; newspapers often publish investigative articles that delve into questions of private or public malfeasance. At the same time, the ever-expanding influence of interest groups and lobbyists on the legislative and policy-making process, combined with their crucial role in campaign fund-raising, has given rise to public perceptions of enhanced corruption in Washington. The United States was ranked 20 out of 163 countries in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The federal government has a high degree of transparency. A substantial number of auditing and investigative agencies function independently of party influence or the influence of incumbent officials, and such agencies are often spurred to action by the investigative work of journalists. Federal agencies regularly place information relevant to their mandate on websites to broaden public access.

The United States has a free, diverse, and constitutionally protected press. In recent years, a debate has arisen over the impact of ownership consolidation, accomplished through the purchase of large media entities—television networks, newspapers, and weekly magazines—by giant corporations with little or no previous interest in journalism. At the same time, internet journalists and bloggers play a growing role in the coverage of political news, and internet access is widespread in the country.

Controversy has also arisen over attempts by federal prosecutors to compel journalists to divulge the names of confidential sources. This issue emerged most vividly in the case of CIA analyst Valerie Plame, whose identity was revealed in the press in 2003 in possible violation of federal law. In the course of the case, a special prosecutor demanded that several reporters testify as to the identity of sources who provided information about Plame. Investigation of the case concluded in 2006 with no charges brought on the principal issue of leaking the identity of an intelligence agent, though I. Lewis Libby, then the chief of staff to Vice President Dick Cheney, was indicted on charges of lying to a grand jury. Reporters have been threatened with contempt-of-court citations in several other cases as well; an internet journalist, Josh Wolf, was jailed in August 2006 for refusing to provide federal prosecutors with tapes of an antiglobalization demonstration in San Francisco that ended in violence, and he remained behind bars at year's end.

The United States has a long tradition of religious freedom. Adherents of practically every major religious denomination, as well as many smaller groupings, can be found throughout the country, and both religious belief and religious service attendance is high. There is an ongoing debate over the role of religion in public life, often centered on the question of whether government subsidies to schools sponsored by religious denominations conform with constitutional rules requiring the separation of church and state. Issues such as gay marriage and abortion, as well as the place of the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, are heavily loaded with religious overtones and serve to mobilize Evangelical Christians to engage in the political process. There are no direct government subsidies to houses of worship.

Although a contentious debate has emerged over the university's role in society, academic life is notable for a healthy level of intellectual freedom. There are ongoing discussions on university campuses over such issues as the war in Iraq, the global economy, and the alleged politicization of curriculums on Middle East affairs. A number of the country's prestigious universities have adopted policies intended to combat harassment against traditionally marginalized groups by enforcing what is known pejoratively as political correctness. Such policies are controversial because they may restrict the expression of opinions, usually voiced by political conservatives, that diverge from mainstream campus views. Private discussion and public debate are vigorous in the United States.

In general, the right to public protest is respected by officials. Protest demonstrations directed at government policies are frequently held in Washington, New York, and other major cities. The United States gives wide freedom to trade associations, nongovernmental organizations, and issue-oriented pressure groups to organize and argue their cases through the political process.

Federal law guarantees trade unions the right to organize workers and engage in collective bargaining with employers. The right to strike is also guaranteed. Over the years, however, the strength of organized labor has declined, so that less than 8 percent of the private workforce is currently represented by unions, one of the lowest such figures among stable, economically advanced democracies. An important factor in organized labor's decline is the country's labor code, which is regarded as an impediment to organizing efforts. Decisions by the National Labor Relations Board, which adjudicates labor-management disputes, have also circumscribed unions' ability to effectively organize and represent workers. In 2006, the board dealt unions a serious blow by greatly expanding the pool of workers deemed to have management responsibility, making them ineligible for union representation. Union organizing efforts are also impeded by strong resistance from employers and the federal government's failure to strictly enforce the law against labor code violators. Several attempts to modify core labor laws have been defeated in Congress over the years. Despite its institutional decline, organized labor continues to play a vigorous role in electoral politics. In the 2006 elections, unions are said to have contributed \$100 million to various candidates, mostly Democrats opposed to the Bush administration's domestic agenda.

Judicial independence is respected. The influence of the court system has become a source of sometimes bitter contention, with critics claiming that judicial authority has expanded into areas of governance that are best left to the legislative branch. Despite a strong rule-of-law tradition, a number of controversies have

emerged over the treatment of poor and especially minority defendants in criminal law cases. African Americans and Hispanics constitute a large portion of defendants in criminal cases involving murder, rape, assault, and robbery.

Civil liberties defenders and other groups have advanced a broad critique of the criminal justice system, contending that there are too many Americans (especially those in minority groups) in prison, that prison sentences are often excessive, and that too many people are prosecuted for minor drug offenses. There are movements in several states toward shorter prison sentences and earlier release for convicted felons. Some have also criticized "three strikes and you're out" laws, under which criminal defendants receive life sentences after conviction on a third felony, even if the offenses are relatively minor. The most recent survey showed that more than 2.2 million people were behind bars at the federal, state, or local level. Concern has been raised about prison conditions, especially the disturbing levels of violence and rape. Meanwhile, the United States has the highest rate of legal executions in the democratic world. Reflecting growing doubts about the death penalty, several states have announced a moratorium on capital punishment while studies are undertaken on the practice's fairness. New DNA testing efforts have exonerated some inmates slated for execution, and a number of others have challenged the predominant lethal-injection method as technically flawed and inhumane.

The United States is one of the world's most racially and ethnically diverse societies. In recent years, the country's population dynamics have shifted in important ways, as residents of Latin American ancestry have replaced African Americans as the largest minority group, and the percentage of whites in the population has declined somewhat. A complex variety of policies and programs are designed to protect the rights of minorities, including laws to prevent discrimination on the job, affirmative action plans for university admissions, quotas to guarantee representation in the internal affairs of some political parties, and policies to ensure that minorities are not treated unfairly in the apportionment of government assistance. Minorities also benefit from an unemployment rate that is low by global standards and a high percentage of home ownership. African Americans, however, continue to lag in economic standing, education, and other social indicators. They are more likely to live in poverty, less likely to own businesses, less likely to have a university degree, and much more likely to have served time in prison than members of other groups, including many recent immigrant groups. Affirmative action in employment and university admissions remains a contentious issue. The Supreme Court has given approval to the use of race or ethnicity as a factor in university admissions under certain, narrow conditions. However, affirmative action has been banned, in whole or in part, by referendum voters in four states, most recently in a 2006 ballot in Michigan.

Since its immigration laws underwent major changes during the 1960s, the United States has maintained a record of liberal immigration policies. In recent years, there has been some debate over the degree to which new immigrants are assimilating into American society. Most observers, however, believe that the country has struck a balance that both encourages assimilation and permits new legal immigrants to maintain certain religious or cultural customs.

Citizens of the United States enjoy a high level of personal autonomy. The right to own property is protected by law and is a jealously guarded part of the American way of life. Business entrepreneurship is encouraged as a matter of government

policy. In 2005, a ruling by the Supreme Court gave the state the right to compel the sale of private property to private developers involved in projects deemed to be in the public interest, drawing sharp criticism from advocates of individual property rights. Eminent domain powers had traditionally been used to advance infrastructure projects like bridges and railroads, but they were increasingly applied to development deals designed simply to improve the local or state economy and increase the tax base. In response to the ruling, a majority of states have adopted laws limiting the ability of the authorities to seize private property, including seven states that adopted such measures through referendums in 2006.

The United States prides itself as a society that offers wide opportunity for economic and social advancement and favors government policies that enhance equality of opportunity and social mobility. Historically, the opportunities for economic advancement have played a key role in the society's successful assimilation of new immigrants. Recently, however, studies have shown a widening of inequality in income and wealth and a narrowing of opportunities for upward mobility. Among the world's prosperous, stable democracies, the United States is unique in having a large underclass of poor people who have at best a tangential role in economic life. According to opinion surveys, many Americans believe that their standard of living is threatened by economic globalization. This belief had political ramifications in 2006, as Democrats benefited from support by those who expressed concern over the state of the economy.

Women have made important strides toward equality over the past several decades. Women are heavily represented in the legal profession, medicine, and journalism, and predominate in university programs that train students for these careers. Although the average compensation of female workers is 80 percent of that for male workers, women with recent university degrees have effectively attained parity with men. Nonetheless, there remain many female-headed families that live in conditions of chronic poverty.

The issue of gay rights is highly contentious. Federal law does not include homosexuals as a protected class in antidiscrimination legislation, though many states have enacted civil rights protection for them. An intense controversy erupted over gay marriage after the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court issued a decision in 2003 that said homosexual couples had the same right to marry as heterosexual couples under the state constitution. Since the ruling, many states have passed laws or constitutional amendments explicitly banning same-sex marriage, though an increasing number of states do permit civil unions or other legal arrangements for gays that guarantee economic and family rights similar to those enjoyed by married couples. During 2006, voters in eight states approved referendums that banned same-sex marriage.

Legalized abortion remains an intensely debated issue in U.S. politics. Abortion rights were guaranteed nationwide not through an act of federal legislation, but by a 1973 Supreme Court decision, *Roe v. Wade*. In recent years, several states have passed restrictions on access to abortion, including requirements that minors inform their parents before undergoing the procedure. The Supreme Court has nullified many of these measures. In a 2006 referendum, the voters of South Dakota, a relatively conservative state, struck down a measure that would have prohibited abortion in almost all cases.

Uruguay

Population: 3,300,000
Capital: Montevideo

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: President Tabare Vazquez's Frente Amplio (Broad Front) coalition, which held a majority in both chambers of Parliament, continued in 2006 to address the issue of human rights violations during the period of military rule (1973-1985) while working to implement ambitious economic and social reforms.

After gaining independence from Spain, the Oriental Republic of Uruguay was established in 1830. The ensuing decades brought a series of revolts, civil conflicts, and incursions by neighboring states, followed by a period of relative stability in the first half of the twentieth century. The rival Colorado and Blanco parties vied for political power in the 1950s and 1960s, but economic troubles and an insurgency by the leftist Tupamaro National Liberation Front led to a military takeover by 1973. From that year until 1985, the country was under the control of a military regime whose viciousness and reputation for incarcerating the largest proportion of political prisoners per capita in the world earned Uruguay the nickname "The Torture Chamber of Latin America."

The military era came to an end with elections held in 1984, in which Julio Maria Sanguinetti of the Colorado Party won the presidency. A 1986 amnesty law promoted by the new civilian president, who had been the military's favored candidate, granted members of the armed forces immunity for human rights violations committed during the years of dictatorship. The military extracted the concession as its price for allowing the democratic transition the year before.

In the next general election, held in November 1989, Luis Herrera of the centrist National (or Blanco) Party was elected president. The 1990s were marked by relative economic stability and prosperity. The Colorados won in both 1994 and 1999, with the latter election a close runoff between Colorado candidate Jorge Batlle and oncologist Tabare Vazquez, the standard-bearer of the leftist Frente Amplio (Broad Front) coalition. Batlle brought several National Party members into his cabinet.

Batlle immediately sought an honest accounting of the human rights situation under the former military regime, while showing equally firm determination to reduce spending and taxes and to privatize state monopolies. In 2001, crises in the rural

economy and an increase in violent crime, as well as growing labor unrest, set off alarms in what was still one of Latin America's safest countries.

A currency devaluation and default in Argentina at the end of 2001 diminished Uruguay's international reserves by 80 percent in six months, and the country lost its coveted investment-grade status among leading financial ratings agencies. By mid-2002, the government was forced to impose a weeklong bank holiday, Uruguay's first in 70 years, to stanch a run on the country's banks. The spillover from Argentina's economic crisis led to rioting and union-backed, antigovernment protests in August that brought much of Montevideo to a standstill. In October, the National Party withdrew its members from Batlle's government.

Disputes with neighboring Brazil over regional free trade, and with Argentina over specific human rights issues festering since the 1970s, dominated Uruguay's political scene in 2003. The economy had shrunk by 11 percent in two years, and one of every three Uruguayans was left living below the poverty line amid the worst economic crisis in the country's history. By 2004, average household income had shrunk by about 30 percent over the previous five years. A bond restructuring that year avoided a potentially catastrophic default and was accompanied by a small economic rally.

In October 2004, Uruguayans elected Vazquez in the first round of voting for president. The elections proved to be a crushing defeat for the Colorado Party, whose presidential candidate, Guillermo Stirling, won just 10 percent of the vote, as well as for the National Party and its standard-bearer, Jorge Larranaga, who garnered 34 percent. Vazquez's coalition also captured a majority of seats in both houses of Parliament in concurrent legislative elections, marking the first time in nearly 40 years that the president's party enjoyed a parliamentary majority; the results aligned Uruguay with a regional shift to the left. Municipal elections held in May 2005 consolidated the Broad Front's increasing power, with the coalition maintaining control of Montevideo and winning in other major constituencies.

As a candidate, Vazquez had fiercely opposed the privatization of state companies and the shrinking of the state's role in Uruguay's economy while promising moderate economic policies and an emphasis on helping the poor. Faced with the challenge of creating a stable macroeconomic framework and attracting foreign capital, he chose as finance minister Danilo Astori, an economist who sought to reassure the private sector by promising clear rules for investors, a floating exchange rate, fiscal discipline, and an inflation-targeted monetary policy in a once-again growing economy. At the same time, the government moved to bring business, unions, and other civil society organizations into the policy-making process in an attempt at "social inclusion." However, tensions between the moderates dominating the economic team and the more radical wing of the Broad Front threatened to slow structural reform. Some analysts also expressed concern about Uruguay's growing political and economic ties to Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez and Vazquez's renewal of diplomatic relations with Cuba, which Batlle had severed in 2002 on human rights grounds.

More problematic was the government's willingness to reopen the issue of some 200 Uruguayans who disappeared during the military's political dominance in the 1970s, with some 170 of those having been abducted while in exile in Argentina. Unlike its neighbors, which were also ruled by military dictatorships during that time,

Uruguay never had a legal accounting for the disappearances and other rights violations, nor was there an official effort to assay moral responsibility. During his inaugural address, Vazquez stated that neither the abduction of the daughter-in-law of famous Argentine poet Juan Gelman nor the murders of two Uruguayan political leaders and two Tupamaro sympathizers in Argentina were covered by the 1986 amnesty.

Following Vazquez's inauguration, human rights groups pressed to have the amnesty law more literally enforced, opening up the possibility of prosecutions for crimes committed before the 1973 coup, as well as for those committed by Uruguayan security forces outside the country. In June 2005, charges of aggravated homicide were filed against former president Juan Maria Bordaberry, a military-backed puppet, and his foreign minister for the 1976 kidnapping and murder of the two exiled congressional leaders in Buenos Aires. Shortly thereafter, a military officers' group warned that attempts to undermine the amnesty risked "exacerbating positions that translate into a confrontation that nobody desires and with unforeseeable eventual consequences." Government efforts to find the remains of missing activists were also stymied by instances of misinformation by former and serving military officers.

In 2006, the Vazquez administration continued to press the issue of human rights. While it did not repeal the 1986 amnesty law, which protects military officers from prosecution, a reinterpretation of the law allowed for higher-level officers to be tried. The prospect of repealing or changing the amnesty law prompted 10 former generals to write an open letter to the government in May 2006 taking full responsibility for human rights violations after the 1973 coup, in an attempt to protect subordinates from any criminal proceedings. In September, two former police chiefs and four army leaders were arrested for human rights violations committed during the 1973-1985 period. Furthermore, army chief General Carlos Diaz was dismissed by Vazquez in October, a long-anticipated move resulting in part from the general's strong opposition to investigating the crimes of the military regime.

In November 2006, Uruguay fully repaid its IMF obligations, thereby terminating the government's IMF agreement. However, economic officials have pledged to continue the agreement's goals of fiscal constraint, low inflation, and structural reform.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Uruguay is an electoral democracy. The last elections in 2004 were free and fair despite isolated acts of violence against several parties' local headquarters. The 1967 constitution established a bicameral General Assembly consisting of the 99-member House of Representatives and the 30-member Senate, with every member serving five-year terms. The president is also directly elected for a five-year term. In 1999, for the first time, Uruguayan parties selected their presidential candidates in open primary elections. Previously, the parties had each fielded a number of candidates, and the candidate with the most votes in each party then accumulated the votes cast for his intraparty rivals. The next national elections are scheduled for 2009.

Major political parties and groupings include the Colorado Party, the Independent Party, the Movement of Popular Participation (MPP), the National (or Blanco) Party, the New Sector/Space Coalition, the Progressive Encounter/Broad Front coalition (EP-FA), the Socialist Party of Uruguay, and the Uruguayan Assembly.

The Transparency Law (*Ley Cristal*), which came into force in January 1999,

criminalizes a broad range of potential abuses of power by government officeholders, including the laundering of funds related to public corruption cases. It also requires high-ranking officials to file financial disclosure statements. Public officials who know of a drug-related crime or incident and do nothing about it may be charged with a "crime of omission" under the Citizen Security Law. In September 2005, the government announced that it had reached an important antinarcotics agreement with the United States, including tight controls on money laundering in a country previously known as a bank-secrecy haven. Uruguay was ranked 28 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Constitutional guarantees regarding free expression are generally respected, and violations of press freedom are rare in Uruguay. The Inter American Press Association has praised the country's higher courts for overturning rulings against the media and employing progressive legal arguments in defense of press freedom. However, the association has noted some verbal harassment by members of President Tabare Vazquez's administration in response to criticism from the media. The press is privately owned, and broadcasting includes both commercial and public outlets. Numerous daily newspapers publish, many of them associated with political parties; there are also a number of weeklies. The government does not place restrictions on internet usage.

Freedom of religion is a cherished political tenet of democratic Uruguay and is broadly respected. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Rights to freedom of assembly and association are provided for by law in Uruguay, and the government generally respects these in practice. Civic organizations have proliferated since the return of civilian rule. Numerous women's rights groups focus on violence against women, societal discrimination, and other problems. Workers exercise their right to join unions, bargain collectively, and hold strikes. Unions are well organized and politically powerful. Strikes are sometimes marked by violent clashes and sabotage.

The judiciary is relatively independent but has become increasingly inefficient in the face of escalating crime, particularly street violence and organized crime. The court system is severely backlogged, and suspects under arrest often spend more time in jail than they would if convicted of the offense in question and sentenced to the maximum prison term. Allegations of police mistreatment, particularly of youthful offenders, have increased. However, prosecutions of such acts are also occurring more frequently. Prison conditions do not meet international standards.

The small black minority continues to face discrimination. The 2002-2003 economic recession as well as general structural dislocation has forced thousands of formerly middle-class citizens to join rural migrants in the shantytowns surrounding Montevideo. While the squalid conditions of these shantytowns remain a significant problem, Vazquez launched a \$200 million National Social Emergency Plan shortly after taking office to provide social assistance to Uruguayans living in extreme poverty.

Violence against women continues to be a problem. Women enjoy equal rights under the law but face traditional discriminatory attitudes and practices, including salaries averaging about two-thirds those of men. As of the end of 2006, no gender discrimination cases had ever reached a courtroom. On a positive note, 60 percent of public university students are women. The government generally protects children's rights and welfare and has made the education and health of children a top priority.

Uzbekistan

Population: 26,200,000

Capital: Tashkent

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7.6NF	7.6NF	7.6NF	7.6NF	7.6NF	7.6NF	7.6NF	7.6NF	7.7NF	7.7NF

Overview: Uzbekistan's human rights conditions, which deteriorated in the wake of the authorities' violent suppression of unrest in Andijon in 2005, remained extremely poor in 2006. The government of President Islam Karimov continued to imprison members of the country's fledgling political opposition, harass independent media, and expel foreign-funded nongovernmental organizations.

Located along the ancient trade route of the famous Silk Road, Uzbekistan was incorporated into the Russian empire by the late nineteenth century. The Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic was established in 1924, and its southeastern portion was detached and organized as the separate Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic five years later.

On December 29, 1991, more than 98 percent of the country's electorate approved a popular referendum on Uzbekistan's independence. In a parallel vote, Islam Karimov, former Communist Party leader and chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the successor to the Communist Party, was elected president with a reported 88 percent of the ballots. The only independent candidate to challenge him, Erk (Freedom) Party leader Mohammed Solih, claimed election fraud. Solih fled the country two years later, and his party was forced underground. The opposition group Birlik (Unity) had been barred from contesting the election and was later refused legal registration as a political party. The Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) and other religious-based groups were banned entirely. Only progovernment parties were allowed to compete in elections to the first post-Soviet legislature in December 1994 and January 1995. A February 1995 national referendum to extend Karimov's first five-year term in office until 2000 was allegedly approved by 99 percent of the country's voters.

The government's repression of the political opposition and of Muslims not affiliated with state-sanctioned religious institutions intensified after a series of deadly bombings in Tashkent in February 1999. The authorities blamed the attacks, which they described as an assassination attempt against Karimov, on the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), an armed group seeking the overthrow of Uzbekistan's secular government and its replacement with an Islamic state.

All of the five parties that competed in the December 1999 parliamentary elections, which were strongly criticized by international monitors, supported the presi-

dent and differed little in their political platforms. In the January 2000 presidential poll, Karimov defeated his only opponent, Marxist history professor Abdulhasiz Jalolov, with 92 percent of the vote. The government refused to register genuinely independent opposition parties or permit their members to stand as candidates.

In August 2000, the IMU engaged in armed clashes with government troops. As part of its declared effort to prevent renewed invasions by the IMU, Uzbekistan placed land mines along portions of its borders with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, leading to protests by both governments and reports of accidental civilian deaths in the region.

After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., Uzbekistan became a key strategic ally of the United States in its military operations in Afghanistan. Tashkent's decision to permit the deployment of U.S. troops on its territory for search-and-rescue and humanitarian operations was widely seen as an effort to obtain various concessions from the United States and its allies, including economic assistance, security guarantees, and reduced criticism of its poor human rights record. In March 2002, the United States and Uzbekistan signed the Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework, in which both countries agreed to cooperate on economic, legal, humanitarian, and nuclear-proliferation matters. Uzbekistan's continued collaboration with the U.S.-led antiterrorism campaign led to U.S. commitments of financial assistance in exchange for promises from Karimov of political reforms.

The fragile state of Uzbekistan's political order was highlighted by a series of suicide bomb attacks and related violent clashes in late March and early April 2004 in Bukhara and Tashkent, in which some 50 people lost their lives. Official media coverage was limited, prompting widespread rumors about the identities and motives of the attackers. The fact that police appeared to be the main targets of the violence prompted speculation that the bombings were acts of revenge carried out by relatives of those imprisoned for alleged religious extremism. The authorities blamed radical international Islamist groups—particularly the IMU, which had links to al-Qaeda, and the banned Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation)—and denied any connection between the violence and the government's repressive political and economic policies.

In the days following the attacks, law enforcement agencies swept up hundreds of alleged suspects and increased security measures in the capital and other large cities. Dozens of defendants were convicted in the second half of the year for their alleged roles in the attacks, and all received lengthy prison sentences in trials that did not meet basic standards of due process. On July 30, several people were killed when suicide bombers struck again, in coordinated attacks on the U.S. and Israeli embassies and the office of Uzbekistan's prosecutor-general. Several groups claimed responsibility, although the claims could not be independently verified.

Elections for the lower house of a new bicameral parliament were held on December 26, 2004. Only the country's five legal parties, all of which are considered to be pro-presidential, were granted registration to participate. Several opposition groups, including Erk and Birlik, announced in November that they would boycott the vote after being unable to register candidates. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which sent only a limited observer mission due to concerns about the poor electoral framework and lack of registered opposition parties, criticized the vote as falling "significantly short of OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections."

The city of Andijon in Uzbekistan's Ferghana Valley, an area that has suffered both from the government's continued repression of Islamic groups and from high poverty and unemployment, was the scene of a violent crackdown by armed forces against a popular uprising in May 2005. On May 10 and 11, family members and supporters of 23 local businessmen charged with involvement in a banned Islamic extremist group staged a peaceful demonstration in anticipation of the trial verdict. The situation turned violent when armed supporters of the businessmen attacked a police station and army barracks. They stormed the prison, freeing inmates—including the 23 businessmen—and captured the local government administration building. Thousands of local residents, among them women and children, subsequently gathered in the center of Andijon, where people spoke out on political and economic issues, often making antigovernment statements.

Security forces responded by opening fire on the demonstrators and storming the occupied building. Although the authorities maintained that the protesters were the first to open fire, eyewitnesses reported that the security forces began shooting indiscriminately, including at people who were fleeing from the scene or were already injured. Official figures put the death toll at 187, but unofficial sources estimated the dead at nearly 800, most of them unarmed civilians. The government accused Islamic extremists of orchestrating the demonstrations, though most of the protesters appeared to have been motivated by economic and social grievances.

Karimov repeatedly rejected calls from the United Nations, the European Union (EU), the OSCE, and the United States for an independent international inquiry into the violence. In July 2005, Uzbekistan gave the United States six months to leave its military base at Karshi-Khanabad. Russia and China supported the official account of the violence and the U.S. base eviction. Meanwhile, Uzbekistan's relations with Kyrgyzstan soured when 439 Uzbek refugees who had fled to Kyrgyzstan after the unrest in Andijon were airlifted to Romania rather than repatriated for possible trial. Kyrgyz-Uzbek relations warmed in 2006, however, as Kyrgyz authorities repatriated five refugees to Uzbekistan and the two countries conducted joint security operations in southern Kyrgyzstan against alleged Islamic extremists.

The crackdown unleashed by the Uzbek authorities after Andijon continued in 2006, targeting potential political opposition figures, human rights defenders, and even former officials. In December 2005, the husband of Nigora Hidoyatova, head of the unregistered opposition party Ozod Dehqonlar (Free Farmers), was shot to death in Kazakhstan. Nodira Hidoyatova, Nigora's sister and coordinator of the opposition Sunshine Coalition, was sentenced to a 10-year prison term on tax evasion charges in March; she was subsequently released after agreeing to cede over \$100,000 in currency and property to the state. Sunshine Coalition leader Sanjar Umarov received a 10-year prison sentence and \$8 million fine in March.

Saidjahon Zainabidinov, an Andijon-based rights defender who provided key accounts to foreign media about Uzbek government actions there, was sentenced to a seven-year prison term in January 2006 for supplying "false information." Rights activist Motabar Tojiboeva was sentenced to an eight-year prison term on defamation and corruption charges in March after a trial that Human Rights Watch described as "unsound." And the well-known dissident poet and songwriter Dodokhon Hasan, who wrote a song describing government actions in Andijon as a "massacre," re-

ceived a three-year suspended sentence for insulting the "dignity and honor" of Karimov after a closed trial in September.

Former defense minister Qodir Ghulomov, who was removed in November 2005, reportedly received a five-year conditional sentence after a closed trial in 2006, a possible reprisal for his role in strengthening U.S.-Uzbek ties. Reports in October indicated that Qobiljon Obidov, the former governor of Andijon, faced charges in connection with the unrest. Obidov had been removed from the post before the uprising, but he had been linked to the businessmen whose trial sparked the violence. Also in October, Karimov removed Andijon governor Saidullo Begaliev, who was in power during the uprising, charging that he had taken insufficient measures to resolve social and economic problems in the province.

On the international front, Uzbekistan's relations with the United States, the EU, and their allies remained chilly even as Karimov actively sought to improve ties with Russia, China, and a number of regional powers. Uzbekistan formally exited GUUAM, an alliance formed by Georgia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Armenia, and Moldova, and rejoined the pro-Russian Collective Security Treaty Organization (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan). Karimov also hosted India's prime minister and visited Pakistan. In a sign of close cooperation, Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) announced in March that it had extradited to Uzbekistan 19 suspected members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. And in July, the pro-Kremlin youth group Nashi established a branch organization in Uzbekistan. In October 2006, however, a European Union delegation visited Uzbekistan amid reports that the EU was considering a review of sanctions imposed against Uzbekistan after the violent suppression of dissent in Andijon in 2005. A group of EU experts visited Andijon in December 2006. Despite the Uzbek government's reported willingness to "discuss" the Andijon events with EU representatives, sanctions remained in place at the end of the year.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Uzbekistan is not an electoral democracy. President Islam Karimov and the executive branch dominate the legislature and judiciary, and the government severely represses all political opposition. The national legislature largely confirms decisions made by the executive branch. The 1994-95, 1999, and 2004 parliamentary elections and the 2000 presidential poll, in which only progovernment candidates could participate, were neither free nor fair. In a January 2002 nationwide referendum, 91 percent of voters allegedly approved amending the country's constitution to extend the presidential term from five to seven years. Karimov's current term in office will therefore end in 2007, rather than in 2005.

In a parallel 2002 vote, 93 percent of voters officially supported replacing the country's 250-member, single-chamber legislature with a bicameral parliament consisting of a 120-seat lower house (with members elected by popular vote for five-year terms) and a 100-member upper house, or Senate (with 84 members elected by regional councils and 16 appointed by the president). Independent observers raised serious doubts about the validity of the referendum, citing the presence of police in polling stations and the fact that some people were able to vote on behalf of several individuals. In April 2003, the parliament adopted legislation providing former presidents with immunity from prosecution and lifelong, state-funded security for them and their immediate families.

Parties based on ethnic or religious affiliations and those advocating subversion of the constitutional order are prohibited. Only five parties, all progovernment, have been registered, and no genuine political opposition groups function legally or participate in the government. Members of unregistered secular opposition groups, including Birlík and Erk, are subject to discrimination, and many are in exile abroad. The Sunshine Uzbekistan opposition movement was effectively smashed in 2006 with the conviction of its leader, businessman Sanjar Umarov, on a variety of economic charges.

Corruption is widespread in the government apparatus, with bribery a common practice to obtain lucrative positions. Uzbekistan was ranked 151 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

While Uzbekistan's constitution provides nominal guarantees of free speech, legislation imposes limits on freedom of speech and the press, particularly with regard to reports on the government and Karimov. The government controls major media outlets and newspaper printing and distribution facilities. The country's private broadcast and print media outlets generally avoid political issues, are largely regional in scope, and suffer from administrative and financial constraints. Although official censorship was abolished in May 2002, the responsibility for censoring material was transferred to newspaper editors, who were warned by the State Press Committee that they would be held personally accountable for what they publish. Self-censorship is widespread, while the few journalists who dare to produce probing or critical reports face harassment, physical violence, and closure of their media outlets. The government has blocked a number of news websites registered outside of Uzbekistan that publish materials critical of Uzbek authorities, and access to controversial information on the internet remains extremely limited.

In the aftermath of the violence in Andijon in May 2005, the authorities intensified their attacks on independent and foreign media representatives still operating in the country, a policy they continued in 2006. In December 2005, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty was forced to close its Tashkent bureau when the Justice Ministry refused to extend its accreditation. A *Deutsche Welle* correspondent lost his accreditation in March 2006 for what the Uzbek authorities deemed an inaccurate story. In September, dissident journalist Jamshid Karimov, a nephew of Karimov's, was reportedly held in a psychiatric hospital. And in October, Uzbek independent journalist Ulughbek Haydarov, a former correspondent for the London-based Institute for War & Peace Reporting, was sentenced to a six-year prison term for extortion.

The government permits the existence of certain mainstream religions, including approved Muslim and Jewish communities, as well as the Russian Orthodox Church and some other Christian denominations. However, the activities of other congregations are restricted through legislation that requires all religious groups to comply with burdensome state registration criteria. Involvement in religious activities carried out by unregistered groups is punishable by fines or imprisonment, and meetings held by such groups have been raided and participants arrested and interrogated. The 1998 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations prohibits activities including proselytizing and private religious instruction, and requires groups to obtain a license to publish or distribute materials.

The government exercises strict control over Islamic worship, including the content of imams' sermons, and is suspicious and intolerant of followers of Muslim organizations that are not sanctioned by the state. Many members of such groups

have been arrested or imprisoned on charges of anticonstitutional activities, often under the pretext of the government's fight against militant Islamists. Muslim prisoners are frequently tortured for their religious convictions or to compel them to renounce their beliefs. Authorities have targeted members of the banned Hizb ut-Tahrir, a radical but officially nonviolent international movement calling for the creation of an Islamic caliphate throughout the Muslim world. Suspected members have been forced to give confessions under torture, and their family members have been subjected to arrest, interrogation, and extortion. The authorities reportedly followed the wave of 2004 suicide bomb attacks with a new crackdown against religious Muslims, as well as believers of other faiths, including Protestants and Jehovah's Witnesses. This policy of repression accelerated after the May 2005 killings in Andijon; Human Rights Watch documented 194 religious believers convicted by November 2005. In November 2006 the U.S. State Department added Uzbekistan to its list of countries of "particular concern" for violations of religious freedom.

The government limits academic freedom, according to the U.S. State Department's 2006 human rights report. While professors generally are required to have their lectures preapproved, implementation of this restriction varies. Nevertheless, university professors reportedly practice self-censorship. Corruption is widespread in the educational system, with bribes commonly required to gain entrance to exclusive universities and to obtain good grades.

Open and free private discussion is limited by the *mahalla* committees, traditional neighborhood organizations that the government has turned into an official system for public surveillance and control. According to Human Rights Watch, committee members went door to door to warn residents not to speak with journalists or foreigners in the wake of the 2005 Andijon killings.

Freedom of association is restricted. Unregistered nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU), do not exist as legal entities and can face difficulties operating. After the unrest in Andijon, the government intensified its crackdown on civil society organizations and human rights activists in order to suppress any possible challenges to the regime. The Uzbek authorities have been particularly interested in closing NGOs that receive funding or other support from the United States and the EU—groups that the Karimov regime associates with popular protests that led to the overthrow of the leaders of Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan in recent years. In 2006, court decisions led to the temporary or permanent closure of such foreign-funded organizations as Freedom House (January); the Eurasia Foundation (March); the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (March); the American Bar Association's Europe and Eurasia Division of the Rule of Law Initiative (April); Counterpart International (May); Central Asian Free Exchange (May); the American Council for Collaboration in Education and Language Study (June); Global Involvement Through Education (June); the Urban Institute (July); Winrock International (July); Crosslink Development International (August); and Partnership in Academics and Development (September).

Despite constitutional provisions for freedom of assembly, the authorities severely restrict this right in practice. Law enforcement officials have used force to prevent demonstrations against human rights abuses in the country, and participants have been harassed, arrested, and jailed. The May 2005 crackdown in Andijon, in which hundreds of unarmed demonstrators were reportedly slain alongside a much

smaller number of armed men, was only the most egregious of the government's recent acts of repression. The Council of the Federation of Trade Unions is dependent on the state, and no genuinely independent union structures exist. Organized strikes are extremely rare.

The judiciary is subservient to the president, who appoints all judges and can remove them from office at any time. Police routinely abuse and torture suspects to extract confessions, which are accepted by judges as evidence and often serve as the basis for convictions. Law enforcement authorities reportedly often plant narcotics, weapons, and banned religious literature on suspected members of Islamic groups or political opponents to justify their arrest. According to Human Rights Watch, the trial of those accused of organizing the May 2005 unrest in Andijon "violated international fair-trial standards." The similarity of the confessions of the defendants—all of whom pleaded guilty—and their consistency with the prosecutor's indictment raised serious concerns that they had been coerced or tortured into confessing. The defendants were denied access to effective legal counsel, and the prosecution failed to present credible evidence in support of the indictment.

Prisons suffer from severe overcrowding and shortages of food and medicine. The Jaslyk prison camp is notorious for its extremely harsh conditions and ill-treatment of religious prisoners. Inmates, particularly those sentenced for their religious beliefs, are often subjected to abuse or torture, and Human Rights Watch has documented a number of torture-related deaths in custody during the last few years.

Although racial and ethnic discrimination is prohibited by law, the belief that senior positions in government and business are reserved for ethnic Uzbeks is widespread.

The government severely limits freedom of movement and residence within the country and across borders. Restrictions on foreign travel include the use of exit visas, which are often issued selectively. Permission is required from local authorities to move to a new city, and the authorities rarely grant permission to those wishing to move to Tashkent. Bribes are often paid to obtain the necessary registration documents.

Widespread corruption, bureaucratic regulations, and the government's tight control over the economy limit most citizens' equality of opportunity. There has been little reform in the country's large and predominantly centrally planned agricultural sector, in which the state sets high production quotas and low purchase prices for farmers. A series of government regulations and decrees over the last few years have placed increasing restrictions on market traders and their ability to operate.

Women's educational and professional prospects are restricted by traditional cultural and religious norms and by ongoing economic difficulties throughout the country. Victims of domestic violence are discouraged from pressing charges against perpetrators, who rarely face criminal prosecution. The trafficking of women abroad for prostitution remains a serious problem. According to a 2005 investigation conducted by journalists from the Institute for War & Peace Reporting, women have been forced to undergo hysterectomies and contraception implants under a secret order from the Health Ministry to reduce the birth rate among rural women. Local authorities frequently use schoolchildren as free or cheap labor to harvest cotton; many children work long hours in unhealthy conditions, often receiving inadequate food and water.

Vanuatu

Population: 200,000

Capital: Port Vila

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



**Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)**

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview: The United States in March 2006 finalized an agreement under which Vanuatu would receive special development assistance due to its positive efforts to improve economic conditions. Also in 2006, the World Bank ranked Vanuatu as a fragile state, and an increased number of fake passports linked to human trafficking were reported. Paramount Chief Teriki Kalmari Peter Poilapa passed away in September.

Vanuatu, formerly known as the New Hebrides, is an archipelago of 83 islands, some with active volcanoes, lying 1,300 miles northeast of Sydney, Australia. It was governed as an Anglo-French "condominium" from 1906 until it achieved independence in 1980. The Anglo-French legacy continues to split society along linguistic lines in all spheres of life, including politics, religion, and economics. Around 75 percent of the population lives in rural areas and engages in subsistence agriculture. Remittances from workers overseas account for about 30 percent of export earnings.

The left-leaning Vanua'aku Party (VP) led the country from 1980 through 1991. A split within the party allowed Maxime Carlot Korman, leader of the francophone Union of Moderate Parties (UMP), to become Vanuatu's first French-speaking prime minister in 1991. Serge Vohor, who headed a dissident faction of the UMP, replaced Carlot Korman in 1995. Barak Sope of the Melanesian Progressive Party took power in 1999 when Vohor was ousted by a no-confidence vote. Edward Natapei of the VP became prime minister in 2001 and served until 2004, when he lost his mandate in a snap election.

No party won a clear mandate in the 2004 elections, an outcome that reflected the widespread public frustration with party and factional politics. The Parliament elected Matas Kelekele, a former Supreme Court justice and a drafter of the constitution, as president, and Vohor was chosen to lead a coalition government as prime minister. Vohor pushed for several constitutional amendments to improve government stability. They included measures to bar no-confidence votes for 12 months before and after a parliamentary election, require a by-election in any constituency whose representative changed parties, and extend parliamentary terms from four to five years. The Parliament approved these proposals for a constitutional referen-

dum in 2005, but the vote has yet to be held. Vohor was thrown out of office in December 2004 by a no-confidence vote after he pushed to restore ties with Taiwan without first consulting with the Parliament. Ham Lini—a brother of Father Walter Lini, one of the founders of independent Vanuatu—was chosen as the new prime minister. Lini underscored that economic reform and strengthening the rule of law would be his top priorities.

In December 2005, the government sought to issue a second telephone license to raise revenue and increase competition, but the Supreme Court ordered the government to honor its telephone monopoly.

Vanuatu in March 2006 finalized an agreement with the United States under which the country would receive some \$66 million in development assistance over five years from the U.S. Millennium Challenge Account. The grant was meant "to reward sound policy decisions that support economic growth and reduce poverty." The award, together with international media attention and revenue resulting from popular U.S. and Australian television shows shot in the country, bolstered Vanuatu's economic position. However, real progress on economic reform and strengthening the rule of law remained difficult in a political environment dominated by ethnic, tribal, and personal rivalries. Such factors were also behind the World Bank's rating of Vanuatu as a fragile state in its 2006 report *Engaging with Fragile States: World Bank Support to Low-Income Countries under Stress*.

Vanuatu saw an increase in the number of fraudulent passports reported in 2006. As in several other South Pacific countries, criminal groups were suspected of using such fake documents to traffic Asian migrants via Vanuatu to their final destinations.

A decision by tribal chiefs to order a member of a local family to leave Santo province was seen as setting a negative precedent with respect to civil liberties. The decision was prompted by local complaints and concerns about the individual's alleged violent behavior.

In September, 80-year old Paramount Chief Teriki Kalmari Peter Poilapa died.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Vanuatu is an electoral democracy. The constitution provides for parliamentary elections every four years. The prime minister, who appoints his own cabinet, is chosen by the 52-seat unicameral Parliament from among its members. Members of Parliament and the heads of the six provincial governments also form an electoral college that selects the president for a five-year term. The president is the head of state, a largely ceremonial post. The National Council of Chiefs works in parallel with the Parliament and exercises authority mainly over language and cultural matters.

No-confidence votes have forced several changes of government in recent years. Parliamentary coalitions have been formed and dissolved with increasing frequency since the 1990s, and fraud and bribery have become widespread in elections.

Many political parties are active. However, party loyalty is weak, individual rivalries are intense, and politicians frequently switch affiliations. The leading parties are the VP, the National Union Party, and the UMP. Politics in Vanuatu is driven by linguistic and tribal identities. In 2005, President Matas Kelekele encouraged the nation to adopt Bismala (a pidgin used throughout the islands) as the national language and to accept both English and French as official languages and use them as principal languages in education.

Corruption is a serious problem. In 2001, Prime Minister Barak Sope was forced to resign after allegations of corruption caused him to lose a parliamentary vote of confidence. Although Sope was sentenced in 2002 to three years in prison for forging government guarantees, he was subsequently pardoned by the president at the time, Father John Bani. In another case, Alfred Maseng Nalo was elected president in April 2004 while serving a two-year suspended sentence for corruption. He stepped down only when his criminal record was revealed. Vanuatu was not ranked in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government generally respects freedoms of speech and the press. The state-owned Television Blong Vanuatu broadcasts in English and French. Radio Vanuatu is the only radio station. The weekly *Port Vila Press* and the privately owned papers *Vanuatu Daily*, *Nasara*, and *Port Vila News* supply international, national, and local news. Most media outlets deliver information in Bismala, English, or French. The number of internet users, although rising, remains small because of high costs and limited access outside the capital.

The government generally respects freedom of religion in this predominantly Christian country. Members of the clergy have held senior government positions, including president and prime minister. There were no reports of restrictions on academic freedom. Port Vila hosts the Emalus Campus of the University of the South Pacific.

The law provides for freedoms of association and assembly, and the government generally respects these rights. Civil society groups are active on a variety of issues. Many receive support from foreign governments and private foundations. There are five independent trade unions organized under the umbrella Vanuatu Council of Trade Unions, which represents about 40 percent of the country's 25,000 persons who are wage workers in the formal economy (a large number of persons in the 70,000-plus labor force are self-employed or part of the informal economy). Workers can organize unions, bargain collectively, and strike. In 2006, the government raised the monthly minimum wage to \$209, effective May 2007. Public demonstrations are permitted by law and generally respected by the government in practice. However, in 2005 the police repeatedly rejected applications by the National Worker's Union to stage a demonstration to support 26 workers dismissed by Air Vanuatu. The police gave no clear reason for the denial, and protesters were arrested.

The judiciary is generally independent, but it is weak and inefficient. Lack of resources has kept the government from hiring and retaining qualified judges and prosecutors. Criminal defendants are often held for long pretrial detentions. Vanuatu has no armed forces. The Vanuatu Mobile Force is a paramilitary wing of the small police force; both are under the command of a civilian police commissioner. There have been reports of police abuse, but such incidents appear to be infrequent and minor. In September 2005, several prison inmates escaped, citing poor conditions as the main reason. The government subsequently released 52 prisoners because of poor sanitary conditions. New Zealand has offered to help upgrade prison facilities.

Most people engage in subsistence farming or fishing. In 2004, Parliament passed a new law to stop all mixed-race and naturalized citizens from farming kava—a native herb that has gained popularity among health-supplement consumers in wealthy countries—in order to protect indigenous farmers. Tourism, the civil service, and offshore banking provide employment in the service sector. In September 2004, the

National Council of Chiefs adopted a motion to require people to carry permits for movement between provinces because of concerns about crime in the capital.

Like several other Pacific Island nations, Vanuatu is suspected of being used by criminal groups to illegally transit trafficked persons to their final destinations in North America, Japan, and Western Europe. In 2006, Vanuatu found an increase in the number of persons using fake passports to enter or transit the country.

Few women hold positions of authority in government or the private sector. Local traditions are frequently sources of discrimination against women, including in the country's laws and before the courts. Violence against women is common and particularly severe in rural areas. Spousal rape is not a crime, and no law prohibits domestic abuse or sexual harassment. Most cases go unreported because the victims fear reprisal or are discouraged by family pressure, and the police and courts generally hesitate to intervene or impose stronger punishments on offenders. Women's rights leaders consider village chiefs to be major obstacles to improving conditions for women. The traditional practice of "bride payment," or dowry, is still common, and critics charge that it encourages the view of women as property. Abortion is permitted only to save the life of a woman or to preserve the woman's physical and mental health, and it is not available on request, even for pregnancies resulting from rape or incest. Men and women are supposed to enjoy equal rights, and divorce was approved in 1986, but the government has yet to pass a much-debated family law bill to provide protections to women and children.

Venezuela

Population: 27,000,000

Capital: Caracas

Political Rights: 4

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review
(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2,3F	2,3F	4,4PF	3,5PF	3,5PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF

Overview: Elections for the National Assembly in December 2005 resulted in a completely pro-government legislature after opposition parties boycotted the polls over perceived bias by electoral authorities. In December 2006, President Hugo Chavez was easily reelected following a campaign in which most of the opposition decided to participate despite continued misgivings about the conduct of election officials. In the weeks following his reelection, Chavez announced that all pro-government parties would be merged and that the license of opposition television station RCTV would not be renewed.

The Republic of Venezuela was founded in 1830, nine years after independence from Spain. Long periods of instability and military rule ended with the establishment in 1961 of civilian rule and the approval of a constitution. Until 1993, the social-democratic Democratic Action Party (AD) and the Social Christian Party (COPEI) dominated politics under an arrangement known as the Punto Fijo pact. President Carlos Andres Perez (1989-1993) of the AD was nearly overthrown by Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chavez and other nationalist military officers in two 1992 coup attempts in which dozens of people were killed. Perez was subsequently impeached as a result of corruption and his inability to stem the social consequences of economic decline, which had coincided with lower oil prices beginning in the 1980s. Rafael Caldera, a former president (1969-1974) and founder of COPEI, was elected president in late 1993 as head of the 16-party National Convergence coalition, which included Communists, other leftists, and right-wing groups. With crime soaring, public corruption unabated, oil wealth diminishing, and the country facing its worst economic crisis in 50 years, popular disillusionment with politics deepened.

In the December 1998 presidential contest, Chavez made his antiestablishment, anticorruption, populist candidacy a referendum on the entrenched political elite, which was famous for its interlocking system of privilege and graft, but also for its consensual approach to politics. As the country's long-ruling political parties teetered at the edge of collapse, their last-minute effort to unify behind Henrique Salas Romer as a consensus candidate was unsuccessful. Chavez won with 56 percent of the vote, and in February 1999, he took the reins of a country that ranked fifth in the world in terms of oil production.

A Constituent Assembly dominated by Chavez followers drafted a new constitution that strengthened the presidency and introduced a unicameral National Assembly. After Venezuelans approved the new constitution in a national referendum in December 1999, the bicameral Congress and the Supreme Court of Justice were dismissed and new national elections were called for May 2000. Although Chavez was reelected president, opposition parties won most of the country's governorships, about half the mayoralties, and a significant share in the National Assembly. Nevertheless, that November, Chavez's allies in the legislature granted him special fast-track powers that allowed him to decree a wide range of laws without parliamentary debate.

In April 2002, following the deaths of 19 people in a massive protest against the government, dissident military officers attempted to remove Chavez from office with backing from some of the country's leading business groups. The provisional government appointed by the military also sought to dismiss the elected vice president and the National Assembly, but faced a reaction from troops still loyal to Chavez and an outburst of protests by pro-Chavez citizens. Chavez was reinstated and moved swiftly to regain control of the military by dismissing as many as 60 generals and placing staunch supporters throughout the upper reaches of the armed forces.

Following the coup attempt, the country was racked by protests from a broad spectrum of civil society. In October, an estimated one million Venezuelans marched in Caracas, demanding that Chavez call either early elections or a referendum on his rule. When he did not respond, opposition leaders called for a general strike that, while lasting 62 days, weakened their political position, failed to force the president from office, and damaged the economy. Nevertheless, anti-Chavez activists succeeded in gathering enough signatures to force a presidential recall vote. While fend-

ing off his opponents with legal maneuvers and intimidation tactics, Chavez introduced a bold program of social service initiatives, including urban health care and literacy programs, many with direct support from the government of Cuba.

Venezuela's first-ever presidential recall referendum was held in August 2004, amid charges of ballot rigging. Although the opposition had collected more than three million signatures in favor of the recall bid, Chavez won with 58 percent of the vote. After the referendum, which was conducted in relative peace and characterized by a high turnout, opposition groups continued to insist that there was a large discrepancy between the official results and their own exit polls. Independent observers said that while there were credible reports of voter harassment, the problems did not appear to have affected the overall outcome. In the October 2004 regional and municipal elections, voters overwhelmingly backed pro-Chavez candidates.

Even as he faced high levels of street crime and unemployment, as well as an economy recovering from severe damage, Chavez continued to devote considerable attention to advancing his influence over the judicial system, the media, and other institutions of civil society. The National Assembly, controlled by Chavez supporters, approved a measure allowing it to remove and appoint judges to the Supreme Tribunal of Justice, which had replaced the old Supreme Court in 1999 and controlled the rest of the judiciary. The legislation allowed Chavez to limit the tribunal's independence and expanded its membership from 20 to 32 justices, who would be appointed by a simple majority vote in the legislature. In December 2004, a law giving the government control over the content of radio and television programs went into effect, with Chavez claiming that the "Venezuelan people have begun to free themselves from . . . the dictatorship of the private media."

In 2005, Venezuela's social services sector continued to boom, aided by thousands of Cubans brought in to staff key positions. Chavez also announced that he would bankroll a new Latin American television network called Telesur—with help from Argentina, Cuba, Brazil, and Uruguay—to counteract "the media dictatorship of the big international news networks." In September, Chavez continued to curry favor in the region by signing a trade pact with nine Caribbean governments under which Venezuela would provide them with oil on favorable credit terms. That same month, the United States cited Venezuela, a major point of transshipment of illegal drugs, for its failure to live up to antinarcotics agreements.

Squabbles between the United States and Venezuela continued throughout 2006 over issues including large Venezuelan arms purchases, a supposed lack of cooperation in efforts to combat illegal drugs and terrorism, alleged assistance to favored political candidates in neighboring countries, and Chavez's September remarks at the United Nations characterizing U.S. president George W. Bush as "the devil." The growing antagonism drove that year's contest for an open Latin American seat on the UN Security Council; Venezuela lost its bid for the seat but claimed to have successfully derailed the U.S.-supported candidacy of Guatemala when Panama emerged as the compromise candidate in November.

Elections for the National Assembly in December 2005 were conducted in an atmosphere of severe mistrust as opposition accusations of unfair practices by the National Electoral Council (CNE) arose once again, this time centered on perceived violations of the secrecy of the vote. A boycott movement gained steam in the days preceding the balloting, resulting in the election—by a mere 25 percent of eli-

gible voters—of a National Assembly in which all 167 deputies were government supporters.

The December 2006 presidential election emerged as a more competitive contest than expected as the ideologically diverse opposition unified, with the exception of AD, behind the candidacy of former AD member Manuel Rosales, the governor of Venezuela's wealthiest state, Zulia. Rosales, running under the banner of the *Un Nuevo Tiempo* (A New Time) party, railed against high crime rates, the Chavez administration's corruption, and Chavez's giveaways of money and oil to favored foreign nations, but he also pledged to maintain generous social programs aimed largely at the poor. Though Rosales's campaign garnered substantial support among wealthy Venezuelans and the disaffected middle class, most poorer Venezuelans continued to support Chavez, who had delivered material benefits to the lower classes, as exhibited by the gradually declining poverty rate. The tone of the campaign was hostile, with Chavez equating Rosales with "U.S. imperialism" and the discredited elites of the *Punto Fijo* era.

The Venezuelan media remained highly polarized, with most press outlets strongly supporting one candidate or the other and accusing opponents of fomenting violence. Despite many polls showing strong backing for the president, some opposition supporters were convinced that Rosales had an excellent chance in the election. Nevertheless, Chavez won handily, receiving 61 percent of the vote, to Rosales's 38 percent, in balloting that generally proceeded without incident.

Few major government initiatives were rolled out prior to the election, as the declared move toward "twenty-first-century socialism" was put largely on hold during the campaign. New rules increasing taxes on oil production were approved, and the economy continued its strong consumer-driven growth. Chavez moved forward with his active foreign policy; he traveled extensively in July and August, visiting and signing political and economic accords with countries including Iran, Belarus, Russia, China, Vietnam, Portugal, and Mali. He also became a factor in elections throughout Latin America, though this produced mixed results, as his explicit or perceived endorsements were successfully turned against leftist candidates in Peru and Mexico. Finally, Venezuela withdrew from the Andean Community in April and entered into an agreement in July to join Mercosur, the trade group composed largely of countries in the Southern Cone. However, in the weeks following reelection the move toward twenty-first-century socialism received a boost with the announcement that all pro-government parties would be merged into one governing party. Additionally, on December 27 Chavez announced that the license of opposition television station RCTV would not be renewed and that it would cease functioning in early 2008.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Venezuela is an electoral democracy. However, the political opposition is forced to operate under increasingly difficult conditions. The December 2005 National Assembly elections were marred by an anemic turnout linked to calls for a boycott by the opposition, which claimed that the secrecy of the vote was compromised by the combination of mechanized voting machines and fingerprint-based antifraud equipment. Though the CNE agreed to forgo use of the equipment, the opposition felt confirmed in its mistrust and decided to sit out the elections. In April 2006, a new CNE board of directors was appointed by the legislature; despite a 4-1 majority on the

board in favor of President Hugo Chavez, the opposition decided to actively contest the December 2006 presidential election. Though the voting process was generally considered free and fair, the CNE was ineffectual at limiting Chavez's use of state resources for his political benefit. The president enjoyed a massive advantage in television exposure, and the promotion of social and infrastructure projects often blurred the line between Chavez's role as head of state and his campaign. Venezuela's two million public-sector workers received holiday bonuses in early November rather than the usual mid-December. Also in early November, a recording emerged of Energy Minister Rafael Ramirez declaring that all workers at PDVSA, the state oil company, had to campaign in favor of the president, remarks that Chavez repeated with approval. The opposition also alleged that the limited use of fingerprint-identification machines was designed to intimidate voters, and that the electoral registry was of highly questionable accuracy.

Venezuela's unicameral National Assembly is composed of 167 seats, with members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms. On the national level, Chavez's complete control of the Assembly allows him to curb the independence of governmental institutions, which increasingly serve as instruments to further his interests. The president, who is both head of state and head of government, is directly elected for up to two six-year terms. Prior to his 2006 election victory, Chavez proposed a 2010 referendum that would determine whether the constitution should be changed to allow indefinite presidential reelection.

Chavez's party, the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR), is allied with a number of smaller parties; aside from the legislature, the coalition also controls the Supreme Tribunal of Justice, the intelligence services, and the Citizen Power branch of government created by the 1999 constitution to fight corruption. Although there are more than 30 registered parties in Venezuela, the system is fragmented; once-dominant parties have seen their bases eroded severely. AD continues to have a considerable following throughout the country by comparison with COPEI, which has seen its fortunes wane significantly, but neither party has much electoral clout. A new opposition movement, Primero Justicia, is led by young political leaders opposed to Chavez who have made headway by capturing local governments, but the group is currently very much divided. Opposition presidential candidate Manuel Rosales, a former AD member, chose to run in 2006 under the banner of a new party, Un Nuevo Tiempo. On several occasions in 2006, Chavez proposed merging government-allied parties into a single "revolutionary" party, and just weeks after being reelected he announced the dissolution of the MVR and its replacement by the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). At year's end, other parties within the governing coalition had not decided whether to be folded into the PSUV.

Despite unifying behind Rosales in 2006, the opposition is ideologically and programmatically incoherent; this deficit, combined with Chavez's popularity and his administration's power over the distribution of state resources, left the opposition struggling to win over Chavez supporters and so-called NiNis, supporters of neither candidate. Following the 2004 recall effort, tens of thousands of people who signed petitions in favor of the referendum found that they could not get government jobs or contracts, qualify for public assistance programs, or receive passports; they were apparently identified on an alleged blacklist of Chavez's political opponents.

The Chavez government, which now enjoys free rein over the economy, has

done little to remove excessive bureaucratic regulations, registration requirements, and other forms of control that increase opportunities for corruption. Several development funds have been created that are controlled by the executive branch without oversight. Anticorruption efforts are sporadic and focus on violations of good-government laws and regulations by the regime's political opponents. Following the strikes of 2002-2003, Chavez replaced technocrats at PDVSA with his own loyalists, to the detriment of the oil company's technical reputation. Protection of private property is also weak, and ambiguous rules create opportunities for extortion-like practices. The expropriation of large, idle landholdings and industrial installations, and the announced creation of tens of thousands of rural and urban cooperatives, slowed in 2006 as activity focused on the election campaign. The 2003 Law against Corruption, which established a citizen's right to public information and set out the state's obligations to provide a thrice-yearly accounting of public goods and expenses, has not improved government transparency. Venezuela was ranked 138 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The Venezuelan media reflect the country's general political polarization. Although the constitution provides for freedom of the press, the media climate is permeated by intimidation, sometimes including physical attacks, and strong anti-media rhetoric by the government is common. Opposition outlets remain vocally hostile toward the government, but their share of print and broadcast media has declined in recent years. A July 2003 Supreme Tribunal ruling upheld laws that protected public authorities and institutions from insulting criticism. The Law on Social Responsibility of Radio and Television went into effect in December 2004, giving the government the authority to control the content of radio and television programs. According to the Inter American Press Association, the government "has used public funds to establish many publications, television and radio stations which enjoy unlimited budgets." During the 2006 election campaign, representatives from private broadcasters were sometimes excluded from public ceremonies, and Chavez threatened to revoke the licenses of private television stations. On December 27, he announced that one of the most popular and vociferous opposition television stations, RCTV, would not have its license renewed in 2007 due to what he claimed were its ongoing efforts to destabilize the government. International organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS) responded with concern, while media watchdog groups characterized the move as an attack on press freedom. The government does not restrict internet access.

Freedom of religion, which the constitution guarantees on the condition that its exercise does not violate public morality, decency, or public order, is generally respected by the government. Academic freedom is generally respected, though ideological tension in universities has increased, and elections for student associations and administration positions have become overtly politicized.

Freedom of peaceful assembly is guaranteed in the constitution, and the government generally respects this right in practice. Public meetings and marches, the latter of which require government permits, are generally permitted without impediment, although government supporters sometimes seek to disrupt them. In 2000, the Supreme Tribunal ruled that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that receive funding from foreign governments or whose leaders are not Venezuelan are not part

of "civil society." As a result, they may not represent citizens in court or bring their own legal actions. The Chavez government has also made an effort to undermine the legitimacy of reputable human rights and other civil society organizations by questioning their ties to international groups. Proceedings related to possible treason charges against leaders of the civic organization Sumate, which received support from the U.S.-based National Endowment for Democracy, remained unresolved in 2006. A new NGO law, modeled on a recent Russian measure that imposed onerous registration and reporting requirements and gave officials greater authority to shutter the groups, received preliminary approval in the National Assembly in June, though final approval remained on hold during the campaign season.

Workers in Venezuela are legally entitled to form unions, bargain collectively, and strike, with some restrictions on public-sector workers' ability to strike. Control of unions is actively contested between opposition-allied traditional labor leaders, who allege that challenges by upstart workers' organizations mask Chavez's intent to create government-controlled unions, and the president's supporters, who maintain that the old labor regime was effectively controlled by employers. State oil company PDVSA continues to be a locus of conflict, with unemployed workers demonstrating for expanded hiring and previously fired workers demanding compensation.

Until Chavez took power, the judicial system was headed by a nominally independent Supreme Court that was nevertheless highly politicized, undermined by the chronic corruption (including the growing influence of narcotics traffickers) that permeates the entire government system, and unresponsive to charges of rights abuses. Under Chavez, the effectiveness of the judicial branch remains tenuous and the level of politicization has increased. An unwieldy new judicial code, which has helped to reduce the number of people jailed while awaiting arraignment, has hampered some law enforcement efforts, resulting in low rates of conviction and shorter prison terms even for convicted murderers.

Widespread arbitrary detention and torture of suspects, as well as extrajudicial killings by the often-corrupt military and the police, have increased along with soaring crime rates. Venezuela's rate of gun deaths is among the world's highest for a country not at war, and an estimated 65 percent of crimes go unreported. Furthermore, since the 1992 coup attempts, weakened civilian governments have had less authority over the military and the police, and rights abuses are committed with impunity. In late 2006, plans to nationalize and reform the police began to be elaborated. Also that year, an escalating conflict between the government and independent gold miners was punctuated by an incident in which six miners were shot dead by the military near the town of La Paragua in September. Though reform plans are under discussion, prison conditions remain among the worst in the hemisphere; riots by inmates are common, and the nongovernmental group Venezuelan Prison Observatory reported at least 412 violent deaths in 2006.

Since Chavez's election, Venezuela's military, which is largely unaccountable to civilian authorities, has become an active participant in the country's social development and the delivery of public services. The 1999 constitution assigns the armed forces a significant role in the state but does not provide for civilian control over the military's budget or procurement practices or for related institutional checks. A separate system of armed forces courts retains jurisdiction over members of the military accused of rights violations and common criminal offenses, and decisions cannot

be appealed in civilian court. The president has made significant headway in assuring the military's personal loyalty, increasingly isolating officers and personnel who are skeptical of his appointment of hundreds of service members to nonmilitary posts.

Venezuela's indigenous people belong to 27 ethnic groups. Their formal rights have improved under Chavez, although those rights—specifically the groups' ability to make decisions affecting their land, cultures, and traditions, and the allocation of natural resources—are seldom enforced by local political authorities. Indigenous communities trying to defend their legal land rights are subject to abuses, including murder, by gold miners and corrupt rural police. The constitution reserves three seats in the National Assembly for indigenous people and also provides for "the protection of indigenous communities and their progressive incorporation into the life of the nation." The lack of effective legal rights, however, has contributed to migration by indigenous people to poverty-stricken urban areas.

There is substantial institutional and societal prejudice against women on issues of domestic violence and rape, and work-related sexual harassment is common. In June 2006, several thousand women protested after the Supreme Tribunal struck down a law allowing a 72-hour period of preventive detention for those accused of domestic abuse so that victimized women could seek safer surroundings.

Vietnam

Population: 84,200,000

Capital: Hanoi

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,5NF	7,5NF

Overview: In April 2006, Nong Due Manh was reelected as head of the Communist Party of Vietnam and, in June, Nguyen Minh Triet was elected president of the country. Both are seen as supporters of economic reform and have called for stronger anticorruption measures to quell public discontent.

Vietnam won full independence from France in 1954 but was divided into a Western-backed state in the south and a Communist-ruled state in the north. Open warfare had erupted between the two sides by the mid-1960s, and U.S. military support for South Vietnam persisted for more than a decade. A peace treaty was signed in 1973, officially ending the war, and the United States agreed to an immediate and total withdrawal of troops. The last U.S. troops left in March 1973. However, fight-

ing continued, and in 1975, North Vietnam claimed victory over the South, uniting the country the following year.

Poor economic policies on the heels of decades of war left the tattered country in deep poverty. In 1986, the government began economic reforms, and Vietnam has since been on a steady path of economic growth. Tourism is a major source of revenue, as is the export of foodstuffs and manufactured products. A stock market opened in 2000. Nevertheless, Vietnam's leadership continues to be divided over the pace and depth of privatization and other market reforms, and political reform has not followed economic change. Official corruption and abuses are widespread, despite the prosecution of a few high-ranking officials, and the authorities continue to suppress religious freedom, the media, and any criticism of the government.

The United States has been pressuring Hanoi to improve its human rights record through high-profile government reports and the designation of Vietnam as a "country of particular concern," a status given to countries with serious human rights violations, and the U.S. Congress has even attempted to link economic aid to the release of political and religious prisoners. The government has worked to address such international concerns as it seeks to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), which it recognizes is essential to sustaining its high economic growth—an average of 7.5 percent a year between 2001 and 2005. The government in 2005 stopped disrupting open celebrations of Roman Catholic masses. Vietnam has an estimated 5 million to 8 million Catholics, the largest number in Southeast Asia after the Philippines. The number of religious prisoners was also estimated to have dropped from 45 to six that year, and a new ordinance relaxed many restrictions on religious groups, allowing charitable activities and freer movement of clergy across the country. Further, at least 12 political and religious prisoners were released in 2005. A so-called cyberdissident was freed in February 2006 as part of an amnesty to celebrate the Lunar New Year and a pro-democracy dissident was released in September 2006—along with 5,300 other prisoners—as part of the National Day amnesty.

At the 10th congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) in April 2006, Nong Due Manh, 64, was reelected as the party's secretary general, a post he has held since 2001. The party also approved a proposal to allow CPV members to engage in business, both to accommodate new economic realities and to recruit entrepreneurs into the party. In June, Nguyen Minh Triet, head of the CPV in Ho Chi Minh City, was elected state president by the National Assembly. Nguyen Tan Dung, a deputy prime minister, was elevated to the premiership that month. Both men are seen as supporters of economic reform, and they have pledged to fight corruption and address the widening economic gap between rural and urban populations; the two problems are sources of deep public discontent and social tension.

As part of the anticorruption campaign, the government allowed the media greater freedom to report on graft and corruption following major bribery and corruption scandals involving officials in the ministry of transportation and the national soccer team.

The government also raised the minimum wage for workers employed by foreign-owned factories by 40 percent, effective in February 2006, following several wildcat strikes and walkouts by workers over the previous year. The government even went so far as to issue warnings to foreign-owned firms to obey the new minimum-wage law.

Vietnam gained official admission to the WTO in November. The same month,

Hanoi assigned light sentences of 15 months each to three U.S. citizens of Vietnamese origin convicted of terrorism and, specifically, of attempting to set up an illegal radio station to disseminate anti-Communist broadcasts. The three were released and deported before U.S. president George Bush's official state visit to Vietnam and, just days before the president was to arrive in Hanoi, the U.S. State Department removed Vietnam from the list of countries of particular concern.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Vietnam is not an electoral democracy. Politics and the government are controlled by the CPV, and its Central Committee is the top decision-making body in Vietnam. The National Assembly, consisting of 498 members elected to five-year terms, generally follows the party's dictates in legislation. Delegates to the Assembly can speak about grassroots complaints, influence legislation, question state ministers, and debate legal, social, and economic issues, within limits set by the party. The president, elected by the National Assembly for a five-year term, appoints the prime minister, who is confirmed by the legislature. A new president was elected in 2006, and the next National Assembly elections are scheduled for 2007. The CPV is the sole legal political party, and no opposition parties are permitted.

Corruption and abuse of office are serious problems. Citizens complain about official corruption, governmental inefficiency, opaque bureaucratic procedures, and unreasonable land seizures. Although senior party and government officials have publicly acknowledged growing public discontent, the government has mainly responded with a few high-profile prosecutions of officials and private individuals rather than by implementing comprehensive reforms. In January, the "PMU 18" scandal made headlines in local news, stirring a strong public reaction. PMU 18 is a bureau within the Ministry of Transportation responsible for road construction and other infrastructure projects. Several PMU 18 officials were alleged to have embezzled \$1.8 million of official funds to gamble on soccer matches and procure commercial sex; computer records showed that at least 200 PMU 18 employees participated in gambling activities. Many foreign governments and international development organizations, whose development assistance to Vietnam comprise a significant part of PMU 18's \$2 billion annual budget, were strongly displeased. The minister of transportation resigned as a result of the scandal, and his deputy was arrested. The same month, the vice captain of the national soccer team was sentenced to jail for six years for fixing matches for profit. Vietnam was ranked 111 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government tightly controls the media. Journalists who overstep the bounds of permissible reporting—for example, by writing about sensitive political and economic matters or the CPV's monopoly on power—are brought to court, sent to prison, or harassed. The director of a publishing company was reportedly told to resign in 2005 when the government learned of his plans to publish a memoir, written by former deputy prime minister Doan Duy Thanh, that was critical of the CPV. Foreign media representatives cannot travel outside Hanoi without government approval. Publications deemed offensive or inaccurate are subject to an official ban. A 1999 law requires journalists to pay damages to groups or individuals found to be harmed by press articles, even if the reports are accurate. At least one suit was filed under this law in September 1999 by the Haiphong Agriculture Materials and Transport Com-

pany against the popular newspaper *Tuoi Tre Hanoi* for defamation, although it was later withdrawn. Media reports on high-level governmental corruption and mismanagement provide a small outlet for public grievances. Under a 2006 decree, journalists face large fines for transgressions of censorship laws, including denying revolutionary achievements, spreading "harmful" information, or exhibiting "reactionary ideology."

Television is the dominant medium. Vietnam Television broadcasts to the entire country, and there are many provincial television stations. Satellite television is officially restricted to senior officials, international hotels, and foreign businesses, but many Vietnamese homes and businesses pick up some foreign broadcasts via satellite. Some foreign channels, including Cable News Network (CNN) and the Discovery Channel, both based in the United States, are broadcast via cable. More than two million Vietnamese have access to the internet, which the government tightly controls. A 2003 law bans the receipt and distribution of antigovernment e-mail messages. Websites considered "reactionary" are blocked, including the Vietnamese-language website of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) since May 2005, and owners of domestic websites must submit their content for official approval. Internet providers face fines and closure for breaking censorship rules, and cyberdissidents have been jailed.

Religious freedom is still restricted, but the situation has improved in recent years in response to international pressure as Vietnam has become more entwined with the global economy. All religious groups and most individual clergy members must join a party-controlled supervisory body. One such body exists for each religion that the state officially recognizes: Buddhism; Roman Catholicism; Protestantism; Islam; Cao Daiism, a synthesis of several religions; and the Hoa Hao faith, a reformist Buddhist church. Religious groups must obtain permission to build or refurbish places of worship; run religious schools or do charitable work; hold conventions, training seminars, and special celebrations; and train, ordain, promote, or transfer clergy. A small number of religious leaders and followers remain in prison or face other forms of government control. In November 2005, Catholic priests were ordained in the country for the first time in decades. Many churches have received government approval for repairs, and adherents can freely attend church without government harassment. In December 2005, Catholic priests were allowed to travel to Rome, and the government has invited an emissary of the Vatican to visit Vietnam.

Academic freedom is limited. University professors must refrain from criticizing government policies and adhere to party views when teaching or writing on political topics. In 2004, a former academic was given a 19-month prison sentence for "abusing the right to democracy and freedom" and breaking a house arrest order. Also in 2004, Pham Que Duong, then a 73-year-old military historian, was sentenced to 19 months in jail for "abuse of democratic freedom and rights." Pham had signed a petition calling for reforms and measures against graft. He was released after only a short time in prison because of significant time spent in pretrial detention, but remains under police surveillance in his home in Hanoi. The government has also accused 83-year-old Hoang Minh Chinh, a former high-ranking CPV member who has become a defender of human rights, of treason against the state (but no official charges were filed); he and his wife also suffered physical attacks by mobs. While the state continues to react strongly to criticism by prominent indi-

viduals, Vietnamese citizens can generally speak freely in private discussion without fear of repercussion.

Freedoms of association and assembly are limited. Human rights organizations and other private groups with rights-oriented agendas are banned, but a small number of nongovernmental groups promote environmental conservation, women's development, and public health. The Vietnam General Conference of Labor (VGCL), closely tied to the CPV, is the only legal labor union. All trade unions are required to join the VGCL and must obtain government approval. In recent years, the government has permitted hundreds of independent "labor associations" to represent workers at individual firms and in some service industries. Farmers and workers have also held small protests and strikes. The central leadership uses such public demonstrations of grievances to pressure local governments and businesses to comply with tax laws, environmental regulations, and wage agreements. Enforcement of child labor, workplace safety, and other labor laws remains poor.

Vietnam's judiciary is subservient to the CPV, which controls courts at all levels. Defendants have a constitutional right to counsel, but lawyers are scarce and many are reluctant to take on human rights and other sensitive cases for fear of harassment and retribution by the state. Defense attorneys cannot call or question witnesses and are only infrequently permitted to request leniency for their clients.

The police are known to abuse suspects and prisoners, and prison conditions are poor. The death penalty is applied mainly for violent crimes, but it has been handed down in cases involving economic and drug-related offenses. Vietnam has imprisoned a number of people for their political and religious beliefs. Police can hold individuals in administrative detention for up to two years on suspicion of threatening national security. There have been fewer arrests and more releases of religious prisoners in recent years.

Ethnic and religious minorities face unofficial discrimination in mainstream society, and some local officials restrict their access to schooling and jobs. Minorities generally have little input on development projects that affect their livelihoods and communities. Human rights groups have accused the government of arresting more than 350 Montagnards ("mountain dwellers" in French) since 2001, and many are given long jail sentences for participating in demonstrations to protest land seizures and demand greater religious freedom (many are Catholic). In recent years, a number fled to Cambodia for refuge, but they were repatriated and are alleged to have faced government persecution, including detention and beatings. Lands seized from the Montagnards are often turned over to lowland Vietnamese to grow commercial crops like coffee beans, of which Vietnam is now the world's number two producer behind Brazil.

Ordinary Vietnamese, particularly those living in major cities, are increasingly free of government intrusion into their daily lives, including their choice of work, place of residence, and participation in economic and religious activities.

Economic opportunities have grown for women, but they continue to face discrimination in wages and promotion. Many women are victims of domestic violence, and thousands each year are trafficked internally and externally and forced into prostitution. HIV/AIDS is spreading rapidly, and intravenous drug use is a leading cause. To counter the problem, the government approved needle exchanges in 2006.

Yemen

Population: 21,600,000

Capital: Sanaa

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF

Overview: Yemen held presidential and local council elections in September 2006. President Ali Abdullah Saleh was reelected with 77 percent of the vote, and his party, the General People's Congress, overwhelmingly won the municipal elections. The balloting was marred by some violence and opposition accusations of fraud. Serious press freedom violations, including the closure of newspapers and detention of journalists, also accompanied the election season.

As the site of the ancient Minaean, Sabaean, and Himyarite kingdoms, Yemen has a history stretching back nearly 3,000 years. For centuries after the advent of Islam, a series of dynastic imams controlled most of northern Yemen and parts of southern Yemen. The Ottoman Empire ruled many of the cities from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century, and the British controlled areas in the southern part of the country, including the port of Aden, beginning in the nineteenth century.

After the imam was ousted in a 1960s civil war and the British left the south in 1967, Yemen remained divided into two countries, the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen). The two states ultimately unified in 1990 after decades of conflict and tension. In the face of widespread poverty and illiteracy, tribal influences that limit the central government's authority in certain parts of the country, a heavily armed citizenry, and the threat of Islamist terrorism, Yemen has managed to take limited steps to improve the status of political rights and civil liberties in the years since unification.

Yemen's April 2003 parliamentary election, its third in a decade, took place despite concerns that popular unrest resulting from the war in Iraq might lead to a postponement. International election observers noted that Yemen had made substantial improvements in electoral management and administration.

In September 2006, Yemen held its second presidential election since unification. President Ali Abdullah Saleh was reelected, receiving 77 percent of the vote. That year marked his 29th as president, since he had served as North Yemen's leader before unification. He had become Yemen's first directly elected president in 1999, winning more than 96 percent of the vote. The 2006 election was the first in which a serious opposition candidate challenged the incumbent. Saleh's main opponent, Faisal

Ben Shamlan, was supported by a coalition of Islamist and opposition parties and received 22 percent of the vote. Final results for the concurrent local elections indicated that the ruling Grand People's Congress (GPC) party won more than 80 percent of the vote for the provincial councils and 70 percent for the district councils.

The election period was marred by a number of deaths. In September, 50 people were killed and more than 200 injured when a stampede broke out at a stadium packed with thousands of Saleh supporters. Days before the balloting, eight voters were killed in election-related violence.

The European Union's Election Observation Mission, which monitored the elections, characterized them as "free and fair" even though the opposition rejected the initial count and threatened to call for large street demonstrations to protest alleged voter manipulation and fraud. The election secured Saleh's rule for another seven years, and opened the door for the possible political candidacy of his son.

Yemen has faced security challenges from terrorist and secessionist movements over the past decade. There were minor clashes in 2006 in the northern region of Saada as part of an uprising by some members of Yemen's large community of Zaidi Shiite Muslims. Hundreds have been killed since fighting broke out in 2004. The clashes temporarily declined after the September 2004 death of Hussein Badr Eddine al-Houthi, a Zaidi cleric who had led the movement, but a second round of violence broke out in the spring of 2005. Separately, in September 2006, five days before the presidential election, Yemeni security forces foiled two simultaneous suicide attacks on oil facilities. The authorities blamed the attempts on militants linked to the Sunni Muslim terrorist group al-Qaeda. Oil exports accounted for 70 percent of the national budget, and the loss of that revenue would have been catastrophic.

Yemen continues to be plagued by serious economic problems, including widespread poverty. Economic growth has been slow, and according to the World Bank, 42 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. In March 2005, Yemen experienced two days of demonstrations over the introduction of a sales tax. During that period, dozens of Yemenis were killed in riots when the price of fuel increased by nearly 150 percent. Fuel subsidies had been lifted as part of an International Monetary Fund reform program.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Yemen is not an electoral democracy. The country appears to have a relatively open democratic system, with citizens voting for president and members of Parliament. However, Yemen's politics are dominated by the ruling GPC party, which has increased the number of elected Parliament seats it holds from 145 in 1993 to 237 in the current Parliament. The government structure suffers from the absence of any significant limits on the executive's authority.

Yemen is headed by a popularly elected president serving seven-year terms, with a bicameral Parliament composed of a 301-seat, popularly elected House of Representatives and a Majlis al-Shura, or Consultative Council, whose 111 members are appointed by the president. The House of Representatives, elected for six-year terms, has legislative authority, and the Majlis al-Shura serves in an advisory capacity. Local council members are popularly elected, with recent elections having coincided with the presidential vote. Yemen is one of the few countries in the Arab world to organize regular elections on national and local levels. There is limited competi-

tion among the ruling GPC party, two main opposition parties (Islah and the Yemeni Socialist Party), and a handful of other parties.

Corruption is an endemic problem at all levels of government and society. Despite recent efforts by the government to fight corruption and institute a civil service reform program, Yemen lacks most legal safeguards to protect against conflicts of interest. Auditing and investigative bodies charged with fighting corruption are not sufficiently independent of the executive authorities. In November 2005, the U.S. government's Millennium Challenge Corporation suspended Yemen's eligibility for assistance under its Threshold Program, concluding that after the country was named a potential aid candidate in fiscal year 2004, corruption had increased. Yemen was ranked 111 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The state maintains a monopoly over the media that reach the most people—television and radio. Access to the internet is not widespread, and the authorities reportedly block websites they deem offensive. The government has pursued a concerted campaign to restrict press freedom in recent years. Journalists continue to face threats of violence, kidnapping, death, and arbitrary arrest, and often encounter unclear judicial processes. These violations increased amid 2006 election disputes and due to the February 2006 publication of Danish cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad. The latter controversy led to the temporary closure of three publications—the *Yemen Observer*, *Al-Hurriya*, and *Al-Rai al-Aam*—and the detention of three journalists. Also in February, three journalists were sentenced to prison and banned from writing for six months for offending the president with articles about government corruption. In the weeks after the September 2006 elections, over 50 rights violations against independent journalists were recorded.

Article 103 of the Press and Publications Law outlaws direct personal criticism of the head of state and publication of material that "might spread a spirit of dissent and division among the people" or "leads to the spread of ideas contrary to the principles of the Yemeni Revolution, [is] prejudicial to national unity or [distorts] the image of the Yemeni, Arab, or Islamic heritage." Although President Ali Abdullah Saleh called for an end to prison sentences for press offenses in June 2004, government authorities continued to use the Press and Publications Law to restrict press freedom. By the end of 2005, the Ministry of Information had presented a new draft press law to the Majlis al-Shura that would end the jailing of journalists for press offenses. However, restrictions concerning criticism of the president or offense to the national interest would remain, and the requirements for practicing journalism would be stiffened. The Yemeni Journalists' Syndicate objected to the draft law, saying it aimed to further restrict press freedom in Yemen. The government in May 2006 suspended the initiative until such objections could be resolved.

Article 2 of the constitution states that Islam is the official religion, and Article 3 declares Sharia (Islamic law) to be the source of all legislation. Yemen has few non-Muslim religious minorities, and their rights are generally respected in practice. The government has imposed some restrictions on religious activity in the context of the rebellion in the northern region of Saada. Mosques' hours of operation have been limited in the area, and imams suspected of extremism have been removed. Strong politicization of campus life, including tensions between supporters of the ruling GPC and opposition Islah parties, places limits on academic freedom.

Yemenis have the right to form associations according to Article 58 of the constitution. Yemen has several thousand nongovernmental organizations, although some observers question their viability and independence. Yemenis also enjoy some freedom of assembly, with periodic restrictions by the government. The authorities were accused of using excessive force against protesters and rioters demonstrating against fuel-price increases in 2005; more than 40 people were killed and hundreds were injured in the violence. However, opposition political rallies were permitted across the country during the 2006 election season.

The government respects the right to form and join trade unions, but some critics claim that the government and ruling party elements have stepped up efforts to control the affairs of these organizations.

The judiciary is nominally independent, but in practice it is weak and susceptible to interference from the executive branch. Government authorities have a spotty record of enforcing judicial rulings, particularly those issued against prominent tribal or political leaders. Lacking an effective court system, citizens often resort to tribal forms of justice or direct appeals to the executive branch of government. In 2006, Yemen restructured its judicial system to remove the president as head of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), which oversees the judiciary. It would instead be led by the chief justice of the Supreme Court, and the judiciary would have an independent budget under the new arrangement. Also that year, some three dozen judges were retired, suspended for possible disciplinary action, or referred for prosecution. In September 2006, a female judge was appointed to the Supreme Court, and another woman was appointed as the head of the civil court of appeals for Aden governorate. Meanwhile, five women were admitted to the Higher Judicial Institute. The various changes in 2006 were part of a larger judicial reform program begun with support from the World Bank in 1997.

Arbitrary detention occurs, partly because law enforcement officials lack proper training and partly because senior government officials lack the political will to root out the problem. Security forces affiliated with the Political Security Office (PSO) and the Ministry of the Interior torture and abuse detainees, and torture remains a problem in PSO prisons, which are not closely monitored.

Yemen is relatively homogenous ethnically and racially. The Akhdam, a small minority group, live in poverty and face social discrimination.

Women are afforded most legal protections against discrimination and provided with guarantees of equality. In practice, however, they continue to face pervasive discrimination in several aspects of life. A woman must obtain permission from her husband or father to receive a passport and travel abroad. Unlike men, women do not have the right to confer citizenship on a foreign-born spouse, and the process of obtaining Yemeni citizenship for a child of a Yemeni mother and a foreign-born father is more difficult than that for a child born of a Yemeni father and a foreign-born mother. Yemen's penal code allows lenient sentences for persons guilty of "honor crimes"—assaults or killings committed against women for alleged immodest or immoral behavior. Laws requiring that a wife obey her husband were abolished by presidential decree in 2004.

Women are vastly underrepresented in elected office. Despite the best efforts of women's rights groups to increase the number of women in Parliament, only one woman won a seat in the 2003 parliamentary elections. The number of women regis-

tered to vote increased nearly sevenfold in a decade, from half a million in the 1993 parliamentary elections to more than three million in the 2003 elections. A study produced by the Women's National Committee in 2004 found that women represented less than 3 percent of all government employees. According to the UN Development Program in 2005, Yemen has one of the largest gaps in the world between boys' and girls' primary school attendance rates.

Zambia

Population: 11,900,000

Capital: Lusaka

Political Rights: 3*

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: Zambia's political rights rating improved from 4 to 3 because of the successful conduct of the country's presidential election, reportedly the best since 1991, and concurrent legislative elections.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	3,4PF

Overview: As 2006 began, President Levy Mwanawasa remained locked in a struggle with civil society groups and the opposition over the constitutional reform process. Mwanawasa rejected calls to create a Constituent Assembly and adopt a new constitution before the 2006 elections. A new electoral law, designed to address the problems in the previous elections, set the stage for the 2006 polls. Although Mwanawasa faced serious health problems and a formidable opponent in Michael Sata of the Patriotic Front, he ultimately won reelection in what international observers called the country's freest and fairest elections in the last 15 years. In contrast to previous years, no candidate challenged the results in court.

Zambia gained independence from Britain in 1964. President Kenneth Kaunda and his United National Independence Party (UNIP) subsequently ruled Zambia as a de facto—and, from 1973, a de jure—one-party state until the transition to a multiparty system in 1991. Kaunda's regime grew increasingly repressive and corrupt as it faced security and economic difficulties during the long guerrilla wars against white rule in neighboring Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Portuguese-controlled Angola and Mozambique. UNIP's socialist policies, combined with a crash in the price of copper, Zambia's primary export, precipitated a two-decade economic decline.

In the face of domestic and international pressure, Kaunda agreed to a new con-

stitution allowing for multiparty democracy in 1991. In free elections in October, former labor leader Frederick Chiluba and his Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) won convincingly, capturing both the presidency and the National Assembly by wide margins. However, the November 1996 presidential and parliamentary polls lacked legitimacy, as the MMD-led government undermined the electoral process. Candidacy laws, voter registration, and media coverage were all manipulated in favor of the incumbents. Most egregiously, constitutional reforms prior to the elections disqualified candidates whose parents were not Zambian by birth or descent, effectively barring Kaunda from seeking to regain his former office. Most opposition parties boycotted the polls, in which the MMD renewed its parliamentary dominance. International observer groups and domestic monitors declared the process and the results to be fraudulent.

Prior to the December 2001 presidential elections, Chiluba supported a move within his party to change the constitution so that he could run for a third term. Dissent within his party, as well as protests by opposition parties and civil society, forced him to abandon the idea. Instead, the MMD nominated Levy Mwanawasa, who won narrowly with just 29 percent of the vote against a divided opposition; Anderson Mazoka of the United Party for National Development (UPND) took 27 percent. During concurrent parliamentary elections, the MMD captured 69 out of 150 elected seats. Both domestic and international election monitors cited serious irregularities in the campaign and elections, including vote rigging, flawed voter registration, unequal and biased media coverage, and the MMD's improper use of state resources. Three opposition candidates petitioned the Supreme Court to overturn Mwanawasa's victory.

Mwanawasa's first term thus began with his legitimacy as president in question, and he held only tenuous control over the ruling MMD. Chiluba had allies in key positions in the party, and it initially remained under his leadership. Ultimately, however, the president asserted his authority over the party and the political arena. In February 2005, the Supreme Court upheld his election, declaring that the 2001 poll was flawed, but not so severely as to affect the outcome. Mwanawasa undermined opponents in the MMD as he spurred the party's National Executive Committee to abolish the position of party vice president and expel certain members. In July 2005, Mwanawasa defeated a challenge to his leadership of the MMD at the party convention.

Mwanawasa's administration has been characterized by a campaign to deal with corruption and an attempt to manage the economy more prudently. Both of these have been applauded by international donors. He earned praise for banning ministers and senior officials from bidding on government contracts and for sacking his own vice president in 2003 for involvement in an irregular oil contract. However, a lack of concrete results in the anticorruption effort and the somewhat selective prosecution of cases have eroded public confidence in the process. On the economic front, Zambia obtained considerable debt relief in April 2005. Economic progress has been evident in the appreciation of the kwacha currency, lower inflation, and some degree of poverty reduction.

As 2005 ended, Mwanawasa remained in a bitter dispute over constitutional reforms, at the heart of which were questions about when a new constitution would be adopted (before or after the 2006 elections) and by what process (via a Constituent Assembly and national referendum or by parliamentary vote). In November 2005, the MMD used its parliamentary majority to defeat a motion to create a Constituent

Assembly. This led to renewed public protests in December, sponsored by civil society and opposition groups. While Mwanawasa initially acceded to demands for a Constituent Assembly (although not before the 2006 elections), he later backtracked.

Mwanawasa began formally campaigning in February for the 2006 elections. A major setback occurred in April when he was flown out of Zambia for medical treatment in Britain. During his three-week stay, it was revealed that he had suffered a minor stroke, which led some to question whether he would be able to run for a second term. Shortly after his return, one of his leading opponents, Anderson Mazoka of the UPND, died, leaving that party and its alliance grouping, the United Democratic Alliance (UDA), without a leader. Benefiting from these events was former Chiluba stalwart Michael Sata, leader of the Patriotic Front (PF). A bitter foe of Mwanawasa's, Sata had a firm base of support in the Copperbelt province and appealed to poorer urban Zambians, which made him a formidable candidate.

By August, three primary contenders for the presidency had emerged: Mwanawasa of the MMD, Sata of the PF, and Hakainde Hichilema of the UPND and UDA. Each of these found support bases in particular regions. During the campaign, Mwanawasa touted his economic and poverty-reduction policies, while others questioned his health and offered more populist messages. Under new leadership since August 2005, the Electoral Commission of Zambia received high marks in the run-up to the polls for consulting regularly with the parties and showing less bias toward the ruling party than in previous years. The polls, conducted on September 28, were endorsed by international observers as the freest and fairest in 15 years. Although initial returns favored Sata, by October 2 it was clear that Mwanawasa had won a second term with 43 percent of the vote, followed by 29 percent for Sata and 25 percent for Hichilema. As Sata disputed the results, riots broke out in PF strongholds. These dissipated after civil society groups appealed for calm and Sata announced that he would not formally challenge the results, but would instead work in Parliament and local councils where the PF had achieved some successes. Of the 150 parliamentary seats that were contested in concurrent legislative elections, the MMD won 72; Sata's PF and Hichilema's UDA won 46 and 27 seats, respectively.

The AIDS pandemic dramatically affects Zambia. UNAIDS estimated HIV infection rates in 2002 at 21.5 percent, and government figures indicate that Zambia already has nearly 700,000 AIDS orphans. While Zambia's efforts to provide antiretroviral medication to people suffering from HIV/AIDS have made progress, it remains difficult to access the drugs in rural areas.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Zambia is an electoral democracy. The 2006 elections represented a step forward in terms of the ability of citizens to democratically change their government. Both the 1996 and 2001 elections featured substantial flaws and were subjects of intense controversy. International observers criticized the 2001 elections, as did Zambia's Supreme Court in its 2005 ruling upholding the election of Levy Mwanawasa as president. Seeking to correct some of these shortcomings, the Parliament passed a government-backed electoral reform law in April 2006. It included provisions for transparent ballot boxes, new voter cards, restrictions on the use of public resources for campaigns, and requirements for balanced coverage of candidates by the state-owned media. However, the law empowered the president to set the date for elections and prevented the media from publish-

ing speculative analyses and unsourced opinion polls in the run-up to the contests. The law, along with efforts by the Electoral Commission of Zambia to consult with the parties and remain unbiased, facilitated a relatively scandal-free electoral process.

The president and the unicameral National Assembly are elected to serve concurrent five-year terms. The National Assembly includes 150 elected members, as well as eight members appointed by the president.

The opposition has been able to operate, although under some duress. PF leader Michael Sata has been arrested and charged with corruption-related offenses and sedition since 2001. In February 2006, he was arrested on charges of defaming the president. After his defeat in the presidential polls, rumors circulated about his setting up "parallel governments" on local councils where the PF held majorities, leading Mwanawasa to accuse him of treasonous behavior. In the months that followed, Sata and the PF became the target of considerable harassment. In December, he was arrested on charges that were subsequently dismissed by the courts. The government also ordered police to deny his party permits to hold rallies. The other opposition block, the UDA, has had problems maintaining its unity. In late 2006, splits in the alliance appeared to leave the UPND and UNIP as the sole remaining partners.

Mwanawasa's campaign to tackle the corruption problem continued in 2006, although many questioned the sincerity of his efforts. In 2005, Mwanawasa attempted to shield his ally, former health minister Kashiwa Bulaya, from prosecution. Key MMD officials and Mwanawasa allies, party chairman Michael Mabenga and national secretary Katele Kalumba, have been implicated in major corruption scandals. Cases against former government officials accused of economic plunder have languished. A case against former president Frederick Chiluba, filed in a British high court, has yet to come to completion. On the positive side, Samuel Musonda, former director of the state-owned Zambia National Commercial Bank, was convicted in 2006 on charges that he used his position to inappropriately provide credit facilities to the Office of President and Cabinet when Chiluba was in office. In May, Zambia and the U.S. government's Millennium Challenge Corporation signed a two-year, \$22.7 million Threshold Program agreement to reduce corruption and improve government effectiveness. In August, the Anti-Corruption Commission announced the formation of integrity committees in several ministries. Zambia was ranked 111 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech is constitutionally guaranteed, but the government often restricts this right in practice. The government controls two widely circulated newspapers, and the state-owned, progovernment Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) dominates broadcast media. Owing to prepublication review at government-controlled newspapers, journalists commonly practice self-censorship. Broadcast media continue to be biased in favor of the government. One independent study indicated that although there had been improvement from previous years, the ZNBC continued to provide more favorable coverage for the incumbent during the 2006 election campaign. Beyond this, the government continues to challenge in court the implementation of two 2002 media laws that gave the parliament control over who sits on the management boards of ZNBC and the Independent Broadcasting Authority. The latter has the authority to regulate the industry and grant licenses to prospective broadcasters.

The independent media continue to play a significant role. The Public Order Act

(POA) and other statutes have at times been used to harass journalists. Other tools of harassment have included criminal libel and defamation suits brought by ruling party leaders in response to stories on corruption. While journalists have been arrested, detained, and harassed by MMD supporters in previous years, there was little such activity in 2006. The government does not restrict internet access.

Constitutionally protected religious freedom is respected in practice. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Under the POA, the police must be notified of all demonstrations seven days in advance; while the law does not require demonstrators to acquire a permit, the police have frequently broken up "illegal" protests because the organizers lacked permits. In March 2006, police refused to grant a permit to Sata to hold a rally. Apart from this, the POA was not used to restrict opposition activities in the run-up to the elections. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in promoting human rights, such as the Zambian Independent Monitoring Team, the Zambian Civic Education Association, the Law Association of Zambia, and the Legal Resources Fund, operate openly. All NGOs, however, are required to register with the government.

Zambia's trade unions are among Africa's strongest, and union rights are constitutionally guaranteed. The Zambia Congress of Trade Unions, an umbrella organization for the country's 19 largest unions, operates democratically without governmental interference. About two-thirds of the country's 300,000 formal (business) sector employees are union members. While collective bargaining rights are protected by statute, labor laws also require labor organizations to have at least 100 members to be registered, a potentially burdensome rule.

Judicial independence is guaranteed by law. While courts do act independently and have staked out adversarial positions vis-a-vis the government, capacity issues, corruption, and political influences all undermine the efficacy of the judiciary. The court system is severely overburdened, and many suspects and defendants do not have access to legal aid owing to limited resources. A lack of qualified personnel (in part because of poor working conditions) contributes to significant trial delays, and pretrial detainees are sometimes held for years under harsh conditions. In rural areas, customary courts of variable quality and consistency, whose decisions often conflict with both national law and constitutional protections, decide many civil matters.

Prison conditions are very harsh. Severe overcrowding, poor nutrition, and limited access to health care have led to many inmate deaths and—along with unsafe sex, tattooing, and drug use—make inmates more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Allegations of police brutality and the use of torture are widespread, but security forces have generally operated with impunity. In 2005, tensions arose between the police and the Police Public Complaints Authority amid accusations that the police were trying to impede investigations of abuse. While the government Human Rights Commission investigated complaints against police and denounced the torture of suspects in a 1997 coup attempt, it has no power to bring charges against alleged perpetrators.

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, tribe, gender, place of origin, marital status, political opinion, color, or creed. However, societal discrimination remains a serious obstacle to women's rights. Domestic violence and rape are major problems, and traditional norms inhibit many women from reporting such assaults. An October 2004 survey by the U.S. Agency for International Development found that 48 percent of Zambian women have been subjected to physical or emo-

tional abuse by their spouse or partner. Women are denied full economic participation and usually require male consent to acquire credit. Discrimination against women is especially prevalent in customary courts; women are considered subordinate with respect to property, inheritance, and marriage. In September 2005, an amended penal code banned the traditional practice of "sexual cleansing," in which a widow has sex with relatives of her deceased husband.

↓ Zimbabwe

Population: 13,100,000
Capital: Harare

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 6
Status: Not Free



Trend Arrow: Zimbabwe received a downward trend arrow due to increasingly violent crackdowns on the opposition, growing militarization of state agencies and functions, and a deterioration in conditions for thousands of people displaced by Operation Murambatsvina.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5.5PF	5.5PF	6.5PF	6.5PF	6.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	7.6NF	7.6NF	7.6NF

Overview: In 2006, Zimbabwe suffered from a further deterioration of political rights and civil liberties amid a near-total collapse of the country's economy. Throughout the year, long-time President Robert Mugabe and members of his government explicitly warned against demonstrations by the opposition, labor unions, and civic groups. Attempts at such protests prompted the large-scale deployment of security forces, the use of excessive force, mass arrests, and physical abuse of detainees. The government expanded its crackdown on the country's few remaining independent media outlets, employing new technologies to jam radio broadcasts and introducing new legislation to monitor and intercept internet-based communications. The political opposition, led by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) continued to be racked by divisions in 2006. Little progress was made in the resettling of hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans affected by Operation Murambatsvina, a politically tinged slum-clearance effort. Zimbabwe's economic crisis worsened significantly in 2006, with inflation reaching a high of over 1,200 percent in September despite a forced devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar that same month. The crisis put the price of basic goods—including food and fuel—out of the reach of most Zimbabweans.

In 1965, a white-minority regime led by Prime Minister Ian Smith unilaterally declared independence from Britain in what was then Rhodesia; the resultant state

was considered illegal and was subjected to extensive sanctions by the United Nations. A guerrilla war led by black nationalist groups, as well as sanctions and diplomatic pressure from Britain and the United States, contributed to the end of white-minority rule in 1979 and the recognition of an independent Zimbabwe in 1980. Robert Mugabe and the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), initially brought to power in relatively democratic elections, have ruled the country since then.

Zimbabwe was relatively stable in its first years of independence, but from 1983 to 1987, the government violently suppressed resistance from the country's largest minority group, the Ndebele, to dominance by Mugabe's ethnic Shona majority. Severe human rights abuses—including the deaths of between 10,000 and 20,000 civilians—accompanied the struggle, which ended with an accord that brought Ndebele leaders into the government. Opposition to Mugabe's government spurred widespread unrest in the 1990s. In 1999, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), an alliance between trade unions and other civil society groups, was created to lead the political opposition.

In February 2000, the MDC helped defeat a referendum on a draft constitution that would have greatly expanded executive power. Parliamentary elections in June 2000 were deemed by observers to be fundamentally flawed prior to balloting. Candidates and supporters of the MDC faced violence and intimidation, including rape. A constitutional provision empowering Mugabe and allied traditional leaders to appoint one-fifth of the members of Parliament helped to ensure ZANU-PF's majority in the legislature. Voter registration, identification procedures, and tabulation of results were judged highly irregular by independent observers. The state-controlled media offered limited coverage of opposition viewpoints, and ZANU-PF used substantial state resources in campaigning. After the poll, Mugabe issued a pardon for thousands of people—most associated with ZANU-PF—for crimes committed during the election campaign, including assault, arson, forced evictions, kidnapping, torture, rape, and attempted murder.

In March 2002, after months of political violence aimed at MDC supporters, Mugabe claimed victory in a deeply flawed presidential election that failed to meet minimum international standards for legitimacy. The election pitted Mugabe against the MDC's Morgan Tsvangirai, a popular union leader. Following the vote, the United States and the European Union imposed travel and arms-sales sanctions on the government, and the country was suspended from the Commonwealth. Mass protests and strikes called by Tsvangirai in 2003 were crushed by security forces. In August 2004, the MDC announced that it would suspend its participation in parliamentary and local elections because it believed there was no hope of a fair poll.

Prior to the March 2005 parliamentary elections, the government enacted two new electoral laws—the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) Act and the Electoral Act—in order to adhere to Southern African Development Community (SADC) protocols. However, the ostensibly independent ZEC was highly partisan, and it did not begin operating until two months before the elections, leaving much of the electoral process to discredited institutions. Furthermore, despite some improvements, the Electoral Act granted the ZEC powers to employ security forces, retained biased residency requirements for voters, denied most expatriates the right to vote, and created an Electoral Court staffed by a deeply compromised judiciary.

Despite its 2004 announcement, the MDC did participate in the March 2005 parliamentary polls. However, the run-up to and conduct of the elections did not allow for a free or fair contest. Reports by local and international human rights groups asserted that MDC candidates and supporters were subjected to violent intimidation and harassment—including arbitrary arrest—throughout the country and were restricted from campaigning openly in rural areas dominated by ZANU-PF (particularly parts of Mashonaland and Manicaland). Security forces and ZANU-PF youth militias also restricted opposition assemblies and rallies in Harare and Bulawayo. As in previous elections, ZANU-PF used government food stocks as a political weapon, denying supplies to some MDC supporters and promising it to other citizens in exchange for votes. In addition, according to Human Rights Watch, "the processes of registering voters, delimiting electoral districts, and providing for inspection of voters' rolls were conducted in a non-transparent and discriminatory way." Though the opposition's access to the media had improved from that of previous elections, equal and fair coverage was denied. Finally, among international monitoring groups, only African monitors believed to be sympathetic to ZANU-PF were allowed to observe the elections.

The elections resulted in a substantial victory for ZANU-PF. It garnered 78 elected seats, which, along with the 30 seats effectively appointed by Mugabe, gave the ruling party a two-thirds majority and the ability to amend the constitution. The MDC won only 41 of 120 elected seats. While observers from the SADC, the African Union, and South Africa deemed the elections reflective of the will of the people, local observers such as the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights and the Zimbabwe Election Support Network were very critical of the vote. The MDC claimed to have discovered major discrepancies in vote tallies in over 30 constituencies. Citing 11 of these constituencies and claiming to have won 94 elected seats, the MDC challenged the ZEC's results and threatened a court battle; however, no legal petition was filed. According to the International Crisis Group, the government escalated its crackdown on opposition supporters and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) after the elections.

Mugabe and ZANU-PF used their two-thirds parliamentary majority to enact a far-reaching Constitutional Amendment Bill in September 2005. Among other provisions, the bill abolished freehold property titles by nationalizing all land, denied landowners any legal recourse regarding expropriated land, brought all schools under state control, and empowered the government to seize the passports and travel documents of people deemed a threat to national interests. Furthermore, the bill reintroduced an upper legislative house, the Senate; Mugabe had abolished the Senate in 1987, along with the post of prime minister. Elections to the new Senate—consisting of 50 directly elected members, 6 presidential appointees, and 10 traditional chiefs—were held in November 2005, and ZANU-PF secured 59 out of 66 seats. The MDC, deeply split over whether to participate in the elections, fielded just 26 candidates and won 7 seats. Only 15 to 20 percent of voters turned out for the balloting. The Senate, estimated to cost about \$60 million annually, was widely considered to be a superfluous body created to reward Mugabe's supporters in the ruling party.

In May 2005, the government began implementing a politically tinged slum-clearance effort known as Operation Murambatsvina (OM), translated as Operation Re-

store Order or Operation Clear the Filth, in which police arrested some 10,000 people in and around Harare and destroyed unauthorized street stalls and informal dwellings. The operation soon spread to almost every urban area and rural business center in Zimbabwe, resulting in the destruction (mostly by bulldozer) of tens of thousands of informal businesses and dwellings, including entire suburbs of Harare (Hatcliff Extension, Mbare, Joshua Nkomo, Porta Farm, and White Cliff Farm) and Bulawayo (Killarney and Ngozi Mine). Domestic and international human rights groups accused the security forces of arresting and fining people arbitrarily and using excessive force that directly resulted in at least three deaths. Initially moved into transit camps outside of the cities, many displaced residents were forced to return to the rural areas "from which they came," as designated on national identity cards.

According to the United Nations, approximately 700,000 people were made homeless by the operation, and another 2.4 million were affected directly or indirectly. Wintry conditions, large transportation expenses, lack of medicines, and national food shortages exacerbated the hardships faced by the displaced, particularly vulnerable groups like children, the old and infirm, and those suffering from HIV/AIDS. In addition, the government actively prevented civic groups and aid agencies from gaining access to the displaced. In December 2005, Mugabe drew international censure by rejecting a UN offer to supply tents as temporary shelter for the displaced. He claimed that living in tents was contrary to Zimbabwean culture. That month, Human Rights Watch released a report documenting the government's denial of assistance and protection—including international food and housing aid—to victims of OM, noting that many of the displaced were living in the open, in rudimentary shelters made from debris of demolished structures, or in "tiny rooms with family members who have agreed to shelter them."

The government defended OM as a necessary effort to restore law and order to the country's cities by enforcing licensing requirements and city ordinances and by removing sources of "illegal activities." However, many of the destroyed vendor stalls, flea markets, and informal settlements had in fact been approved by government officials. Many analysts maintain that the operation was designed to impose control over urban areas that had proved to be MDC strongholds and sources of antigovernment agitation. Nevertheless, some of the townships targeted by the operation were built on land confiscated from white landowners and populated by ZANU-PF supporters.

Victims of OM saw little improvement in basic living conditions in 2006. Upon initiating the campaign, government officials had announced ambitious plans—dubbed Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle, or Better Life—to build new housing projects for the urban poor in place of the destroyed dwellings. However, according to numerous human rights organizations, these projects remained mostly incomplete, and failed to benefit people displaced by OM. In August, the church-based Solidarity Peace Trust (SPT) reported that the government had built almost no new dwellings for those displaced by OM, and that many were returning to the destroyed urban areas to crowd into surviving dwellings or build new structures. In September, Amnesty International reported that "contrary to government statements almost none of the victims of Operation Murambatsvina have benefited from the rebuilding, with only 3,325 houses constructed—compared to the 92,460 homes destroyed...and construction has ground to a halt in many areas." The group also

noted that most constructed houses were incomplete ("lacking doors, windows, floors, and even roofs") and lacked basic water and sanitation facilities. Many houses and land plots had been allocated not to victims of OM but to civil servants, police officers, and soldiers, the report said. Amnesty noted that, in the investigated areas, army officers led most interministerial committees charged with allocating constructed houses, and that the process was driven by political status or bribes.

The government's seizures of white-owned farmland, which began in 2000, precipitated the collapse of Zimbabwe's economy, since the commercial farming sector had accounted for the majority of the country's exports, foreign exchange, and jobs. Much of the seized land went to ZANU-PF officials, Mugabe loyalists, and war veterans without a farming background. The country's gross domestic product has fallen more than 35 percent since the land reform began, making Zimbabwe the world's fastest-shrinking economy in a country without an active war or insurgency. The triple-digit inflation that has plagued Zimbabwe in recent years increased rapidly in 2006, peaking at over 1,200 percent in September. As a result, a bundle of basic goods cost Zimbabweans 13 times as much as it did the year before. The government controls the prices of many major commodities and food staples, and state-linked companies dominate many sectors, exacerbating the shortages of key imports, most notably fuel. In December, the Department of Social Welfare reported that living standards had dropped by 150 percent since 1996. Unemployment is estimated at 80 percent. Furthermore, in both 2005 and 2006, Zimbabwe narrowly escaped expulsion from the International Monetary Fund with last-minute payments on arrears. The country's dire political and economic situation has resulted in the emigration of hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans.

In an attempt to control the country's hyperinflation and regulate currency exchange, Reserve Bank governor Gideon Gono in August 2006 announced a 1,000 percent devaluation in the Zimbabwean dollar, allowing only 16 working days for the old currency to be exchanged for new denominations. He also mandated that individuals could exchange just Z\$ 100 million (US\$1,000) a day, and security forces were deployed to arrest people who had been "hoarding cash" for exchange on the black market. Because of hyperinflation and Zimbabwe's unreliable banking sector, many people had kept their money at home, and unofficial foreign currency traders were the prime conduits for foreign exchange transactions in the country. Over 2,000 people were detained, and more than Z\$20 billion (US\$200,000) was officially reported as seized by police officers, soldiers, and members of ZANU-PF's youth militias. They were widely accused of heavy-handedness and illegal cash seizures. Furthermore, rural Zimbabweans who had not heard of the devaluation were taken advantage of by urbanites who bought large amounts of livestock with the soon-to-be-defunct currency.

In December 2005, the government agreed to allow the UN World Food Program to distribute food aid to over three million people through June 2006, and in March 2006, Zimbabwe's Millers Association warned that the country—once one of Africa's major sources of agricultural exports—had only two weeks' worth of wheat remaining. In April, the government banned international agencies from carrying out crop estimates in the country. The domestic Zimbabwe Peace Project reported in September that food, humanitarian, and educational aid was being distributed on political grounds.

In April 2006, the SPT and local media reported that security forces had taken control of food production by small-scale farmers in the south; the government said the army was ensuring that farmers were selling maize to the state-controlled Grain Marketing Board. The grain board announced in September that soldiers would be deployed throughout the country's agricultural regions to collect grain. Farmers were not legally allowed to sell grain to any other buyer, though many farmers, citing nonpayment by the state, claimed they had no option but to do so.

Zimbabwe in December 2005 became the first Southern African country to register a decline in HIV prevalence (from 24.6 to 20.1 percent). The drop was largely attributed to changes in sexual behavior, particularly the increased use of condoms. However, in July 2006 Human Rights Watch reported that only 25,000 of some 350,000 Zimbabweans in need of antiretroviral drugs had access to treatment, and that "abusive government policies"—including forced evictions, official tolerance for domestic violence, and increased hospital fees—were blocking wider access to treatment and increasing the threat of infection.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Zimbabwe is not an electoral democracy. Recent presidential and legislative elections have been marred by political violence and intimidation (perpetrated by security forces and ZANU-PF youth militias), a discriminatory electoral framework, biased media coverage, and the unscrupulous use of state resources. President Mugabe and ZANU-PF have dominated the political landscape since independence in 1980, overseeing at least 16 amendments to the constitution—including the elimination of the post of prime minister—that have expanded presidential power. Mugabe has on several occasions invoked the Presidential Powers Act, which enables him to bypass normal governmental review and oversight procedures. Presidential elections are held every six years. In December 2006, ZANU-PF delegates to the party's annual conference approved a plan to postpone presidential elections—originally scheduled for 2008—until 2010, extending Mugabe's rule by two years (Mugabe has vowed to retire at the end of his current presidential term). The postponement will require another constitutional amendment.

From 1987 to 2005, Zimbabwe had a unicameral legislature. In September 2005, an upper house (Senate)—disbanded by a 1987 constitutional amendment—was reconstituted with a new amendment. It consists of 50 directly elected members, 6 presidential appointees, and 10 traditional chiefs. The lower chamber (House of Assembly) comprises 120 elected seats and 30 seats filled by various Mugabe appointees; elections are held every five years. ZANU-PF loyalists make up 72 percent of the House of Assembly and over 89 percent of the Senate. In October 2006, the ruling party handily won two parliamentary by-elections, though local observers claimed that the polls were marred by violent intimidation and flawed voter registration.

The MDC had until recently represented a significant oppositionist force in Zimbabwe. However, a debate over whether the MDC should contest elections for the newly created Senate in 2005 led to a split in the party, and 26 MDC members registered as candidates in defiance of party leader Tsvangirai. After Tsvangirai expelled the 26 dissidents, they and their supporters formed a "pro-Senate" MDC faction led by MDC secretary-general Welshman Ncube. In February 2006, the pro-Senate faction elected Arthur Mutambara, a former student leader and scientist who

had been living abroad, as its leader. Tsvangirai was reelected president of his faction the following month. Later in the year, the two leaders both made gestures toward reconciling and presenting a united front against Mugabe; in July, they met in public for the first time at a convention called by the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance to form a broad opposition coalition. Still, relations between the factions remained acrimonious. MDC Member of Parliament (MP) Timothy Mubawu of the Tsvangirai faction was charged in July with organizing a violent attack on MDC MP Trudy Stevenson of the Mutambara faction.

Mugabe continued to direct government officials and security forces to crack down on opposition activity in 2006. In March, security forces uncovered a small arms cache at the home of Peter Hirschmann, a former Rhodesian soldier and alleged member of the shadowy rebel Zimbabwean Freedom Movement (ZFM), and 11 people were arrested for allegedly trying to organize a coup. Several MDC officials were among those arrested, although the party denied any connection to Hirschmann, the ZFM, or the uncovered arms. Security Minister Didymus Mutasa vowed to "physically eliminate" the accused plotters, who in turn accused the police of physical abuse and torture. However, all except Hirschmann were later released because of a lack of evidence. Also in March, Mubawu was arrested for insulting Mugabe. Mutambara and 60 of his supporters were detained in May while en route to a by-election campaign march in a Harare suburb.

Corruption is rampant throughout the country, including at the highest levels of government. A profound lack of transparency in government tenders and other operations has allowed graft to thrive. Patronage is crucial to ZANU-PF's grip on power, and the party owns a wide range of businesses that profit its leaders. ZANU-PF and government officials have been allocated many of the properties seized from white farmers. Anticorruption prosecutions are almost exclusively motivated by political vendettas, and reports of extensive corruption and nepotism have contributed to the stark decline in public and investor confidence in Zimbabwe's economy. The government hailed its August 2006 currency reform as a crackdown on corrupt officials and money traders. In November, Mugabe blocked the release of a Finance Ministry report detailing the use of fraudulent contracts and invoices by cabinet ministers and ZANU-PF officials to exploit Zisco, the country's sole steel company. Zimbabwe was ranked 130 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression and of the press is severely restricted in Zimbabwe. The country's draconian legal framework includes the recently amended Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Bill. The AIPPA requires all journalists and media companies to register with the government-controlled Media and Information Commission (MIC), gives the information minister sweeping powers to decide who can work as a journalist, and mandates prison sentences of up to two years for journalists working without accreditation. In January 2006, freelance journalist Sidney Saize was detained for three days on charges of practicing journalism without a license and filing a "false story" for Voice of America (VOA). Authorities use a range of restrictive legislation—including the Official Secrets Act, the AIPPA, and the Public Order and Security Act (POSA)—to harass journalists. Section 15 of the POSA and Section 80 of the AIPPA criminalize the publication of "inaccurate" information, and both laws

have been used to intimidate, arrest, and prosecute journalists. The new Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Bill increases prison sentences for similar violations to a maximum of 20 years. Journalists are routinely subjected to verbal intimidation, physical attacks, arrest and detention, and financial pressure by the police, authorities, and supporters of the ruling party. Foreign journalists are rarely granted visas to file stories from Zimbabwe, and local correspondents for foreign publications, particularly those whose reporting has portrayed the regime in an unfavorable light, have been refused accreditation or threatened with lawsuits and deportation.

The government dominates the print media. Coverage in state-controlled dailies such as the *Chronicle* and the *Herald* consists of favorable portrayals of Mugabe and the ruling ZANU-PF party and attacks on government critics. The *Daily News*, the country's only independent daily, was shuttered in 2003 for not adhering to the AIPPA and continued to be denied a license by the MIC in 2006. Constitutional challenges to the AIPPA by the affiliates of the *Daily News* have proven unsuccessful. In January 2006, the weekly *Financial Gazette* withdrew an article suggesting that the MIC was controlled by intelligence officers after the commission threatened the newspaper with revocation of its license.

The state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) runs all broadcast media, which are seen as mouthpieces of the regime. The prohibitive costs of satellite services that provide international news programming place them out of reach for most Zimbabweans. In December 2005, police and government officials raided the Harare office of the independent Voice of the People (VOP) radio station, confiscating equipment and files and arresting three employees. Six members of the VOP's board of trustees were also arrested and charged with broadcasting without a license. In order to circumvent Zimbabwe's restrictive laws, VOP broadcasts locally produced programs into the country from the Netherlands. In 2005, the government began using Chinese-supplied technology to jam these shortwave broadcasts, along with those of the London-based oppositionist radio station SW Radio Africa and VOA.

In April 2006, the government introduced new legislation, the Interception of Communications Bill, that would allow government officials to intercept electronic communications to prevent a "serious offense" or a "threat to national security." The bill would require internet service providers (ISPs) to pay the cost of surveillance. In August, media advocates and ISP representatives uniformly opposed the bill at a parliamentary hearing. While technology for implementing the legislation was already undergoing tests, officials said in November that the bill would be amended to reflect the concerns of the parliamentary legal committee.

Freedom of religion is generally respected, although church attendance is becoming increasingly politicized. Zimbabwe's economic crisis has propelled a recent boom in attendance, and church groups such as the Solidarity Peace Trust and the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance have been at the forefront of opposition to the Mugabe government. However, church involvement has also increased among high-ranking members of the ostensibly socialist ZANU-PF—some of whom have even been ordained as lay preachers—and church groups such as the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) and the newly formed Ecumenical Peace Initiative are widely perceived as progovernment. In June 2006, cancellation of the country's traditional National Prayer Day by the ZCC after a meeting with Mugabe sparked a war of words between religious organizations from across the political divide.

Academic freedom is limited. Security forces and ZANU-PF thugs harass dissident university students, who have been arrested or expelled for protesting against government policy. The Constitutional Amendment Bill passed in September 2005 brought all schools under state control. In 2006, the Zimbabwe Peace Project reported that school heads loyal to ZANU-PF were distributing education aid based on parents' political loyalties.

The nongovernmental sector is small but active. However, NGOs, particularly those dealing with human rights issues, have faced increasing legal restrictions and extralegal harassment. Public demonstrations and protests are severely restricted under the 2002 POSA, which requires police notification—in practice, police permission—to hold public meetings and demonstrations. Such meetings are often deemed illegal and broken up, and participants are subject to arbitrary arrest by security forces (including intelligence officers) and attacks by ZANU-PF militias. The POSA also allows police to impose arbitrary curfews and forbids criticism of the president. The Private Voluntary Organizations (PVO) Act, originally introduced by the Rhodesian government and revived in 2002, sets out restrictive registration and funding requirements for NGOs. In December 2004, Parliament passed the Non-Governmental Organizations Act, which retains the PVO Act's more repressive provisions while increasing scrutiny of groups that "promote and protect human rights" and explicitly prohibiting such groups from receiving foreign funding. Following the model of the MIC, the act also establishes an NGO Council with which organizations must register or risk criminal charges. While Mugabe has yet to sign the legislation, in March 2006 Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa said that hurdle would be overcome by year's end.

As a result of these restrictions, mass action campaigns organized by the opposition in 2005 and 2006 failed to gain much traction and resulted in widespread arrests and beatings of protesters. In April 2006, the government responded to Tsvangirai's announcement of a new campaign of "peaceful democratic resistance" by increasing salaries for security forces, setting up police and army roadblocks, and issuing threats of violence. In September, the country's largest labor federation, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), called for a rolling protest campaign against deteriorating living conditions. When the ZCTU was joined by other civil society organizations and major opposition parties, the government deployed thousands of security personnel in Harare, Bulawayo, and other urban centers. Some 500 people were arrested across the country, including almost the entire ZCTU leadership. Several union leaders—including President Lovemore Motombo and Secretary-General Wellington Chibhebhe—were severely beaten in custody. Security forces continued to disrupt demonstrations by the Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) group and arrest demonstrators; in three years of protests, some 900 WOZA activists have been detained for violating the POSA, including more than 400 protesting high prices and unemployment in Harare and Bulawayo in February 2006.

The right to collective labor action is limited under the Labor Relations Act, which allows the government to veto collective bargaining agreements that it deems harmful to the economy. Strikes are allowed except for industries declared "essential" under the act. Because the labor movement provides the most organized resistance to Mugabe's authoritarian rule, it has become a particular target for repression.

Mugabe has used his presidential powers to declare strikes illegal, and labor organizers frequently face government harassment. The government has created a rival union umbrella organization, the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions, to try to undermine the ZCTU.

While some courts have struck down or disputed government actions, increasing pressure by the regime has substantially eroded the judiciary's capacity to act independently. The accused are often denied access to counsel and a fair, timely trial. However, several journalists have recently been acquitted of criminal charges by magistrates, as have several MDC activists. The MDC's Tsvangirai was acquitted of treason charges in December 2004 by the high court, and another set of treason charges was dropped in August 2005. Nonetheless, the government has repeatedly refused to enforce court orders and has replaced senior judges or pressured them to resign by stating that it could not guarantee their security. The judicial system has been burdened by the vacancy of nearly 60 magistrate posts, which has caused a backlog of some 60,000 cases. In January 2006, Judge Benjamin Paradza was convicted of corruption by the high court and subsequently fled the country, claiming that he was being targeted for issuing antigovernment rulings. In September, after several magistrates refused to take the case for fear of violent reprisals, Justice Minister Chinamasa was cleared of attempting to bribe a witness in the trial of Security Minister Mutasa, who stands accused of inciting political violence.

In general, security and military forces are accountable to the government but abuse citizens with impunity. Security forces often ignore basic rights regarding detention, searches, and seizures. The government has taken no clear action to halt the rising incidence of torture and mistreatment of suspects held by police or security services. War veterans and ZANU-PF militants operate as *de facto* enforcers of government policies—including land redistribution—and have committed human rights abuses such as assault, torture, rape, extralegal evictions, and extralegal executions without fear of punishment. In June 2004, the government passed the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Amendment Act, which allows police to hold suspects accused of economic crimes for up to four weeks without bail; human rights activists contend that the act contravenes the right to presumption of innocence. Security forces in 2006 took on increased roles in crop collection, food distribution, and enforcement of government monetary policy. In March, the government announced plans to set up a Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission with a mandate to receive, investigate, and redress human rights complaints. Human rights activists greeted the announcement with skepticism.

Prison conditions are harsh and life-threatening. The country's 42 prisons have an intended capacity of roughly 16,000 inmates, but house about 21,000. Such overcrowding, along with a major shortage of funds, has contributed to a rise in HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis infections, food shortages, and the deterioration of already poor health and sanitation facilities. Deaths in prisons are often caused by disease, poor sanitation, or beatings by guards. Many prisoners rely on family members for food. Pretrial detention is a major problem, with some inmates being held for over 10 years without trial. Women and juveniles are housed separately from men, and pre-trial detainees are generally held in separate, common cells.

The state has extensive control over travel and residence. In December 2005, the government, using powers granted by the September 2005 Constitutional Amend-

ment Bill (CAB), seized the passports of two prominent government critics, newspaper owner Trevor Ncube and MDC official Paul Themba Nyathi. The high court later ruled the seizure illegal because the government had yet to pass implementation legislation for the new powers. Foreign critics are routinely expelled or prevented from entering the country. In December 2006, the Registrar-General ceased printing new passports, citing the unaffordable cost of the imported paper required for the documents.

Property rights are not respected in Zimbabwe. Operation Murambatsvina saw the eviction of hundreds of thousands of urban dwellers from their homes and the destruction of thousands of residential and commercial structures, many of which had been approved by the government. Fewer than 600 white-owned farms remain out of the 4,500 that existed when the land invasions started in 2000. Any avenues of legal recourse for expelled farmers were closed with the enactment of the CAB in September 2005. In an apparent reversal, the government in May 2006 offered expelled farmers the chance to bid for new land holdings, and in August, Mugabe called for an end to ongoing farm invasions. In September, the government promised to withdraw settlers from foreign-owned farms occupied after 2000.

The ruling party, which is dominated by the majority Shona ethnic group, continues to encourage political and economic discrimination against the minority Ndebele people. The Ndebele tend to be marginalized politically, and their region (Matabeleland, an opposition stronghold) lags behind in economic development. Restrictive citizenship laws discriminate against Zimbabweans with origins in neighboring African countries. Despite divisive government actions and statements, including explicitly racist justifications for land seizures, relations between the remaining white minority and the black majority are relatively peaceful.

Women enjoy extensive legal protections, but de facto societal discrimination and domestic violence persist. Women serve as ministers in national and local governments and hold seats in Parliament. Joyce Mujuru is second vice president of Zimbabwe and a possible successor to Mugabe. In April 2006, the World Health Organization reported that Zimbabwean women's life expectancy of 34 years was the world's shortest and was four years shorter than that of Zimbabwean men. Sexual abuse is widespread, including the use of rape as a political weapon. A recent upsurge in gender-based violence spurred renewed calls for the enactment of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Bill, which has lingered in Parliament for seven years. In 2005, the domestic NGO Girl Child Network recorded an average of 700 rapes per month of girls under 16 years of age. The prevalence of customary laws in rural areas undermines women's civil rights and access to education. Traditional practices such as polygamy and *lobola*—the negotiated price a groom must pay to marry a bride—remain legal, and there were reports of girls being offered as settlements in interfamily disputes. A December 2004 report from UNICEF noted a gap between the existence and the implementation of many laws relating to women's and children's rights. Homosexuality, decried as un-African by Mugabe, is illegal in Zimbabwe.

Armenia/Azerbaijan* Nagorno-Karabakh

Population: 145,000

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Partly Free



* *The designation of two countries is intended to reflect the international consensus on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the de facto authority over the territory.*

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF

Overview:

A referendum held in December 2006 on a draft constitution for Nagorno-Karabakh elicited criticism from the international community, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which said it would not recognize the vote. Meanwhile, mediators acting under the aegis of the OSCE's Minsk Group renewed efforts to resolve the long-standing dispute over the territory. Armenian president Robert Kocharian met with Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev on several occasions during the year, but no meaningful progress was made by year's end.

Nagorno-Karabakh, populated largely by ethnic Armenians, was established as an autonomous region inside Soviet Azerbaijan in 1923. In February 1988, Nagorno-Karabakh's regional legislature adopted a resolution calling for union with Armenia. The announcement triggered a violent chain of events that led to warfare over the next several years between Armenian, Azerbaijani, and local Nagorno-Karabakh forces.

At its inaugural session in January 1992, Nagorno-Karabakh's new legislature adopted a declaration of independence, which was not recognized by the international community. By the time a Russian-brokered ceasefire was signed in May 1994, Karabakh Armenians, assisted by Armenia, had captured essentially the entire territory, as well as seven adjacent Azerbaijani districts. Virtually all ethnic Azeris had fled or been forced out of the enclave and its surrounding areas, and the fighting had resulted in thousands of deaths and an estimated one million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

In December 1994, the head of Nagorno-Karabakh's state defense committee, Robert Kocharian, was selected by the territory's Parliament for the newly established post of president. Parliamentary elections were held in April and May 1995, and Kocharian defeated two other candidates in a popular vote for president in November of the following year.

In September 1997, Foreign Minister Arkady Ghukasian was elected to replace

Kocharian, who had been named prime minister of Armenia in March of that year. Kocharian was elected Armenia's president in 1998. In the territory's June 2000 parliamentary vote, 123 candidates representing five parties competed for the National Assembly's 33 seats. The ruling Democratic Union Artsakh (ZhAM), which supported Ghukasian, won a slim victory, taking 13 seats. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutiun won 9 seats, the Armenakan Party captured one seat, and formally independent candidates, most of whom supported Ghukasian, won 10. International observers described the electoral campaign and voting process as calm and largely transparent, although problems were noted with the accuracy of some voter lists.

In February 2001, former defense minister Samvel Babayan was found guilty of organizing a March 2000 assassination attempt against Ghukasian and sentenced to 14 years in prison. His supporters insisted that the arrest was politically motivated, as Babayan had been involved in a power struggle with Ghukasian. Others, however, welcomed the arrest and conviction of Babayan, who had been accused of corruption and reportedly wielded considerable political and economic power in the territory.

Ghukasian was reelected to a second term as president in August 2002 with 89 percent of the vote. His closest challenger, former National Assembly Speaker Artur Tovmasian, received just 8 percent. Voter turnout was close to 75 percent. Observers from countries including the United States, Britain, and France reported no serious violations. While a number of domestic and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) concluded that the elections marked a further step in Nagorno-Karabakh's democratization, they did note some flaws, including the limited access for the opposition to state-controlled media. Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry described the election as a violation of international norms, insisting that a legitimate vote could be held only after a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

With both Armenia's president, Kocharian, and Azerbaijan's president, Heydar Aliyev, poised to seek reelection in 2003, few observers expected either leader to make the politically risky concessions needed for any breakthroughs in the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute that year. An upsurge in shooting incidents along the ceasefire line during the summer, which both Armenian and Azerbaijani officials accused the other side of instigating, fueled concerns of a further and more widespread escalation of violence. In the fall of 2003, Aliyev was succeeded by his son, Ilham Aliyev.

Nagorno-Karabakh held local elections in August 2004, ignoring calls from the Council of Europe to cancel the balloting. The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry again issued a protest. Parliamentary elections were held in June 2005, and the opposition criticized the vote, claiming that the authorities used state administrative resources to influence the outcome. Azerbaijani officials likewise criticized the election, insisting that any vote in the region would be illegal until the many Azerbaijanis who had fled Nagorno-Karabakh were allowed to return. According to results issued by the Central Election Commission in Stepanakert, Ghukasian's ZhAM received 12 seats. The Free Motherland Party, allied with the ZhAM, received 10 seats. Another eight seats went to unaffiliated candidates who were believed to be loyal to Ghukasian. Only three seats were won by candidates opposed to the president. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) does not recognize the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and therefore did not monitor the election.

The OSCE's Minsk Group—which had been established a decade earlier to facilitate negotiations on a political settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh's status—hosted

a number of confidence-building meetings in 2005 in order to continue a dialogue between the principal parties. Kocharian and Aliyev met on two separate occasions in 2005, and a number of meetings took place over the course of 2006 at both the ministerial and presidential levels. However, considerable distance remained between the two parties' positions, and at year's end a compromise on the dispute was not within view.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties Nagorno-Karabakh has enjoyed de facto independence from Azerbaijan since 1994 and retains close political, economic, and military ties with Armenia. Parliamentary elections in 1995 and 2000 were regarded as generally free and fair, as were the 1996 and 1997 presidential votes. Parliamentary elections, which the opposition claimed were marred by fraud and other irregularities, were held in June 2005. All of the elections, however, were considered invalid by the international community, which does not recognize Nagorno-Karabakh's independence. Nagorno-Karabakh's president, who is directly elected for up to two five-year terms, appoints the prime minister. The unicameral National Assembly's 33 members are elected from single-mandate districts for five-year terms.

The main political parties in Nagorno-Karabakh are the ZhAM, the Free Motherland Party, Movement 88, and the ARF-D.

On December 10, 2006, a referendum on a draft constitution in Nagorno-Karabakh elicited criticism from the international community, including the OSCE, which said it would not recognize the vote. The OSCE chairman-in-office, Karel De Gucht, said on December 11 that "such a referendum is counter-productive to the ongoing conflict settlement process." Official reports indicated that 98 percent of those voting supported the referendum, which sought to declare the disputed territory an independent and sovereign state.

The territory is believed to suffer from extensive corruption. Nagorno-Karabakh was not listed separately in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The territory of Nagorno-Karabakh officially remains under martial law, which imposes restrictions on civil liberties, including media censorship and the banning of public demonstrations. However, the authorities maintain that these provisions have not been enforced since 1995, a year after the ceasefire was signed.

The government controls many of the territory's broadcast media outlets, and most journalists practice self-censorship, particularly on subjects related to Azerbaijan and the peace process. Underfunded public television broadcasts only several hours a day. Internet access in the territory is limited.

The registration of religious groups is required under Nagorno-Karabakh's 1997 law on religion. The Armenian Apostolic Church, to which most residents belong, is the only religious organization registered with the territory. According to Forum 18, a religious-freedom watchdog group based in Norway, members of various minority faiths, including Pentecostals, Adventists, Baptists, and Jehovah's Witnesses, have faced restrictions on their activities.

Freedom of assembly and association are limited, although trade unions are allowed to organize.

The judiciary, which is not independent in practice, is influenced by the executive branch and powerful political and clan forces.

The majority of Azeris who fled the fighting continue to live in poor conditions in IDP camps in Azerbaijan. International aid organizations, meanwhile, are reducing direct assistance to the IDPs. Land mine explosions continue to cause deaths and injuries each year, with children and teenagers among the most vulnerable groups. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, at least 50,000 antipersonnel mines were laid during the war, but in many cases, records of minefield locations were never created or were lost.

Nagorno-Karabakh's fragile peace has failed to bring significant improvement to the economy, particularly in the countryside, and pensioners are particularly severely affected. Widespread corruption, a lack of substantive economic reforms, and the control of major economic activity by powerful elites limit equality of opportunity for most residents.

China

Hong Kong

Population: 7,000,000

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6.3PF	5.3PF	5.3PF	5.3PF	5.3PF	5.3PF	5.3PF	5.2PF	5.2PF	5.2PF

Overview: Chief Executive Donald Tsang in 2006 rebounded from the defeat of his political reform package in December 2005, successfully representing the often competing interests of the people of Hong Kong and the Chinese leadership. With strong support from both Beijing and Hong Kong residents, Tsang appeared certain to be reelected as chief executive in March 2007. However, critics remained concerned about the progress of Hong Kong's political reform, pointing to the passage of a controversial surveillance law in September 2006.

Located just off the southern Chinese coast, Hong Kong Island was ceded in perpetuity to Britain following the Opium War in 1842; adjacent territories were subsequently added, and the last section was leased to Britain in 1898 for a period of 99 years. Hong Kong's transition to Chinese rule began in 1984 with the Sino-British Joint Declaration, in which London agreed to return the entire colony to China in 1997. In return, Beijing—under Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's "one country, two systems" formula—pledged to maintain the capitalist enclave's legal, political, and economic autonomy for 50 years.

Under the 1984 agreement, London and Beijing drafted a constitution for Hong

Kong known as the Basic Law. It was adopted by the Chinese National People's Congress (NPC) in 1990, and was set to take full effect in 1997. The Basic Law, which stated that universal suffrage was the "ultimate aim" for Hong Kong, allowed direct elections for 18 seats in the territory's 60-member legislature, known as the Legislative Council (Legco), beginning in 1991, with the gradual expansion of elected seats to 30 by 2003. "Functional constituencies"—business and social interest groups, many with close ties to Beijing—were to choose the remaining 30 seats. Hong Kong's last British colonial governor, Christopher Patten, infuriated Beijing with his attempts to deepen democracy by giving ordinary residents a greater say in the selection of Legco's indirectly elected members. After China took control in 1997, Beijing disbanded the partially elected Legco and installed a provisional legislature that repealed or tightened several civil liberties laws during its 10-month tenure.

Tung Chee-hwa was chosen by a Beijing-organized election committee to lead Hong Kong. Widely perceived as a mere proxy for the mainland government, Tung saw his popularity wane as Beijing became increasingly involved in Hong Kong's affairs, and the economy suffered in the wake of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. The government's independence and credibility were questioned further in 2002, when officials introduced Basic Law Article 23, a draft antisubversion bill aimed at replacing colonial-era national security laws. The considerable powers the bill gave to the government led to fears that freedoms of speech and the press would be compromised, and opponents mounted massive protest demonstrations in July 2003. The bill was subsequently tabled, and authorities said it would not be reintroduced.

Following his reelection in 2002, Tung promised to consult with the public on changes to the electoral system. However, in April 2004, the NPC standing committee cut the debate short, unilaterally interpreting the Basic Law and issuing a ruling that rejected universal suffrage for either the 2007 chief executive or 2008 Legco elections. The NPC also maintained that political reform in Hong Kong could not occur without the standing committee's prior approval. In July 2004, hundreds of thousands of people took part in a peaceful rally to protest the ruling.

In the September 2004 Legco elections, pro-Beijing parties retained control of the legislature, with prodemocracy parties winning only 25 of the 60 seats (18 of the 30 directly elected seats and 7 of the 30 seats chosen by functional constituencies). The elections were marred by incidents of intimidation and threats against candidates, journalists, and voters; much of this activity was thought to have been organized by Beijing. In a report issued in September 2004, Human Rights Watch called the multiple instances of election manipulation "some of the most worrying violations of human rights since the 1997 handover."

In March 2005, with two years left to serve, the deeply unpopular Tung resigned as chief executive; he was replaced by Donald Tsang, a career civil servant from the British colonial administration. In another controversial interpretation of the Basic Law, largely reflecting Beijing's concerns about Tsang's political reliability, the NPC ruled that he would serve out the remainder of Tung's term rather than a full five-year term as chief executive.

Tsang has been successful in representing the often competing interests of the people of Hong Kong and the Chinese leadership. His political reform package, which would have doubled the size of the committee that elected the chief executive and expanded Legco by five directly elected and five indirectly elected seats, was de-

feated in the legislature in December 2005. However, he rebounded from the loss in 2006, retaining Beijing's backing and enjoying popularity ratings in Hong Kong of 60-70 percent. Apart from the continued economic recovery, Tsang's popularity was boosted by Beijing's restrained reaction to prodemocracy rallies in December 2005 and July 2006, as well as by expectations that Chinese president Hu Jintao would unveil a timetable for democracy when he made his planned first visit to the territory in July 2007, the tenth anniversary of the return to Chinese rule. While critics remained concerned about the progress of Hong Kong's political reform, pointing to the passage of a controversial surveillance law in September 2006, there was no repeat that year of the widespread demonstrations that greeted the antisubversion bill in 2003. At the end of 2006, Tsang appeared certain to be reelected as chief executive in March 2007.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Hong Kong's Basic Law calls for the election of a chief executive and a unicameral Legislative Council (Legco). The chief executive is elected by an 800-member committee: some 200,000 "functional constituency" voters—representing business and social interest groups, many with close ties to Beijing—elect 600 members, and the remaining 200 consist of Legco members, Hong Kong delegates to the NPC, religious representatives, and 41 members of the mainland's Chinese People's Consultative Conference. The Legco currently consists of 30 directly elected members and 30 members chosen by the functional constituency voters. The chief executive serves a five-year term, and Legco members serve four-year terms.

Although the Basic Law calls for the direct election of Hong Kong's chief executive and Legco, China's NPC in April 2004 ruled out universal suffrage for the 2007 and 2008 elections, invoking the Basic Law's caveat that the transition should be "gradual" and should proceed "in light of the actual situation." The NPC concluded that Hong Kong was "not yet ready" for full democratic government.

In December 2005, Chief Executive Donald Tsang's political reform package was defeated in the Legco after prodemocracy legislators refused to support a plan that did not include a timetable for universal suffrage. There were expectations in 2006 that Chinese president Hu Jintao would mark his first visit to Hong Kong in July 2007 by unveiling a road map for democracy in the territory.

The territory's Basic Law restricts Legco's lawmaking powers, prohibiting legislators from introducing bills that would affect Hong Kong's public spending, governmental operations, or political structure. Legco members can introduce bills concerning governmental policy, but only with the chief executive's prior approval. In certain cases, the government has used a very broad definition of "governmental policy" to block Legco bills. In addition, for an individual member's bill to pass, it must have separate majorities among Legco members who are directly elected and those who represent interest groups. Although there are fair electoral laws, the 2004 Legco elections were marred by voter and candidate intimidation and threats, largely at the hands of Chinese government supporters.

Hong Kong is generally regarded as having low rates of corruption, although it is apparent that business interests have considerable influence on Legco. The right to access government information is protected by law, and such information is provided to citizens in practice. Hong Kong was ranked 15 out of 163 countries

and territories surveyed in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Under Article 27 of the Basic Law, Hong Kong residents enjoy freedom of speech, press, and publication. Hong Kong's media are widely regarded as among the freest in East Asia. Newspapers, magazines, and broadcast media remain outspoken, and political debate is vigorous. International media organizations operate freely in Hong Kong, and foreign reporters do not need government-issued identification to operate. Hong Kong has 16 privately owned newspapers, although four of them are funded by pro-Beijing interests and follow the Chinese government's lead on political issues. Observers remain concerned about media self-censorship, and the Falun Gong spiritual movement has encountered difficulty in trying to publish its *Epoch Times* newspaper. There are no restrictions on internet access.

The Basic Law provides for freedom of religion, which is generally respected in practice. Religious groups are specifically excluded from the Societies Ordinance, which requires nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to register with the government. Falun Gong followers remain free to practice, and none have been denied entry into Hong Kong since 2004, according to the U.S. State Department's 2006 human rights report.

University professors can write and lecture freely, and political debate on campuses is lively. Research is independent of the government.

Passage of the controversial Interception of Communications and Surveillance Ordinance in September 2006, necessitated by a court decision finding that the existing grounds for police surveillance contravened the Basic Law, led to concerns that the measure gave the authorities too much power. Under the new law, the chief executive will appoint a panel of judges to approve surveillance activities, including telephone wiretaps and monitoring of e-mail correspondence.

The Basic Law also guarantees freedom of assembly and association. The police must be notified in advance of events, but they rarely if ever deny permits. Protests on "politically sensitive" issues are held regularly, including an annual commemoration of the 1989 crackdown on demonstrators in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Falun Gong followers frequently hold demonstrations against Beijing's treatment of their counterparts in China.

Even the government's staunchest critics acknowledge that Hong Kong residents enjoy the same basic rights as before the 1997 handover, but many of these rights are now on a weaker legal footing. While the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights continues to be formally incorporated into Hong Kong's 1991 bill of rights, the provisional legislature that served for 10 months after the handover watered down certain provisions and rolled back certain laws protecting workers' rights. It also amended laws to give officials the power to cite national security concerns in denying registration to NGOs, deregistering existing groups, and barring public protests, although these powers have not been exercised.

Hong Kong's trade unions are independent, and membership is not restricted to a single trade, industry, or occupation. However, the laws restrict some basic labor rights and do not protect others. The provisional legislature in 1997 removed both the legal basis for collective bargaining and legal protections against summary dismissal for union activity. The Employment Ordinance provides punishments for antiunion discrimination. Though strikes are legal in the territory, many workers

sign employment contracts stating that job walkouts could be grounds for summary dismissal.

Hong Kong's common-law judiciary is independent, and the judicial process is fair. Trials are public and held before a jury. However, the NPC reserves the right to make a final interpretation of the Basic Law, effectively limiting the power of Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeals. Other than isolated incidents of threats, there are no reports of political terror, unjustified imprisonment, exile, or torture.

Hong Kong's police force, which remains firmly under the control of civilian authorities, is well supervised and not known to be corrupt. The police are forbidden by law to employ torture and other forms of abuse. Arbitrary arrest and detention are also illegal; suspects must be charged within 48 hours of their arrest. Prison conditions generally meet international standards.

Citizens are treated equally under the law, though Hong Kong's large population of foreign domestic workers remains vulnerable to discrimination. Since foreign workers face deportation if dismissed, they remain fearful of bringing complaints against employers.

The government does not control travel, choice of residence, or choice of employment in Hong Kong, although documents are required to travel to the Chinese mainland. The Hong Kong SAR maintains its own immigration system independent of China. In 2004, mainland China relaxed travel restrictions to allow Chinese to visit Hong Kong as individuals, no longer requiring them to join tour groups. However, all Chinese visitors must obtain exit-entry permits from their local public security bureaus before traveling. Employers have to apply to bring workers from China into Hong Kong; direct applications from workers are not accepted.

Though women enjoy equal access to schooling and are protected under the Basic Law, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report, published in March 2006, there is nevertheless discrimination in employment, salary, welfare, inheritance, and promotion. There has also been a worrying increase in the incidence of domestic violence, with one in five families reporting some form of domestic abuse in 2005. Despite robust efforts by the government to stop human trafficking, Hong Kong remains a point of transit and destination for persons trafficked for sexual exploitation or forced labor.

China

Tibet

Population: 5,300,000*

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free



* This figure from China's 2000 census includes 2.4 million Tibetans living in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and 2.9 million Tibetans living in areas of Eastern Tibet that, beginning in 1950, were incorporated into four Chinese provinces.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview: While the Chinese government continued to extol the economic benefits that its Western Development Program was bringing to the region, notably the new Qinghai-Tibet railway, concerns have been raised that the resulting increase in the number of Han Chinese traveling to Tibet would further jeopardize the region's distinct culture and future prospects for autonomy. Separately, in September 2006, a foreign television crew recorded footage of Chinese soldiers shooting and killing Tibetans who were trying to flee across the border into Nepal.

China's occupation of Tibet has marginalized a Tibetan national identity that dates back more than 1,600 years. Beijing's claim to the region is based on imperial influence during China's Mongol and Manchu dynastic periods in the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries, respectively. Communist China invaded central Tibet in 1950 and, in 1951, formally annexed Tibetan territory. In an effort to undermine Tibetan claims to statehood, Beijing split up the lands that had traditionally comprised Tibet, incorporating the eastern portion into four different Chinese provinces. The core central and western portions, which had been under the administration of the Dalai Lama's government, were designated the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in 1965.

The defining event of Beijing's rule took place in 1959, when Chinese troops suppressed a major uprising in Lhasa, following widespread fighting over the previous three years. A reported 87,000 Tibetans were killed in the Lhasa area alone. The massacre forced the Tibetan spiritual and political leader, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, to flee to India with some 80,000 supporters. During the next six years, China closed 97 percent of the region's monasteries and defrocked more than 100,000 monks and nuns. During Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), nearly all of Tibet's 6,200 monasteries were destroyed.

Resistance to Beijing's rule continued and was ruthlessly suppressed through-

out Tibet. Under reforms introduced in 1980, religious practice was allowed again—with restrictions—and tourism was permitted in certain areas. Protests resumed in 1987, and some 200 mostly peaceful demonstrations were mounted over the next six years. Four large-scale protests against Chinese rule took place in Lhasa. After three days of antigovernment protests in March 1989, martial law was imposed on the city and the surrounding areas; it was not lifted until May 1990.

In addition to jailing dissidents, Beijing in the mid-1990s stepped up efforts to control religious affairs and undermine the exiled Dalai Lama's authority. In 1995, six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was detained by the authorities and his selection by the Dalai Lama as the eleventh reincarnation of the Panchen Lama was rejected. The Panchen Lama was the highest religious figure to have remained in Tibet after the mass exodus in 1959. Beijing then orchestrated the selection of another six-year-old boy as the Panchen Lama. Since one of the roles of the Panchen Lama is to identify the reincarnated Dalai Lama, Beijing could control the eventual selection of the fifteenth Dalai Lama. Beijing has also tried to manipulate the identification and education of other religious figures.

In recent years, the Chinese government has made a series of goodwill gestures that may be aimed at influencing international opinion on Tibet. Several Tibetan political prisoners have been freed shortly before the end of their sentences. China hosted envoys of the Dalai Lama in 2002, the first formal contacts between Beijing and the Dalai Lama since 1993, and the fifth round of the ongoing dialogue was held in February 2006. Since 1988, the Tibetan government-in-exile has sought to negotiate genuine autonomy for Tibet, having dropped earlier demands for independence. While official statements suggest Beijing is willing to have contacts with the Dalai Lama, the government disputes his view that an autonomous Tibet should include territory that has been incorporated into Chinese provinces and rejects his aspirations for a democratically elected government within the autonomous area. Other Tibetan groups remain firmly in favor of independence.

At September 2005 celebrations marking the fortieth anniversary of the TAR, the Chinese government praised the achievements of the past 40 years, particularly the economic development, social progress, and stability brought by the Western Development Program. The central achievement of the program is the Qinghai-Tibet railway, inaugurated in July 2006, which links Lhasa with five major Chinese cities: Beijing, Shanghai, Xining, Chengdu, and Guangzhou. Within five years, the railway will be extended from Lhasa to the urban centers of Shigatse and Nyingtri. The Chinese leadership has asserted that it will boost trade, create jobs, and raise living standards. Tourism revenue is expected to exceed \$700 million by 2010, and the number of visitors is set to jump from 1.8 million in 2005 to 10 million by 2020. The Chinese government is also eager to exploit the region's rich natural resources, inviting international companies to carry out oil and gas exploration.

While many Tibetans have benefited from such development, particularly the infrastructural improvements, the changes have disproportionately benefited Han Chinese. Scholars predict that the new railroad will increase Han Chinese migration to the TAR, heightening ethnic tensions and Tibetan fears of cultural assimilation.

Meanwhile, Beijing continues to tighten political control over the region, jailing dissidents and restricting freedoms. The ongoing disregard for human rights was vividly illustrated in September 2006, when a foreign television crew recorded foot-

age of Chinese soldiers shooting and killing Tibetans who were trying to flee across the border into Nepal.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The Chinese government rules Tibet, through administration of the TAR and 10 Tibetan autonomous prefectures in what were traditional Tibetan areas in nearby Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan Provinces. Under the Chinese constitution, autonomous regions have the right to formulate their own regulations and implement national laws and regulations in accordance with local conditions. In practice, the TAR mirrors the rest of China and is governed through the local legislature or people's congress system, with representatives sent annually to attend the National People's Congress in Beijing. Unlike China's provinces, which are run by a governor, autonomous regional governments have the post of chairman, usually held by a member of the largest ethnic group. Jampa Phuntsog, an ethnic Tibetan, has served as chairman of the TAR government since 2003, but few of the other senior positions are held by Tibetans. No Tibetan has ever held the top post of TAR Communist Party secretary. Zhang Qingli, a Han Chinese, was appointed to the post in May 2006. The authorities in the TAR continue to strictly limit basic freedoms guaranteed under the Chinese constitution.

Corruption remains a problem in Tibet. In October 2006, Tibet University students demonstrated against official corruption and discrimination in the allocation of civil service jobs to predominantly Han Chinese, a major cause of discontent among ethnic Tibetan graduates. International concerns have also been raised about criminal organizations using the new Qinghai-Tibet railway to smuggle endangered plant and animal species.

China controls the flow of information in Tibet, tightly restricting all media and regulating internet use. Tibetan-language radio programming by Voice of America, Radio Free Asia (RFA), and the Norway-based Voice of Tibet are jammed along with their Chinese-language counterparts. Increased availability of the internet in urban areas has provided some Tibetans with more access to information, although people must show identity cards before using the internet in public facilities.

An update to the 2000 restrictions on internet content was introduced in late September 2005 as a way of preventing the distribution of uncensored information through websites or e-mail, including all news related to "politics, economics, military affairs, foreign affairs and social and public affairs." This ban includes any information relating to Tibetan independence, the government-in-exile, and human rights abuses. In April 2005, the Tibet Culture Website was closed down, and in October 2006, a series of online blogs written by Tibetan poet and intellectual Oeser were also closed by the Chinese authorities. A media clampdown under way throughout China is being enforced all the more strictly in ethnic minority areas, including Tibet.

According to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report, issued in March 2006, the government's record on respect for religious freedom "remained poor." While some religious practices are tolerated, officials "forcibly suppressed activities they viewed as vehicles for political dissent or advocacy of Tibetan independence." Possession of pictures of the Dalai Lama can still lead to imprisonment. Communist Party members and senior officials in Tibet must adhere to atheism and cannot practice a religion. The Religious Affairs Bureaus (RABs) continue to con-

trol who can and cannot study religion in the TAR. Officials allow only boys over the age of 18 to become monks, and they are required to sign a declaration rejecting Tibetan independence, expressing loyalty to the Chinese government, and denouncing the Dalai Lama. Since 1996, Beijing has strengthened control over monasteries under a propaganda campaign intended to undermine the Dalai Lama's influence as a spiritual and political leader. The government announced the end of this "patriotic education campaign" in 2000, but government-run "work teams" continue to visit monasteries to conduct mandatory sessions. In 2005, 40 out of 50 nuns practicing at the Gyarak Nunnery were expelled for refusing to participate in such sessions. Since Zhang Qingli was appointed Communist Party secretary in Tibet in May 2006, he has called for an intensification of the "patriotic education" campaign for monks and nuns.

The government manages the daily operations of monasteries through Democratic Management Committees (DMCs) and the RABs. The government approves all committee members so that only "patriotic and devoted" monks and nuns may lead DMCs. Since 1995, laypeople have also been appointed to these committees. According to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report, released in March 2006, Beijing claims that Buddhist monasteries are associated with pro-independence activism in Tibetan areas. As a result, spiritual leaders have encountered difficulty reestablishing historical monasteries, facing a lack of funds, restrictions on monastic education, and denial of government permission to operate religious institutions.

In universities, professors cannot lecture on certain topics, and many must attend political indoctrination sessions. The government restricts course materials, prohibiting information deemed "politically sensitive," in order to prevent campus-based political and religious activity. According to the U.S. State Department, students at Tibet University are barred from religious practice.

Independent trade unions, civic groups, and human rights groups are illegal. Some international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) focusing on development and health care operate in Tibet, under highly restrictive agreements signed with Chinese government agencies. However, cumbersome registration requirements and the clampdown on NGOs following the "color revolutions" in some former Soviet republics in 2003-2005 make it increasingly difficult for these organizations to operate.

While some progress has been made in establishing the rule of law in other parts of China, the judicial system in Tibet remains abysmal, with most judges lacking any legal education. There is a lack of access to legal representation, and trials are closed if the issue of "state security" is invoked. In January 2005, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, a senior lama sentenced to death in December 2002, had his sentence, which had been temporarily suspended, formally commuted to life in prison under pressure from the international community. In a trial that Human Rights Watch said "lacked any pretense of due process," he was found guilty in 2002 of causing explosions and inciting separatism. His alleged co-conspirator, Lobsang Dondrup, was executed in January 2003.

Following the September 2006 videotaping of Chinese soldiers shooting Tibetan civilians, there has been a crackdown on people trying to flee across the border to Nepal. In October 2006, some 53 Tibetans were detained for allegedly acting as guides for asylum seekers.

Although the Chinese government allowed the UN Human Rights Commission's Special Rapporteur on torture, Manfred Nowak, to visit Tibet in December 2005,

political dissidents continue to face particularly severe human rights abuses. Security forces routinely engage in arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, and execution without due process, punishing even nonviolent protests against Chinese rule. Former detainees who manage to escape overseas after release, such as Jigme Gyatso, recount stories of torture and forced confessions.

Owing to strictly controlled access to the TAR, it is difficult to determine the exact number of political prisoners. According to the 2006 annual report of the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, there were a total of 103 known political detainees, down from 145 in 2004. However, 24 political detentions took place in 2005, an increase from 15 in 2004. In January 2006, two monks and three nuns were sentenced to up to three years' imprisonment for distributing posters critical of the Chinese government. Separately, Phuntsog Nyidron was permitted to travel to the United States for medical treatment in March 2006, having served 14 years in prison for participating in a peaceful political protest.

As members of one of China's 55 officially recognized "minority" groups, Tibetans receive preferential treatment in university admissions. However, the dominant role of the Chinese language in education and in careers in government, business, and academia limits opportunities for many Tibetans. Furthermore, the illiteracy rate among Tibetans (over 47 percent) remains five times greater than that of Han Chinese (around 9 percent). In the private sector, employers favor Chinese for many jobs, especially in urban areas. Tibetans find it more difficult than Chinese to obtain permits and loans to open businesses.

China's restrictive family-planning policies are more leniently enforced for Tibetans and other ethnic minorities than for Han Chinese. Officials limit urban Tibetans to having two children and encourage—but do not usually require—rural-Tibetans to stop at three children.

Cyprus

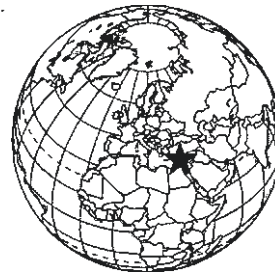
Northern (Turkish) Cyprus

Population: 235,000

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,2PF	4,2PF	4,2PF	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Note: See Cyprus under Country Reports.

Overview: The ruling Republican Turkish Party (CTP) ended its coalition with the Democratic Party (DP) in September 2006,

replacing it with the newly formed Free Party. The DP and the opposition National Unity Party (UBP) blamed the shuffle on alleged meddling by Turkey. No significant progress was made during the year on efforts to reunify the island.

The Ottoman Empire allowed Britain to administer Cyprus beginning in 1878, and Britain annexed the island in 1914. Cyprus gained independence in 1960 after a 10-year guerrilla campaign by partisans demanding union with Greece. In July 1974, Greek Cypriot National Guard members, backed by the military junta in power in Greece, staged an unsuccessful coup aimed at unification with the mainland. Five days later, Turkey invaded northern Cyprus, seized control of 37 percent of the island, and expelled 200,000 Greek Cypriots from the north. Today the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities are almost completely separated into their respective enclaves.

A buffer zone, called the Green Line, has divided Cyprus since 1974. The capital, Nicosia, which is located at the Green Line, is similarly divided. Tensions between the Greek and Turkish populations have plagued the island since independence. UN resolutions stipulate that Cyprus is a single country in which the northern third is illegally occupied. In 1983, Turkish-controlled Cyprus declared its independence as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), an entity recognized only by Turkey.

The Turkish government elected in November 2002 was much more supportive of the reunification of Cyprus than its predecessors, since Turkey's own chances of membership in the European Union (EU) had been linked to a resolution of the island's division. Significant pressure from the EU and the United States, as well as UN intervention, also helped move the two sides closer to a settlement. A new pro-unification government led by Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Talat was elected in northern Cyprus in December 2003.

However, the latest and most promising round of reunification negotiations, led by then UN secretary-general Kofi Annan, collapsed in 2004 after no consensus was reached. As previously agreed, Annan himself then proposed a plan that was put to a vote in simultaneous, separate referendums in northern and southern Cyprus in April 2004. Greek Cypriots, who previously had been more enthusiastic with respect to reunification, had reservations about the plan, especially concerning security and international guarantees that the Turkish side would comply. Ultimately, 76 percent of Greek Cypriots voted against the plan, while 65 percent of Turkish Cypriots voted in favor. With the island still divided, only Greek Cyprus joined the EU as scheduled in May 2004. The EU had used the prospect of membership as a bargaining tool to encourage reunification, but the internationally recognized government's entry was already assured by the time of the late-April referendum. As membership could no longer be used as a bargaining tool with the south, a new reunification plan will be still more difficult to achieve.

In legislative elections held in February 2005, Talat's Republican Turkish Party (CTP) won 44 percent of the vote, increasing its share of seats to 24 out of 50. The National Unity Party (UBP), which had campaigned against reunification in the 2004 referendum, came in second with 32 percent, or 19 seats. Serdar Denktash, the son of President Rauf Denktash, led the CTP-allied Democratic Party (DP) to win six seats, an increase of one. The only other party in parliament was the pro-unification Peace and Democracy Party, which dropped from three seats to one.

The pro-unification government elected in 2003 and the "yes" vote in the 2004 referendum had weakened the power of President Denktash, a unification opponent who had held his post since the north declared independence. He did not run in the April 2005 presidential election. Instead, Talat emerged as the victor in a field of seven candidates, defeating UBP leader Dervish Eroglu, 56 percent to 23 percent.

The ruling coalition of the CTP and the DP had difficulty forming a government after June 2006 by-elections. When three deputies (two from the UBP and one from the DP) resigned to form the new, progovernment Free Party in September, the coalition collapsed, and Serdar Denktash quit the government. The DP and UBP blamed the collapse in part on Turkey, which had cooled to the elder Denktash's anti-EU and anti-unification positions and allegedly extended its disfavor to the son despite his more positive stance on those issues. Turkey was also accused of collusion to weaken the UBP, of whose use of nationalist rhetoric Turkey allegedly disapproved. Prime Minister Ferdi Sabit Soyer kept his post when his CTP formed a new coalition government with the Free Party after the September collapse.

Turkish Cypriots' support for reunification has sparked international efforts to end their isolation. However, attempts to end trade and travel bans have been thwarted by the Greek Cypriots, who have worked against most direct contact between the north and the rest of the world. Talks between Talat and Greek Cypriot president Tassos Papadopoulos in July 2006, the first since the 2004 referendum, led to the approval of a program of confidence-building measures; subsequent negotiations between senior aides made no progress. International mediation led by Finland in fall 2006 failed as well. Still, trade has increased between the two sides since 2004, and free movement across the Green Line has improved as more checkpoints have opened and restrictions have been loosened. Aid packages from the EU suggested after the referendum were approved in February and October 2006.

Living standards in the north, where the economy depends heavily on the government of Turkey, are only about a third of those in the south. The public sector provides most jobs, although many Turkish Cypriots now cross the border to work on the Greek side.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Elections in the TRNC are free and fair. The president and 50-seat Assembly are elected to five-year terms. The powers of the president are largely ceremonial, and the prime minister is head of government. The main parties are the ruling, pro-unification CTP, in coalition with the new Free Party since September 2006; the UBP, which has opposed reunification; and the DP, which left the ruling coalition in September.

The roughly 1,000 Greek and Maronite Christian residents of the north are disenfranchised in the TRNC, but many vote in elections in the southern Republic of Cyprus. Minorities are not represented, and women are underrepresented, in the Assembly.

The government has made efforts to combat corruption in recent years, but graft and lack of transparency are still considered problems in northern Cyprus.

Freedom of the media is generally respected, but problems persist. The criminal code allows the authorities to jail journalists for what they write, and the government has been hostile to the independent press. The editor of the outspoken daily newspaper *Afrika*, for example, has faced hundreds of court summonses for his

paper's criticism of Turkish and Turkish Cypriot officials. On three occasions in the summer of 2006, Turkish Cypriot police arrested Greek Cypriot journalists covering events in northern Cyprus; all were accused of filming in military areas, and most were released soon after. The government does not restrict access to the internet.

A 1975 agreement with Greek Cypriot authorities provides for freedom of worship, which is generally respected. The government does not restrict academic freedom. In 2004, Turkish Cypriot schools began teaching a less partisan account of Cypriot history in favor of multiple perspectives, in accordance with Council of Europe recommendations.

The rights of freedom of assembly and association are respected. Civic groups and nongovernmental organizations generally operate without restrictions. Workers may form independent unions, bargain collectively, and strike, although union members have been subject to harassment.

The judiciary is independent, and trials generally meet international standards of fairness. Turkish Cypriot police, under the control of the Turkish military, sometimes fail to respect due process rights, and there have been allegations of abuse of detainees. The police have been accused of corruption related to narcotics trafficking. Since the TRNC is not recognized by other countries, it has no extradition treaties, and Turkish Cypriots accused of crimes abroad have sometimes fled back to northern Cyprus. However, in 2006, a Turkish Cypriot man charged in Britain for manslaughter was similarly charged and tried in the TRNC, after the British police had requested that action be taken; the trial was still ongoing at the end of the year.

Greek Cypriots and Maronites in the north face discrimination and have alleged that they are subject to official surveillance. They have also experienced difficulties at border crossings to the south.

After the 2004 referendum on reunification, the EU attempted to initiate direct trade and flights between northern Cyprus and the rest of the world, but it was unable to circumvent international regulations that control the ports and airports of the unrecognized state. After joining the EU, the recognized Cypriot government blocked several attempts by the EU to follow through with its initiatives. However, trade between the two parts of the island did increase after restrictions were loosened in 2004, and new border crossings have opened. In addition, all EU citizens, including Greek Cypriots, can now travel to the north by presenting identity cards and no longer require passports or visas. Turkish Cypriots still have difficulty traveling abroad because most governments do not recognize their travel documents, although thousands have obtained Republic of Cyprus passports since the option became available in 2004.

The status of property formerly owned by Greek Cypriots in the north is expected to be a major point of contention in any future reunification talks. In the past, former owners of property in the north who fled to the south in and before 1974 have taken their cases to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), to which they could appeal directly because no adequate local remedy had been judged to be available. The ECHR ruled in April 2005 that the Turkish Cypriot regime must institute more effective mechanisms to address Greek Cypriot property claims in the north; as of December 2005, the court had suspended all further cases on the subject. In March 2006, the Turkish Cypriot authorities announced the formation of a property commission, to which complaints can be brought. The commission had received

more than 40 complaints by August 2006, three of which had been resolved through compensation or by reinstatement of the property.

Violence against women is a problem. Domestic abuse is treated as a family matter and is rarely dealt with in court. There are legal provisions for equal pay for equal work, but these are not always enforced.

Georgia Abkhazia



Population: 340,000

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Partly Free

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
--	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	5.5PF	5.5PF

Overview: The political environment in Abkhazia remained tense in 2006, particularly regarding relations with Georgia, as it appeared that hostilities could break out, potentially leading to a wider regional conflict. Violence in Abkhazia's Gali district, which had an ethnic Georgian population, remained a persistent problem.

Annexed by Russia in 1864, Abkhazia became an autonomous republic within Soviet Georgia in 1930. The year after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, Abkhazia declared its independence from Georgia, igniting a war that lasted nearly 14 months. In September 1993, Abkhaz forces, with covert assistance from Russia, seized control of the city of Sukhumi, ultimately defeating the Georgian army and winning de facto independence for the republic. As a result of the conflict, more than 200,000 residents, mostly ethnic Georgians, fled Abkhazia, and casualty figures were estimated in the thousands. An internationally brokered ceasefire was signed in Moscow in 1994, although the territory's final status remains unresolved.

In the October 1999 elections for president of Abkhazia, Vladislav Ardzinba, the incumbent and the only candidate running for office, was reelected. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations, and other international organizations refused to recognize the vote as legitimate. In a concurrent referendum, the results of which were not accepted by any state, a reported 98 percent of voters supported independence for Abkhazia. Georgia denounced the polls as illegal and as an attempt to sabotage peace talks.

Tensions in the Kodori Gorge, an area of Abkhazia controlled partly by Georgia

and partly by the separatist government, underscored the fragility of the region's peace. In October 2001, a group reportedly consisting of Chechen rebels and Georgian partisans clashed with Abkhaz troops following a deadly raid on a village in the gorge. The downing of a UN helicopter and the bombing of several Abkhaz villages by aircraft that Georgian authorities alleged had come from Russia intensified the conflict. Tbilisi responded by sending troops to the upper part of the gorge in what it said was an operation to protect ethnic Georgians living there from separatist attacks. Abkhaz officials insisted that despite a UN-brokered protocol calling for the withdrawal of Georgian forces, which was signed by Russia and Georgia in 2002, Georgia had not pulled all of its troops out of the Kodori Gorge.

Deputies loyal to Ardzinba won a landslide victory in the March 2002 parliamentary elections when the opposition Revival and People's Party withdrew most of its candidates in protest over the conduct of the campaign. Government-backed candidates, who won all 35 seats in the legislature, ran unopposed for 13 of them. Among the problems cited during the elections were that ethnic Georgians displaced by the war were not able to vote, official radio and television promoted progovernment candidates, and the head of the Central Election Commission had disqualified a number of candidates supported by the opposition. As with previous voting in Abkhazia, the international community declared the elections to be illegitimate.

In April 2003, after just four months in office, the government of Prime Minister Gennady Gagulia resigned. Gagulia stepped down following pressure from Amsakhara, an increasingly powerful opposition political movement representing primarily veterans of the 1992-93 war, which had threatened to organize a mass rally if he remained in office. On April 22, Defense Minister Raul Khajimba was named to succeed Gagulia as prime minister. Subsequently, Amsakhara also called on Ardzinba to resign as president because of his poor health. Ardzinba, who was undergoing medical treatment in Moscow for an undisclosed illness and was no longer actively involved in the daily running of the government, insisted that he had no intention of stepping down before the next presidential election in October 2004.

In advance of the presidential poll, a new political movement called United Abkhazia (Yedinaya Abkhazia) took shape, with the aim of putting forward a single opposition candidate. However, all three of the new movement's leaders became presidential candidates: Sergei Shamba, the Abkhaz foreign minister; Nodar Khashba, a senior official in Russia's emergencies ministry; and Sergei Bagapsh, a former prime minister. The Central Election Commission barred one of the leading contenders, Alexander Ankvab, for allegedly failing to meet the residency requirement for presidential candidates. The commission also cited his refusal to take a full language test to evaluate his command of Abkhaz, which is the official state language of the Abkhaz Republic. Ankvab, who was the breakaway republic's interior minister during the war of 1992-93, has been among the most prominent of Ardzinba's opponents.

Election officials declared Bagapsh the winner of the October 3 poll with 50.08 percent of the vote, more than the 50 percent needed to avert a second round. The postelection period, from the end of 2004 through the beginning of 2005, featured a series of charges and countercharges between Bagapsh and Khajimba, who had the backing of the Ardzinba administration and Moscow. Ardzinba, who had handpicked Khajimba as his successor, contested Bagapsh's apparent victory and refused to leave office. Meanwhile, Russia had imposed economic sanctions on Abkhazia after

Bagapsh was declared the winner. Under pressure from Moscow, Bagapsh and Khajimba ultimately agreed to a deal in which Khajimba would be the vice presidential candidate on Bagapsh's ticket in a rerun of the election. Bagapsh won the presidency in the fresh January 2005 vote, with the newly allied running mates garnering 91 percent of the vote. Turnout was 58 percent of the electorate, a higher-than-expected figure.

In February 2006, key players within Abkhazia's elite put their names to a declaration expressing their desire to have Abkhazia recognized as an independent state. President Bagapsh, Vice President Khajimba, Prime Minister Ankvab and Speaker of Parliament Nuzgar Ashuba headed the list of government and nongovernment figures who signed the document. A perception that Georgia was increasingly likely to take military action was believed to have prompted the public move.

In May 2006, Georgian and Abkhaz officials participated in a UN Coordinating Council meeting, where each side provided the other with peace plans. The Coordinating Council was established by the United Nations in 1997 as a vehicle for discussing issues related to resolving the Abkhaz conflict. The 2006 gathering was the first time since 2001 that the parties had met through this forum. The meeting took up, among other issues, the question of permitting the return of the estimated 200,000 displaced Georgians who fled Abkhazia during the 1992-1993 hostilities.

In an effort to reestablish its authority, in July, Georgian troops entered the upper Kodori Valley, the only portion of Abkhazia that has been under Georgian control. The Georgian central government's move into the Kodori Valley was in response to the refusal of Emzar Kvitsiani, the leader of a Kodori-based paramilitary group, to disarm his forces.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Residents of Abkhazia can elect government officials, but the more than 200,000 displaced Georgians who fled the region during the war in the early 1990s could not vote in any of the elections held since Abkhazia's de facto independence. International organizations including the OSCE, as well as the Georgian government, have criticized the polls as illegitimate.

Although the 1994 constitution established a presidential-parliamentary system of government, the president exercises extensive control. Abkhazia's 1994 constitution provides for a president, who is elected with his vice president, for a five-year term. The Parliament, or "People's Assembly," contains 36 members who are elected for five years in single-seat constituencies.

The agreement struck in December 2004 between Sergei Bagapsh (now president) and Raul Khajimba (now vice president) in advance of the January 2005 rerun of the presidential election was to provide Khajimba's supporters the right to 40 percent of the positions in the future government, in the event that the Bagapsh-Khajimba ticket was successful. The ethnic Georgian Abkhazian Supreme Council has operated as a government in exile in Tbilisi since being expelled from Abkhazia in 1993.

Opposition political parties include Aitara (Revival) Amsakhara, a political group representing primarily veterans of the 1992-1993 war, is a growing force in the territory's political life.

Corruption in the territory is believed to be extensive. Abkhazia is not listed separately on Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Several independent newspapers are published in the territory. Electronic media are controlled by the state and generally reflect government positions. Private television and radio stations are restricted in broadcasting news with political content. Abkhazia's broadcasting infrastructure is poor, as much of it was destroyed during the civil war more than a decade ago.

Most nongovernmental organizations operating in Abkhazia rely on funding from outside the territory.

Defendants' limited access to qualified legal counsel, violations of due process, and lengthy pretrial detentions are among the systemic problems in Abkhazia's criminal justice system.

The human rights and humanitarian situation in Abkhazia continued to be a very serious problem in 2006. In its July 2005 resolution extending the Georgia observer mission (UNOMIG) through January 2006, the UN Security Council stressed "[t]he urgent need for progress on the question of refugees and internally displaced persons." With increased tension plaguing the region, the mandate was last extended by resolution 1716 (October 2006) and was set to expire on April 15, 2007. In August 2006, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Jean Arnault as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Georgia.

The security environment in the Gali district, whose population is largely ethnic Georgian, remained fragile over the course of 2006, with a number of killings occurring during the year. While some Georgian schools operate in Gali, many residents in the district do not have access to education in the Georgian language.

Travel and choice of residence are limited by the ongoing separatist dispute. Approximately 200,000 ethnic Georgians who fled Abkhazia during the early 1990s are living in western Georgia, primarily in the Zugdidi district bordering Abkhazia. Most of these internally displaced persons are unable or unwilling to return because they fear for their safety. As much as 85 percent of the Abkhaz population hold Russian passports and receive social benefits as Russian citizens.

Equality of opportunity and normal business activities are limited by widespread corruption, the control by criminal organizations of large segments of the economy, and the continuing effects of the war. Abkhazia's economy is heavily reliant on Russia.

India

Kashmir

Population: 11,400,000

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF

Overview: Meaningful progress on a solution to the conflict over Kashmir, which has killed at least 45,000 civilians, soldiers, and militants since 1989, remained elusive throughout 2006. However, the November 2003 reciprocal ceasefire between Indian and Pakistani troops was largely upheld during the year, the two national governments held several rounds of talks, and New Delhi also engaged in discussions with local separatist groups in Indian-administered Kashmir. Although attacks targeting Hindu civilians and other minorities took place on a number of occasions, the overall level of violence fell during 2006, continuing a four-year trend.

After centuries of rule by Afghan, Sikh, and local strongmen, the British seized control of Kashmir in 1846 and sold it to the Hindu maharajah of the neighboring principality of Jammu. The maharajah later incorporated Ladakh and other surrounding areas into what became the new princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. During the partition of British India into the new nations of India and Pakistan in 1947, Maharajah Hari Singh attempted to preserve Jammu and Kashmir's independence. However, after Pakistani tribesmen invaded, the maharajah agreed to Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India in return for promises of autonomy and eventual self-determination.

Within months of gaining their independence, India and Pakistan went to war in Kashmir. A UN-brokered ceasefire in January 1949 established the present-day boundaries, which gave Pakistan control of roughly one-third of Jammu and Kashmir, including the far northern and western areas. India retained most of the Kashmir Valley along with predominantly Hindu Jammu and Buddhist-majority Ladakh.

Under Article 370 of India's constitution and a 1952 accord, the territory received substantial autonomy. However, New Delhi began annulling the autonomy guarantees in 1953, and in 1957, India formally annexed the part of Jammu and Kashmir under its control. Seeking strategic roads and passes, China seized a portion of Kashmir in 1959. India and Pakistan fought a second, inconclusive war over the territory in 1965. Under the 1972 Simla accord, New Delhi and Islamabad agreed to respect the Line of Control (LOC) dividing the region, and to resolve Kashmir's status through negotiation.

The armed insurgency against Indian rule gathered momentum after 1987, when the pro-India National Conference Party won state elections that were marred by widespread fraud and violence, and authorities began arresting members of a new, Muslim-based, opposition coalition. Militant groups with links to political parties assassinated several National Conference politicians and attacked government targets in the Kashmir Valley. The militants included the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and other pro-independence groups consisting largely of indigenously Kashmiris, as well as Pakistani-backed Islamist groups seeking to bring Kashmir under Islamabad's control.

As the violence escalated, New Delhi placed Jammu and Kashmir under federal rule in 1990 and attempted to quell the mass uprising by force. By the mid-1990s, the Indian army had greatly weakened the JKLF, which abandoned its armed struggle in 1994. The armed insurgency has since been dominated by Pakistani-backed extremist groups, which include in their ranks many non-Kashmiri fighters from elsewhere in the Muslim world. Although opposition parties joined together to form the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) in 1993, they boycotted the 1996 state elections, and the National Conference was able to form a government under party leader Farooq Abdullah.

In August 2000, Hizbul Mujahideen, the largest armed group in Kashmir, initiated a dialogue with the Indian government, but talks broke down when India refused to include Pakistan in the discussions. A summit held in 2001 failed to resolve the two countries' long-standing differences over Kashmir. Militants stepped up their attacks in the aftermath of the summit, with an increasing focus on targeting Hindu civilians in the southern districts of the state. In addition, a leading moderate separatist politician, Abdul Ghani Lone, was assassinated in May 2002, probably by a hard-line militant group.

Seeking legitimacy for the electoral process, New Delhi encouraged all political parties to participate in the fall 2002 state elections, but was unsuccessful in persuading the APHC to contest the polls. However, in a surprise result, the ruling National Conference lost 29 of its 57 assembly seats, while the Congress Party and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) made significant gains, winning 16 and 20 seats, respectively. In November, the two parties formed a coalition government headed by the PDP's Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. The new government promised to address human rights violations, corruption, and economic development, and urged the central government to hold peace talks with separatist political groups. In October 2005, Sayeed stepped down as chief minister in keeping with the 2002 power-sharing agreement with Congress, under which the two parties agreed to swap the post every three years. Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, previously an urban development minister, was named as Sayeed's replacement.

After initial signs of improvement during the new Sayeed government's honeymoon period in early 2003, the incidence of both violence and human rights violations returned to previous levels. Nevertheless, the Indian government has shown a greater willingness to initiate dialogue with various Kashmiri groups, including the APHC. In January 2004, talks were held for the first time between Kashmiri separatists and the highest levels of the Indian government. The newly elected federal government announced in November 2004 that in response to an improved security situation, it planned to reduce troop numbers in the region; in addition, it presented

a four-year, \$5 billion development package designed to improve infrastructure, education, and tourism.

India issued travel documents to a number of separatist political leaders that allowed them to meet with Pakistan-based Kashmiri separatists in June 2005; at the meeting, APHC spokesperson and leading moderate Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said that the time had come for Kashmiri politicians to take the lead in finding a peaceful solution. The APHC's commitment to renouncing violence was reiterated in September, when an APHC delegation met with Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh. However, the desire of Kashmiris to become more deeply involved in the negotiating process has been hampered by an emerging split within the APHC between hardliners, who favor a continuation of the insurgency, and moderates, who favor a political solution.

Authorities in New Delhi have also attempted to improve relations with Pakistan. In November 2003, Pakistan declared a cease-fire across the LOC, which India reciprocated; the cease-fire has largely held since then. Since announcing the resumption of a "composite dialogue," including discussion of the Kashmir dispute, in January 2004, the two governments have held several rounds of talks. Although little substantive progress has been made on finding a lasting solution to the conflict, the two sides have discussed a range of issues and continued to affirm their commitment to solving the Kashmir dispute through peaceful negotiations. A number of confidence-building measures, such as improved nuclear safeguards, reopened transport links, and an increased diplomatic presence, have gradually been implemented. India and Pakistan agreed in February 2005 to start a bus service across the LOC that would link the capitals of Indian and Pakistani Kashmir. After bureaucratic delays and despite threats from insurgent groups—militants attacked targets along the intended route twice before the bus's launch—the service started in April. This historic opening allowed Kashmiri civilians to reunite with family members, many of whom had been unable to see each other for decades, although due to onerous red tape relatively few Kashmiris have been able to avail themselves of this new opportunity.

In October 2005, Pakistani-administered Kashmir and parts of Indian-administered Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Pakistan were hit by an earthquake whose epicenter was near the Pakistani-Kashmir capital of Muzaffarabad. Although Indian-administered Kashmir escaped the brunt of the destruction, about 1,300 people were killed and 150,000 were rendered homeless. After several weeks of wrangling, India and Pakistan agreed to open their border at several crossing points to facilitate family contacts and improve relief efforts, and India also allowed Pakistan to fly helicopters over previously restricted airspace. However, both governments were accused of permitting territorial sensitivities to overshadow the need to cooperate on a massive relief effort in very difficult mountainous terrain.

During 2006, peace talks with Pakistan continued but progress on resolving the Kashmir dispute remained incremental. In a token gesture, India reduced troop levels in Kashmir by 3,000 men, although a much more substantive demilitarization has been discussed. Following talks between the Indian government and various separatist factions in May, the Indian prime minister announced the formation of five working groups tasked with discussing various issues related to the conflict, including improving Srinagar-New Delhi relations, improving relations across the LOC, furthering the state's economic development, reviewing the cases of detainees, and

ensuring good governance. He also reiterated the importance of cracking down on human rights abuses. In a positive development, four by-elections for the state legislature were held in April 2006 with close to a 60 percent turnout, despite militant groups' calls for a boycott. The number of fatalities continued to decrease, in a continuation of a trend dating to 2002; about 1,100 people were killed during 2006, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP). However, violence still continues, albeit at a lower level; a spate of grenade attacks targeted tourists in the spring, while attacks on security forces, politicians, and minority groups took place throughout the year.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Each of India's states, including Jammu and Kashmir, is governed by an appointed governor who serves as titular head of state and by an elected bicameral legislature headed by a chief minister. India has never held a referendum on Kashmiri self-determination as called for in a 1948 UN resolution. The state's residents can nominally change the local administration through elections, which are held at least once every five years, but historically, elections have been marred by violence, coercion by security forces, and balloting irregularities. Militants commonly enforce boycotts called for by separatist political parties, threaten election officials and candidates, and kill political activists and civilians during the balloting. During the campaign period leading up to the 2002 elections for the 87-seat state assembly, more than 800 people, including over 75 political activists and candidates, were killed. However, the balloting process itself was carefully monitored by India's Election Commission, and turnout averaged just over 40 percent. Most independent observers judged the elections to be fair but not entirely free, largely because of the threat of violence. The municipal elections held in February 2005 were also largely peaceful despite some threats of violence and calls for a boycott.

Those who participate in the political process face continued threats and violence from militant groups, who target senior politicians as well as party activists. In a high-profile assassination, Education Minister Ghulam Nabi Lone was killed in October 2005. Insurgents attacked activists of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in Soporan district in January 2006, killing three people. In April, according to the SATP, unidentified terrorists shot dead Mohammed Afzal, a municipal councillor from Sopore who had run as a Congress-backed independent candidate in the 2005 municipal elections. Just after the elections, two newly elected councillors were killed, and several others resigned after receiving threats.

Although Jammu and Kashmir was returned to local rule in 1996, many viewed the National Conference Party government as corrupt, incompetent, and unaccountable to the wishes and needs of Kashmiris. An International Crisis Group report noted that official corruption is "widespread," and corruption cases are seldom prosecuted. Much corrupt behavior and illegal economic activity can be traced directly to political leaders and parties and to militant groups. The new state government made a commitment to address issues of corruption and governance; however, progress in improving both has been slow, and government opacity remains a major concern. Indian-controlled Kashmir was not ranked separately on Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Primarily because of pressure from militants, conditions for the media remain

difficult, and many journalists practice some level of self-censorship. Militant groups regularly threaten and sometimes kidnap, torture, or kill journalists. In February 2006, staff at the *Greater Kashmir* newspaper received threats from members of a breakaway JKLF faction who felt that the paper was not providing them with adequate coverage; the gunmen also ransacked the popular newspaper's offices and damaged equipment. A correspondent for a national daily was abducted and almost killed by militants in June. Journalists are occasionally also harassed or detained by the authorities. Reporter Abdul Rouf and his wife were detained without charge in late November and were accused in December of harboring militants at their home; they remained under arrest at year's end, although they reportedly denied the charges. Photojournalist Maqbool Sahil has been detained since September 2004 under the Public Safety Act, charged with possessing official secrets and spying for Pakistan. In both cases, security services have disregarded judicial orders to free the accused.

Though it is generally not used, India's 1971 Newspapers Incitements to Offenses Act (in effect only in Jammu and Kashmir) gives district magistrates the authority to censor publications in certain circumstances. Pressure to self-censor has also been reported at smaller media outlets that rely on state government advertising for the majority of their revenue. Despite these restrictions, however, newspapers do report on controversial issues such as alleged human rights abuses by security forces. Authorities generally do not restrict foreign journalists' access to the state or to separatist leaders, according to the U.S. State Department's 2006 human rights report. Internet access is unrestricted. Threats from extremist militants forced some cable television operators to temporarily suspend services in May 2006, and the offices of one operator were bombed in October.

Freedom to worship and academic freedom are generally respected by Indian and local authorities. In 2003, for the first time in over a decade, the state government granted permission to separatist groups seeking to organize a procession to mark the prophet Muhammad's birthday; permission was granted again in subsequent years, according to the U.S. State Department's 2006 International Religious Freedom Report. However, Islamist militant groups do target Hindu and Sikh temples or villages for attack; a number of such incidents, in which dozens of civilians were killed, occurred during the year. In a rare case of Muslim-Buddhist tension, the alleged desecration of a Koran sparked a violent altercation between members of the two communities in Leh in February 2006, leaving a number of people injured.

Freedoms of assembly and association are occasionally restricted. Although local and national civil rights groups are permitted to operate, the Indian government has banned some international groups from visiting the state. Several human rights activists have been killed since 1989, and the few individuals and groups that continue to do human rights work are sometimes unable to travel freely within the state or are subject to harassment from both security forces and pro-government militias. The APHC, an umbrella group of 23 secessionist political parties, is allowed to operate, although its leaders are frequently subjected to short-term preventative arrest, and its requests for permits for public gatherings are routinely denied. Senior JKLF leader Javed Ahmad Mir was taken into preventative custody several times during 2006, once after taking part in a protest against human rights abuses in Srinagar. Until 2005, the Indian government had also denied permission for APHC leaders to travel to Pakistan. Politically motivated strikes, protest marches, and an-

tigovernment demonstrations take place on a regular basis, although some are forcibly broken up by the authorities.

The judiciary was able to function more effectively in 2006, according to the U.S. State Department's human rights report, but judges, witnesses, and the families of defendants remain subject to threats and intimidation from militants. In addition, the government frequently disregards judicial orders quashing detentions, and security forces refuse to obey court orders. Many judicial abuses are facilitated by the 1978 Public Safety Act and other broadly drawn laws that allow authorities to detain people for up to two years without charge or trial. Although detentions under the security laws are nonrenewable, authorities frequently re-arrest suspects and impose new detentions; sources estimate that several hundred people are held in preventative detention under such legislation at any given time.

In a positive step, the draconian 2002 Prevention of Terrorism Act was repealed by the new Indian government in September 2004. However, two other broadly written laws—the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the Disturbed Areas Act—allow Indian forces to search homes and arrest suspects without a warrant, shoot suspects on sight, and destroy homes or buildings believed to house militants or arms. Moreover, the Special Powers Act requires New Delhi to approve any prosecution of Indian forces. Impunity is the norm, and efforts to bring soldiers to justice have been rare, but disciplinary action is occasionally meted out to members of the police and security forces, and in a few cases criminal charges have been filed. In April 2006, the national Central Bureau of Investigation indicted five army officers for the March 2000 extrajudicial killing of five villagers at Pathribal. While the state human rights commission (HRC) examines some complaints (it has received hundreds since its inception, mostly regarding prisoner release, custodial deaths, and alleged harassment by security forces), it is hampered by inadequate resources and infrastructure. In addition, it cannot directly investigate abuses by the army or other federal security forces, or take action against those found to have committed violations. In August 2006, the chairperson of the HRC resigned, citing concern that the state government was not sufficiently serious about human rights issues.

In a continuing cycle of violence, hundreds of militants, security force personnel, and civilians are killed each year, although the number continued to decline during 2006; the SATP reported that 349 civilians, 168 security force personnel, and 599 militants were killed during the year, for a total of 1,116. Approximately 600,000 Indian security personnel based in Kashmir, including soldiers, federal paramilitary troops, and the police, carry out arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture, "disappearances," and custodial killings of suspected militants and alleged civilian sympathizers. As part of the counterinsurgency effort, the government has organized and armed progovernment militias composed of former militants. Members of these groups act with impunity and have reportedly carried out a wide range of human rights abuses against pro-Pakistani militants and civilians. According to Amnesty International's 2006 report, the level of violations has slightly decreased, but at least 6 deaths in custody, 38 enforced disappearances (including several juveniles), and 22 extrajudicial killings were reported during the year. Local human rights groups estimate that at least 8,000 people have "disappeared" during the course of the insurgency.

Of particular concern is the continuing problem of custodial killings, in which

police and security forces kill militants or civilians held in custody and then claim that they were "encounter" deaths, meaning they were killed during firefights. The practice is exacerbated by the fact that security force personnel are often rewarded—with either cash or a promotion—for producing a dead "militant," and holding militants in custody is considered a security risk.

Armed with increasingly sophisticated and powerful weapons, and relying to a greater degree on the deployment of suicide squads, militant groups backed by Pakistan continue to kill pro-India politicians, public employees, suspected informers, members of rival factions, soldiers, and civilians. The roughly 1,400 active militants also engage in kidnapping, rape, extortion, and other forms of intimidation. Violence targeting Pandits, or Kashmiri Hindus, is part of a pattern dating to 1990 that has forced several hundred thousand Hindus to flee the region; many continue to reside in refugee camps near Jammu. On April 30 and May 1, 2006, militants killed at least 35 Hindus living in Udhampur and Doda districts. Other religious and ethnic minorities such as Sikhs and Gujjars have also been targeted. Until a cease-fire was declared in November 2003, shelling by Indian and Pakistani troops along the LOC killed numerous civilians, displaced thousands more, and disrupted schools and the local economy. An extensive September 2006 report by Human Rights Watch documented patterns of abuse carried out by all sides, and pointed out that widespread impunity for such abuse has only helped to perpetuate the conflict.

As in other parts of India, women face some societal discrimination as well as domestic violence and other forms of abuse. Female civilians continue to be subjected to harassment, intimidation, and violent attack, including rape and murder, at the hands of both the security forces and militant groups. In recent years, women and girls have also been targeted by Islamist groups and pressured to adopt more conservative styles of dress or stop attending school, but there were no reported instances of this in 2006. In May, protesters led by Asiya Andrabi, head of the separatist women's group Dukhtaran-e-Millat, demonstrated after news reports surfaced of a prostitution ring that catered to local and Indian politicians and law enforcement personnel; some alleged that the ring had official sanction and was also used to gain information regarding militant activities. Andrabi had previously campaigned against adultery and alcohol consumption in the state.

Israel

Israeli-Occupied Territories

Populations: 4,018,000 (1,482,000: Gaza; 2,536,000: West Bank). In addition, there are some 187,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank and 20,000 in the Golan Heights. Approximately 177,000 Jews and 174,000 Arabs live in East Jerusalem.



Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free

Note: The areas and total number of persons under Israeli jurisdiction changed periodically during the year as a result of the fluid nature of Israel's military presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6.5NF	6.5NF	6.5NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	6.6NF	6.5NF	6.5NF

Overview: Gains in personal freedom for the Palestinians resulting from the 2005 withdrawal of Israeli settlers and army personnel from the Gaza Strip and the dismantling of four settlements in the West Bank were tempered in 2006 by renewed Israeli military activity and the continued construction of the West Bank security barrier. Armed Israeli incursions into Palestinian areas of the West Bank, while less common than in the years between 2001 and 2004, nonetheless occurred with some frequency in 2006. Mutual ceasefires announced by Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) early in 2005 broke down amid frequent rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel and the ensuing Israeli military operations. Construction in Israel's largest West Bank settlement blocs continued in 2006, and hopes for a further "disengagement" from the West Bank were checked by continued unrest in Gaza. Israeli court rulings called for adjustments to the route of the West Bank security barrier at several junctures throughout the year to ameliorate its impact on Palestinian civilians.

After the Arab Higher Committee and the Arab League rejected a UN partition plan in November 1947, Israel declared its independence on the portion of land allotted for Jewish settlement. In 1948, the fledgling state was jointly attacked by neighboring Arab countries in Israel's War of Independence. Israel maintained its sovereignty and captured additional territory. Jordan captured East Jerusalem and the West Bank, while Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip. In the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel seized the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, as well as the Sinai

Peninsula (from Egypt) and the Golan Heights (from Syria). The Golan Heights had been used by Syria to shell northern Israeli communities.

After 1967, Israel began establishing Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, an action regarded as illegal by most of the international community. Israel has maintained that the settlements are legal since under international law the West Bank and Gaza are in dispute, with their final legal status to be determined through direct bilateral negotiations based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. The settlements have become a major sticking point in negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and in relations between Israel and the international community.

In what became known as the first *intifada* (uprising), Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza began attacking mainly Israeli settlers and Israel Defense Forces (IDF) troops in 1987 to protest Israeli rule. A series of secret negotiations between Israel and Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) conducted mostly in Oslo, Norway, produced an agreement in September 1993. The Declaration of Principles provided for a PLO renunciation of terrorism, PLO recognition of Israel, Israeli troop withdrawals, and gradual Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza.

Most of Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho were turned over to the new Palestinian Authority (PA) in May 1994. Following the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 by a right-wing Jewish extremist opposed to the peace process, Israel, under the stewardship of Prime Minister Shimon Peres, began redeploying its forces from six major Palestinian cities in the West Bank and Gaza.

Under the Oslo provisions implemented so far, the Palestinians have had full or partial control of Gaza and up to 40 percent of the territory of the West Bank (including 98 percent of the Palestinian population outside of East Jerusalem). However, Palestinian jurisdiction eroded considerably after the September 2000 eruption of the second intifada, triggered by Likud party leader Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount. The IDF subsequently reentered areas under PA control.

At the U.S. presidential retreat of Camp David in July 2000 and at Taba, Egypt, in the fall and in early 2001, Israeli and Palestinian leaders engaged in negotiations under U.S. sponsorship. For the first time, Israel discussed compromise solutions on Jerusalem, agreeing to some form of Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem and Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem's Old City. Israel also offered all of the Gaza Strip and more than 95 percent of the West Bank to the Palestinians. The Palestinian leadership rejected the Israeli proposals; analysts suggest that Arafat did not believe Israel's guarantee of contiguity of Palestinian territory in the West Bank and rejected Jewish claims to Jerusalem. In addition, Israel refused to recognize the "right of return" to current-day Israel for Palestinian refugees.

After the collapse of the talks, the Palestinians' armed uprising continued, and violence flared throughout the occupied territories. Meanwhile, Sharon was elected Israeli prime minister in February 2001. Insisting that the PA was not preventing terrorism, Israel responded to successive waves of Palestinian suicide bombings by staging raids into Palestinian-ruled territory, destroying weapons factories and killing top leaders and members of radical Islamist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, as well as members of the secular Tanzim and al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, both offshoots of the mainstream Fatah movement. Many Palestinian civilians were also killed in the Israeli raids.

In April 2003, Israel and the Palestinians agreed to abide by a road map to peace put forward by the United States, Russia, the United Nations, and the European Union. The multistage, performance-based plan demanded coordinated Palestinian and Israeli steps toward peace, and the eventual creation of an independent Palestinian state.

After the death of Yasser Arafat in November 2004 and the election of Mahmoud Abbas as the new PA president in January 2005, violence between the two sides declined markedly. In February 2005, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon and Abbas met in Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt, and agreed on a formal truce that lasted through June 2006. In August 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew all settlers from the Gaza Strip, ending its 38-year presence in the Palestinian coastal enclave. About 9,000 settlers left their homes in 21 settlements in Gaza. By September 2005, all IDF troops had pulled out, and Palestinians were free to move about Gaza, no longer encumbered by numerous IDF checkpoints and roadblocks. However, while Israel handed over control of Gaza's southern border to the PA and the European Union (subject to Israeli surveillance), it retained control over the airspace and coastline.

Elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) were held in January 2006. The Islamist party Hamas, running under the name "List of Change and Reform," won 74 of 132 seats. Fatah, the party formed by Arafat and led by President Abbas, won only 45 seats. The results provided Hamas with the ability to form a government without Fatah support. Hamas's popularity was due in large part to its network of health clinics and schools and its vow to fight corruption; its electoral gains were a significant challenge to the Fatah-dominated PA, which was widely viewed as corrupt.

In June 2006, in response to the killing of eight Palestinian civilians by an artillery shell landing on a Gaza beach, Hamas declared an end to the truce with Israel and fired nearly 20 Qassam rockets into southern Israel on June 10 alone. The PA, as well as all armed factions involved, claimed that the errant shell was fired by Israeli forces, while the Israeli government maintained that the nearest military position was out of range and therefore Israel could not have been responsible. The event remained a source of dispute.

June also marked the first entry of Israeli forces into the Gaza Strip since the unilateral "disengagement" in September 2005. The assault came in response to a raid on an Israeli army outpost in the western Negev Desert by militants from Hamas and other groups based in the Gaza Strip. The militants' raid resulted in the killing of two Israeli soldiers and the capture of Israeli corporal Gilad Shalit. Israel's reentry into Gaza followed three days later. Israel said the move, Dubbed Operation Summer Rains, was intended to recover the kidnapped soldier and neutralize areas of the Gaza Strip from which Qassam fire was believed to be emanating. The fierce fighting that ensued resulted in the deaths of dozens of unarmed Palestinian civilians. Israel was condemned by human rights groups for such deaths, as well as for the destruction of a major power plant in Gaza and the resulting loss of electricity to a significant percentage of Gaza residents. Operation Summer Rains saw much of the newly autonomous Gaza population fall once again under Israeli military control, though Israel maintained throughout the year that it had no intention of reoccupying the area.

Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip decreased somewhat between the months of August and September, but there was another spike in October and No-

vember as Israel sought to halt rocket fire from the north of the Strip and destroy tunnels under the border. PA-controlled areas of the northern West Bank also faced incursions by the Israeli military during the year, notably in early October, when operations in Qabatiya and Nablus led to the deaths of four Palestinian militants.

Israel's policy of assassinating suspected terrorists continued in 2006. Israeli Air Force (IAF) air strikes in February killed two members of Islamic Jihad and two members of al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, all of whom Israel said were responsible for firing Qassam rockets from Gaza into Israel. IAF air strikes later in February killed two senior commanders of al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and strikes in June killed senior militants from Islamic Jihad and the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC), including PRC leader Jamal Abu Samhadana, one Israel's most wanted. Further air strikes in October killed three Hamas military commanders and at least one member of al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades who Israel said had been involved in Qassam rocket attacks.

Israel continued construction of a controversial security fence roughly along the West Bank side of the 1949 armistice line (Green Line). Composed of high-wire fencing, ditches, security sensors, watchtowers, and concrete slabs, the fence's stated purpose was to prevent terrorists from infiltrating Israel. In some areas, it jutted farther east into the West Bank and restricted Palestinian access to agricultural property, schools, and jobs. Palestinians complained that the barrier was a means to expropriate West Bank land and collectively punish ordinary Palestinians for acts committed by terrorists.

In recent years, the Israeli Supreme Court has ordered on numerous occasions that the proposed route of the security barrier be changed to reduce its negative impact on Palestinian residents. In 2006 alone, the Supreme Court heard over 100 petitions, filed by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and Palestinian civilians, alleging hardship resulting from the route of the barrier. The Ministry of Defense continued to alter the route of the barrier in response to Supreme Court rulings. Analysts have suggested that the barrier would ultimately incorporate 8 percent of West Bank land, putting 99.5 percent of Palestinians outside the barrier. Once complete, however, the barrier would cut off approximately 55,000 Palestinians living in East Jerusalem from the rest of the city. Israel continued to insist that the fence was a temporary solution to an ongoing terrorist threat, not a permanent border.

The internationally backed road map put forward in 2003 demands a freeze on settlements, a condition that Israel has not honored. U.S. president George W. Bush publicly acknowledged in 2004 that some large West Bank settlements would remain intact as part of a final-status resolution to the conflict, particularly the heavily populated settlements close to the Green Line. A report issued in 2005 at Sharon's request—before Israel dismantled four West Bank settlements in August—stated that more than half of the illegal settler outposts in the West Bank were built on land whose ownership was unclear, or on land owned by Palestinians. Outposts normally consist of a handful of trailer homes placed mainly by religious Jews on uninhabited land. The report said that the Israeli Ministry of Housing had provided some financing for the outposts even though the cabinet had not approved their construction.

Israel's Supreme Court hears petitions from non-Israeli residents of the occupied territories and frequently receives petitions to remove outposts allegedly built on confiscated land. Rights groups often charge that such petitions are not adjudicated in a timely fashion and are sometimes dismissed without sufficient cause. In

February 2006, the IDF destroyed nine permanent houses at the illegal outpost of Amona, following a petition from the Israeli NGO Peace Now. More recently, Palestinian petitioners from the villages of Burqa and Deir-Dibwan in November joined a similar petition lodged by Peace Now to force the removal of the relatively large outpost of Migron. In May, Israeli defense minister Amir Peretz authorized the expansion of the Jewish community of Beitar Illit and three other West Bank settlements. Tenders were issued in September for 342 new houses in Beitar Illit alone.

In the run-up to the Israeli elections in March 2006, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert expressed his desire to withdraw from several more small settlements, to complete construction of the West Bank security barrier, and to consolidate Israel's hold over a small number of large settlement blocs adjacent to the Green Line. However, further settlement withdrawal, beyond the dismantling of temporary outposts, seemed to have halted amid continued unrest in Gaza.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Since they are not citizens of Israel, Palestinians under Israeli control in the West Bank and Gaza cannot vote in Israeli elections. They are permitted to vote in elections organized by the PA. Balloting held in January 2005 resulted in the election of Mahmoud Abbas as president of the PA. Israel helped facilitate voting by easing roadblocks and checkpoints in the West Bank and Gaza. Concerning the January 2006 PLC elections, the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) found that "despite some problems during the campaign and with electoral preparations, Israeli authorities generally eased travel through checkpoints on election day to facilitate freedom of movement."

After Israel annexed East Jerusalem in 1967, Arab residents there were issued Israeli identity cards and given the option of obtaining Israeli citizenship. However, by law, Israel strips Arabs of their Jerusalem residency if they remain outside the city for more than three months. Arab residents of East Jerusalem who do not choose Israeli citizenship have the same rights as Israeli citizens except the right to vote in national elections (they can vote in municipal elections). Many choose not to seek citizenship out of solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, believing East Jerusalem should be the capital of an independent Palestinian state. East Jerusalem's Arab population does not receive a share of municipal services proportionate to its numbers.

Arabs in East Jerusalem have the right to vote in PA elections, but do so subject to restrictions imposed by the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem. In advance of the January 2006 elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), the PA's legislative body, Israeli authorities announced that polling could take place at five designated post offices in East Jerusalem, in keeping with a compromise reached prior to PA elections held in 1996. Israel initially announced its intention to bar campaigning in Jerusalem, in response to Hamas's intention to field candidates in the elections. However, a compromise was reached on this issue, whereby only those parties that registered with the Jerusalem municipality would be allowed to campaign; Hamas was not allowed to register.

Druze and Arabs in the Golan Heights who were under Syrian rule before Israel captured the area in 1967 and annexed it in 1981 cannot vote in Israeli national elections, but they are represented at the municipal level.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most closely covered news stories in the world, a circumstance that suggests there is a relatively high degree of press freedom in the occupied territories. However, international press freedom groups regularly criticize Israel for blocking journalists' access to active conflict zones, for harming and sometimes killing reporters during battles, and for harassing Palestinian journalists. Israel has long denied that it deliberately targets journalists and insists that reporters covering armed conflict in the West Bank and Gaza are in danger of getting caught in crossfire. In one high-profile incident, British freelance cameraman and film director James Miller was fatally shot in the Gaza Strip in 2003. In January 2005, a cameraman for Israeli Channel 10, Majdi al-Arabid, was wounded by gunfire while filming the entry of Israeli troops into Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. In April 2006, a British Coroner's Court declared the death an unlawful killing on the part of the IDF, to which Israel has responded with a promise to further examine the incident. In November, Nabil al-Mazzawi, a cameraman with Qatar-based television station Al-Jazeera, was beaten by Israeli soldiers and held for several hours following violent demonstrations against Israel's security barrier outside Jerusalem.

Israel generally recognizes the right to freedom of worship and religion. On several occasions during the latest intifada, Israel has restricted Muslim men under 40 from praying on the Temple Mount compound in Jerusalem's Old City, for fear of violent confrontations. Palestinians have deliberately damaged Jewish shrines and other holy places in the West Bank. In the wake of Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, Palestinians desecrated or destroyed several synagogues in former settlements.

While academic freedom is generally respected, IDF closures and curfews and the West Bank security barrier restrict access to Palestinian academic institutions. Israeli authorities have at times shut universities, and schools have been damaged during military operations. Since the inception of the second intifada in 2000, Israel has prohibited many student residents of the Gaza Strip from attending classes at West Bank universities, citing security concerns. Throughout the intifada, schoolchildren have periodically been injured or killed during fighting.

Freedoms of assembly and association are generally respected. However, Israel has imposed strict curfews in the West Bank at various times since September 2000. There are many Palestinian NGOs and civic groups, and their activities are generally not restricted by Israel. Labor affairs in the West Bank and Gaza are governed by a combination of Jordanian law and PA decisions. Workers may establish and join unions without government authorization. Palestinian workers in Jerusalem are subject to Israeli labor law.

Palestinians accused by Israel of security offenses in Israeli-controlled areas are tried in Israeli military courts. Security offenses are broadly defined. Some due process protections exist in these courts, though there are limits on the rights to counsel, bail, and appeal. Administrative detention is widely used. Most convictions in Israeli military courts are based on confessions, sometimes obtained through coercion. In 2000, Israel outlawed the use of torture as a means of extracting security information, but milder forms of physical coercion are permissible in cases where the prisoner is believed to have vital information about impending terrorist attacks. Human rights groups still criticize Israel for continuing to engage in what they consider torture. Confessions are usually spoken in Arabic and translated into Hebrew for official records.

Israel holds somewhere between 7,000 and 10,000 Palestinians in jail. Many

suspected of involvement in terrorism are held in administrative detention without charge or trial. Israel frequently releases prisoners in the context of peace negotiations or mutual exchanges. In February 2005, in accordance with the truce agreement reached in Sharm al-Sheikh between Israel and the PA, Israel released 500 Palestinian prisoners, although not those charged with taking part in attacks that killed Israelis. In June 2005, Israel released another 400 prisoners. No such prisoner exchanges were conducted in 2006; negotiations for the release of an untold number of jailed Hamas militants in exchange for abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit broke down by year's end. While Palestinians have recourse to Israel's highest civilian courts to protest home demolitions and Israeli tactics in carrying out targeted assassinations, decisions made in their favor are rare. However, Israel's Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled in favor of Palestinians who have petitioned to have sections of the West Bank security barrier rerouted. There are several such petitions currently before the court.

According to the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, Israeli security forces have killed more than 3,920 Palestinians since the beginning of the second intifada (about 50 percent of whom were civilians and/or non-combatants). Violence between Palestinians and Israeli settlers is not uncommon; B'Tselem places the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli civilians in the occupied territories between the start of the second intifada in 2000 and October 2006 at 41, while the number of Israeli civilians killed by Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza during that same time period was 235.

Freedom of movement improved measurably in 2005 following Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, but the trend was reversed somewhat following the reentry of the Israeli military in June 2006. Reduced security checkpoints in the West Bank, especially around the time of Palestinian elections, contributed to an easing of Palestinian mobility, as did Israel's handing over security control to the PA in the West Bank town of Tulkarm and its dismantling of four settlements in the northern West Bank in 2005. The security measures had denied Palestinians easy passage from one town to another, making access to jobs, hospitals, and schools extremely difficult. Renewed Israeli military operations in West Bank towns such as Nablus and its surrounding villages in mid-2006 did, however, cause some restriction on Palestinian freedom of movement.

Israel exercises overall military control at border crossings between the West Bank and Jordan. Construction of Israel's security barrier has also cut off many Palestinians from their farms and denied them and others easier access to other parts of the West Bank. All West Bank and Gaza residents must have identification cards in order to obtain entry permits into Israel, including East Jerusalem. Israel often denies permits without explanation.

The Palestinian economy has been seriously affected by the Israeli closures of West Bank and Gaza crossing points; thousands of Palestinians rely on access to jobs in Israel. Israel's Operation Summer Rains in the Gaza Strip in 2006 has been the source of particular economic hardship. Citing security concerns, Israel barred Gazan workers from entering Israel beginning in March 2006. Israel has traditionally been the primary market for Gazan goods, but after the beginning of the military operation in June nearly all transit points between the two territories were closed. The Kami crossing, through which commercial supplies enter Gaza, was largely closed as well, though Israel permitted the entry of food aid. These closures, in addition to similar periodic closures between Israel and the West Bank, led to a marked decline in Palestinian agricultural exports in 2006.

While Palestinian women are underrepresented in most professions and encounter discrimination in employment, they do have full access to universities and to many professions. Palestinian societal norms, derived in part from Sharia (Islamic law), put women at a disadvantage in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Rape, domestic abuse, and "honor killings," in which unmarried women who are raped or who engage in premarital sex are murdered by a relative, are not uncommon; these murders often go unpunished. Human Rights Watch released a report in November 2006 that cited widespread abuse of women in Palestinian society, with reference to instances of rape victims being forced to marry assailants, and light sentences for men who kill female relatives suspected of adultery. The report pointed out that women's fates in instances of rape or abuse are increasingly determined by tribal leaders, a situation that Human Rights Watch claims is detrimental to Palestinian women.

Israel

Palestinian Authority-Administered Territories

Population: 4,018,000
(1,482,000: Gaza;
2,536,000: WestBank)



Political Rights: 4*
Civil Liberties: 6*
Status: Partly Free

Ratings Change: The Palestinian Authority-Administered Territories' political rights rating improved from 5 to 4 due to the victory of an opposition group, Hamas, in relatively free and fair Palestinian Legislative Council elections in January 2006. However, the civil liberties rating declined from 5 to 6 as internecine Palestinian clashes and Israeli military operations increased, undermining the rule of law and personal autonomy.

Note: The areas and total number of persons under Palestinian jurisdiction changed periodically during the year as a result of the fluid nature of Israel's military presence and activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,5PF	4,6PF

Overview: Elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), the Palestinian Authority (PA) legislative body, took place in January 2006. A sweeping victory for the Islamist party

Hamas enabled it to form a majority government led by Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh. However, Hamas's classification as a terrorist organization and the Hamas-led government's refusal to recognize Israel resulted in diplomatic isolation by many foreign governments and an attendant cutoff in aid money. Israel's Operation Summer Rains in mid-2006 and subsequent military actions that year featured the reentry of Israeli forces into Gaza and parts of the West Bank that had been left under PA control in 2005. Internecine violence between armed militant groups and the various security forces of the PA continued during 2006.

In the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel occupied Sinai, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. Israel annexed Jerusalem's Old City and East Jerusalem in 1967 and the Golan Heights in 1981. In what became known as the *intifada* (uprising), Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza began attacking mainly military targets in 1987 to protest Israeli rule. A series of secret negotiations between Israel and Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) conducted in Oslo, Norway, produced an agreement in September 1993. Premised on the land-for-peace formula articulated in UN Security Council Resolution 242 of November 1967, the new Declaration of Principles provided for Israeli troop withdrawals and gradual Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza in exchange for an end to Palestinian terrorism and recognition of Israel. The resulting Palestinian Authority (PA) has had full or partial control of up to 40 percent of the territory of the West Bank, more than 50 percent of the territory of the Gaza Strip, and 98 percent of the Palestinian population.

At the U.S. presidential retreat of Camp David in July 2000 and at Taba, Egypt, in the fall and in early 2001, Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak and U.S. president Bill Clinton engaged the Palestinian leadership in the most far-reaching negotiations ever. For the first time, Israel discussed compromise solutions on Jerusalem, agreeing to some form of Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem and Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem's Old City. Israel also offered all of the Gaza Strip and more than 95 percent of the West Bank to the Palestinians. Arafat, however, rejected the offers. The Palestinian leadership rejected the Israeli proposals; analysts suggest that Arafat did not believe Israel's guarantee of contiguity of Palestinian territory in the West Bank; insisted that Israel recognize a "right of return," (allowing Palestinian refugees to live in Israel); and rejected Jewish claims to Jerusalem. After a controversial visit by Likud party leader Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in September 2000, the Palestinians launched an uprising, known as the second, or Al-Aqsa, Intifada. Sharon became prime minister in February 2001 elections.

Insisting that the PA was not preventing terrorism, Israel responded to successive waves of Palestinian suicide bombings by staging raids into Palestinian-ruled territory, destroying weapons factories, and killing top leaders and members of radical Islamist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad as well as members of the secular Tanzim and al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, both offshoots of Arafat's Fatah movement. Many Palestinian civilians were killed in the Israeli raids.

In April 2003, Israel and the Palestinians agreed to abide by a road map to peace put forward by the United States, Russia, the United Nations, and the European Union. The multistage, performance-based plan demanded coordinated Palestinian and Israeli steps toward peace and the eventual creation of an independent Palestinian state.

A PA presidential election was held in January 2005 to replace Arafat, who died in November 2004. The election, repeatedly postponed during Arafat's rule, was the second in the PA's history; the first voting for president and the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) had taken place in 1996. Mahmoud Abbas won the 2005 contest with approximately 62 percent of the vote. In subsequent municipal voting in Gaza, the Islamist party Hamas won 77 out of 118 seats in 10 districts, to Fatah's 26 seats. In a second round of West Bank and Gaza municipal voting in May, Fatah won most municipalities, but Hamas posted impressive gains. Each group accused the other of fraud, and Fatah gunmen shut down Gaza voter-registration offices preparing for legislative elections scheduled for July. In June, Abbas postponed those elections until at least early 2006.

The long-awaited PLC elections were held in January 2006. The Islamist party Hamas, running under the name List of Change and Reform, won 74 of 132 seats. Fatah, the party formed by Arafat and led by President Abbas, won only 45 seats. The results provided Hamas with the ability to form a government without Fatah support. Hamas's popularity was due in large part to its network of health clinics and schools and its vow to fight corruption; its electoral gains were a significant challenge to the Fatah-dominated PA, which was widely viewed as corrupt. Since Hamas's ascent to power, the PA-administered territories have seen frequent armed clashes between Hamas and Fatah supporters, with the participation of various other armed factions. October featured the worst internecine fighting to date, with clashes between Palestinian security services, which were under the control of Abbas, and officials from the Hamas-dominated Interior Ministry leading to the deaths of at least 10 people in Gaza City and Khan Yunis.

Hamas's electoral victory was met with disappointment within Israel and among a number of foreign governments. At an emergency cabinet meeting held the day of the Palestinian elections, Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert's government declared its unwillingness to negotiate with a Palestinian government in which Hamas was a participant, citing Hamas's responsibility for the deaths of hundreds of Israeli civilians over several years of terrorist attacks. The United States, the single largest donor to the PA, similarly rejected the legitimacy of the new Palestinian government, announcing a halt in aid to the PA so long as it included Hamas, which was listed by the U.S. State Department as a terrorist organization. The European Union, the second most significant donor to the PA, also cut off millions of dollars in aid, demanding that Hamas renounce violence. According to the PA, the decrease in foreign aid rendered it unable to pay the salaries of thousands of civil servants, leading to widespread protests over the course of the year.

Mutual ceasefires announced by Israel and the PA in February 2005 had resulted in a significant decrease in violence between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. In August and September 2005, Israel had withdrawn about 9,000 settlers from their homes in 21 settlements in Gaza, and the PA assumed control over all of the Gaza Strip. The removal of Israeli military checkpoints, restrictions on Palestinian road travel, and the fortifications surrounding the settlements significantly enhanced freedom of movement for Palestinians inside Gaza.

However, gains in personal freedom resulting from the withdrawal from Gaza were offset in 2006 by large-scale Israeli military operations in the area. Militants from Hamas and other Gaza-based groups launched a raid on an Israeli army outpost

in the western Negev Desert in June, resulting in the killing of two Israeli soldiers and the capture of an Israeli corporal. Israel responded with the reentry of significant numbers of Israeli ground forces into Gaza in July, in an operation known as Summer Rains. The fierce fighting that followed resulted in the deaths of many unarmed Palestinian civilians. Israel was condemned by human rights groups for the deaths, as well as for the destruction of a major power plant in Gaza and the resulting loss in electricity to a significant percentage of Gaza residents. These acts, along with the detention on June 29 of several PLC members affiliated with Hamas, led to charges that the true aim of Summer Rains was to topple the Hamas-led Palestinian government.

Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip decreased somewhat between the months of August and September, but spiked in October and November. The later fighting was concentrated in the north of the Gaza Strip, an area Israel claimed was being used as a launching ground for crude Qassam rockets, and which was the site of dozens of illicit tunnels into Israel. Air strikes and shelling in and around the town of Beit Hanoun led to over a dozen Palestinian civilian deaths in early November. In the deadliest single attack on PA-controlled soil, 18 civilians were killed on November 8 by an Israeli tank shell. The attack brought condemnation from across Europe and the Middle East and led Israel to declare a halt to further shelling until the conclusion of an official inquiry. Hamas chief Khaled Mashaal vowed renewed attacks on Israeli civilians. PA-controlled areas of the northern West Bank also faced incursions by the Israeli military, notably in early October, when operations in Qabatiya and Nablus led to the deaths of four Palestinian militiamen.

Also in 2006, Israel continued its policy of targeting suspected terrorists. Israeli Air Force (IAF) strikes in February killed two members Islamic Jihad and two members of al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, all of whom Israel said were responsible for firing Qassam rockets from Gaza into Israel. IAF air strikes later in February killed two senior commanders of al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and strikes in June killed senior militants from Islamic Jihad and the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC), including PRC leader Jamal Abu Samhadana. Further air strikes in October killed three Hamas military commanders and at least one member of al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades who had allegedly been involved in Qassam rocket attacks. Late November saw the announcement of a truce on the part of Israeli and Palestinian officials in an effort to halt the violence in Gaza. Israel is widely perceived to have abided by the truce, refraining from any large scale incursions into the strip. However, Qassam rocket fire from Gaza into the neighboring Israel communities continued. Israel continued to carry out arrests of Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants in the West Bank, while Palestinian factions regularly attempted attacks on Israeli targets. Israeli Premier Ehud Olmert met with Palestinian president Abbas in late December, resulting in a pledge on the part of Olmert to ease restrictions on Palestinian movement. However, the reduction in the number of checkpoints in the West Bank was minimal, and rocket fire from Gaza continued apace.

President Abbas, the leader of Fatah, and Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas held several meetings during the year aimed at forming a unity government. Haniyeh said that Hamas wanted a unity government in order to "lift the siege and ending [sic] the suffering of the Palestinian people," a reference to the expected resumption of foreign aid after the installation of a more moderate Palestinian government. How-

ever, Hamas at the same time vowed never to recognize Israel or to join a government that did. Such recognition was one of the main conditions set by the "Quartet" of Middle East peace brokers—the United States, the European Union, the United Nations, and Russia—for renewing direct aid to the PA.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The Palestinian Authority (PA) president is elected to five-year terms, and international observers judged the January 2005 presidential election to be generally free and fair. The unicameral Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) was expanded from 88 to 132 representatives ahead of the elections in January 2006. The prime minister is nominated by the president. As per agreements with Israel, the PLC has no real authority over borders or defense policy. Laws governing Palestinians in the occupied territories derive from Ottoman, British Mandate, Jordanian, Egyptian, and PA law, as well as Israeli military orders.

In the January 2006 PLC elections, at least five parties competed in addition to the dominant Hamas and Fatah. The armed faction Islamic Jihad did not participate and urged its followers to boycott the PLC elections. While the elections were deemed largely fair by international observers, there were credible reports of the use of PA resources for the benefit of Fatah candidates, as well as campaigning by Hamas candidates in mosques, in violation of the PA's electoral rules. Some voters reported encountering difficulty in reaching polling stations because of Israeli roadblocks, though Israel is largely credited with having allowed relatively free access during the elections.

Palestinian residents of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem do not have the right to vote in national elections in Israel. Arabs in East Jerusalem who hold Israeli identity cards can vote in the city's municipal elections and in PA elections. Israel allowed Palestinian residents of Israeli-occupied East Jerusalem to vote in the PLC elections, thus following the policy set in the 1996 elections. However, Israeli authorities restricted campaigning in East Jerusalem to those parties that registered with the Israeli police, and refused to allow Hamas permission to campaign there.

Transparency and the consolidation of PA finances became priority issues in the wake of Yasser Arafat's death in 2004, due to rampant corruption during his presidency. President Mahmoud Abbas oversaw a cleanup of Palestinian finances, instituting budget controls, ending the old system of cash handouts to political loyalists and members of security services, and launching a widespread corruption probe in February 2005. While the Hamas-led government that took control following the January 2006 PLC elections expressed a willingness to subject itself to budgetary oversight, many foreign governments have nonetheless been reluctant to contribute money out of concern that it would be used for terrorist operations. Transparency International did not rank Palestine in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

A 1996 law passed by the PLC that guarantees freedom of expression has yet to be ratified. The media are not free in the West Bank and Gaza, and press freedom continued to suffer in 2006. Under a 1995 PA press law, journalists may be fined and jailed, and newspapers closed, for publishing "secret information" on Palestinian security forces or news that might harm national unity or incite violence. However, another press law, also signed in 1995, stipulates that Palestinian intelligence services do not reserve the right to interrogate, detain, or arrest journalists on the basis

of their work. Nevertheless, several small media outlets have been pressured by authorities to provide favorable coverage of the PA. Arbitrary arrests, threats, and the physical abuse of journalists critical of the PA are routine. Official Palestinian radio and television are government mouthpieces. According to the International Telecommunication Union, as of 2004, 160,000 Palestinians had access to the internet.

The relative lawlessness in Palestinian areas also endangered journalists during 2006. Gunmen stormed the offices of prominent Gaza radio journalist Salim Abu Amr in September, but later released him unharmed. Abu Amr was largely seen as a Fatah supporter, and his kidnapping was believed by many to have been the work of Hamas-affiliated militiamen. Employees of Fatah-affiliated news agencies faced several violent attacks during the year, and journalists covering anti-Hamas demonstrations in September were subjected to beatings by masked men. Foreign journalists have not been immune from attack: Associated Press photographer Emilio Morenatti was abducted in Gaza in October, as were Fox reporter Steve Centanni and photographer Olaf Wiig. All were freed unharmed. Abbas has in the past ordered Palestinian television to stop airing bloody images of conflict and programs glorifying "martyrs," a common practice following the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000.

Anti-Israel preaching and incitement to violence continue to feature in mosque prayer services and on official radio and television broadcasts within PA-administered territory, despite the PA's attempts in recent years to regulate such speech. In 2006, the politicization of mosque sermons extended to intra-Palestinian rivalries as well. In May, Fatah activists called on their followers to boycott certain Hamas-affiliated mosques in response to perceived incitement against Abbas by preachers.

The PA generally respects freedom of religion, though no law exists protecting religious expression. The basic law declares Islam the official religion of Palestine and also states that "respect and sanctity of all other heavenly religions [that is, Judaism and Christianity] shall be maintained." Personal status law, which governs marriage and divorce, is based on religious law; for Muslims, it is derived from Sharia (Islamic law), and for Christians, from ecclesiastical courts. Some Palestinian Christians have experienced intimidation and harassment by radical Islamist groups and PA officials. Following remarks made in September 2006 by Pope Benedict XVI about Islam and the prophet Muhammad, churches and Christian institutions in the Gaza Strip received bomb threats. A Greek Orthodox church in Gaza City and four churches in Nablus were attacked by Muslim Palestinians wielding guns and firebombs, causing damage to the structures but no injuries.

The PA has authority over all levels of education. Some Palestinian schools teach hatred of Israel. Israeli military closures, curfews, and the West Bank security barrier restrict access to Palestinian academic institutions. Israeli authorities have at times shut universities, and schools have been damaged during military operations. Throughout the intifada, schoolchildren have periodically been injured or killed during fighting.

The PA requires permits for rallies and demonstrations and prohibits violence and racist sloganeering. Nevertheless, large rallies, often marked by violent rhetoric, are regular occurrences in Palestinian areas. There are a broad range of Palestinian nongovernmental organizations and civic groups, and Hamas itself operates a large network providing social services to certain Palestinians. Active criticism of the PA was once rare, but Hamas's ascent to government has brought about an increase in

antigovernment protest. There were several high-profile, antigovernment demonstrations in 2006, though the protesters were not free from intimidation.

Labor affairs in the West Bank and Gaza are governed by a combination of Jordanian law and PA decision. Workers may establish and join unions without government authorization. Palestinian workers seeking to strike must submit to arbitration by the PA Ministry of Labor. There are no laws in the PA-ruled areas to protect the rights of striking workers. Palestinian workers in Jerusalem are subject to Israeli labor law.

The Palestinian judicial system is not independent. While the PA unveiled a draft constitution in April 2003, neither Arafat or Abbas endorsed it. Despite Abbas's 2005 consolidation of 13 security services into three, law and order remained elusive in 2006. Property laws were not always enforced, few taxes were paid, and even traffic police were in some cases too frightened to enforce rules. Palestinian judges lack proper training and experience. Israeli demands for a Palestinian crackdown on terrorism have given rise to state security courts, which lack almost all due process rights. There are reportedly hundreds of administrative detainees currently in Palestinian jails and detention centers. The same courts are also used to try those suspected of collaborating with Israel or accused of drug trafficking. Defendants are not granted the right to appeal sentences and are often summarily tried and sentenced to death. According to the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, alleged collaborators are routinely tortured in Palestinian jails and are denied the right to defend themselves in court. These practices are not prohibited under Palestinian law.

Despite attempts by Abbas in 2005 to outlaw armed men on Gaza's streets, armed factions proliferated in the PA-administered areas in 2006. News reports identified at least five autonomous armed militias operating in PA territory. In particular, armed clashes between Fatah- and Hamas-affiliated gunmen occurred throughout the year.

Violence between Palestinians and Israeli settlers is common. Settlers in the West Bank have been ambushed and murdered by Palestinian gunmen. These attacks generally go unpunished by the PA. Groups of settlers have attacked Palestinians and destroyed Palestinian property (such as olive groves), often without serious legal penalties.

The intifada and Israeli closures of the Palestinian territories have exacted a serious toll on the Palestinian economy in recent years. Citing security concerns, Israel barred Gazan workers from entering Israel beginning in March 2006. Israel's Operation Summer Rains in the Gaza Strip caused particular economic hardship. Israel has traditionally been the primary market for Gazan goods, but after the beginning of the Gaza operation in July nearly all transit points were closed. The Kami crossing, through which commercial supplies entered Gaza, was largely closed as well, though Israel permitted the entry of food aid. These closures, in addition to similar periodic closures between Israel and the West Bank, led to a marked decline in Palestinian agricultural exports in 2006.

While Palestinian women are underrepresented in most professions and encounter discrimination in employment, they do have full access to universities and to many professions. A political quota system was instituted in 2005, mandating that women be represented on each party's list for PLC elections. Personal status law, derived in part from Sharia, puts women at a disadvantage in matters of marriage,

divorce, and inheritance. Rape, domestic abuse, and "honor killings," in which unmarried women who are raped or who engage in premarital sex are murdered by a relative, are not uncommon. These murders often go unpunished. Human Rights Watch released a report in November 2006 citing widespread abuse of women in Palestinian society, with reference to instances of rape victims being forced to marry assailants, and light sentences for men who kill female relatives suspected of adultery. The report pointed out that women's treatment in instances of rape or abuse is increasingly determined by tribal leaders or PA-appointed governors, and not by the courts, a situation that Human Rights Watch said leads to arbitrary decisions. The report urged the PA to make the protection of women from violence a top priority.

Moldova

Transnistria

Population: 700,000

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF

Overview: Transnistria's relations with Moldova deteriorated in 2006, as customs regulations imposed by Ukraine limited the separatist enclave's ability to trade independently of Moldova. Referendum voters in September overwhelmingly supported independence and eventual unification with Russia. In December 2005, the opposition group *Obnovlenye* had made surprising gains in parliamentary elections, but incumbent President Igor Smirnov was reelected in December 2006.

The Pridnestrovskaaia Moldavskaia Respublica (PMR), bounded by the Dniester River to the west and the Ukrainian border on the east, is a breakaway region in eastern Moldova with a large population of ethnic Russians and ethnic Ukrainians. In the rest of Moldova, where the dominant language is nearly identical to Romanian, the separatist region is called Transnistria. Transnistria was attached to the territory that became Moldova when the borders were redrawn under Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in 1940. As the Soviet Union began to collapse in 1990, pro-Russian separatists in Transnistria, fearing that Moldova would join neighboring Romania, declared independence and established the PMR under an authoritarian presidential system.

With weapons and other assistance from the Russian army, the PMR leadership fought a military conflict with Moldova that ended with a 1992 ceasefire. A new

Moldovan constitution in 1994 gave the territory substantial autonomy, but the conflict remained unresolved. The separatist regime was strong enough to resist absorption by Moldova, yet too weak to gain outright international recognition; it is not recognized by any independent state.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Russia, and Ukraine have attempted to mediate a final settlement between Moldova and the PMR. They also participate in the Joint Control Commission that monitors compliance with the 1992 ceasefire. In September 2005, the United States and the European Union (EU) were invited to join the negotiations as observers.

The lingering presence in Transnistria of more than 1,000 Russian soldiers and a supply of Russian weapons has further complicated matters. In 1999, Russia agreed to an OSCE initiative calling for the removal of all Russian weapons and troops by December 2002. However, as the withdrawal deadline approached, Russia announced that it would not meet its obligation and attempted to refashion its soldiers as "guarantors" of any eventual diplomatic settlement. In response to this development, the OSCE extended the deadline by 12 months. The new date was likewise disregarded, as Russia declared that it would not remove all of its troops until a final settlement was reached. In May 2006, Russia reiterated that troops would remain in Transnistria for the foreseeable future. Moldovan president Vladimir Voronin and the Moldovan Parliament have both called for the troops to be withdrawn.

Settlement negotiations have made little progress over the past several years. Moldova rejected a Russian-backed federalization plan in November 2003 after it drew public protests. Early in 2004, five negotiators representing the OSCE, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Transnistria agreed to meet regularly, but talks were suspended that year after Transnistrian authorities closed two schools on their territory that were teaching in Moldovan using the Latin script. The dynamic shifted somewhat with the December 2004 election of President Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine, who subsequently launched a peace plan that formed the basis for talks in 2005. Negotiations between the five parties in January 2006, with the EU and United States in attendance as observers, ended without yielding significant progress.

In March 2006, Ukraine and Moldova agreed to a new set of customs regulations, under which all cargo shipped from Transnistria to Ukraine must be first cleared by Moldovan customs officers. The agreement was met with protests on the Transnistrian side of the border, and the PMR government subsequently pulled out of settlement talks with Moldova. Russia also denounced the move, while the OSCE praised Ukraine for its role in the dispute. The EU also implemented an EU Border Assistance Project, designed to curb smuggling across the Transnistrian segment of the Ukraine-Moldova border. Relations deteriorated further in September, when Transnistria held a referendum in which citizens overwhelmingly backed a course of independence with the goal of eventually joining Russia. The referendum was not recognized by Moldova or the international community. Russia publicly backed the vote.

In December 2005, the pro-business *Obnovlenye* (Renewal) Party, headed by Deputy Speaker of Parliament Yevgeny Shevchuk, won an unexpected victory in legislative elections, defeating the *Respublica* Party of Transnistrian president Igor Smirnov. The elections were not recognized by the international community and were not independently monitored. Pro-Smirnov politicians have criticized Shevchuk, who assumed the position of Speaker of Parliament after the elections, for not taking

a hard enough line on Moldova, and have voiced suspicions that he may be willing to consider unification. However, Shevchuk has publicly made strong statements against Moldova and the West.

In December 2006 presidential elections, Smirnov was reelected with 82 percent of the vote. His closest competitor, Anatoliy Bazhen of the Pridnestrovie Communist Party, received 8 percent. As with the parliamentary elections, the result was not recognized outside of Transnistria, and the election was not independently monitored.

Commentators have pointed out that Transnistria has little economic incentive to consider joining Moldova, Europe's poorest country. Most of Moldova's industrial infrastructure is within Transnistria's borders, although economic isolation limits its potential.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties: Residents of Transnistria cannot elect their leaders democratically, and they are unable to participate freely in Moldovan elections. While the PMR maintains its own legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government, no country recognizes its sovereignty. Both the president and the 43-seat, unicameral Supreme Council are elected to five-year terms. Having won reelection in December 2006, Igor Smirnov is now serving his fourth term as president, and he has said that he will not step down until Transnistria is independent. The international community has generally considered the presidential and parliamentary elections held since 1992 as neither free nor fair, although they have not been monitored.

Andrey Safonov, an outspoken critic of Smirnov, was initially barred from competing in December 2006 presidential elections due to alleged fraudulent signatures on his petition to secure a place on the ballot. He was given permission to compete the day before the elections, which Smirnov won easily with 82 percent of the vote. Local reports indicated that opposition campaigns were not covered by the press. In 1996 and 2001 presidential elections, candidates with genuine prospects of challenging Smirnov were banned from participation. In December 2005 parliamentary elections, the opposition group *Obnovlenye* made significant gains, defeating the ruling *Republica Party*. However, the Parliament has traditionally held very little power. Native Moldovan speakers are not represented in government and are under constant political pressure. The Ministry of State Security has conducted Soviet-style interviews of citizens suspected of subversive activities and engages in brutality and heavy-handed threats.

Corruption is a serious problem in Transnistria. The authorities are entrenched in the territory's economic activities and are often complicit in organized crime. Moldova has accused Transnistria of illicitly exporting large quantities of drugs and weapons, although officials from the EU and the OSCE have argued that such charges are exaggerated. The Customs Department, headed by the president's son, is suspected of diverting funds to top officials. Russia has financial interests in Transnistria's illegal activities, although its economic influence over the territory has probably declined in recent years. Transnistria is not listed separately on Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The media environment is restrictive, but the few independent outlets rarely experience open harassment. The authorities use tactics such as bureaucratic obstruction and the withholding of information to inhibit the activities of independent

media. The independent newspaper *The Individual and His Rights* has experienced intimidation and violent attacks. Journalists exercise a certain amount of self-censorship. Nearly all media are state owned or controlled, and such outlets do not criticize the authorities. A single company dominates the limited private broadcasting, cable television, and internet access. There were no reports of censorship of internet content.

Religious freedom is restricted. A locally administered census in 2005 found that more than 80 percent of Transnistrians identify themselves as Orthodox Christians. Authorities have denied registration to other religious groups, and Jehovah's Witnesses are regularly arrested. Unregistered groups have difficulty renting space for prayer meetings and face harassment.

Although about 5,000 students study Moldovan using the Latin script, this practice is restricted in Transnistria. The Moldovan language and Latin alphabet are associated with support for unity with Moldova, while Russian and the Cyrillic alphabet are associated with separatist goals. In 2004, authorities closed down eight schools that had not obtained a licensing permit and had not adopted the official curriculum. Parents and teachers who resisted the action were forcibly removed, and some were threatened by authorities. The schools were allowed to reopen but faced logistical and legal hurdles. In 2005, the OSCE reported that parents who send their children to schools using Latin script continue to face harassment from the security services.

The authorities severely restrict freedom of assembly and rarely issue required permits for public protests. Freedom of association is similarly circumscribed. All nongovernmental activities must be coordinated with local authorities, and groups that do not comply face harassment, including visits from security officials. In March 2006, authorities banned all foreign financing for nongovernmental groups. The region's trade unions are holdovers from the Soviet era, and the United Council of Labor Collectives works closely with the government.

The judiciary is subservient to the executive and implements the will of the authorities. Defendants do not receive fair trials, and the legal framework falls short of international standards. Politically motivated arrests and long-term detentions are common. Human rights groups have received accounts of torture in custody. Politically motivated killings and police harassment have also been reported, and political prisoners are frequently denied access to lawyers. Prison conditions are considered harsh, and the facilities are severely overcrowded. Two members of the so-called Ilascu group remain in jail, despite calls from the European Court of Human Rights for their release. The two men were imprisoned for crimes against the Transnistrian authorities during the 1992 armed conflict and have reportedly been tortured while in prison.

In the summer of 2006, two bombing incidents aboard Tiraspol public transportation vehicles killed several people. Government officials speculated that Moldovan security forces could be responsible, but the OSCE reported that the blasts were most likely linked to criminal activity.

Authorities discriminate against ethnic Moldovans. According to Moldova's Ministry of Information, more than 270,000 people in Transnistria hold Moldovan citizenship, at least 80,000 hold Russian citizenship, and 80,000 hold Ukrainian citizenship.

Domestic violence against women is a problem, and women are underrepresented in most positions of authority. Transnistria is a transit point for trafficking in women for the purpose of prostitution.

Morocco

Western Sahara

Population: 270,000

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview: The Polisario Front made little progress during 2006 in its push to secure Western Sahara's independence from Morocco, which continued to offer only autonomy for the territory. However, the two sides maintained their long-standing ceasefire. UN-sponsored visits between Sahrawis living in camps in Algeria and family members in Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara were restarted in November 2006 after a five-month suspension.

Western Sahara was ruled by Spain for nearly a century until Spanish troops withdrew in 1976, following a bloody guerrilla conflict with the pro-independence Polisario Front. Both Morocco and Mauritania claimed the phosphate-rich region and partitioned it after Spain's withdrawal, with Mauritania receiving the southern third. Rejecting the arrangement, the Polisario declared an independent state, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, and continued its guerrilla campaign. Mauritania renounced its claim to the region in 1979, and Moroccan troops filled the vacuum by annexing the entire territory.

Moroccan and Polisario forces engaged in a low-intensity conflict until the United Nations brokered a ceasefire in 1991. The agreement called for a referendum on independence, to be supervised by the UN Mission for a Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). However, the vote has yet to take place, with the Polisario and Morocco disagreeing about who is eligible to participate.

Since the annexation, Morocco has moved to assert its control by encouraging Moroccans to move to the region, providing financial incentives and rewards for doing so. The Moroccan authorities have also encouraged Sahrawis to move to Morocco. While Morocco has attempted to improve relations by releasing Sahrawi prisoners in recent years, it still detains Sahrawi activists and demonstrators on a regular basis.

In 2004, the Polisario accepted the UN Security Council's so-called Baker plan, which called for up to five years of autonomy followed by a referendum on the territory's status. However, Morocco rejected the plan. The Polisario in August 2005 agreed to release its remaining 400 Moroccan prisoners of war; Morocco continued to hold smaller numbers of Sahrawi prisoners.

In 2006, Morocco's King Mohamed VI said on several occasions that he was willing to grant autonomy to Western Sahara, but insisted that independence was out of the question. The king claimed that if Western Sahara were granted independence, it would cause regional instability and become a lawless haven for terrorists.

In positive news, the United Nations refugee agency in November resumed flights facilitating family visits between Sahrawis living in camps in Tindouf, Algeria, and relatives living in Western Sahara. The flights, carried out intermittently since 2004, had been suspended for the previous five months. In October, the UN Security Council extended MINURSO's mandate through April 2007, and reaffirmed its commitment to finding a "mutually acceptable" solution that "will provide for the self-determination" of the people of Western Sahara.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Moroccan authorities organize local elections and ensure that leaders of the Sahrawi independence movement are excluded from both local leadership and representation in the Moroccan parliament.

Morocco's constitution guarantees press freedom but, in practice, little exists in Western Sahara. Although there were fewer reported instances of government interference with press access to Western Sahara in 2006, Moroccan authorities continue to exercise control over who enters and reports on the region. The restrictions are particularly evident when there are local riots or demonstrations against Moroccan rule. Moroccan and international reporters are subject to expulsion or detention if the government objects to their work or they enter the region without permission. Western Sahara's population is extremely poor and has little access to independent media or the internet.

Sahrawis, like the vast majority of Moroccans, are Sunni Muslims, and Moroccan authorities generally respect their freedom of worship. There are no major universities or institutions of higher learning.

Moroccan officials restrict the ability of Sahrawis to form political organizations or assemble in public places. Demonstrations and riots are a regular occurrence in Western Sahara's towns and villages, and Moroccan authorities often arrest those involved. In October 2006, the Moroccan government disbanded the Groupements Urbains de la Surete (GUS), a security force formed in 2004 that was accused of human rights violations during riots and demonstrations in Laayoune in 2005. The force's 5,000 members would be reassigned to other security units. Sahrawis are subject to Moroccan laws, including labor laws, but little organized labor activity takes place in the poverty-stricken region.

Particularly during the 1961-1999 reign of Morocco's King Hassan II, the current king's father, Sahrawis who opposed the regime were summarily detained, killed, tortured, and "disappeared." While thousands of Moroccan dissidents suffered under Hassan's rule, Sahrawis who defied him faced even harsher scrutiny. The political situation is different today, but Sahrawis who oppose Morocco's sovereignty are still detained, and torture has not ceased under King Mohamed.

International human rights groups have for decades criticized the behavior of Moroccan authorities in Western Sahara. A September 2006 report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights was highly critical of Morocco's record in the territory. The report was intended to be distributed only to Algeria, Morocco, and the

Polisario, but was leaked to the press in October. Morocco's Equity and Reconciliation Commission, founded in 2004 to examine government abuses under Hassan, did not hold scheduled public hearings in Western Sahara. Few Sahrawis had the opportunity to testify publicly before the commission.

Both the Polisario and Moroccan authorities restrict freedom of movement in potential conflict areas.

Sahrawi women face much of the same cultural and legal discrimination as Moroccan women. Conditions are generally worse for women living in rural areas where poverty and illiteracy rates are higher.

Pakistan

Kashmir

Population: 5,200,000

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
--	--	--	--	--	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF

Overview: Although relations between India and Pakistan remained more cordial in 2006 than in previous years, little substantive progress was made on resolving the status of Kashmir. Meanwhile, the Pakistani government faced continuing demands for increased political rights from nationalist and pro-independence Kashmiri groups within Pakistani-administered Kashmir, which consisted of two administrative units—Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas. Elections to the Azad Kashmir legislative assembly were held in July, but pro-independence candidates were again barred from standing for election. The entire process was widely regarded as rigged, ensuring a victory for pro-Islamabad parties. There was some sectarian violence between Sunni and Shiite Muslim groups in the Northern Areas in 2006, but large-scale incidents were less common due to a 2005 peace agreement between religious leaders as well as a crackdown on extremist groups by the authorities. Recovery and reconstruction efforts pertaining to the region's devastating October 2005 earthquake, which killed more than 88,000 people and rendered several million others homeless, continued during 2006.

For centuries, Kashmir was ruled by Afghan, Sikh, and local strongmen. In 1846, the British seized control of the territory and sold it to the Hindu maharajah of the neighboring principality of Jammu. The maharajah later incorporated Ladakh and

other surrounding areas into the new princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. When British India was partitioned into India and Pakistan in 1947, Maharajah Hari Singh tried to maintain Jammu and Kashmir's independence. However, after Pakistani tribesmen invaded, he agreed to cede Jammu and Kashmir to India. In return, India promised autonomy and eventual self-determination for the territory.

India and Pakistan went to war over Kashmir within months of gaining their independence. As part of a UN-brokered ceasefire in January 1949 that established the present-day boundaries, Pakistan gained control of roughly one-third of Jammu and Kashmir, including the far northern and western areas, as well as a narrow sliver of land adjoining Indian-held Kashmir. India retained most of the Kashmir Valley along with Jammu and Ladakh.

Unlike India, Pakistan never formally annexed the portion of Kashmir under its control. The Karachi Agreement of April 1949 divided Pakistani-administered Kashmir into two distinct entities—Azad (Free) Kashmir and the Northern Areas. The Northern Areas consist of the five districts of Gilgit, Ghizer, Ghanche, Diamer, and Baltistan. Pakistan retained direct administrative control over the Northern Areas, while Azad Kashmir was given a larger degree of nominal self-government.

For several decades, an informal council administered Azad Kashmir. A legislative assembly was set up in 1970, and the 1974 interim constitution established a parliamentary system headed by a president and a prime minister. However, the political process in Azad Kashmir has been suspended on several occasions by the military rulers of Pakistan. In 1977, General Zia ul-Haq dissolved the legislative assembly and banned all political activity for eight years, and in 1991, the prime minister of Azad Kashmir was dismissed, arrested, and imprisoned in Pakistan.

Chronic infighting among Azad Kashmir's various political factions has also allowed Islamabad to interfere with ease in the electoral process. In the 1996 state elections, Sultan Mahmud Chaudhary's Azad Kashmir People's Party (AKPP) emerged with a majority of seats. The outgoing Muslim Conference (MC) had boycotted the elections, accusing the AKPP of vote rigging and fraud. In elections held in July 2001, with a 48 percent turnout, the MC swept back into power, winning 30 out of 48 seats. However, Pakistani leader General Pervez Musharraf installed Sardar Muhammad Anwar Khan, a very recently serving general, as the president of Azad Kashmir later that month, amid speculation that Islamabad intended to reassert its control over the territory. Anwar's term ended in 2006, and MC candidate Raja Zulqarnain Khan was elected to replace him following the July 2006 legislative assembly elections, in which 369 candidates from 15 parties contested the 41 directly elected seats. Musharraf nominee and MC leader Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan became prime minister, while the MC won a majority of seats in the assembly.

The lack of political representation in the Northern Areas has fueled demands for both formal inclusion within Pakistan and self-determination. In 1988, Gilgit was racked by unrest after the majority Shiite Muslims demanded an independent state. The Pakistani army suppressed the revolt with the help of armed Sunni Muslim tribesmen from a neighboring province. In 1999, the Pakistani Supreme Court directed the government to act within six months to give the Northern Areas an elected government with an independent judiciary. After the verdict, the Pakistani government announced a package that provided for an appellate court and an expanded and renamed Northern Areas Legislative Council (NALC). In August 2003, the NALC

submitted a proposal to the Pakistani government that envisioned a more autonomous form of provincial government along the lines of what currently existed in Azad Kashmir. Elections to the NALC were held in October 2004, but the body continues to have few real fiscal and legislative powers, despite ongoing calls for federal authorities to devolve more power to local elected politicians. The Musharraf-backed Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-i-Azam) party currently dominates the NALC—it won only four seats, but was able to co-opt independent members—while exiled former national prime minister Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party serves as the main "opposition."

Militant groups that had long been active in Azad Kashmir markedly expanded their presence in the Northern Areas during the Kargil conflict between Indian and Pakistani-backed forces in 1999, with many of them establishing offices in the region. Since early 2002, Musharraf has been under sustained international pressure to curb the activities of Pakistani-based militant groups. However, when he banned the movement of militants from the Pakistani portion of Kashmir into the Indian-held section in June 2003, hard-line Islamist groups in Azad Kashmir organized protest rallies denouncing his decision and vowed to continue their armed insurgency. Extremist groups that receive patronage from the Pakistani military continue to operate in both Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas.

While the Pakistani authorities have readily provided support to armed militants fighting in India, they have been less tolerant of groups that espouse Kashmiri self-determination. In 2001, 12 small Kashmiri separatist groups in Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas announced the formation of the All Parties National Alliance, which committed itself to fighting for an independent Kashmir. Nationalist and pro-independence groups in Pakistani-administered Kashmir, including the Balawaristan National Front, the Karakoram National Movement, and others, have continued to agitate for increased political representation.

Talks between India and Pakistan over the ultimate status of Kashmir, as well as other confidence-building measures, have continued regularly since a cease-fire was instituted in November 2003; periodic meetings between national leaders have made clear that they want to continue the dialogue. India and Pakistan agreed in February 2005 to start a bus service across the Line of Control (LOC) that separated the territory, linking the capitals of Indian and Pakistani Kashmir. After bureaucratic delays and despite threats from insurgent groups (militants attacked targets along the intended route twice before the bus line's launch), the service started in April 2005. This historic opening allowed Kashmiri civilians to reunite with family members, many of whom had been separated and unable to see each other for decades. However, a meaningful and comprehensive resolution to the Kashmir dispute remains elusive.

In October 2005, Pakistani-administered Kashmir and parts of Indian-administered Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Pakistan were hit by a major earthquake, the epicenter of which was located near the Azad Kashmir capital of Muzaffarabad. At least 88,000 people were killed, 100,000 were injured, and several million were rendered homeless. After several weeks of wrangling, India and Pakistan agreed to open their border at several crossing points in order to facilitate family contacts and improve relief efforts, and India also allowed Pakistan to fly helicopters over previously restricted airspace. However, both governments were accused of allowing territorial sensitivities to overshadow the need to cooperate on a massive relief effort being

conducted in very difficult mountainous terrain. The Pakistani military, which had thousands of troops based in the region, reportedly prioritized the safety and evacuation of its own personnel over the larger civilian rescue effort, leading to growing resentment within the Kashmiri population against the Pakistani government. In contrast, militant groups won praise for their speedy response and relief efforts, which they conducted with logistical help from the military. Although international aid agencies have poured billions of dollars into the region, these programs have been marred by allegations that corruption has led to a delay in assisting those in need.

Sectarian tension between the majority Shias and the Sunnis in the Northern Areas, which first erupted into violence with 1988 riots that killed at least 150 people, continued to be a concern. Violent protests broke out in 2003 among Shias in Gilgit over the government's decision to introduce a new educational curriculum. Attempts by Shias to campaign for changes to the curriculum led to the imposition of a curfew in Gilgit and several other parts of the Northern Areas in June 2004, after thousands of Shiite protesters clashed with security forces and attacked government buildings, offices, and a state-run hotel. Sectarian violence flared once again following the murder of a Shiite cleric in January 2005. It remained a problem over the course of the year, leading to prolonged curfews and nearly 100 deaths. The situation improved somewhat in 2006 after a group of religious leaders drew up a peace agreement and the authorities cracked down on extremist groups. However, sporadic attacks continued to occur.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The political rights of the residents of Pakistani-administered Kashmir remain severely limited. Neither the Northern Areas nor Azad Kashmir have representation in Pakistan's national Parliament. The Northern Areas are directly administered by the Pakistani government under the Legal Framework Order of 1994; the region is not included in the Pakistani constitution and has no constitution of its own, meaning there is no fundamental guarantee of civic rights, democratic representation, or the separation of powers. Executive authority is vested in the minister for Kashmir affairs, a civil servant appointed by Islamabad. A 36-seat Northern Areas Legislative Council (NALC)—of which 24 seats are filled through direct elections and six each are reserved for women and technocrats from each district—serves in an advisory capacity and has no authority to change laws or control revenue. A number of bills and resolutions passed by the NALC in recent years have not been approved by the minister. Elections to the NALC were held in October 2004; candidates who won seats included independents as well as representatives of several national political parties.

Azad Kashmir has an interim constitution, an elected unicameral assembly, a prime minister, and a president who is elected by the legislative assembly. Both the president and the assembly serve five-year terms. Of the 49 seats in the assembly, 41 are filled through direct elections, while 8 are reserved seats (5 for women, and 1 each for representatives of overseas Kashmiris, technocrats, and religious leaders). However, Pakistan exercises considerable control over both the structures of governance and electoral politics. Islamabad's approval is required to pass legislation, and the minister for Kashmir affairs handles the daily administration of the state and controls the budget. The Pakistani military retains a guiding role on issues of politics and governance.

As explained in great detail by Human Rights Watch (HRW) in a groundbreaking September 2006 report on the region, individuals and political parties who do not support Kashmir's accession to Pakistan are barred from participating in the political process, standing for election, or taking a job with any government institution. At least 60 pro-independence candidates who belonged to the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), the All Parties Nationalist Alliance, and smaller political parties were barred from participating in the July 2006 Azad Kashmir legislative assembly elections. Overall, HRW noted that the election process was flawed and "greeted with widespread charges of poll rigging by opposition political parties and independent analysts." However, unlike the 2001 elections, the poll featured few instances of physical violence or harassment—aside from threats—against candidates or their supporters, possibly as a result of the greater international presence in the wake of the earthquake. In general, anti-accession parties and individuals are subject to surveillance, harassment, and abuse by Pakistani intelligence and security services.

Azad Kashmir receives a large amount of financial aid from the Pakistani government, but successive administrations have been tainted by corruption and incompetence. A lack of official accountability has been identified as a key factor in the poor socioeconomic development of both Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas. The International Crisis Group (ICG) recently reported that governance by non-local bureaucrats in the Northern Areas has led to a lack of accountability and transparency, and that local government capacity is weak. Pakistani-controlled Kashmir was not rated separately in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The Pakistani government uses the constitution and other laws to curb freedom of speech on a variety of subjects, including the status of Kashmir. In recent years, authorities have banned several local newspapers from publishing and have detained or otherwise harassed Kashmiri journalists. In 2004, the magazine *Kargil International* was banned after it published a pro-independence article, and its editor and publisher were arrested and charged with sedition in 2005. In early 2005, the federal government "advised" newspapers to restrict coverage of sectarian violence in the Northern Areas, allegedly out of a concern that sensationalized reporting would further inflame sectarian tensions. When a number of newspapers refused to refrain from covering such news, the government suspended official advertisements in eight newspapers that it alleged were covering the news in a sensational way. In addition to pressure and threats from the authorities, journalists face some harassment from nonstate actors. Khursheed Ahmed, the Gilgit bureau chief of the national Urdu daily *Khabrain* and the president of the Gilgit Press Club, was targeted in bomb attacks at his home in March and July of 2005. Ahmed speculated that the attacks may have been a retaliatory measure taken against local journalists who refused to publish the statements of extremist organizations. No such attacks were reported during 2006, however.

Internet access is not usually restricted but remains confined to urban centers. Deliberately limited telephone and mobile phone access has been expanded in the wake of the 2005 earthquake, and the presence of many foreign media outlets has also helped to partially open up a tightly controlled news and information environment in Azad Kashmir. Books that do not adequately adhere to a pro-accession stance are regularly banned, according to HRW.

Pakistan is an Islamic republic, and there are numerous restrictions on religious freedom. In addition, religious minorities face unofficial economic and societal discrimination and are occasionally subject to violent attack. Shias, who form the majority of the population in the Northern Areas, include a large number of Ismailis, a group that follows the Aga Khan. Sectarian strife between the majority Shiite population and the increasing number of Sunni Muslims (many of whom are migrants from elsewhere in Pakistan) first became a concern in 1988 and continues to be a problem. In June 2004, violence erupted in Gilgit between security forces and Shiite protesters who were campaigning for changes to be made in religious textbooks, which they said presented only a Sunni version of Islamic history. Until new textbooks can be designed, the old ones are still being used, but the contentious material is being omitted.

Sectarian tensions increased again after the January 2005 murder of Agha Ziauddin Rizvi, a prominent Shiite cleric who had led the campaign for the separate curriculum, by Sunni extremists, which sparked a wave of violence in which 15 people were killed. Although Gilgit and Skardu were placed under curfew for over a month and the Rangers, a paramilitary security force, were deployed to maintain peace, further waves of violence killed almost 100 civilians and caused an estimated 35,000 others to be evacuated. Extremists from both sides targeted the Ismaili community, with each group accusing them of supporting its rival, and carried out tit-for-tat reprisal killings, such as the March 2005 murder of former police inspector general Sakhnullah Tareen by Shiite assailants. Further friction developed between Shias in Gilgit and the Rangers in October 2005, following an armed attack on a bus. There were fewer violent incidents in 2006 thanks to a crackdown on extremist groups by authorities and a government-organized *jirga* (traditional tribal assembly) of sectarian religious leaders that drew up a peace agreement. However, sporadic attacks continued to take place. In November 2006, arsonists burned down an Ismaili place of worship in Chitral district, according to the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP).

Freedoms of association and assembly are restricted. The constitution of Azad Kashmir forbids individuals and political parties from taking part in activities that are prejudicial to the ideology of the state's accession to Pakistan. Political parties that advocate Kashmiri independence are allowed to operate but have not been able to participate in elections. According to Amnesty International, some people who do not support the accession of Azad Kashmir to Pakistan have been dismissed from their jobs and denied access to educational institutions. A number of nationalist political parties have been formed in the Northern Areas that advocate either self-rule or greater political representation within Pakistan. However, their leaders are subject to harassment, arbitrary arrest, and long jail terms. The Balawaristan National Front, which advocates independence for the Northern Areas, estimates that more than 70 individuals are facing sedition or treason cases as a result of their political activities.

Police in recent years have suppressed antigovernment demonstrations, sometimes violently, in both Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas, and have imposed lengthy curfews in order to prevent protesters from assembling. The protests have included rallies by nationalist political organizations, student marches, and demonstrations by the Shiite or Sunni communities. In October 2005, 10 people were killed

in clashes between Shiite students and security forces in Gilgit; press reports alleged that security forces had fired indiscriminately into a group of unarmed students who were protesting the death of another student in police custody. Police in Muzaffarabad also used excessive force to break up a November 2005 demonstration by earthquake survivors who were protesting their eviction from a camp. In February 2006, police detained leaders of the JKLF, including Amanullah Khan, after they attended a peaceful rally in Rawalpindi against the construction of the Basha Dam. Khan was detained for a week and was not permitted to receive visitors during that time, according to the U.S. State Department's human rights report.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are generally able to operate freely. In 2003, the HRCP established an office in Gilgit to monitor the human rights situation in the region. However, the Aga Khan Rural Support Program—run by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), an international development organization that focuses on Ismaili communities worldwide—has been subjected to increasing harassment and violence. According to the U.S. State Department's 2006 International Religious Freedom report, Sunni extremist groups in recent years have vandalized AKF-founded schools and health clinics and have attacked AKF personnel, although no such attacks were reported in 2006. Following the October 2005 earthquake, there were reports of some intimidation and violence directed at NGOs involved in the relief effort. The British Broadcasting Corporation reported that the Sindh-based Muttahida Qaumi Movement was forced to temporarily close its camps and abandon its relief efforts in November 2005 after repeated attacks and intimidation by suspected militants. The situation for labor rights in Pakistani-controlled Kashmir is similar to that in Pakistan.

The judiciary of the Northern Areas consists of district courts and a chief court, whose decisions are final. The NALC Legal Framework Order of 1994 provides for a separate court of appeals, and this was finally established in 2005. The territory continues to be governed by the colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulations, under which residents are required to report to local police stations once a month. Judges are appointed on three-year contracts, which can be extended "subject to performance." The ICG has called that arrangement a recipe for judicial subservience to the executive. Azad Kashmir has its own system of local magistrates and high courts, whose heads are appointed by the president of Azad Kashmir. Appeals are adjudicated by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. There are also Islamic judges who handle criminal cases concerning Islamic law. According to the HRCP, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) operates throughout Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas and engages in extensive surveillance and monitoring (particularly of pro-independence groups and the press), as well as arbitrary arrests and detentions. In some instances, those detained by the ISI, the police, or the security forces are tortured, and several cases of death in custody have been reported. Impunity for acts of torture and other mistreatment of civilians by the military and intelligence forces remains the norm.

A number of Islamist militant groups, including al-Qaeda, operate from bases in Pakistani-administered Kashmir with the tacit permission of Pakistani intelligence. Several militant groups that advocate the accession of Kashmir to Pakistan receive weapons and financial aid from the Pakistani government in support of their infiltrations into Indian-administered Kashmir. The militant presence increased in the Northern Areas during the 1999 Kargil conflict with India, and several militant groups

continue to operate there and engage in anti-Shia activism. Under pressure from the United States, General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's president, undertook several steps in 2002 to curb infiltrations across the LOC, such as banning the main militant groups and persuading them to close some of their training camps in Azad Kashmir. Although infiltration into Indian-administered Kashmir has declined since 2004, neither the militant groups nor the Pakistani military has abandoned this tactic altogether. Tension between the Islamist, pro-Pakistan groups, and the pro-independence Kashmiri groups has reportedly intensified. Members of Indian Kashmiri militant groups who have crossed over into Azad Kashmir, many of whom have pro-independence leanings, face some discrimination and harassment from Pakistani authorities.

Until a bilateral ceasefire was declared in November 2003, shelling between Indian and Pakistani forces around the LOC in Kashmir killed or displaced numerous civilians; some of these people remain unable to return to their homes. In addition, the Azad Kashmir government manages relief camps for refugees from Indian-administered Kashmir, the bulk of whom arrived after the situation on the Indian side worsened in 1989. Many more of the refugees (approximately 1.5 million) live outside camps in Azad Kashmir and throughout Pakistan. The appropriation of land in the Northern Areas by non-Kashmiri migrants from elsewhere in Pakistan, which has been tacitly encouraged by the federal government and army, has led to dwindling economic opportunities for the local population as well as an increase in religious and ethnic tensions.

The status of women in Pakistani-administered Kashmir is similar to that of women in Pakistan. While the HRCP reports that honor killings and rape occur less frequently than in other areas of Pakistan, domestic violence, forced marriage, and other forms of abuse continue to be issues of concern. In the first reported case of its kind, three military personnel were accused in the rape of a woman in Azad Kashmir in July 2005; despite being pressured to withdraw the accusation, the family was able to have a case registered. Women are not granted equal rights under the law, and their educational opportunities and choice of marriage partner remain circumscribed. In February 2004, a spate of attacks by suspected Islamist hard-liners opposed to women's education targeted girls' schools in the Northern Areas.

Russia

Chechnya



Population: 1,200,000 (Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the Russian Federation, 2007, Inter-Agency Transitional Workplan for the North Caucasus. The population of Chechnya according to the 2002 Russian census was approximately 1,100,000.)

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
--	6,6NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview: Deputy Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov was promoted to the Chechen premiership in March 2006 and continued to strengthen his hold on power in the republic. Critics like investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who was murdered in October, have claimed that Kadyrov and his security forces torture suspected rebels, many of whom disappear without a trace. Rebel violence declined as Kadyrov consolidated his position, and two important rebel leaders were killed during the year, but the larger region remained unstable.

Chechnya, a small, partly mountainous North Caucasus republic, has a history of armed resistance to Russian rule dating to the czarist period. In February 1944, the Chechens were deported en masse to Kazakhstan after Soviet leader Joseph Stalin accused them of collaborating with Nazi German forces. Officially rehabilitated in 1957 and allowed to return to their homeland, they remained politically suspect and were excluded from the region's administration.

After winning election as Chechnya's president in October 1991, former Soviet air force Major General Dzhokhar Dudayev proclaimed Chechnya's independence. Moscow responded with an economic blockade. In 1994, Russia began assisting Chechens opposed to Dudayev, whose rule was marked by growing corruption and the rise of powerful clans and criminal gangs. Russian president Boris Yeltsin sent 40,000 troops into Chechnya by mid-December of that year and attacked the capital, Grozny. As casualties mounted in the widening conflict, Russian public opposition increased, fueled by criticism from much of the country's then-independent media. In April 1996, Dudayev was killed by a Russian missile.

A peace deal that was signed in August 1996 resulted in the withdrawal of most Russian forces from Chechnya. However, a final settlement on the republic's status

was put off until 2001. In May 1997, Russia and Chechnya reached an accord recognizing the newly elected president, Aslan Maskhadov, as Chechnya's legitimate leader.

Following incursions into neighboring Dagestan by renegade Chechen guerrillas and deadly apartment bombings in Russia that the Kremlin blamed on Chechen militants, Russian prime minister Vladimir Putin launched a second military offensive in Chechnya in September 1999. Russian troops conquered the flat terrain in the north of the republic, but progress slowed considerably as they neared heavily defended Grozny. During the hostilities, Moscow withdrew its recognition of Maskhadov as president.

Russia's indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets caused some 200,000 people to flee Chechnya, with most heading to the tiny neighboring Russian republic of Ingushetia. After federal troops finally captured Grozny in February 2000, the Russian military focused on rebel strongholds in the mountainous southern areas. Russian security sweeps led to regular atrocities in which civilians were beaten, raped, or killed, while Russian forces were subject to almost daily bombings and sniper attacks by rebels. The renewed campaign enjoyed broad popular support in Russia, fueled by the media's now one-sided reporting in favor of the official government position.

As the war persisted and atrocities increased, some Chechen fighters engaged in terrorist acts. In a crisis covered live by Russian television, a group of Chechen rebels stormed a Moscow theater in October 2002, taking 750 people hostage. Ultimately, more than 120 hostages died, most from the effects of a sedative gas that Russian troops used to incapacitate the rebels. Russian authorities reported that all 41 of the rebels had been killed.

A March 2003 referendum on a new Chechen constitution took place in the absence of free media and public debate. Chechnya's Moscow-appointed administration claimed a voter turnout of 85 percent, with 96 percent of participants backing the new charter. However, an independent survey of voter sentiments by the Russian human rights group Memorial found that 80 percent of the indigenous population opposed the referendum. Memorial and a number of other human rights groups pointed to a variety of irregularities in the voting, including intimidation by Russian troops, grenade attacks, multiple votes cast by some individuals, and tens of thousands of Russian troops being allowed to vote. Accordingly, the outcome did not reflect the real intentions of the local population.

Kremlin-backed candidate Akhmad Kadyrov won the Chechen presidency in October 2003 elections. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) said the elections had not offered voters a significant choice, and the U.S. government deemed them "seriously flawed." Chechen rebels assassinated Kadyrov in a May 2004 stadium bombing. In subsequent elections in August, Alu Alkhanov, Chechnya's interior minister since 2003, won with a reported 74 percent of the vote. The official voter turnout was 85 percent, but journalists observing the process called that figure wildly inflated. Despite Alkhanov's election, a great deal of de facto control remained in the hands of Kadyrov's son, Ramzan Kadyrov, who could not become president until he turned 30.

In September 2004, Chechen and other anti-Russian guerrillas carried out a terrorist attack in the neighboring republic of North Ossetia, capturing a school in the town of Beslan. More than 330 people—half of them children—died when the hos-

tage standoff ended in chaotic violence. Putin, who had succeeded Yeltsin as president in 2000, used the attack to justify the further centralization of power in Russia as a whole, replacing the direct election of regional governors with a system of presidential appointments. Meanwhile, some families of the Beslan victims criticized the government in Moscow for its inability to prevent terrorist attacks and for covering up the negligence and corruption that contributed to the debacle.

In March 2005, Maskhadov, the separatist leader, was killed in an operation conducted by the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB). His death came weeks after the rebels declared a unilateral ceasefire in February, in an unsuccessful bid to convince the Russian government to enter peace negotiations. Putin responded to the ceasefire by ordering an expansion of the conflict. The assassination of Maskhadov, who had been elected in a relatively fair ballot in 1997, was a serious blow to the more moderate faction in the separatist leadership and significantly reduced the chances for a negotiated settlement.

Maskhadov's replacement as rebel leader was the little-known Abdul-Khalim Saidulayev, the former head of a religious court. During his tenure, the conflict increasingly spread beyond Chechnya's borders into the surrounding North Caucasus region. Separatist forces launched a two-day attack on Nalchik, capital of the republic of Kabardino-Balkariya, in October 2005. According to official estimates, 33 police officers and 12 civilians were killed in the fighting, along with 92 guerrillas.

Saidulayev was killed on June 17, 2006; his vice president, Doku Umarov, then became the rebel leader. Umarov vowed to continue Saidulayev's effort to spread the fight to other regions of Russia while continuing to target Grozny's pro-Moscow regime. The rebels suffered a major loss with the death of infamous guerrilla commander Shamil Basayev in a July 10 explosion, which the Russian government claimed was part of a special forces operation. Basayev, who had taken responsibility for the Moscow and Beslan hostage raids among other attacks, was the key link between many of the disparate Islamist, terrorist, and criminal elements within the rebel movement. Despite Russian assertions to the contrary, the vast majority of the rebels' financing came from criminal activity inside Russia, not foreign sponsors. By the end of 2006, the rebels controlled only small areas in the republic's mountainous south, and major guerrilla actions within Chechnya had become less common as Kadyrov sought to crush or co-opt the remaining rebel fighters.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: While the 1997 presidential elections—conducted by the republic's separatist authorities—were characterized by international observers as reasonably free and fair, the resumption of war in 1999 led to the total evisceration of Chechens' political rights. President Maskhadov fled the capital in December 1999, and the Parliament elected in 1997 ceased to function. In June 2000, Russian president Putin enacted a decree establishing direct presidential rule over Chechnya. There is no party pluralism and politicians who advocate Chechen independence are unable to work openly and freely.

The Russian government's claims to have returned the republic to democratic rule with a March 2003 constitutional referendum lacked credibility. The referendum was orchestrated by the Kremlin with no opportunity for debate, and widespread vote rigging was reported. In the subsequent presidential election of October 2003,

candidates representing a genuine alternative were not on the ballot, and debate was stifled in an atmosphere of repression and censorship. Under current rules, the Russian president recommends a candidate for the Chechen presidency, who then must be approved by the Chechen parliament. The Chechen president effectively serves at the pleasure of the Russian president. The bicameral legislature consists of the 21-member Council of the Republic and 40-member Popular Assembly. The members serve four-year terms.

The president elected in 2003, Akhmad Kadyrov, was assassinated in May 2004. Although Alkhanov won the presidency under similarly undemocratic circumstances later in 2004, Ramzan Kadyrov, who was appointed prime minister in March 2006, now wields the most power in the republic. Kadyrov headed his father's security service, and reconstituted it as the Akhmad Kadyrov Special Purpose Regiment in 2004. His men are reportedly involved in abductions, disappearances, extortion, trading in contraband, and the maintenance of unsanctioned prisons and torture chambers. Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya said in April 2006 that she had evidence of torture by Kadyrov's group, including one witness who had been tortured by Kadyrov himself. The Russian human rights group Memorial and Human Rights Watch have made similar charges, which Kadyrov has denied. His fighters have clashed with police in neighboring Dagestan and Ingushetia, and with Alkhanov's guards.

Kadyrov's strong-arm rule has helped the Kremlin consolidate more effective control over the republic, crushing rebel resistance and beginning the rebuilding process. Kadyrov reached the age of 30 in October 2006, the minimum required to be president, leading to growing friction with Alkhanov. Kadyrov benefits in this struggle from his extensive control over the current Chechen parliament, which was elected in November 2005. He has begun building a personality cult and seeks increasing autonomy from the Kremlin.

Corruption is rampant in Chechnya. Kadyrov's critics have reported that he forces public-sector employees to make "voluntary" contributions to a fund named after his father. Corruption in the North Caucasus education system makes it prohibitively expensive for many youth to get the kind of training they want, threatening stability and economic development, according to a World Bank report. Federal funds designated for rebuilding Chechnya traditionally have been diverted to a variety of other purposes due to extensive corruption. On November 15, Sultan Isakov, the head of the agency responsible for providing compensation to people who lost property in the fighting, was arrested for allegedly soliciting a bribe.

Information in Chechnya is tightly managed. Kadyrov's financial resources allow him to control all local broadcast and most print media, which provide extensive coverage of his activities. There are three licensed television broadcasters, whose content is pro-government. Russian state-run television and radio continue to broadcast in Chechnya, although much of the population remains without electricity. The rebel movement operates a website with reports about the conflict and other news from its perspective. The October 2006 Moscow murder of Politkovskaya, a special correspondent for Moscow-based *Novaya Gazeta*, silenced one of the few remaining journalists brave enough to travel in Chechnya without official escorts and collect evidence of abuses by Russian troops and the pro-Moscow Chechen government. Kadyrov had publicly expressed his hatred of her.

The Russian military imposes severe restrictions on journalists' access to the

widening Caucasus conflict area, issuing accreditation primarily to those of proven loyalty to the Russian government. Few foreign reporters are allowed into Chechnya, and when they are granted entry, journalists covering the conflict must be accompanied at all times by military officials. Because of the devastating effects of the war, including damaged infrastructure, internet usage is negligible.

Most Chechens are Muslims who practice Sufism, a mystical form of Islam. Ramzan Kadyrov openly calls for giving this form of Islam a central role in Chechen public life. He has also called on women to wear headscarves. The strict Wahhabi sect of Sunni Islam, with roots in Saudi Arabia, has been banned by the Russian government.

Since the start of the fighting in 1994, many of the republic's schools have been damaged or destroyed, and education in Chechnya has been sporadic. Most schools have not been renovated and continue to lack such basic amenities as textbooks, electricity, and running water.

Some charitable nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working on humanitarian, cultural, and social issues are allowed to operate, but they face increasing Russian government criticism and pressure. Human rights groups, particularly those that deal with sensitive issues such as torture and other forms of abuse by police and the security services, have been subjected to growing scrutiny by the authorities. In 2006, the federal government introduced extensive reporting requirements, greatly increasing the workload for NGOs. The International Committee of the Red Cross in September 2004 suspended its visits to detainees because there were too many obstacles to conducting them properly. Attempts to resume the visits in 2006 failed. Kadyrov suspended the activities of the Danish Refugee Council for several weeks in February and March 2006 to protest the publication of Danish cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad. In October of that year, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture, Manfred Nowak, postponed a planned visit because the Russian government would not let him make unannounced trips to detention centers or interview detainees in private. Also that month, the authorities closed the Nizhny Novgorod-based Russian-Chechen Friendship Society, a humanitarian organization involved in building mutual understanding between Russians and Chechens and monitoring human rights abuses in the republic. Labor union activity is almost nonexistent as a result of the devastation of the Chechen economy and widespread unemployment.

The rule of law is extremely weak. Extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and other serious crimes are rarely investigated and even more rarely prosecuted. There has been some progress in a few high-profile cases. After juries in the Russian city of Rostov twice refused to convict Captain Eduard Ulman and three other members of a Russian Military Intelligence (GRU) special unit for killing six Chechens in January 2002 even though they had admitted to the slayings, the Constitutional Court ruled in April 2006 that a military tribunal would hear their case. Jury trials are set to be introduced in Chechnya in 2007, allowing Chechen juries to hear cases against people accused of committing crimes in the republic. The European Court of Human Rights has stepped in when Russian courts refuse to hear cases. In July 2006, the Strasbourg-based court found Colonel General Aleksandr Baranov, currently the commander of Russian military forces in the North Caucasus, responsible for the disappearance and presumed death of Khadzhi-Murat Yandiyev, a prisoner detained in Chechnya.

in 2000. The decision was the first on a disappearance in Chechnya and could open the way for similar cases. Memorial estimates that as many as 5,000 people have vanished during the second Chechen war and notes that the problem is not being addressed by the authorities. In November, the court found Russia responsible for the disappearances and presumed deaths of an additional three individuals in Chechnya.

The Chechen police forces are led by commanders who have allegedly committed murder and abductions. Civilians are subject to harassment and violence, including torture, rape, and extrajudicial execution, at the hands of Russian soldiers, and senior Russian military authorities have disregarded such abuses. Human rights groups report that while disappearances had previously been concentrated in Chechnya, the practice has now spread to neighboring Ingushetia. Chechen rebels have captured Russian soldiers during combat, enslaving them, trading them among themselves, and ultimately selling them back to their families.

Russian troops engage in so-called mopping-up operations in which they seal off entire towns and conduct house-to-house searches for suspected rebels. During these security sweeps, soldiers have been accused of beating and torturing civilians, looting, and extorting money. Thousands of Chechens have gone missing or been found dead after such operations.

While many refugee camps have been closed and Chechens who fled the violence have been pressured to return to their homes, tens of thousands of refugees still remain outside of Chechnya. Many who return live in appalling conditions in tent camps, abandoned buildings, or cramped quarters with friends or relatives. There are tens of thousands of additional internally displaced persons inside the republic and well over 100,000 long-term homeless, many of them orphaned children and teenagers. Travel to and from the republic and inside its borders is severely restricted.

Widespread corruption and the economic devastation caused by the war severely limit equality of opportunity. Ransom obtained from kidnapping and the lucrative illegal oil trade provide money for Chechens and members of the Russian military. Much of the republic's infrastructure and housing remains damaged or destroyed after years of war, with reconstruction funds widely believed to have been substantially misappropriated by corrupt local authorities. In the capital city of Grozny, the long-term conflict has devastated civilian life, with more than 60 percent of all buildings completely destroyed. Much of the population ekes out a living selling produce or other goods at local markets. Residents who have found work are employed mostly by the local police, the Chechen administration, the oil and construction sectors, or small enterprises. The success of Kadyrov's government in pushing forward rebuilding efforts has improved the overall economic situation.

With the rise of Ramzan Kadyrov, who emphasizes traditional values, women face increased discrimination in this Islamic, male-dominated culture. At the same time, the war has resulted in many women becoming the primary breadwinners for their families. The war has taken a heavy toll on children, many of whom suffer from various psychological traumas. Children, who accounted for up to 40 percent of casualties during the war, continue to suffer from poor living conditions, including lack of access to education and health care.

Serbia

Kosovo

Population: 2,000,000 (est.)

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	5,5NF	5,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview: Negotiations between the Serbian government and ethnic Albanian leaders in the UN-administered Serbian province of Kosovo began in February 2006. However, by year's end it was clear that the negotiations had essentially failed, which opened up the possibility that the UN Security Council would have to impose a solution on the two sides. Within Kosovo, little progress was made on improving human rights and political and civil liberties for non-Albanian ethnic communities, and violent attacks on non-Albanians continued on a regular basis. Meanwhile, Kosovo experienced a shuffle in its local leadership. President Ibrahim Rugova died in January 2006, and Fatmir Sejdiu, a member of his party, was elected to the post in February. Prime Minister Bajram Kosumi was replaced by former rebel leader Agim Ceku in March.

Kosovo, currently a Serbian province administered by the United Nations, was contested by ethnic Albanians (who, in Kosovo, are predominantly Muslim) and Serbs (primarily Orthodox Christians) throughout the twentieth century. After the death of Yugoslav dictator Josip Broz Tito in 1980, ethnic Albanians in Kosovo began protesting in favor of obtaining republic status within the former Yugoslavia, and in some cases outright independence from Yugoslavia. Tensions increased after Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic came to power and revoked much of Kosovo's autonomy within Serbia in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For most of the 1990s, an uneasy status quo held between the Serbian government and the Kosovo Albanians, who, under their long-time leader Ibrahim Rugova, developed an entirely parallel society in Kosovo, complete with quasi-governmental institutions, hospitals, and school systems. Meanwhile, all but Serbia and Montenegro had broken away from the old Yugoslav federation in a bloody 1991-1995 ethnic conflict.

In late 1997, an ethnic Albanian guerrilla movement called the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) began a series of attacks against Serbs in the province, as well as against fellow Albanians deemed to be collaborating with the Serbian government. Serbian government forces responded to the growing insurgency with disproportionate force, and after two rounds of internationally sponsored negotiations in February and March 1999 failed to bring an end to the increasing violence in the

province, NATO launched a 78-day bombing campaign in March 1999 aimed at forcing the rump Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) to relinquish control over the province. During the war, Yugoslav military forces and paramilitary gangs forcibly expelled hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians. Under the terms of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244 of June 1999, a NATO-led peacekeeping force (KFOR) assumed responsibility for security in Kosovo. The resolution effectively turned Kosovo into a protectorate of the international community, while officially recognizing continued FRY sovereignty over the province.

Since international forces moved into Kosovo in mid-1999, tens of thousands of non-Albanians have been forced to flee the province, and Albanians currently comprise about 90 percent of the population. A Serb population is concentrated in a small piece of territory north of the Ibar River, and smaller Serb enclaves are scattered throughout the rest of Kosovo in virtual ethnic ghettos. In March 2004, two days of violent riots by Albanian mobs aimed at non-Albanian ethnic groups across Kosovo left 20 dead, 800 homes and 30 churches destroyed, and more than 4,000 Serbs and other non-Albanians homeless. Kofi Annan, then the UN secretary-general, called the events "an organized, widespread, and targeted campaign," and Human Rights Watch reported that international organizations had "failed catastrophically in their mandate to protect minority communities during the March 2004 violence." On a visit to a Serb enclave in the aftermath of the riots, Soren Jessen-Petersen, who took over as head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in June 2004, publicly decried the fact that in twenty-first-century Europe, human beings were forced to live in ghettos enclosed by barbed wire. Extremist violence, motivated by both politics and criminal activities, has affected other non-Albanian minorities in the province, such as the Gorani, Bosniaks, and Roma, as well as Albanians in some instances.

Elections for the Kosovo Parliament in October 2004 were marred by a Serb boycott, with 99 percent of Serbs registered to vote in Kosovo declining to cast a ballot. The elections reconfirmed the basic postwar balance of Kosovo Albanian politics, as Rugova's Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) maintained its position as the leading political party, followed by former KLA political leader Hashim Thaci's Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and former KLA commander Ramush Haradinaj's Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK). A week after the elections, in which 53 percent of Kosovo's eligible voters participated, Kosovo's Central Election Commission called for a recount of all the ballots in response to numerous complaints. Kosovo's current government is led by an LDK-AAK coalition.

The March 2004 violence and the failure of the Serb community to participate in the parliamentary elections created new uncertainties about Kosovo's future. During the course of 2004-2005, fears that extremists would begin attacking international forces in Kosovo led UNMIK to abandon its "standards before status" policy, under which Kosovo's future status would be determined only after its political leadership and society as a whole had achieved certain standards regarding human rights and political and civil liberties, particularly in the areas of democratization, rule of law, respect for minority rights, and respect for the security of neighboring states. After the March 2004 violence, the new policy officially became "status *with* standards," but it was soon clear that the international community had decided to proceed with determining Kosovo's final status regardless of the human rights situation.

Haradinaj, then Kosovo's prime minister, was indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in March 2005, and he resigned to contest the charges. He was replaced as prime minister by Bajram Kosumi. Rugova, Kosovo's president since 2002, died in January 2006, paving the way for a power struggle among a number of younger politicians claiming Rugova's mantle as the preeminent leader of the Kosovo Albanian population. Fatmir Sejdiu, a member of Rugova's LDK, was elected president in February with an 80-12 vote in the Kosovo Assembly. In March, Kosumi's poor performance as prime minister led to his removal and replacement by Agim Ceku, the former military leader of the KLA. Many Serb residents of Kosovo suspected Ceku of being responsible for war crimes, and his appointment did little to bridge the tremendous divide between the two ethnic communities. Meanwhile, a new Special Representative of the UN secretary-general, Joachim Rucker, took office in September 2006.

Non-Albanian ethnic communities in Kosovo continued to face frequent acts of violence. In August 2006, a grenade was thrown into a café in the Serb section of Mitrovica, injuring nine people. A few weeks later in September, a bomb exploded in a Serb home in Klina, injuring four members of one family. Albanians themselves are frequently the victims of such attacks. In September, a bomb attack damaged the car of Kosovo's internal affairs minister.

Negotiations between Belgrade and Kosovo authorities over the province's future status, mediated by international officials, began in Vienna in February 2006. Meetings were held on decentralization, community rights, religious and cultural heritage, and economic issues, while working groups on returns, energy, transport and communications, and missing persons met formally and informally. Although several months of negotiations resulted in virtually no progress in bringing the two sides closer together, they did clarify the two parties' negotiating positions on certain technical issues. Throughout the year, Belgrade insisted that the international community had an obligation to respect Serbia's internationally recognized territorial integrity. Kosovo Albanians, meanwhile, just as strongly insisted that they had the right to self-determination and would settle for nothing less than full independence. After nine months of talks, international mediators began publicly airing the possibility that they would have to devise their own solution for Kosovo's future status and ask the UN Security Council to impose the decision on the two parties. The outcome appeared likely to be some form of independence, although with a high degree of international supervision.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: According to UNSCR 1244, ultimate authority within Kosovo resides with the UN special representative in the province, who is appointed by the UN secretary-general. The special representative, who also serves as chief of UNMIK, is responsible for implementing civilian aspects of the agreement ending the Kosovo conflict in 1999. Kosovo's government currently consists of what are called the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, including a 120-seat Assembly whose members are popularly elected and serve three-year terms. Twenty seats in the Assembly are reserved for representatives of ethnic minorities. The Assembly elects a president, who also serves a three-year term. According to Kosovo's Constitutional Framework, the president nominates the prime minister, and parliament is required to approve the nomination.

Elections in Kosovo in the post-1999 period, organized by the international community, have been considered generally free and fair. However, given the large role played by international officials in the province's administration, the lack of freedom of movement for ethnic minorities in Kosovo, and problems related to the ability of women to participate in the political process, the actual level of democratization in Kosovo remains low. In the October 2004 parliamentary elections, 32 political parties or independent candidates participated, and 54 percent of the 1,300,000 eligible voters in Kosovo turned out. The elections were marred, however, by the fact that 99 percent of the Serbs in Kosovo boycotted the elections. Local elections foreseen for 2006 were postponed by the Special Representative of the UN secretary-general for up to 12 months.

Throughout the post-1999 period, the main political parties in Kosovo have been late President Ibrahim Rugova's LDK, which enjoys 45 to 60 percent of the popular vote in general and municipal elections; the PDK, led by former KLA political leader Hashim Thaci, which garners 25 to 30 percent; and the AAK, led by former prime minister and KLA commander Ramush Haradinaj, which usually gains 7 to 8 percent. Kosovo's political system remained based on clan and regional ties, complicating the effort to create a stable, democratic government. The PDK, for instance, drew most of its support from the Drenica valley in north-central Kosovo, while the AAK got most of its votes in western Kosovo's Dukagjin area. Serbs, when they have chosen to participate in elections, have generally voted for an umbrella organization named the "Return Coalition," which usually captures 5 to 10 percent of the vote.

A major focus of the current effort to make progress on Kosovo's status is the transfer of authority in various governmental fields from UNMIK agencies to local institutions. Kosovo's civil service, however, is hampered by the fact that the various government ministries are divided among the main political parties, meaning appointments within the civil service often depend more on party connections than professional qualifications or competence. Administrative capacity at the municipal level is still weak both at the administrative and at the strategic planning level. The provisional institutions have set up an intergovernmental working group to develop a new public administration reform strategy to come into effect as of 2007. Meanwhile, Belgrade-sponsored parallel administrative structures continue to operate in most predominantly Serb municipalities, including in the areas of justice, education, health care.

Corruption in Kosovo is widespread and considered to be at high levels even by regional standards. In October 2006, PDK president Hashim Thaci claimed that the threat to Kosovo society stemming from organized crime and the mafia was the biggest danger Kosovo faced. A poll released in November 2006 revealed that 82 percent of Kosovo's residents believed there was corruption in Kosovo's government, with the energy ministry being singled out as the most corrupt government institution.

Freedom of expression is limited because of the overall lack of security. Although a wide variety of print and electronic media operate in Kosovo, journalists report frequent harassment and intimidation. In a report on the performance of local media during the March 2004 violence, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe noted that they had engaged in "reckless and sensationalist reporting," displayed "an unacceptable level of emotion, bias, and carelessness," and were de-

serving of "the strongest criticism." In March 2005, representatives of leading print media adopted a press code, and in October, the temporary media commissioner's office began to phase out its supervision of print publications. In June 2005, a journalist from the newspaper *Bota Sot* was shot in a drive-by shooting and subsequently died of his injuries. In a move reflecting a further transfer of competencies from international officials to local bodies, in August 2006, the UNMIK's temporary media commissioner was replaced by an Independent Media Commission, composed of five Kosovars and two internationals. There were no reports of government attempts to restrict access to the internet.

The Albanian population in Kosovo, which is predominantly Muslim, on the whole enjoys freedom of belief and religious association, but there have been consistent, systematic attacks on Orthodox Christian churches and other holy sites associated with the Serb population. During the March 2004 violence, 30 Christian churches and monasteries were destroyed or damaged. Since NATO took control of Kosovo in 1999, roughly 130 churches and other properties belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church have been destroyed or damaged. Over the past several years, Kosovo's small Protestant community has claimed that "Islamic extremists" were attending services so as to be able to identify worshippers and later harass them. There were also several reported incidents of attacks on Protestant places of worship.

While academic freedom has not been formally restricted, there are frequent complaints about the low academic standards and politicization of the University of Pristina. The University of Pristina operates under the authority of the provisional institutions, while Mitrovica University operates under the authority of Belgrade.

Freedom of assembly, especially in ethnic flashpoints such as the divided city of Mitrovica, is occasionally restricted by UNMIK and KFOR because of security concerns. Both domestic and foreign nongovernmental organizations generally function freely, although lack of donor funding in the past two years has forced a large number to cease operations. While current UNMIK regulations governing labor rights allow workers to join unions, there is no explicit right of association. Similarly, the law does not recognize the right to strike, but no attempts have been made to prevent workers from striking. A 2004 World Bank report claimed that the labor market functions in a virtually unregulated way, and in the absence of collective bargaining agreements, the market largely determines wages. The largest union in Kosovo, the Union of Independent Trade Unions, claims to represent some 100,000 workers.

Kosovo lacks a functioning criminal justice system. A report issued in 2006 by Human Rights Watch noted that "rampant impunity for crime" is one of the greatest problems facing Kosovo, and a 2005 report by Kai Eide, special envoy of the UN secretary-general, said that the justice system is the weakest of the province's institutions. Courts at all levels of the system are subject to political influence and intimidation. Ethnic Albanian judges rarely prosecute cases involving Albanian attacks on non-Albanians, and the physical safety of non-Albanian judges brought into Kosovo to try cases is difficult to guarantee. Criminal suspects arrested under the UN special representative's power to order executive detentions are frequently released by local judges. According to the Eide report, "property rights [in Kosovo] are neither respected nor ensured." The backlog in the civil court system stands at several tens of thousands of cases. Some 17,000 cases involving property claims

were backlogged in municipal courts as of 2005, and almost all were claims by Serbs. The breakdown of normal legal and judicial institutions has resulted in an increase in the number of murders attributable to blood feuds and vendettas, carried out in accordance with a medieval Albanian legal code known as the Kanun of Lek Dukagjini. Since 1999, about 40 murders have been attributed to blood feuds. Prison conditions in Kosovo are generally in line with international standards, although prison overcrowding remains a problem.

Several leading members of the former KLA are under investigation by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for actions committed before, during, and after the NATO intervention. Testifying before the UN Security Council in June 2006, the chief prosecutor of the ICTY, Carla Del Ponte, in June 2006 claimed that UNMIK's level of cooperation with the ICTY is the worst of any government in the region. According to Del Ponte, "the UNMIK leadership is encouraging a climate which deters witnesses from talking to my investigators when it comes to Albanian perpetrators."

Freedom of movement continues to be a significant problem in Kosovo for ethnic minorities. In 2003, Amnesty International reported that non-Albanians in Kosovo "find themselves subjected to both direct and indirect discrimination when seeking access to basic civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights." UNMIK has done little to promote the return of some 220,000 people the UN High Commissioner for Refugees lists as displaced from Kosovo; the 2005 Eide report noted, "[T]he overall return process has come to a virtual halt." The position of Kosovo's non-Serb ethnic minorities is particularly difficult. Four seats in Kosovo's Parliament are reserved for non-Albanian and non-Serb ethnic communities such as Roma, Turks, Bosniaks, and Ashkali. As a rule, however, they generally do not get serious political support from Belgrade, and most Kosovo Albanians consider them to be Serb collaborators and frequently discriminate against them as such. In August 2006, the Commission of the European Communities reported that minority communities, mostly Serbs, face serious restrictions in freedom of movement, access to education, health care, public utilities, and social assistance due to the poor quality of services and security concerns.

In August 2006, the Commission of the European Communities reported that Kosovo is located on a heroin trafficking route, and consumption continues to increase. The same source noted that organized crime remains a serious problem in Kosovo, with criminal networks extending to various socioeconomic sectors and into politics. Belgrade-sponsored parallel administrative structures regarding property registration cause legal uncertainty for property rights holders.

Gender inequality is a serious problem in Kosovo, as it is throughout the Balkans. Patriarchal societal attitudes often limit a woman's ability to gain an education or choose her own marriage partner, and women represent a disproportionately high percentage of the unemployed. In Kosovo's latest parliamentary elections, held in 2004, women won 29 percent of the seats, giving them 35 out of the 120 seats in the Kosovo Parliament. As of 2005, and occupied 28 percent of all municipal assembly seats. Current election rules stipulate that women must occupy every third spot on each political party's candidate list. As of November 2006, women constituted 27 percent of the judges in Kosovo, and 20 percent of the prosecutors, and 14 percent of the Kosovo Police Corps. According to the results of a study published in 2004,

only half of Kosovo women between the ages of 25 and 64 have received even basic elementary education. In some rural areas of Kosovo, this figure reaches only 10 percent. In May 2006, the Education Committee in Skenderaj municipality unanimously agreed to prohibit married women from receiving a secondary education because "they should be taking care of their husbands." Similarly, in many rural areas, women are effectively disenfranchised by "family voting," in which the male head of a household casts ballots for the entire family. Domestic violence is an area of serious concern.

Human trafficking is a major problem in Kosovo, which serves as a place of transit, a point of destination, and a source for women and children trafficked from Eastern to Western Europe for the purpose of prostitution. The presence of a large international military force and of numerous international civilian agencies provides a relatively affluent clientele for the trafficking trade in the province. In August 2006, UNICEF reported that child trafficking in Kosovo was on the rise.

Somalia

Somaliland

Population: 3,500,000

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review

(Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5,4PF

Overview: Somaliland, which had enjoyed *de facto* independence and relative stability since 1991, sought to define the role of Islam in public life in 2006 as Islamist forces took control of anarchic southern and central Somalia. Journalists faced official and unofficial pressure when covering the sensitive topic, and Somaliland's president in October endorsed the application of Islamic law. Separately, the upper house of parliament voted in May to extend its term by four years rather than hold scheduled elections in September.

The modern state of Somalia was formed in 1960 when the newly independent protectorates of British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland agreed to unite. In 1969, General Siad Barre took power in Somalia, ushering in a violent era fraught with clan rivalries and political repression. As flood, drought, and famine racked the nation, the struggle to topple Barre resulted in varying degrees of civil war and banditry that lasted until January 1991, when he was finally deposed. Heavily armed militias,

divided along traditional clan lines, then fought for power. The current Somaliland, largely conforming with the borders of the former British Somaliland in the northwestern corner of the country, seized the opportunity of Somalia's political collapse to declare independence.

In a series of clan conferences following the 1991 independence declaration, Somaliland's leaders agreed to form a government system that combined elements of an electoral democracy (a directly elected lower house) with traditional political structures (an upper House of Elders). Political parties did not operate freely until 2003. Since then, the three main political parties have roughly represented Somaliland's three most powerful clans. While the presidential election of 2003 and parliamentary elections of 2005 did not meet international standards, they were conducted without reports of widespread intimidation or misappropriation. Nevertheless, the government is relatively weak; clan-based conflicts still threaten stability; and women have very little role in the decision-making process. There are also fears that the conflict in southern and central Somalia could spill over into Somaliland. Such concerns grew more acute in 2006, as Islamist forces gained control of much of Somalia, and the Ethiopian military responded with an invasion late in the year.

About half of Somaliland's people are pastoral livestock herders. Since the region is not recognized as independent, it does not receive the kind of direct aid that many developing states do. However, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) provide some social services.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

According to Somaliland's current constitution, the president is directly elected for five-year terms and appoints the cabinet. The lower house of the bicameral Parliament, the 82-seat House of Representatives, is directly elected for five-year terms, while the 82-seat House of Elders is indirectly elected by local communities for six-year terms. In April 2003, nearly half a million voters took part in the presidential election, which Dahir Riyale Kahin won by a margin of less than 100 votes. Some powerful supporters of Kahin's opponent, Ahmed Mahmoud Silanyo, urged him to form a rival government, but he chose to respect the electoral process, thus averting bloodshed. The last elections for the lower house of Parliament took place in September 2005, but the upper house has repeatedly postponed elections since its formal six-year term expired in 2003. In May 2006, the House of Elders voted to extend its term another four years rather than hold elections in September. Three main parties dominate Somaliland politics: the For Justice and Development Party; the United Peoples' Democratic Party, which is the president's party loosely affiliated with Somaliland's second largest clan, the Dir clan; and the Peace, Unity, and Development Party, affiliated with Kahin's challenger Ahmed M. Mahamoud Silanyo and loosely affiliated with the country's largest clan, the Isaaq clan.

Transparency International did not rank Somaliland separately in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. However, local journalists have reported widely on the corruption problem. In May 2006, the president fired the interior minister and the police commissioner over rumors of their corruption and abuse of power.

While Somaliland journalists continue to fare much better than their colleagues in the rest of Somalia, they have faced problems at the hands of government as well as nongovernmental actors. In June 2006, according to the New York-based Com-

mittee to Protect Journalists, Mohamed Abdi Urad, editor of the daily *Jamhuuriya*, was detained overnight by police in the capital, Hargeisa, on orders of the high court after the paper published an article that criticized the decision by the upper house of Parliament to extend its term. Other press freedom incidents in 2006 involved the rise to power in southern and central Somalia of an Islamist group known as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). A reporter for the independent daily *Haatuf*, which was critical of the ICU, was detained in September after he wrote that the Islamists were infiltrating Somaliland. In October, demonstrators burned over a thousand copies of the paper. The Somaliland minister of information in November 2006 allegedly ordered two female journalists working for state-owned Radio Hargeisa to be fired for wearing *hijab* (headscarves).

Somaliland's population is almost entirely Sunni Muslim, and according to the constitution, Islam is the state religion. Throughout 2006, there was a great deal of public debate about the role of religion in political and judicial life.

Many international NGOs operate in Somaliland with limited government interference. However, there has been a backlash against their work in the local media. Newspaper editorials have accused NGOs of acting without regard for Somaliland's culture and operating without transparency.

Somaliland has a functioning judiciary, but there are questions about its independence. In 2006, Kahin was pressured to articulate a position on the role of Sharia (Islamic law) in determining law as Somaliland reacted to the rise of the ICU. Authorities do not want Somaliland to be dominated by ICU sympathizers, which could result in a destabilizing military response from Ethiopia. However, local Islamists are also agitating for Islam to play a more prominent role in public life. In October, Kahin said Sharia would be applied in Somaliland, but it is unclear how such a policy would be implemented in the context of existing laws.

The police and other government agencies have been accused of committing some human rights abuses, but the situation is not comparable to that of Somalia generally, where there is little respect for the rule of law. In September 2006, protesters demonstrated against alleged police torture of detained terrorism suspects.

Almost all Somalilanders share the same ethnicity and religion. The discrimination that exists is based on clan exclusion. The larger clans are more powerful and more politically connected, while some of the smaller clans are not prominently represented in public life.

Somaliland public life is dominated by men. Women are present in the workplace and do hold some government positions, but real power is in the hands of male clan leaders. There is still a great deal of social and legal discrimination against women, and female genital mutilation is widely practiced.

United States

Puerto Rico



Population: 3,900,000

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline For Year Under Review (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: The decline of the island's economic performance accelerated in 2006, a development that, among other things, led to a two-week shutdown of the government. The year also brought convictions in a high-profile corruption case and signs of a renewed debate over Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States.

Having initially been captured by U.S. forces during the Spanish-American War in 1898, Puerto Rico acquired the status of a commonwealth of the United States following approval by plebiscite in 1952. As a commonwealth, Puerto Rico exercises approximately the same control over its internal affairs as do the 50 states. Although they are U.S. citizens, residents of Puerto Rico cannot vote in presidential elections and are represented in the U.S. Congress by a delegate to the House of Representatives who can vote in committee, but not on the floor.

Politically, Puerto Rico is almost equally divided between the pro-commonwealth Popular Democratic Party (PPD) and the pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP). The governor, Anibal Acevedo-Vila of the PPD, won election in late 2004 by a razor-thin margin over his PNP opponent. At the same time, the PNP controls both houses of the legislature. The result is near-gridlock in government, with Acevedo-Vila unable to push any significant part of his program through the opposition-dominated legislature.

Although Puerto Rico had for years been showcased as one of the Caribbean's major economic success stories, its performance has stagnated in recent years. Per capita income stands at just over one-half the level of the poorest state in the United States, labor force participation is low, and poverty rates are high. With tax revenues dwindling, the government of Acevedo-Vila faced a crisis in May 2006 that forced a shutdown of most government offices. The shutdown lasted two weeks and ended only when the governor and legislature agreed to borrow \$740 million to cover a budget deficit and establish a sales tax to pay for the loan.

In November, two allies of former governor Pedro Rossello were convicted of extorting millions of dollars in kickbacks from a public works project in the late 1990s. The case was the latest in a series of scandal prosecutions that have targeted officials from Rossello's PNP administration of the 1990s.

Political divisions within Puerto Rico reflect divisions among Puerto Ricans over the island's relationship with the United States. For years, Puerto Ricans have been nearly equally divided between those who favor the continuation of commonwealth status and those who favor full U.S. statehood. Commonwealth supporters argue that the special status allows the island to maintain its separate culture and an exemption from paying federal income tax, but advocates of statehood seek presidential voting rights and full representation in Congress.

A third option, independence, has little popular support; the Independence Party (PIP) candidate for governor, Ruben Berrios, failed to collect 5 percent of the vote in the most recent election. There appears to be more support for Puerto Rico's independence among political elites in Latin America than in Puerto Rico itself. After a conference on the topic held in Panama in November 2006, legislatures in both Argentina and Brazil passed resolutions backing independent status. At present, the U.S. Congress shows no interest in changing Puerto Rico's status. However, there have been calls within the commonwealth for another referendum on the matter in **2008**.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The commonwealth constitution, modeled after that of the United States, provides for a governor elected for four-year terms and a bicameral legislature, currently consisting of a 27-member Senate and a 51-member House of Representatives, elected for four-year terms.

As U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans are guaranteed all civil liberties granted in the United States. The major political parties are the pro-commonwealth PPD, the pro-statehood PNP, and the pro-independence PIP.

Puerto Rico was not ranked in Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Puerto Rico has a varied and vigorous media environment. During 2004, a coalition of human rights and gay organizations formally complained about frequent antihomosexual comments and jokes on radio and television.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed in this predominantly Roman Catholic territory, and a substantial number of Evangelical churches have been established on the island in recent years. Academic freedom is guaranteed.

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed by law, and Puerto Ricans frequently mount protest rallies against government policies or policies of the United States. There is a robust civil society, with numerous nongovernmental organizations representing the interests of different constituencies. The government respects trade union rights, and unions are generally free to organize and strike.

The legal system is based on U.S. law, and a supreme court heads an independent judiciary. Crime is the most serious problem facing the island. The law enforcement and legal systems have been seriously tested by an increase in drug-related crime. A controversy has emerged over the issue of capital punishment. Although Puerto Rico prohibits the death penalty, Puerto Ricans are subject to the death penalty for crimes that violate U.S. federal law.

In recent years, there has been an upsurge in attempts by illegal migrants from various Caribbean countries, many traveling in flimsy boats, to reach Puerto Rico. Many are brought to the island by smugglers, who encourage their migration

efforts by warning that new U.S. policies would make immigration more difficult in the future.

Laws granting equal rights for women in education, at the workplace, and in other aspects of society have been adopted. Women's rights organizations, however, claim that women are still subject to widespread discrimination.

Freedom in the World 2007

Methodology

INTRODUCTION

The *Freedom in the World* survey provides an annual evaluation of the state of global freedom as experienced by individuals. The survey measures freedom—the opportunity to act spontaneously in a variety of fields outside the control of the government and other centers of potential domination—according to two broad categories: political rights and civil liberties. Political rights enable people to participate freely in the political process, including the right to vote freely for distinct alternatives in legitimate elections, compete for public office, join political parties and organizations, and elect representatives who have a decisive impact on public policies and are accountable to the electorate. Civil liberties allow for the freedoms of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy without interference from the state.

Freedom House does not maintain a culture-bound view of freedom. The methodology of the survey is grounded in basic standards of political rights and civil liberties, derived in large measure from relevant portions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These standards apply to all countries and territories, irrespective of geographical location, ethnic or religious composition, or level of economic development. The survey operates from the assumption that freedom for all peoples is best achieved in liberal democratic societies.

The survey does not rate governments or government performance per se, but rather the real-world rights and social freedoms enjoyed by individuals. Freedoms can be affected by state actions, as well as by non-state actors, including insurgents and other armed groups. Thus, the survey ratings generally reflect the interplay of a variety of actors, both governmental and nongovernmental.

The survey includes both analytical reports and numerical ratings for 193 countries and 15 select territories¹. Each country and territory report includes an overview section, which provides historical background and a brief description of the year's major developments, as well as a section summarizing the current state of political rights and civil liberties. In addition, each country and territory is assigned

1. These territories are selected based on their political significance and size. Freedom House divides territories into two categories: related territories and disputed territories. Related territories consist mostly of colonies, protectorates, and island dependencies of sovereign states that are in some relation of dependency to that state and whose relationship is not currently in serious legal or political dispute. Disputed territories are areas within internationally recognized sovereign states whose status is in serious political or violent dispute and whose conditions differ substantially from those of the relevant sovereign states. They are often outside of central government control and characterized by intense, longtime, and widespread insurgency or independence movements that enjoy popular support.

a numerical rating—on a scale of 1 to 7—for political rights and an analogous rating for civil liberties; a rating of 1 indicates the highest degree of freedom and 7 the least amount of freedom. These ratings, calculated based on the methodological process described below, determine whether a country is classified as Free, Partly Free, or Not Free by the survey.

The survey findings are reached after a multi-layered process of analysis and evaluation by a team of regional experts and scholars (see below). Although there is an element of subjectivity inherent in the survey findings, the ratings process emphasizes intellectual rigor and balanced and unbiased judgments.

HISTORY OF THE SURVEY

Freedom House's first year-end reviews of freedom began in the 1950s as the *Balance Sheet of Freedom*. This modest report provided assessments of political trends and their implications for individual freedom. In 1972, Freedom House launched a new, more comprehensive annual study of freedom called *The Comparative Study of Freedom*. Raymond Gastil, a Harvard-trained specialist in regional studies from the University of Washington at Seattle, developed the survey's methodology, which assigned political rights and civil liberties ratings to 151 countries and 45 territories and—based on these ratings—categorized them as Free, Partly Free, or Not Free. The findings appeared each year in Freedom House's *Freedom at Issue* bimonthly journal (later titled *Freedom Review*). The survey first appeared in book form in 1978 under the title *Freedom in the World* and included short, explanatory narratives for each country and territory rated in the study, as well as a series of essays by leading scholars on related issues. *Freedom in the World* continued to be produced by Gastil until 1989, when a larger team of in-house survey analysts was established. In the mid 1990s, the expansion of *Freedom in the World's*, country and territory narratives demanded the hiring of outside analysts—a group of regional experts from the academic, media, and human rights communities. The survey has continued to grow in size and scope; the 2007 edition is the most exhaustive in the *Freedom in the World's* 35-year tenure.

RESEARCH AND RATINGS REVIEW PROCESS

This year's survey covers developments from December 1, 2005, through December 31, 2006, in 193 countries and 15 territories. The research and ratings process involved 29 analysts and 15 senior-level academic advisors—the largest number to date. The 10 members of the core research team headquartered in New York, along with 19 outside consultant analysts, prepared the country and territory reports. The analysts used a broad range of sources of information—including foreign and domestic news reports, academic analyses, nongovernmental organizations, think tanks, individual professional contacts, and visits to the region—in preparing the reports.

The country and territory ratings were proposed by the analyst responsible for each related report. The ratings were reviewed individually and on a comparative basis in a series of six regional meetings—Asia-Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Europe—involving the analysts,

academic advisors with expertise in each region, and Freedom House staff. The ratings were compared to the previous year's findings, and any major proposed numerical shifts or category changes were subjected to more intensive scrutiny. These reviews were followed by cross-regional assessments in which efforts were made to ensure comparability and consistency in the findings. Many of the key country reports were also reviewed by the academic advisors.

CHANGES TO THE 2007 EDITION OF *FREEDOM IN THE WORLD*

The survey's methodology is reviewed periodically by an advisory committee of political scientists with expertise in methodological issues. Over the years, the committee has made a number of modest methodological changes to adapt to evolving ideas about political rights and civil liberties. At the same time, the time series data are not revised retroactively, and any changes to the methodology are introduced incrementally in order to ensure the comparability of the ratings from year to year.

In the 2007 edition of the survey, several sub-questions were added to the checklist question guidelines; the checklist questions are used by the analysts when scoring each of their countries, while the guidelines—in the form of bulleted sub-questions—provide general guidance to the analysts about issues they should consider when scoring each checklist question. The new sub-questions include two on subnational elections (the last sub-questions under Political Rights checklist questions A.1. and A.2.) and one on the rights of noncitizens (the last sub-question under Civil Liberties checklist question F.4). (The checklist questions and guidelines appear at the end of this methodology essay.)

The number of countries analyzed by the survey increased from 192 to 193 in the 2007 edition of *Freedom in the World*. This change occurred as the result of the separation of Serbia and Montenegro into two separate countries. The number of related and disputed territories also increased by one, from 14 to 15, with the addition of Somaliland as a separate territory.

Finally, *Freedom in the World 2007* focuses on developments from December 1, 2005 through December 31, 2006. This timeframe represents a change from the previous survey edition, which encompassed a 12-month, non-calendar-year timeframe of December 1, 2004 through November 30, 2005. Future editions of the survey will cover a 12-month calendar year. Thus, the 2007 edition alone reflects a 13-month, rather than a 12-month, calendar-year period.

RATINGS PROCESS

(*NOTE: see the full checklists and keys to political rights and civil liberties ratings and status at the end of the methodology essay.*)

Raw Points - The ratings process is based on a checklist of 10 political rights questions and 15 civil liberties questions. The political rights questions are grouped into the three sub-categories: Electoral Process (3 questions), Political Pluralism and Participation (4), and Functioning of Government (3). The civil liberties questions are grouped into four sub-categories: Freedom of Expression and Belief (4 questions), Associational and Organizational Rights (3), Rule of Law (4), and Personal

Autonomy and Individual Rights (4). Raw points are awarded to each of these questions on a scale of 0 to 4, where 0 points represents the smallest degree and 4 the greatest degree of rights or liberties present. The political rights section also contains two additional discretionary questions: question A (For traditional monarchies that have no parties or electoral process, does the system provide for genuine, meaningful consultation with the people, encourage public discussion of policy choices, and allow the right to petition the ruler?) and question B (Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group?). For additional discretionary question A, 1 to 4 points may be added, as applicable, while for discretionary question B, 1 to 4 points may be subtracted (the worse the situation, the more points that may be subtracted). The highest number of points that can be awarded to the political rights checklist is 40 (or a total of up to 4 points for each of the 10 questions). The highest number of points that can be awarded to the civil liberties checklist is 60 (or a total of up to 4 points for each of the 15 questions).

The raw points from the previous survey edition are used as a benchmark for the current year under review. In general, a change in raw points is made only if there has been a real world development during the year that warrants a change (e.g., a crackdown on the media, the country's first free and fair elections) and is reflected accordingly in the narrative.

In answering both the political rights and civil liberties questions, Freedom House does not equate constitutional or other legal guarantees of rights with the on-the-ground fulfillment of these rights. While both laws and actual practices are factored into the ratings decisions, greater emphasis is placed on the latter.

In addition, for states and territories with small populations, the absence of pluralism in the political system or civil society is not necessarily viewed as a negative situation unless the government or other centers of domination are deliberately blocking its establishment or operation. For example, a small country without diverse political parties or media outlets or significant trade unions are not penalized if these limitations are determined to be a function of size and not overt restrictions.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties Ratings - The total number of points awarded to the political rights and civil liberties checklists determines the political rights and civil liberties ratings. Each rating of 1 through 7, with 1 representing the highest and 7 the lowest level of freedom, corresponds to a range of total points (see Tables 1 and 2).

Status of Free, Partly Free, Not Free - Each pair of political rights and civil liberties ratings is averaged to determine an overall status of "Free," "Partly Free," or "Not Free." Those whose ratings average 1.0 to 2.5 are considered Free, 3.0 to 5.0 Partly Free, and 5.5 to 7.0 Not Free (see Table 3).

The designations of Free, Partly Free, and Not Free each cover a broad third of the available raw points. Therefore, countries and territories within any one category, especially those at either end of the category, can have quite different human rights situations. In order to see the distinctions within each category, a country or territory's political rights and civil liberties ratings should be examined. For example, countries at the lowest end of the Free category (2 in political rights and 3 in civil

liberties, or 3 in political rights and 2 in civil liberties) differ from those at the upper end of the Free group (1 for both political rights and civil liberties). Also, a designation of Free does not mean that a country enjoys perfect freedom or lacks serious problems, only that it enjoys comparably more freedom than Partly Free or Not Free (or some other Free) countries.

Indications of Ratings and/or Status Changes - Each country or territory's political rights rating, civil liberties rating, and status is included in a statistics section that precedes each country or territory report. A change in a political rights or civil liberties rating since the previous survey edition is indicated with an asterisk next to the rating that has changed. A brief ratings change explanation is included in the statistics section.

Trend Arrows - Positive or negative developments in a country or territory may also be reflected in the use of upward or downward trend arrows. A trend arrow is based on a particular development (such as an improvement in a country's state of religious freedom) which must be linked to a change in raw points in the corresponding checklist question (in this case, an increase in the number of raw points assigned to checklist question D2, which covers religious freedom). However, not all increases or decreases in raw points warrant trend arrows. Whether a positive or negative development is significant enough to warrant a trend arrow is determined through consultations among the report writer, the regional academic advisors, and Freedom House staff. Also, trend arrows are assigned only in cases where increases or decreases in raw points are not sufficient to warrant a ratings change; thus, a country cannot receive both a ratings change and a trend arrow during the same year. A trend arrow is indicated with an arrow next to the name of the country or territory that appears before the statistics section at the top of each country or territory report. A brief trend arrow explanation is included in the statistics section.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES RATING

POLITICAL RIGHTS

Rating of 1 - Countries and territories that receive a rating of 1 for political rights come closest to ensuring the freedoms embodied in the checklist questions, beginning with free and fair elections. Those who are elected rule, there are competitive parties or other political groupings, and the opposition plays an important role and has actual power. Minority groups have reasonable self-government or can participate in the government through informal consensus.

Rating of 2 - Countries and territories rated 2 in political rights are less free than those rated 1. Such factors as political corruption, violence, political discrimination against minorities, and foreign or military influence on politics may be present and weaken the quality of freedom.

Ratings of 3, 4, 5 - The same conditions that undermine freedom in countries

and territories with a rating of 2 may also weaken political rights in those with a rating of 3, 4, or 5. Other damaging elements can include civil war, heavy military involvement in politics, lingering royal power, unfair elections, and one-party dominance. However, states and territories in these categories may still enjoy some elements of political rights, including the freedom to organize quasi-political groups, reasonably free referenda, or other significant means of popular influence on government.

Rating of 6 - Countries and territories with political rights rated 6 have systems ruled by military juntas, one-party dictatorships, religious hierarchies, or autocrats. These regimes may allow only a minimal manifestation of political rights, such as some degree of representation or autonomy for minorities. A few states are traditional monarchies that mitigate their relative lack of political rights through the use of consultation with their subjects, tolerance of political discussion, and acceptance of public petitions.

Rating of 7 - For countries and territories with a rating of 7, political rights are absent or virtually nonexistent as a result of the extremely oppressive nature of the regime or severe oppression in combination with civil war. States and territories in this group may also be marked by extreme violence or warlord rule that dominates political power in the absence of an authoritative, functioning central government.

CIVIL LIBERTIES

Rating of 1 - Countries and territories that receive a rating of 1 come closest to ensuring the freedoms expressed in the civil liberties checklist, including freedom of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. They are distinguished by an established and generally equitable system of rule of law. Countries and territories with this rating enjoy free economic activity and tend to strive for equality of opportunity.

Rating of 2 - States and territories with a rating of 2 have deficiencies in a few aspects of civil liberties, but are still relatively free.

Ratings of 3, 4, 5 - Countries and territories that have received a rating of 3, 4, or 5 range from those that are in at least partial compliance with virtually all checklist standards to those with a combination of high or medium scores for some questions and low or very low scores on other questions. The level of oppression increases at each successive rating level, including in the areas of censorship, political terror, and the prevention of free association. There are also many cases in which groups opposed to the state engage in political terror that undermines other freedoms.

Rating of 6 - People in countries and territories with a rating of 6 experience severely restricted rights of expression and association, and there are almost always political prisoners and other manifestations of political terror. These countries may be characterized by a few partial rights, such as some religious and social freedoms, some highly restricted private business activity, and relatively free private discussion.

Rating of 7 - States and territories with a rating of 7 have virtually no freedom. An overwhelming and justified fear of repression characterizes these societies.

Countries and territories generally have ratings in political rights and civil liberties that are within two ratings numbers of each other. Without a well-developed civil society, it is difficult, if not impossible, to have an atmosphere supportive of political rights. Consequently, there is no country in the survey with a rating of 6 or 7 for civil liberties and, at the same time, a rating of 1 or 2 for political rights.

ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY DESIGNATION

In addition to providing numerical ratings, the survey assigns the designation "electoral democracy" to countries that have met certain minimum standards. In determining whether a country is an electoral democracy, Freedom House examines several key factors concerning the last major national election or elections.

To qualify as an electoral democracy, a state must have satisfied the following criteria:

- 1) A competitive, multiparty political system;
- 2) Universal adult suffrage for all citizens (with exceptions for restrictions that states may legitimately place on citizens as sanctions for criminal offenses);
- 3) Regularly contested elections conducted in conditions of ballot secrecy, reasonable ballot security, and in the absence of massive voter fraud, and that yield results that are representative of the public will;
- 4) Significant public access of major political parties to the electorate through the media and through generally open political campaigning.

The numerical benchmark for a country to be listed as an electoral democracy is a sub-total score of 7 or better (out of a total possible 12) for the political rights checklist sub-category A (the three questions on Electoral Process). In the case of presidential/parliamentary systems, both elections must have been free and fair on the basis of the above criteria; in parliamentary systems, the last nationwide elections for the national legislature must have been free and fair. The presence of certain irregularities during the electoral process does not automatically disqualify a country from being designated an electoral democracy. A country cannot be an electoral democracy if significant authority for national decisions resides in the hands of an unelected power, whether a monarch or a foreign international authority. A country is removed from the ranks of electoral democracies if its last national election failed to meet the criteria listed above, or if changes in law significantly eroded the public's possibility for electoral choice.

Freedom House's term "electoral democracy" differs from "liberal democracy" in that the latter also implies the presence of a substantial array of civil liberties. In the survey, all Free countries qualify as both electoral and liberal democracies. By contrast, some Partly Free countries qualify as electoral, but not liberal, democracies.

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2007**CHECKLIST QUESTIONS AND GUIDELINES**

Each numbered checklist question is assigned a score of 0-4 (except for discretionary question A, for which 1-4 points may be added, and discretionary question B, for which 1-4 points may be subtracted), according to the survey methodology. The bulleted sub-questions are intended to provide guidance to the writers regarding what issues are meant to be considered in scoring each checklist question; the authors do not necessarily have to consider every sub-question when scoring their countries.

POLITICAL RIGHTS CHECKLIST**A. ELECTORAL PROCESS**

1. Is the head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?

- Did established and reputable national and/or international election monitoring organizations judge the most recent elections for head of government to be free and fair? (*Note:* Heads of government chosen through various electoral frameworks, including direct elections for president, indirect elections for prime minister by parliament, and the electoral college system for electing presidents, are covered under this and the following sub-questions. In cases of indirect elections for the head of government, the elections for the legislature that chose the head of government, as well as the selection process of the head of government himself, should be taken into consideration.)

- Have there been undue, politically motivated delays in holding the most recent election for head of government?

- Is the registration of voters and candidates conducted in an accurate, timely, transparent, and non-discriminatory manner?

- Can candidates make speeches, hold public meetings, and enjoy media access throughout the campaign free of intimidation?

- Does voting take place by secret ballot or by equivalent free voting procedure?

- Are voters able to vote for the candidate or party of their choice without undue pressure or intimidation?

- Is the vote count transparent, and is it reported honestly with the official results made public? Can election monitors from independent groups and representing parties/candidates watch the counting of votes to ensure their honesty?

- Is each person's vote given equivalent weight to those of other voters in order to ensure equal representation?

- Has a democratically elected head of government who was chosen in the most recent election subsequently been overthrown in a violent coup? (*Note:* Although a peaceful, "velvet coup" may ultimately lead to a positive outcome—particularly if it replaces a head of government who was not freely and fairly elected—the new leader has not been freely and fairly elected and cannot be treated as such.)

- In cases where elections for regional, provincial, or state governors and/or other subnational officials differ significantly in conduct from national elections, does the conduct of the subnational elections reflect an opening toward improved political rights in the country, or, alternatively, a worsening of political rights?

2. Are the national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?

- Did established and reputable domestic and/or international election monitoring organizations judge the most recent national legislative elections to be free and fair?

- Have there been undue, politically motivated delays in holding the most recent national legislative election?

- Is the registration of voters and candidates conducted in an accurate, timely, transparent, and non-discriminatory manner?

- Can candidates make speeches, hold public meetings, and enjoy media access throughout the campaign free of intimidation?

- Does voting take place by secret ballot or by equivalent free voting procedure?

- Are voters able to vote for the candidate or party of their choice without undue pressure or intimidation?

- Is the vote count transparent, and is it reported honestly with the official results made public? Can election monitors from independent groups and representing parties/candidates watch the counting of votes to ensure their honesty?

- Is each person's vote given equivalent weight to those of other voters in order to ensure equal representation?

- Have the representatives of a democratically elected national legislature who were chosen in the most recent election subsequently been overthrown in a violent coup? (*Note:* Although a peaceful, "velvet coup" may ultimately lead to a positive outcome—particularly if it replaces a national legislature whose representatives were not freely and fairly elected—members of the new legislature have not been freely and fairly elected and cannot be treated as such.)

- In cases where elections for subnational councils/parliaments differ significantly in conduct from national elections, does the conduct of the subnational elections reflect an opening toward improved political rights in the country, or, alternatively, a worsening of political rights?

3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair?

- Is there a clear, detailed, and fair legislative framework for conducting elections? (*Note:* Changes to electoral laws should not be made immediately pre-

ceding an election if the ability of voters, candidates, or parties to fulfill their roles in the election is infringed.)

- Are election commissions or other election authorities independent and free from government or other pressure and interference?
- Is the composition of election commissions fair and balanced?
- Do election commissions or other election authorities conduct their work in an effective and competent manner?
- Do adult citizens enjoy universal and equal suffrage? (*Note: Suffrage can be suspended or withdrawn for reasons of legal incapacity, such as mental incapacity, or conviction of a serious criminal offense.*)
- Is the drawing of election districts conducted in a fair and nonpartisan manner, as opposed to gerrymandering for personal or partisan advantage?
- Has the selection of a system for choosing legislative representatives (such as proportional versus majoritarian) been manipulated to advance certain political interests or to influence the electoral results?

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION

1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system open to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

- Do political parties encounter undue legal or practical obstacles in their efforts to be formed and to operate, including onerous registration requirements, excessively large membership requirements, etc.?
- Do parties face discriminatory or onerous restrictions in holding meetings, rallies, or other peaceful activities?
- Are party members or leaders intimidated, harassed, arrested, imprisoned, or subjected to violent attacks as a result of their peaceful political activities?

2. Is there a significant opposition vote and a realistic possibility for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?

- Are various legal/administrative restrictions selectively applied to opposition parties to prevent them from increasing their support base or successfully competing in elections?
 - Are there legitimate opposition forces in positions of authority, such as in the national legislature or in sub-national governments?
 - Are opposition party members or leaders intimidated, harassed, arrested, imprisoned, or subjected to violent attacks as a result of their peaceful political activities?

3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign

powers, totalitarian parties, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group?

- Do such groups offer bribes to voters and/or political figures in order to influence their political choices?
- Do such groups intimidate, harass, or attack voters and/or political figures in order to influence their political choices?
 - Does the military control or enjoy a preponderant influence over government policy and activities, including in countries that nominally are under civilian control?
- Do foreign governments control or enjoy a preponderant influence over government policy and activities by means including the presence of foreign military troops, the use of significant economic threats or sanctions, etc.?

4. Do cultural, ethnic, religious, or other minority groups have full political rights and electoral opportunities?

- Do political parties of various ideological persuasions address issues of specific concern to minority groups?
- Does the government inhibit the participation of minority groups in national or sub-national political life through laws and/or practical obstacles?
- Are political parties based on ethnicity, culture, or religion which espouse peaceful, democratic values legally permitted and de facto allowed to operate?

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT

1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?

- Are the candidates who were elected freely and fairly duly installed in office?
- Do other appointed or non-freely elected state actors interfere with or prevent freely elected representatives from adopting and implementing legislation and making meaningful policy decisions?
- Do non-state actors, including criminal gangs, the military, and foreign governments, interfere with or prevent elected representatives from adopting and implementing legislation and making meaningful policy decisions?

2. Is the government free from pervasive corruption?

- Has the government implemented effective anticorruption laws or programs to prevent, detect, and punish corruption among public officials, including conflict of interest?
- Is the government free from excessive bureaucratic regulations, registration requirements, or other controls that increase opportunities for corruption?

- Are there independent and effective auditing and investigative bodies that function without impediment or political pressure or influence?
- Are allegations of corruption by government officials thoroughly investigated and prosecuted without prejudice, particularly against political opponents?
- Are allegations of corruption given wide and extensive airing in the media?
- Do whistleblowers, anticorruption activists, investigators, and journalists enjoy legal protections that make them feel secure about reporting cases of bribery and corruption?

What was the latest Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index score for this country?

3. Is the government accountable to the electorate between elections, and does it operate with openness and transparency?

- Are civil society groups, interest groups, journalists, and other citizens able to comment on and influence pending policies of legislation?

Do citizens have the legal right and practical ability to obtain information about government operations and the means to petition government agencies for it?

- Is the budget-making process subject to meaningful legislative review and public scrutiny?

Does the government publish detailed accounting expenditures in a timely fashion?

- Does the state ensure transparency and effective competition in the awarding of government contracts?
- Are the asset declarations of government officials open to public and media scrutiny and verification?

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTIONS:

A. For traditional monarchies that have no parties or electoral process, does the system provide for genuine, meaningful consultation with the people, encourage public discussion of policy choices, and allow the right to petition the ruler?

- Is there a non-elected legislature that advises the monarch on policy issues?
- Are there formal mechanisms for individuals or civic groups to speak with or petition the monarch?
- Does the monarch take petitions from the public under serious consideration?

B. Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group?

- Is the government providing economic or other incentives to certain people in order to change the ethnic composition of a region or regions?

- Is the government forcibly moving people in or out of a certain or areas in order to change the ethnic composition of those regions?
- Is the government arresting, imprisoning, or killing members of certain ethnic groups in order change the ethnic composition of a region or regions?

CIVIL LIBERTIES CHECKLIST

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF

1. Are there free and independent media and other forms of cultural expression?
(*Note:* In cases where the media are state-controlled but offer pluralistic points of view, the survey gives the system credit.)

- Does the government directly or indirectly censor print, broadcast, and/or Internet-based media?
- Is self-censorship among journalists common, especially when reporting on politically sensitive issues, including corruption or the activities of senior officials?
- Does the government use libel and security laws to punish those who scrutinize government officials and policies through either onerous fines or imprisonment?
- Is it a crime to insult the honor and dignity of the president and/or other government officials? How broad is the range of such prohibitions, and how vigorously are they enforced?
- If media outlets are dependent on the government for their financial survival, does the government withhold funding in order to propagandize, primarily provide official points of view, and/or limit access by opposition parties and civic critics?
- Does the government attempt to influence media content and access through means including politically motivated awarding of broadcast frequencies and newspaper registrations, unfair control and influence over printing facilities and distribution networks, selective distribution of advertising, onerous registration requirements, prohibitive tariffs, and bribery?

Are journalists threatened, arrested, imprisoned, beaten, or killed by government or non-governmental actors for their legitimate journalistic activities, and if such cases occur, are they investigated and prosecuted fairly and expeditiously?

- Are works of literature, art, music, and other forms of cultural expression censored or banned for political purposes?

2. Are religious institutions and communities free to practice their faith and express themselves in public and private?

Are registration requirements employed to impede the free functioning of religious institutions?

Are members of religious groups, including minority faiths and movements,

harassed, fined, arrested, or beaten by the authorities for engaging in their religious practices?

- Does the government appoint or otherwise influence the appointment of religious leaders?
- Does the government control the production and distribution of religious books and other materials and the content of sermons?
- Is the construction of religious buildings banned or restricted?
- Does the government place undue restrictions on religious education? Does the government require religious education?

3. Is there academic freedom and is the educational system free of extensive political indoctrination?

- Are teachers and professors free to pursue academic activities of a political and quasi-political nature without fear of physical violence or intimidation by state or non-state actors?
- Does the government pressure, strongly influence, or control the content of school curriculums for political purposes?
- Are student associations that address issues of a political nature allowed to function freely?
- Does the government, including through school administration or other officials, pressure students and/or teachers to support certain political figures or agendas, including pressuring them to attend political rallies or vote for certain candidates? Conversely, does the government, including through school administration or other officials, discourage or forbid students and/or teachers from supporting certain candidates and parties?

4. Is there open and free private discussion?

- Are people able to engage in private discussions, particularly of a political nature (in places including restaurants, public transportation, and their homes) without fear of harassment or arrest by the authorities?
- Does the government employ people or groups to engage in public surveillance and to report alleged anti-government conversations to the authorities?

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS

1. Is there freedom of assembly, demonstration, and open public discussion?

- Are peaceful protests, particularly those of a political nature, banned or severely restricted?
- Are the legal requirements to obtain permission to hold peaceful demonstrations particularly cumbersome and time consuming?
- Are participants of peaceful demonstrations intimidated, arrested, or assaulted?

- Are peaceful protestors detained by police in order to prevent them from engaging in such actions?

2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations? (*Note:* This includes civic organizations, interest groups, foundations, etc.)

- Are registration and other legal requirements for nongovernmental organizations particularly onerous and intended to prevent them from functioning freely?

- Are laws related to the financing of nongovernmental organizations unduly complicated and cumbersome?

- Are donors and funders of nongovernmental organizations free of government pressure?

- Are members of nongovernmental organizations intimidated, arrested, imprisoned, or assaulted because of their work?

3. Are there free trade unions and peasant organizations or equivalents, and is there effective collective bargaining? Are there free professional and other private organizations?

- Are trade unions allowed to be established and to operate free from government interference?

- Are workers pressured by the government or employers to join or not to join certain trade unions, and do they face harassment, violence, or dismissal from their jobs if they do?

- Are workers permitted to engage in strikes, and do members of unions face reprisals for engaging in peaceful strikes? (*Note:* This question may not apply to workers in essential government services or public safety jobs.)

- Are unions able to bargain collectively with employers and able to negotiate collective bargaining agreements that are honored in practice?

- For states with very small populations or primarily agriculturally-based economies that do not necessarily support the formation of trade unions, does the government allow for the establishment of peasant organizations or their equivalents? Is there legislation expressly forbidding the formation of trade unions?

- Are professional organizations, including business associations, allowed to operate freely and without government interference?

F. RULE OF LAW

1. Is there an independent judiciary?

- Is the judiciary subject to interference from the executive branch of government or from other political, economic, or religious influences?

- Are judges appointed and dismissed in a fair and unbiased manner?
- Do judges rule fairly and impartially, or do they commonly render verdicts that favor the government or particular interests, whether in return for bribes or other reasons?
- Do executive, legislative, and other governmental authorities comply with judicial decisions, and are these decisions effectively enforced?
- Do powerful private concerns comply with judicial decisions, and are decisions that run counter to the interests of powerful actors effectively enforced?

2. Does the rule of law prevail in civil and criminal matters? Are police under direct civilian control?

- Are defendants' rights, including the presumption of innocence until proven guilty, protected?
- Are detainees provided access to independent, competent legal counsel?
- Are defendants given a fair, public, and timely hearing by a competent, independent, and impartial tribunal?
- Are prosecutors independent of political control and influence?
- Are prosecutors independent of powerful private interests, whether legal or illegal?
- Is there effective and democratic civilian state control of law enforcement officials through the judicial, legislative, and executive branches?
- Are law enforcement officials free from the influence of non-state actors, including organized crime, powerful commercial interests, or other groups?

3. Is there protection from political terror, unjustified imprisonment, exile, or torture, whether by groups that support or oppose the system? Is there freedom from war and insurgencies?

- Do law enforcement officials make arbitrary arrests and detentions without warrants or fabricate or plant evidence on suspects?
- Do law enforcement officials beat detainees during arrest and interrogation or use excessive force or torture to extract confessions?
- Are conditions in pretrial facilities and prisons humane and respectful of the human dignity of inmates?
- Do citizens have the means of effective petition and redress when their rights are violated by state authorities?
- Are there private/non-state actors operating in the country that engage in kidnapping for ransom, murder, or other violent crimes against the general population or specific groups?
- Is the population subjected to physical harm, forced removal, or other acts of violence or terror due to civil conflict or war?

4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?

- Are members of various distinct groups—including ethnic and religious minorities, homosexuals, and the disabled—able to exercise effectively their human rights with full equality before the law?
- Is violence against such groups widespread, and if so, are perpetrators brought to justice?
- Do members of such groups face legal and/or de facto discrimination in areas including employment, education, and housing because of their identification with a particular group?
- Do women enjoy full equality in law and in practice as compared to men?
- Do non-citizens—including migrant workers, asylum seekers, and non-citizen immigrants—enjoy basic internationally recognized human rights, including the right not to be subjected to torture or other forms of ill-treatment, the right to due-process of law, and the rights of freedom of association, expression, and religion?

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

1. Does the state control travel or choice of residence, employment, or institution of higher education?

- Are there restrictions on foreign travel, including the use of an exit visa system, which may be issued selectively?
- Is permission required from the authorities to move within the country?
- Does the government determine or otherwise influence a person's type and place of employment?
- Are bribes or other inducements for government officials needed to obtain the necessary documents to travel, change one's place of residence or employment, enter institutions of higher education, or advance in school?

2. Do citizens have the right to own property and establish private businesses? Is private business activity unduly influenced by government officials, the security forces, political parties/organizations, or organized crime?

- Are people legally allowed to purchase and sell land and other property, and can they do so in practice without undue interference from the government or non-state actors?
- Does the government provide adequate and timely compensation to people whose property is expropriated under eminent domain laws?
- Are people legally allowed to establish and operate private businesses with a reasonable minimum of registration, licensing, and other requirements?

- Are bribes or other inducements needed to obtain the necessary legal documents to operate private businesses?
 - Do private/non-state actors, including criminal groups, seriously impede private business activities through such measures as extortion?
3. Are there personal social freedoms, including gender equality, choice of marriage partners, and size of family?
- Is violence against women, including wife-beating and rape, widespread, and are perpetrators brought to justice?
 - Is the trafficking of women and/or children abroad for prostitution widespread, and is the government taking adequate efforts to address the problem?
 - Do women face de jure and de facto discrimination in economic and social matters, including property and inheritance rights, divorce proceedings, and child custody matters?
 - Does the government directly or indirectly control choice of marriage partners through means such as requiring large payments to marry certain individuals (e.g., foreign citizens) or by not enforcing laws against child marriage or dowry payments?
 - Does the government determine the number of children that a couple may have?
 - Does the government engage in state-sponsored religious/cultural/ethnic indoctrination and related restrictions on personal freedoms?
 - Do private institutions, including religious groups, unduly infringe on the rights of individuals, including choice of marriage partner, dress, etc.?
4. Is there equality of opportunity and the absence of economic exploitation?
- Does the government exert tight control over the economy, including through state ownership and the setting of prices and production quotas?
 - Do the economic benefits from large state industries, including the energy sector, benefit the general population or only a privileged few?
 - Do private interests exert undue influence on the economy through monopolistic practices, cartels, or illegal blacklists, boycotts, or discrimination?
 - Is entrance to institutions of higher education or the ability to obtain employment limited by widespread nepotism and the payment of bribes?
 - Are certain groups, including ethnic or religious minorities, less able to enjoy certain economic benefits than others? For example, are certain groups restricted from holding particular jobs, whether in the public or the private sector, because of de jure or de facto discrimination?
 - Do state or private employers exploit their workers through activities including unfairly withholding wages and permitting or forcing employees to work under unacceptably dangerous conditions, as well as through adult slave labor and child labor?

KEY TO SCORES, PR AND CL RATINGS, AND STATUS**Table 1****Table 2**

Political Rights (PR)		Civil Liberties (CL)	
Total Scores	PR Rating	Total Scores	CL Rating
36-40	1	53-60	1
30-35	2	44-52	2
24-29	3	35-43	3
18-23	4	26-34	4
12-17	5	17-25	5
6-11	6	8-16	6
0-5*	7	0-7	7
Table 3			
Combined Average of the PR and CL Ratings		Country Status	
1.0-2.5		Free	
3.0-5.0		Partly Free	
5.5-7.0		Not Free	

* It is possible for a country's total political rights score to be less than zero (between -1 and -4) if it receives mostly or all zeros for each of the ten political rights questions *and* it receives a sufficiently negative score for political rights discretionary question B. In such a case, a country would still receive a final political rights rating of 7.

Tables and Ratings

Table of Independent Countries

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating	Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Afghanistan	5	5	Partly Free	Dominica*	1	1	Free
Albania*	3	3	Partly Free	Dominican Republic*	2	2	Free
Algeria	6	5	Not Free	East Timor*	3	4▼	Partly Free
Andorra*	1	1	Free	Ecuador*	3	3	Partly Free
Angola	6	5	Not Free	Egypt	6	5	Not Free
Antigua and Barbuda*	2	2	Free	El Salvador*	2	3	Free
Argentina*	2	2	Free	Equatorial Guinea	7	6	Not Free
Armenia	5	4	Partly Free	Eritrea	7	6	Not Free
Australia*	1	1	Free	Estonia*	1	1	Free
Austria*	1	1	Free	Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free
Azerbaijan	6	5	Not Free	Fiji	6▼	4▼	Partly Free
Bahamas*	1	1	Free	Finland*	1	1	Free
Bahrain	5	5	Partly Free	France*	1	1	Free
Bangladesh*	4	4	Partly Free	Gabon	6	4	Partly Free
Barbados*	1	1	Free	The Gambia	5	4	Partly Free
Belarus	7	6	Not Free	Georgia*	3	3	Partly Free
Belgium*	1	1	Free	Germany*	1	1	Free
Belize*	1	2	Free	Ghana*	1	2	Free
Benin*	2	2	Free	Greece*	1	2	Free
Bhutan	6	5	Not Free	Grenada*	1	2	Free
Bolivia*	3	3	Partly Free	Guatemala*	3▲	4	Partly Free
Bosnia-Herzegovina	3▲	3	Partly Free	Guinea	6	5	Not Free
Botswana*	2	2	Free	Guinea-Bissau*	4▼	4	Partly Free
Brazil*	2	2	Free	Guyana*	2▲	3	Free
Brunei	6	5	Not Free	Haiti*	4▲	5▲	Partly Free
Bulgaria*	1	2	Free	Honduras*	3	3	Partly Free
Burkina Faso	5	3	Partly Free	Hungary*	1	1	Free
Burma	7	7	Not Free	Iceland*	1	1	Free
Burundi*	4▼	5	Partly Free	India*	2	3	Free
Cambodia	6	5	Not Free	Indonesia*	2	3	Free
Cameroon	6	6	Not Free	Iran	6	6	Not Free
Canada*	1	1	Free	Iraq	6	6▼	Not Free
Cape Verde*	1	1	Free	Ireland*	1	1	Free
Central African Republic*	5	4	Partly Free	Israel*	1	2	Free
Chad	6	6▼	Not Free	Italy*	1	1	Free
Chile*	1	1	Free	Jamaica*	2	3	Free
China	7	6	Not Free	Japan*	1	2	Free
Colombia*	3	3	Partly Free	Jordan	5	4	Partly Free
Comoros*	3▲	4	Partly Free	Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free
Congo (Brazzaville)	6▼	5	Not Free	Kenya*	3	3	Partly Free
Congo (Kinshasa)	5▲	6	Not Free	Kiribati*	1	1	Free
Costa Rica*	1	1	Free	Kuwait	4	4▲	Partly Free
Cote d'Ivoire	7▼	6	Not Free	Kyrgyzstan	5	4	Partly Free
Croatia*	2	2	Free	Laos	7	6	Not Free
Cuba	7	7	Not Free	Latvia*	1	1	Free
Cyprus*	1	1	Free	Lebanon	5	4	Partly Free
Czech Republic*	1	1	Free	Lesotho*	2	3	Free
Denmark*	1	1	Free	Liberia*	3▲	4	Partly Free
Djibouti	5	5	Partly Free	Libya	7	7	Not Free
				Liechtenstein*	1	1	Free

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating	Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Lithuania*	1	1	Free	↓ Seychelles*	3	3	Partly Free
Luxembourg*	1	1	Free	Sierra Leone*	4	3	Partly Free
Macedonia*	3	3	Partly Free	Singapore	5	4	Partly Free
Madagascar*	4▼	3	Partly Free	Slovakia*	1	1	Free
Malawi*	4	3▲	Partly Free	Slovenia*	1	1	Free
Malaysia	4	4	Partly Free	Solomon Islands	4▼	3	Partly Free
↑ Maldives	6	5	Not Free	Somalia	7▼	7	Not Free
Malta*	1	1	Free	South Africa*	3▼	2	Free
Marshall Islands*	1	1	Free	South Korea*	1	2	Free
Mauritania	5▲	4	Partly Free	Spain*	1	1	Free
Mauritius*	1	2▼	Free	Sri Lanka*	4▼	4▼	Partly Free
Mexico*	2	3▼	Free	Sudan	7	7	Not Free
Micronesia*	1	1	Free	Suriname*	2	2	Free
Moldova*	3	4	Partly Free	Swaziland	7	5	Not Free
Monaco*	2	1	Free	Sweden*	1	1	Free
Mongolia*	2	2	Free	Switzerland*	1	1	Free
Montenegro*	3	3	Partly Free	Syria	7	6▲	Not Free
Morocco	5	4	Partly Free	Taiwan*	2▼	1	Free
Mozambique*	3	4	Partly Free	Tajikistan	6	5	Not Free
Namibia*	2	2	Free	Tanzania	4	3	Partly Free
Nauru*	1	1	Free	Thailand	7▼	4▼	Not Free
Nepal	5▲	4▲	Partly Free	Togo	6	5	Not Free
Netherlands*	1	1	Free	Tonga	5	3	Partly Free
New Zealand*	1	1	Free	Trinidad and Tobago*	2▲	2	Free
Nicaragua*	3	3	Partly Free	Tunisia	6	5	Not Free
Niger*	3	3	Partly Free	Turkey*	3	3	Partly Free
Nigeria	4	4	Partly Free	Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free
North Korea	7	7	Not Free	Tuvalu*	1	1	Free
Norway*	1	1	Free	Uganda	5	4	Partly Free
Oman	6	5	Not Free	Ukraine*	3	2	Free
Pakistan	6	5	Not Free	United Arab Emirates	6	5▲	Not Free
Palau*	1	1	Free	United Kingdom*†	1	1	Free
Panama*	1	2	Free	United States*	1	1	Free
Papua New Guinea*	3	3	Partly Free	Uruguay*	1	1	Free
Paraguay*	3	3	Partly Free	Uzbekistan	7	7	Not Free
Peru*	2	3	Free	Vanuatu*	2	2	Free
↓ Philippines*	3	3	Partly Free	Venezuela*	4	4	Partly Free
Poland*	1	1	Free	Vietnam	7	5	Not Free
Portugal*	1	1	Free	Yemen	5	5	Partly Free
Qatar	6	5	Not Free	Zambia*	3▲	4	Partly Free
↑ Romania*	2	2	Free	↓ Zimbabwe	7	6	Not Free
↓ Russia	6	5	Not Free				
Rwanda	6	5	Not Free				
St. Kitts and Nevis*†	1	1	Free				
St. Lucia*	1	1	Free				
St. Vincent and the Grenadines*	2	1	Free				
Samoa*	2	2	Free				
San Marino*	1	1	Free				
Sao Tome and Principe*	2	2	Free				
Saudi Arabia	7	6	Not Free				
Senegal*	2	3	Free				
Serbia*	3	2	Free				

PR and CL stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. The ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

▲▼ up or down indicates a change in Political Rights or Civil Liberties since the last survey.

↑↓ up or down indicates a trend arrow.

* indicates a country's status as an electoral democracy.

Note: The ratings reflect global events from December 1, 2005, through December 31, 2006.

Table of Related Territories

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
China			
Hong Kong	5	2	Partly Free
United States			
Puerto Rico	1	1	Free

Table of Disputed Territories

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Armenia/Azerbaijan			
Nagorno-Karabakh	5	5	Partly Free
China			
Tibet	7	7	Not Free
Cyprus			
Northern (Turkish) Cyprus	2	2	Free
Georgia			
Abkhazia	5	5	Partly Free
India			
Kashmir	5	5	Partly Free
Israel			
Israeli-Occupied territories	6	5	Not Free
Palestinian Authority-Administered territories	4▲	6▼	Partly Free
Moldova			
Transnistria	6	6	Not Free
Morocco			
Western Sahara	7	6	Not Free
Pakistan			
Kashmir	7	5	Not Free
Russia			
Chechnya	7	7	Not Free
Serbia			
Kosovo	6	5	Not Free
Somalia			
Somaliland	5	4	Partly Free

Combined Average Ratings: Independent Countries

FREE	Greece	Montenegro	NOT FREE
1.0	Grenada	Nicaragua	5.5
Andorra	Israel	Niger	Algeria
Australia	Japan	Papua New Guinea	Angola
Austria	Monaco	Paraguay	Azerbaijan
Bahamas	Panama	Philippines	Bhutan
Barbados	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Seychelles	Brunei
Belgium	South Korea	Turkey	Cambodia
Canada	Taiwan	3.5	Congo (Brazzaville)
Cape Verde		Comoros	Congo (Kinshasa)
Chile	2.0	East Timor	Egypt
Costa Rica	Antigua and Barbuda	Guatemala	Guinea
Cyprus	Argentina	Liberia	Kazakhstan
Czech Republic	Benin	Madagascar	Maldives
Denmark	Botswana	Malawi	Oman
Dominica	Brazil	Moldova	Pakistan
Estonia	Croatia	Mozambique	Qatar
Finland	Dominican Republic	Sierra Leone	Russia
France	Mali	Solomon Islands	Rwanda
Germany	Mauritius	Tanzania	Tajikistan
Hungary	Mongolia	Zambia	Thailand
Iceland	Namibia	4.0	Togo
Ireland	Romania	Bangladesh	Tunisia
Italy	Samoa	Burkina Faso	United Arab Emirates
Kiribati	Sao Tome and Principe	Guinea-Bissau	6.0
Latvia	South Africa	Kuwait	Cameroon
Liechtenstein	Suriname	Malaysia	Chad
Lithuania	Trinidad and Tobago	Nigeria	Iran
Luxembourg	Vanuatu	Sri Lanka	Iraq
Malta		Tonga	Swaziland
Marshall Islands	2.5	Venezuela	Vietnam
Micronesia	El Salvador	4.5	6.5
Nauru	Guyana	Armenia	Belarus
Netherlands	India	Burundi	China
New Zealand	Indonesia	Central African Republic	Cote d'Ivoire
Norway	Jamaica	The Gambia	Equatorial Guinea
Palau	Lesotho	Haiti	Eritrea
Poland	Mexico	Jordan	Laos
Portugal	Peru	Kyrgyzstan	Saudi Arabia
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Senegal	Lebanon	Syria
Saint Lucia	Serbia	Mauritania	Zimbabwe
San Marino	Ukraine	Morocco	
Slovakia	PARTLY FREE	Nepal	7.0
Slovenia	3.0	Singapore	Burma
Spain	Albania	Uganda	Cuba
Sweden	Bolivia	5.0	Libya
Switzerland	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Afghanistan	North Korea
Tuvalu	Colombia	Bahrain	Somalia
United Kingdom	Ecuador	Djibouti	Sudan
United States	Georgia	Ethiopia	Turkmenistan
Uruguay	Honduras	Fiji	Uzbekistan
1.5	Kenya	Gabon	
Belize	Macedonia	Yemen	
Bulgaria			
Ghana			

**Combined
Average
Ratings:
Related
Territories**

FREE
1.0
Puerto Rico (US)

PARTLY FREE
3.5
Hong Kong (China)

Combined Average Ratings: Disputed Territories		
FREE 2.0	PARTLY FREE 4.5	NOT FREE 5.5
Cyprus (Northern [Turkish] Cyprus)	Somaliiland (Somalia)	Israeli-Occupied Territories (Israel) Kosovo (Serbia)
	5.0 Abkhazia (Georgia) Kashmir (India) Nagorno-Karabakh (Armenia/Azerbaijan) Palestinian Authority- Administered Territories (Israel)	6.0 Kashmir (Pakistan) Transnistria (Moldova)
		6.5 Western Sahara (Morocco)
		7.0 Chechnya (Russia) Tibet (China)

Electoral Democracies (123)

Albania	Hungary
Andorra	Iceland
Antigua and Barbuda	India
Argentina	Indonesia
Australia	Ireland
Austria	Israel
Bahamas	Italy
Bangladesh	Jamaica
Barbados	Japan
Belgium	Kenya
Belize	Kiribati
Benin	Latvia
Bolivia	Lesotho
Botswana	Liberia
Brazil	Liechtenstein
Bulgaria	Lithuania
Burundi	Luxembourg
Canada	Macedonia
Cape Verde	Madagascar
Central African Republic	Malawi
Chile	Mali
Colombia	Malta
Comoros	Marshall Islands
Costa Rica	Mauritius
Croatia	Mexico
Cyprus	Micronesia
Czech Republic	Moldova
Denmark	Monaco
Dominica	Mongolia
Dominican Republic	Montenegro
East Timor	Mozambique
Ecuador	Namibia
El Salvador	Nauru
Estonia	Netherlands
Finland	New Zealand
France	Nicaragua
Georgia	Niger
Germany	Norway
Ghana	Palau
Greece	Panama
Grenada	Papua New Guinea
Guatemala	Paraguay
Guinea-Bissau	Peru
Guyana	Philippines
Haiti	Poland
Honduras	Portugal

Romania
St. Kitts and Nevis
St. Lucia
St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Samoa
San Marino
Sao Tome and Principe
Senegal
Serbia
Seychelles
Sierra Leone
Slovakia
Slovenia
South Africa
South Korea
Spain

Sri Lanka
Suriname
Sweden
Switzerland
Taiwan
Trinidad and Tobago
Turkey
Tuvalu
Ukraine
United Kingdom
United States
Uruguay
Vanuatu
Venezuela
Zambia

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Freedom House is an independent private organization supporting the expansion of freedom throughout the world.

Freedom is possible only in democratic political systems in which governments are accountable to their own people, the rule of law prevails, and freedoms of expression, association and belief are guaranteed. Working directly with courageous men and women around the world to support nonviolent civic initiatives in societies where freedom is threatened, Freedom House functions as a catalyst for change through its unique mix of analysis, advocacy and action.

ANALYSIS. Freedom House's rigorous research methodology has earned the organization a reputation as the leading source of information on the state of freedom around the globe. Since 1972, Freedom House has published *Freedom in the World*, an annual survey of political rights and civil liberties experienced in every country of the world. The survey is complemented by an annual review of press freedom, an analysis of transitions in the post-communist world, and other publications.

ADVOCACY. Freedom House seeks to encourage American policymakers, as well as other governments and international institutions, to adopt policies that advance human rights and democracy around the world. Freedom House has been instrumental in the founding of the worldwide Community of Democracies, has actively campaigned for a reformed Human Rights Council at the United Nations, and presses the Millennium Challenge Corporation to adhere to high standards of eligibility for recipient countries.

ACTION. Through exchanges, grants, and technical assistance, Freedom House provides training and support to human rights defenders, civil society organizations, and members of the media in order to strengthen indigenous reform efforts in countries around the globe.

Founded in 1941 by Eleanor Roosevelt, Wendell Willkie, and other Americans concerned with mounting threats to peace and democracy, Freedom House has long been a vigorous proponent of democratic values and a steadfast opponent of dictatorships of the far left and the far right. The organization's diverse Board of Trustees is composed of a bipartisan mix of business and labor leaders, former senior government officials, scholars, and journalists who agree that the promotion of democracy and human rights abroad is vital to America's interests abroad.

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES • POLITICS

Freedom in the World, the Freedom House flagship survey whose findings have been published annually since 1972, is the standard-setting comparative assessment of global political rights and civil liberties. The survey ratings and narrative reports on 193 countries and a group of select territories are used by policymakers, the media, international corporations, and civic activists and human rights defenders to monitor trends in democracy and track improvements and setbacks in freedom worldwide.

"The explosion of democracy is a central development of our era. Freedom House provides an invaluable resource in this authoritative survey of the on-the-ground realities of the state of freedom around the world."

—**Jessica Tuchman Mathews**, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

"*Freedom in the World* is an indispensable reference."

—**Samuel P. Huntington**, Harvard University

"An essential source, *Freedom in the World* works from the assumption that freedom is a universal value, not reserved for the rich."

—**Francis Fukuyama**, Johns Hopkins University

"*Freedom in the World* is the Michelin Guide to democracy's development."

—**Daniel Henninger**, *Wall Street Journal*

"*Freedom in the World* is an invaluable source for scholars and essential reading for policymakers and political leaders concerned with the promotion and consolidation of democracy"

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"While there are many sources of economic data, good political data is hard to find. Freedom House's survey is an exception. For anyone concerned with the state of freedom, or simply with the state of the world, *Freedom in the World* is an indispensable guide."

—**Fareed Zakaria**, *Newsweek*

"This overview will be indispensable to anyone interested in political and civil liberties."

— *Publishers Weekly*

FREEDOM HOUSE is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that supports democratic change, monitors freedom, and advocates for democracy and human rights.



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